

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

Date: APRIL 26TH

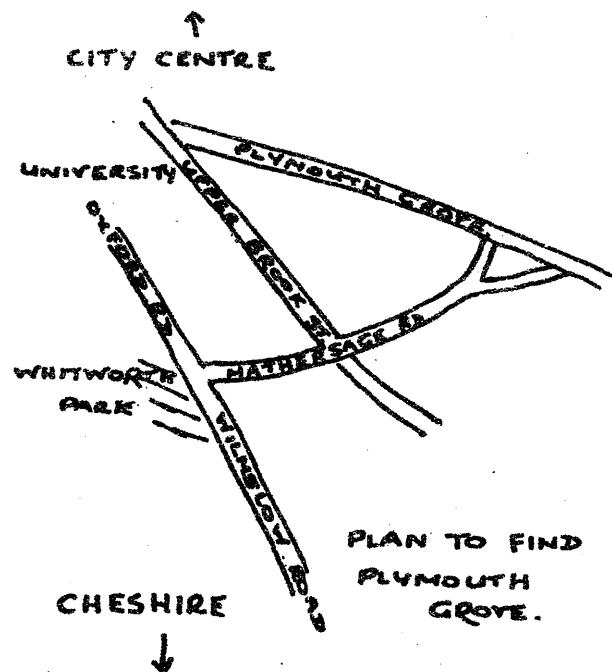
Time: 2.00 p.m.

Speaker: J. GEOFFREY SHARPS

Subject: HOW I BECAME A GASKELLIAN

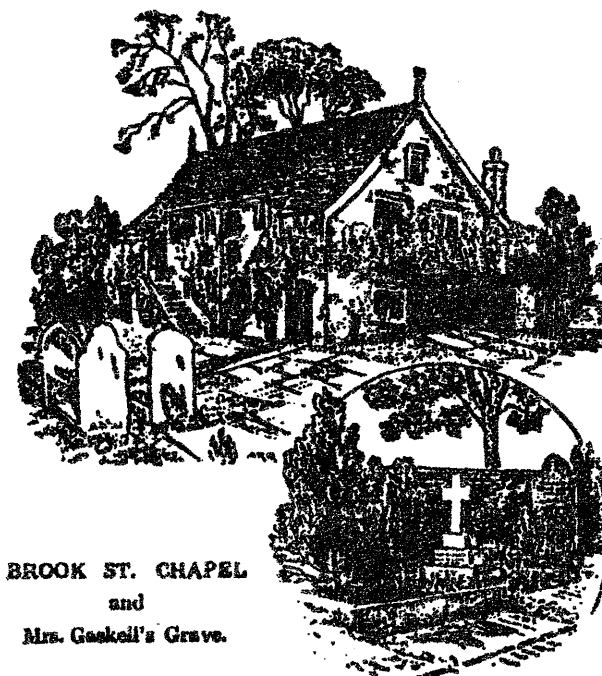
Teas: £1.00

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!

## 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.

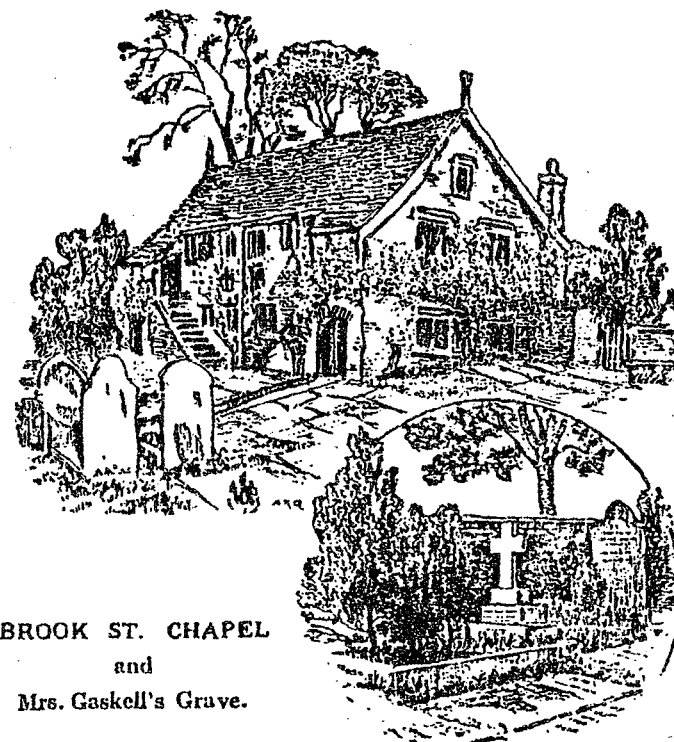
An exhibition of Gaskell Illustrators will be on view  
after both meetings, at the schoolroom, Brook Street

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 ) 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

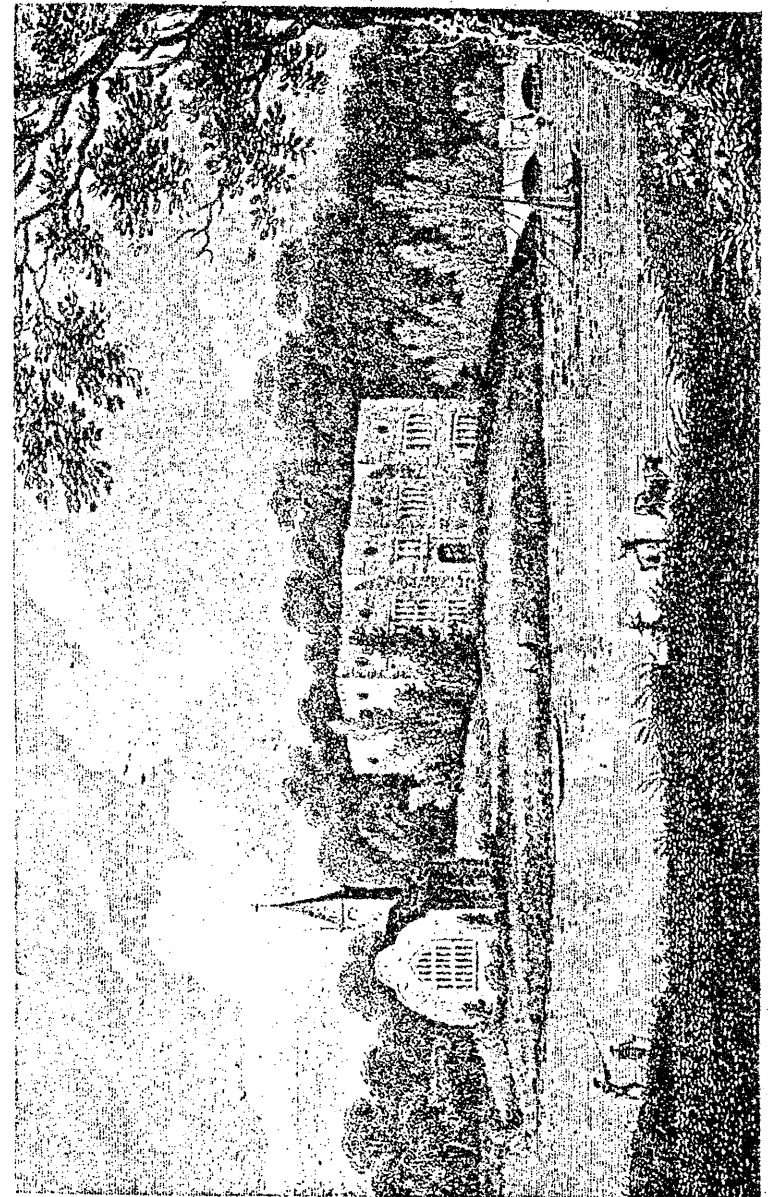
'I was brought up in a little country town, and it is my lot now to live in or rather on the borders of a great manufacturing town, but when spring days first come and the bursting leaves and sweet, earthy smells tell me that 'Somer is ycomen in', I feel a stirring instinct and long to be off into the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

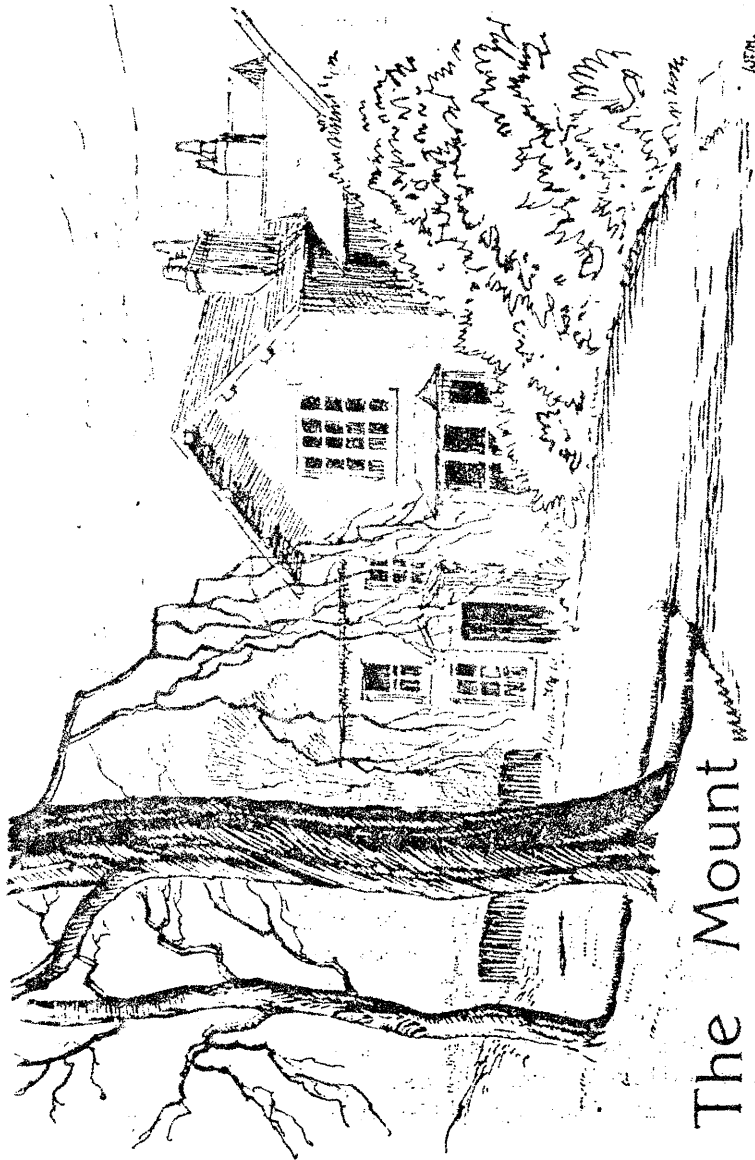
Acknowledgements for details of Samuel Greg to 'Portrait of a Village. The Happy Valley' by Margaret Ingram, illustrated by W. Stirling Martin

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#### 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.

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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.

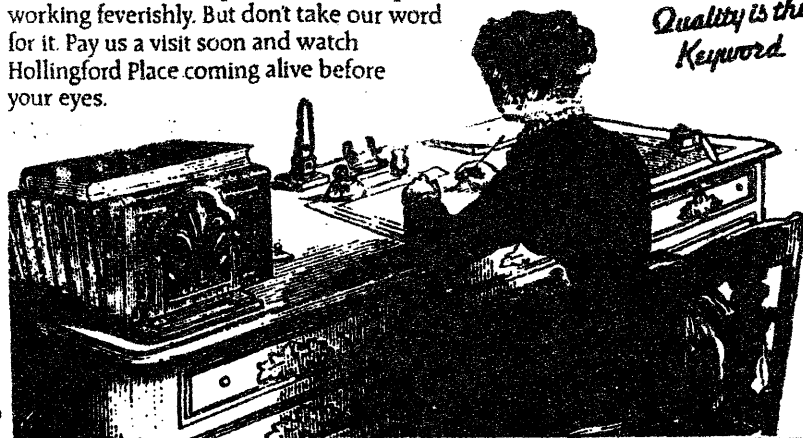
Prices from around £79,000.

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

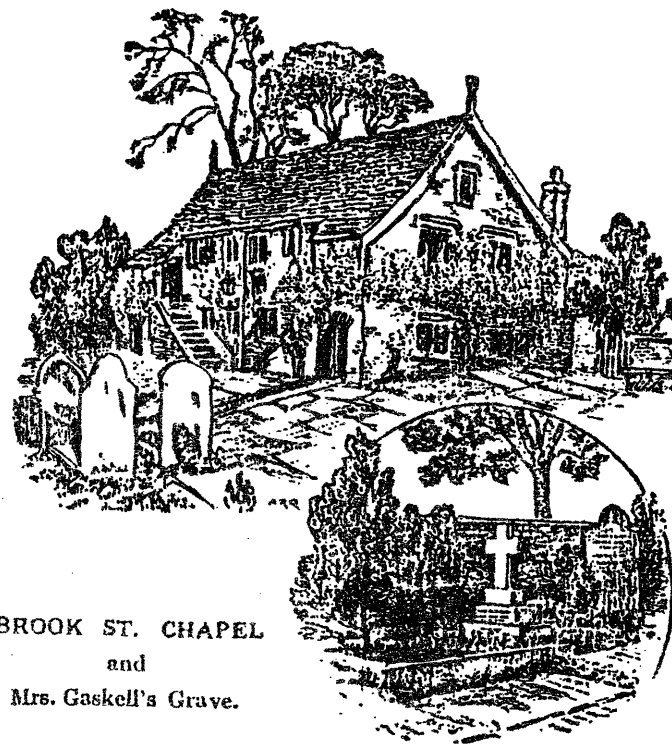


**Alfred McAlpine Homes**

*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-

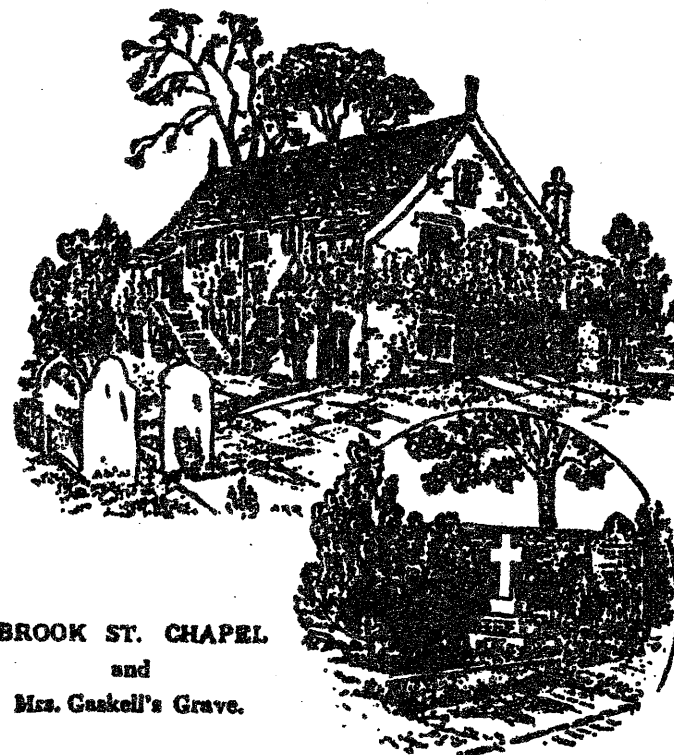
Editor: Mrs J Leach, Far Yew Tree House, Over Tabley, Knutsford, Cheshire WA16 0HN (Tel: 0565 4668)

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.

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 hill-side 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!

\* \* \* \* \*





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.

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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

Summer Academy in the Peaks and Pennines

'Town and Country Life in Northern Literature'

Week 1, July 16th-23rd. 19th Century writers, focussing on Anne Brontë, Elizabeth Gaskell and Alfred Tennyson

Week 2, July 23rd-30th. 20th Century Decades, from suffragettes to contemporary T.V. theatre.

Visits are a feature of both these courses recommended by member Elsie Davis of Sheffield.

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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.

\* \* \* \* \*

# 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 grey 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 all  
fit 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 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.

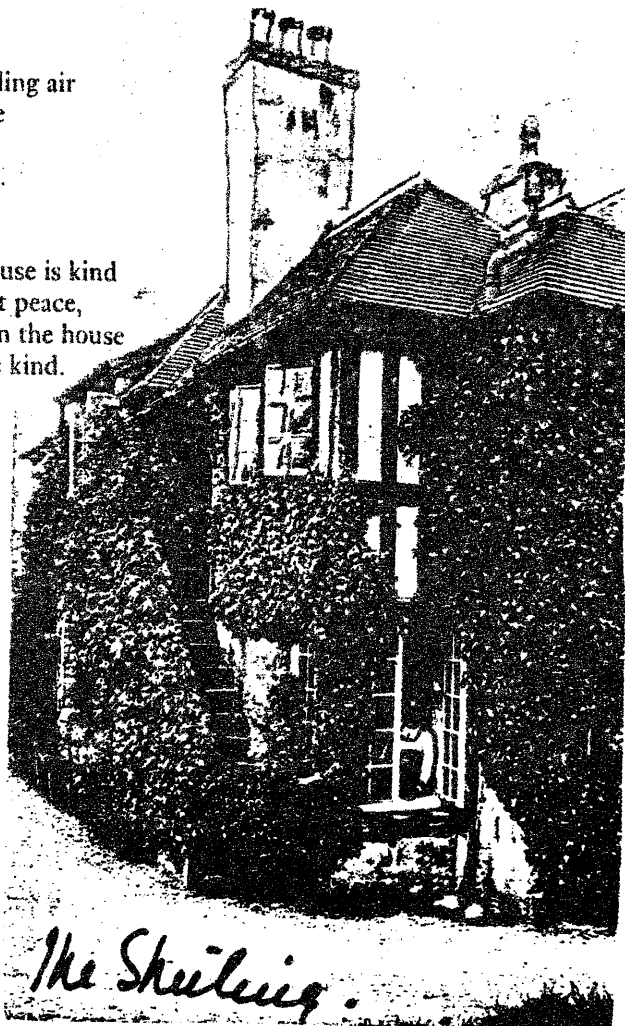
The Silverdale area can be recognised in several Gaskell works; the treacherous Morecambe Bay crossing

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.

\* \* \* \* \*

#### 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.

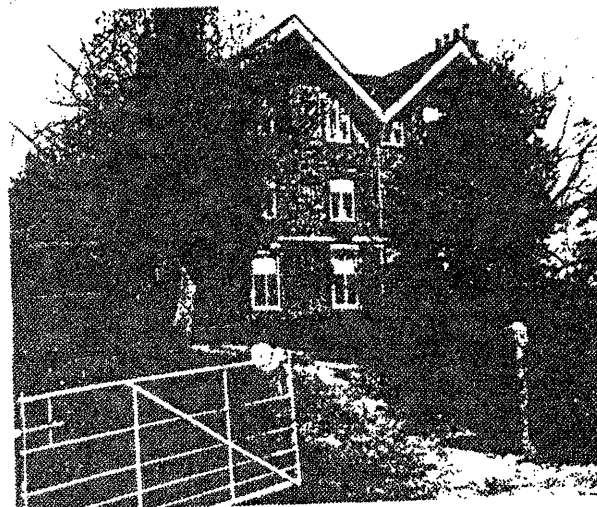
We hope you will enjoy this newsletter and the Journal which is just going to print to be ready for the April meeting.

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.

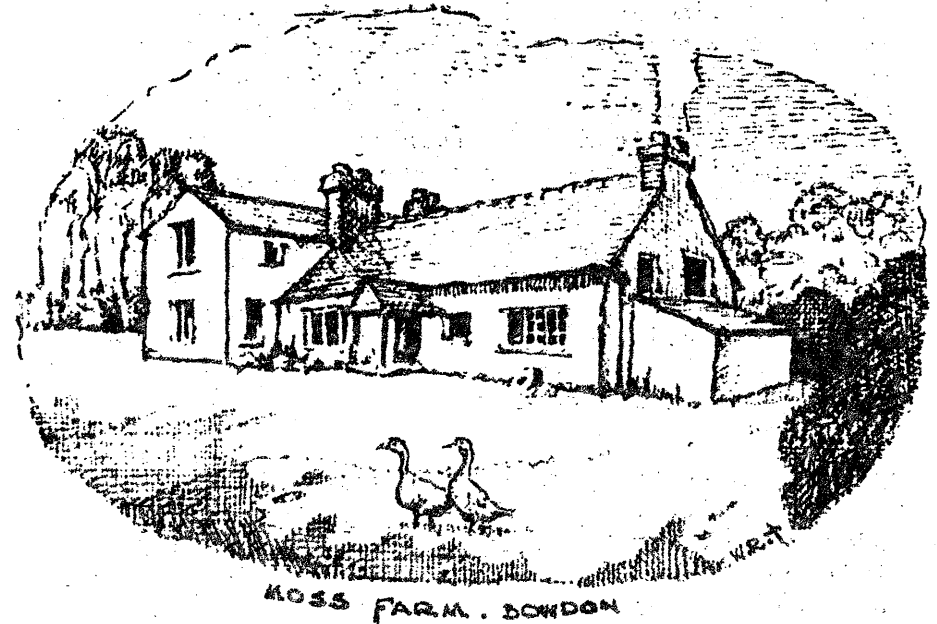
A particularly interesting reference to these visits appears in a letter of May 1851: "Hearn Meta Flossie and baby (Julia) went to Bowden yesterday. Mary took them as I was too weak and Papa too busy to go; and returned last night. Flossy was dreadfully tired when she got there. You have no idea how 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  
Tel: 0565 4668

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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).

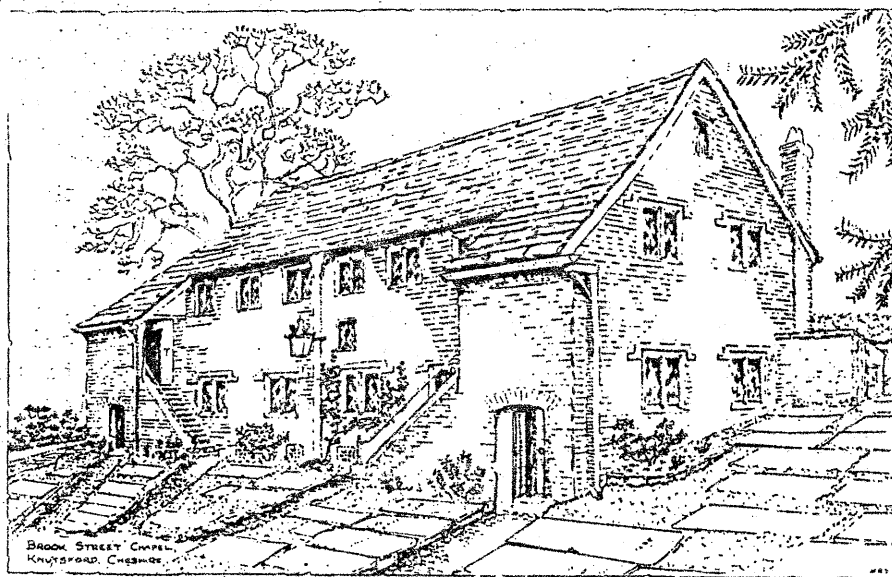
Another exhibit showing something of the early history of the Chapel is taken from a copy of the Minutes of the Cheshire 'Classis' (meetings of ministers of the district for the discussion of chapel affairs and the ministry). These cover a period from 1691-1743. Both the original manuscript and the printed 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.

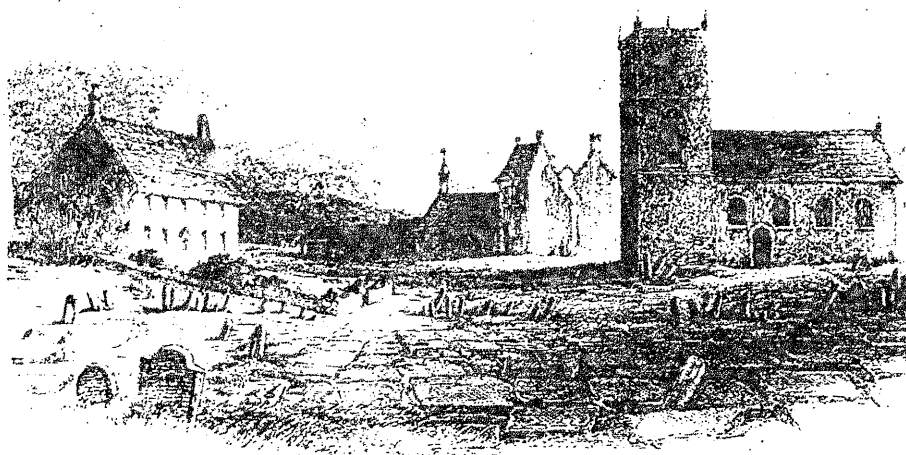
I had never considered that the word 'induce' had ever been used in a medical sense until recent years, when there has been some controversy about the birth of babies being induced by doctors on Fridays so that they could count on having a free weekend. However, the complete Oxford English Dictionary 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



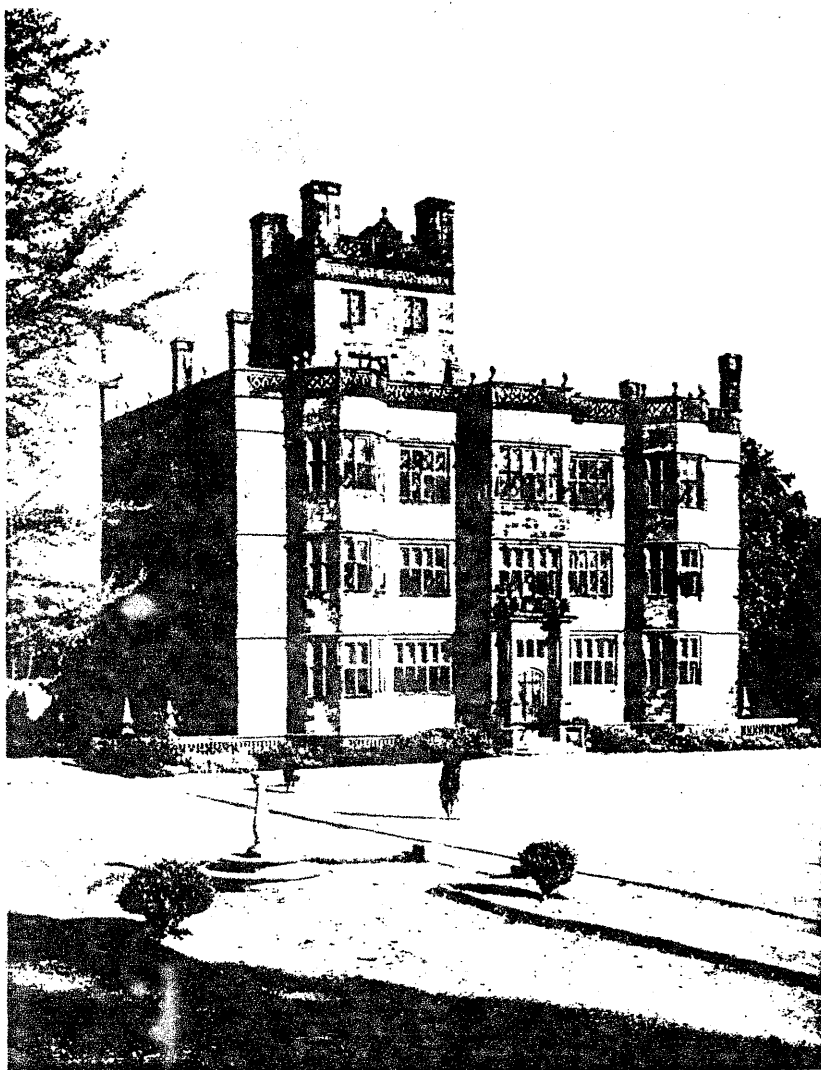
Sir James Kay-Shuttleworth, 1st Bt (1804-77)  
from an early photograph c.1865

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

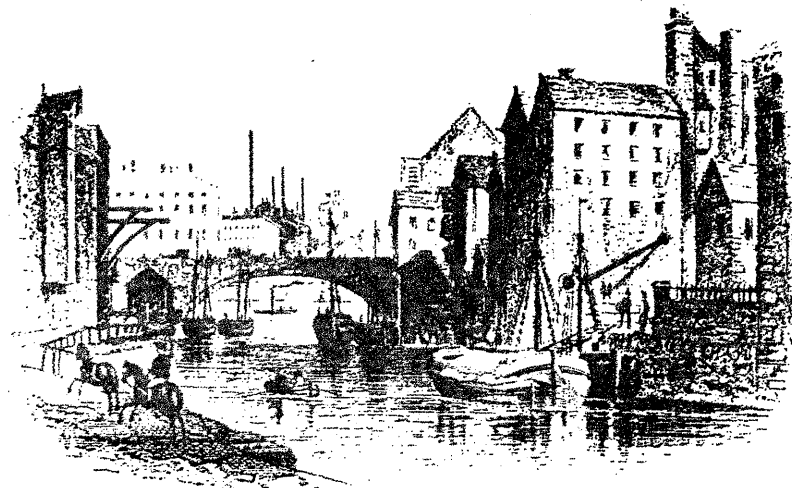
as a subject for fiction. - that  
was her opinion. I dreaded.  
I felt almost sure that if  
people would only read what  
I had to say they would not  
be disappointed. - but I feared I  
still think it probable that  
many may refuse to read any  
book of that kind. (I am  
writing in such a hurry 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

\* \* \* \* \*

ELIZABETH GASKELL AND FREDRIKA BREMER  
A COMPARISON

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.

\* \* \* \* \*

#### 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 bygones should be bygones, 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'

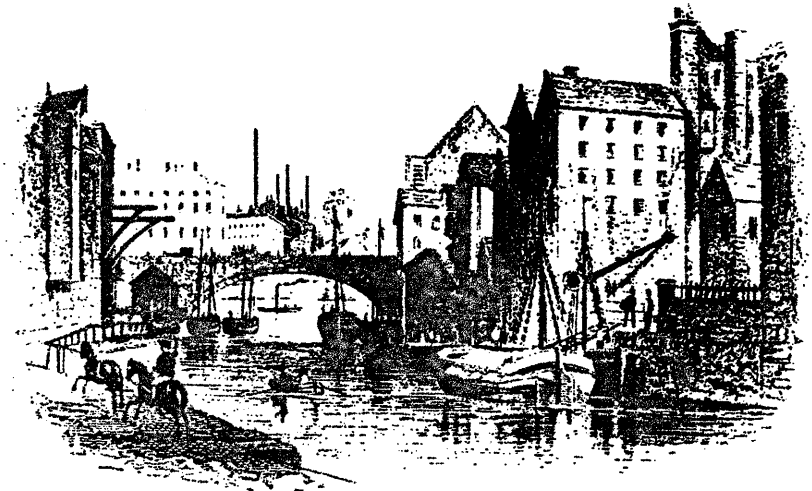
Manch. C. News 22 June 1878

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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

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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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- 9 Chapple, J A V & Pollard, A, ed. Gaskell Letter No.12 p.33 in The Letters of Mrs Gaskell

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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)

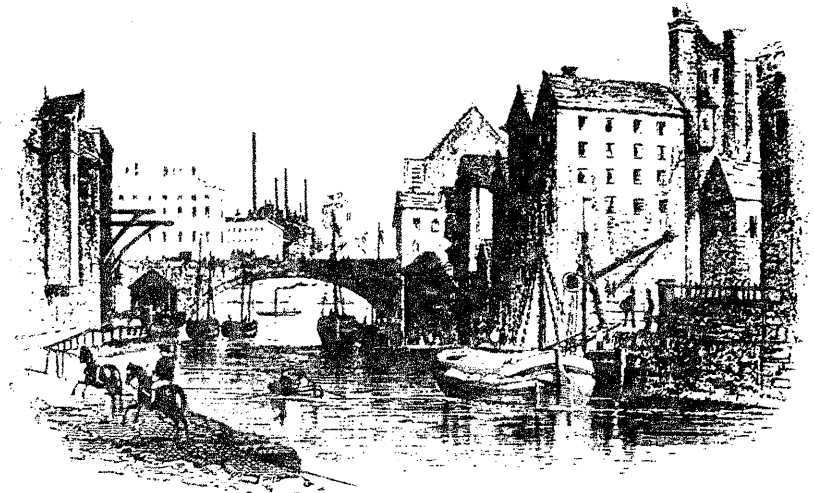


Ashbourne Hall, 1839.

(see Book Notes p.19)



# The Gaskell Society



*The River Irwell & Albert Bridge Manchester*

## NEWSLETTER

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 634668)

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NO. 11

## EDITOR'S LETTER

Once again it is time for me to prepare and send out a newsletter and, at the same time, Alan Shelston is working on the next Journal; thank you for your encouraging comments on our publications as it makes our efforts worth while.

If this newsletter has a different appearance it is due to my attempts to master word processing, a long and painful process as I am a technological idiot and I can not be sure if the words, as I am typing them, will actually reach you in the form of a newsletter!

All our members are able to share in our activities through our publications even if they are not able to get to any of our meetings. 1990 was another successful year and 1991 promises much.

### Forthcoming Events

Spring Meeting at Cross Street Chapel, Manchester on 13th April.

Our Speaker will be Professor Michael Wheeler of Lancaster University whose address will be on Elizabeth Gaskell and Unitarianism. No venue could be more appropriate for this subject, of such importance for understanding ECG's work. Lunch will be available at The Portico Library where there will also be an exhibition on the Library's early years.

### ALLIANCE OF LITERARY SOCIETIES

It is perhaps unfortunate, though unavoidable, that the AGM is the following Saturday, 20th April at The Birmingham and Midland Institute, Margaret Street (near to City Art Gallery and New Street Station.)

We hope some members will be able to support us as we are acting as hosts, with The Bronte Society, our joint conference at Ambleside, being the main theme.

Perhaps some members who can not travel to Manchester could get to Birmingham instead. It is very stimulating meeting members of other societies and we have planned a full and varied programme.

Booking form, with further details, enclosed.

#### Summer outing to Buxton, Sunday, 28th July

As part of The Buxton Festival, Robin Allan is staging Charlotte Bronte and Elizabeth Gaskell a dramatic documentary also using slides and music. This will be at The Old Hall Hotel, and, with tea, (substantial) will cost £7. Buxton has many charms and a picnic lunch in the Pavilion Gardens would be pleasant.

If you are not coming to the April Meetings and would like to join us for this please send SAE for further details.

AGM, Saturday 28th Sept, when our speaker, on Elizabeth Gaskell and France will be Professor Philip Yarrow who has collected fascinating research material for this illustrated talk.

#### LONDON AND SOUTH EAST GROUP

The two London meetings have been so enjoyable that we hope to have more regular meetings as a literary circle. Richard Beckley has agreed to organise these for the present; he is also a member of The Bronte Society and retired lecturer in German at King's College, London. Please send him an SAE if you think you might be able to attend, even occasionally.

Richard Beckley

6, Rose Cottages, Tinker's Green, Nr. Finchingfield, Essex CM17 4NR

#### Weekend Conference SYLVIA'S LOVERS AND OTHERS

12th-15th July at The North Riding College, Scarborough.

We still have a few spare places for this and a follow on break at Cober Hill. See insert SHEET AND REPLY BY RETURN IF INTERESTED.

#### CANAL TRIPPERS

I am sure you will remember the scene from Libbie Marsh's Three Era's of the Whitsuntide outing to Dunham? There were very few bank holidays in those days so they were much enjoyed by the workers and particularly this one which fell in early summer.

"The court seemed alive, and merry with voices and laughter. The bed-room windows were open wide, (and had been all night on account of the heat) and every now and then you might see a head and a pair of shoulders, simply encased in shirt sleeves, popped out, and you might hear the inquiry passed from one to the other:-

"Well, Jack, and where art thou bound to?"

"Dunham"

"Why, what an old fashioned chap thou be'st. Thy Grandad afore thee went to Dunham; but thou wert always a slow coach. I'm off to Alderly, me, and my missus."

"Aye, that's because there's only thee and thy missus; wait till thou hast gotten four childer like me, and thou'll be glad enough to take 'em to Dunham, ould-fashioned way, for fourpence a-piece'.

This trip was made on The Duke of Bridgewater's Canal, built opened in 1761 to carry coal from the Worsley mines into Manchester and by 1772 it had two boats for goods and passengers with a coffee room and 'cabbins' for first, second and third class passengers.

It may have been 'ould -fashioned' in Libbie Marsh's day but in 1867 Manchester day trippers were still going to Dunham, as I found from this MSS account of an outing by St Paul's Methodist Church. Bennett Street, Literary and Educational Society.

(Manchester Central Library Archives M38/4/2/14)

'Whit Saturday, 1867

"AT Dunham spinners and weavers, mechanics and sailors, shoemakers, clerks and warehouse men some with happy smiling faces

and others who bore on their countenances traces of

scanty food and employment, results of a crisis we have not yet quite got through and the effects of which will not be obliterated from amongst us for many years to come". This refers to the effects of the American civil War and the Cotton Famine and depression.

The Manchester folk were enjoying their day, "away from the almost constant whir of the ponderous wheels and the deafening noise of the fast flying shuttle, the heated loom and the ill ventilated work-shop . . . memory dwells on scenes like this as upon an oasis in a desert".

The success of the Bridgewater Canal encouraged similar ventures and in 1766 the first sod of the Trent and Mersey Canal was cut. This was largely the enterprize of Josiah Wedgwood whose family invested £6,000, the Duke of Bridgewater £2,000 and his uncle Samuel Egerton of Tatton, £3,000. Erasmus Darwin was also involved, and there were many small investors for the £200 shares. The Wedgwoods took for their company motto, "It flows for country and people."

On August, 1990 a group of us set out for an evening cruise on this canal now a leisure enterprize but still showing signs of its industrial past with salt works, also restored as industrial history, and the unique Anderton boat lift, built in 1875 to lift boats from the canal to the River Weaver fifty feet below. We just had time to see this before rain set in for the night but we had enjoyed a pleasant canal trip.

For our AGM weekend outing I hope we will not be considered 'ould fashioned' if we visit Alderley. Mrs Gaskell must have known it well as it was close to the Winkworth's home. The Stanleys who owned it had objections to the 'Cottontots' of Manchester visiting it but the Stanleys are no longer in possession to great dog or handcuff' us as they did in the past. I will tell you more about this in the next newsletter.

## BOOK NOTES

by Christine Lingard

Sex and Death in Victorian Literature edited by Regina Barreca. Macmillan, £35

A series of thirteen essays on nineteenth-century British poetry, fiction and prose including the lot of the beautiful ignoramus: Ruth; and the tradition of the fallen woman by Hilary Schor, assistant professor of English at The University of Southern California.

Dealing with sex rather than death this short study offer a new perspective on Ruth, and makes comparisons with the poets from Wordsworth and the romantic tradition who were such an early influence on Tennyson and Browning whom she rarely acknowledges not forgetting Rossetti and, above all, Ruskin from whom she learned aesthetics. It shows how beauty was essential in fashioning the plot. Even though the novel is not entirely successful it marks an important shift in Gaskell's relationship to male authority. The book also contains articles on Hardy, Tennyson, Eliot, Dickens, Thackeray, Rossetti, Ruskin, Emily Bronte and vampires.

Death and Future Life in Victorian Literature and Theology by Michael Wheeler. Cambridge University Press £35

This broad study of Victorian literature deals principally with Tennyson, Dickens, Hopkins and Newman. It makes only passing mention of Gaskell but it makes the interesting point that her treatment of death in Mary Barton is consistent with a Unitarian theology which denies everlasting punishment.

(ED. This book also explores the nature of religious experience, belief and language in the nineteenth century. Illustrated.)

## THE GASKELL SOCIETY OF JAPAN : ANNUAL REPORT

IT is a great pleasure to report on the activities of our Society in 1990. Firstly, we are very glad to be able to tell you that the members are increasing year after year and now number 93; this is due to the enthusiasm and commitment of Professor Yuriko Yamawaki, the President of the Society.

In April we issued Newsletter NO. 2, a 25 page booklet mainly summarising four studies which had been presented at the last AGM (on Mary Barton, The Half Brothers, Lois the Witch and Sylvia's Lovers, 'Gaskellism and Gaskellian' by Prof. Yamawaki, 'Mrs Gaskell and Dickens' by Prof. S. Koike and 'My encounter with Mrs Gaskell' by Prof. M. Tougou.

On 12th May we had the second regular spring meeting with a presentation of two studies; 'Feminism and North and South' by Mrs Kanamura and 'From the Sunday School Penny Magazine by Mrs Tohira. Afterwards we enjoyed a get together over tea.

In October we were honoured to welcome Professor Arthur Pollard, the President of the Gaskell Society of U.K., and Mrs Phyllis Pollard as special guests to the Second Annual General Meeting. Professor Pollard gave lectures on English women novelists at The British Council, The Bronte Society of Japan, Tokyo Women's University etc.

On 12th October the AGM was held at Jissen Women's University. Four studies were presented: 'Cousin Phillis' by F. Yoshizawa, 'Mary Barton' by Y. Abe, 'Cranford' by E. Kumuzawa, and a short story 'Right at Last'. Then followed Professor Pollard's lecture on 'Mrs Gaskell's Young Women'. Afterwards we had time to talk with Professor and Mrs Pollard and much appreciated this friendly exchange with one another through Elizabeth Gaskell. We were happy to have communed with their wonderful and warm human nature and hope they will return to Japan again.

As for other activities two groups are at work one translating Ruth which has never been translated till now; four eager members have already been at work for two years and have now finished one third of it. The other group, is now translating Mary Barton, which was translated in 1949 but is out of print. They are trying very hard to translate without spoiling the beauty and power of Mrs Gaskell's works. Mrs Akiko Aikawa, a member of The Gaskell Society, translated Six Weeks at Heppenheim; half of it has been published in the University magazine, 'Jissen English Literature'.

We are planning to publish Journal 1 this year and have some contributions in hand. We hope 1991 will be as good a year as 1990.

Mariko Tahira (Member of G.S.  
of Japan)

Ed. Our President, Arthur Pollard spent a very full and enjoyable nine days in Japan. Although he had a heavy lecture programme he and Mrs Pollard (who also lectured, on Katherine Mansfield) had time some of the sights of Japan, including the old capital of Kyoto and were hospitably entertained by members of The Gaskell Society of Japan. It was a most valuable exchange for all concerned and we are grateful for the assistance of The British Council,

### BOOK NEWS

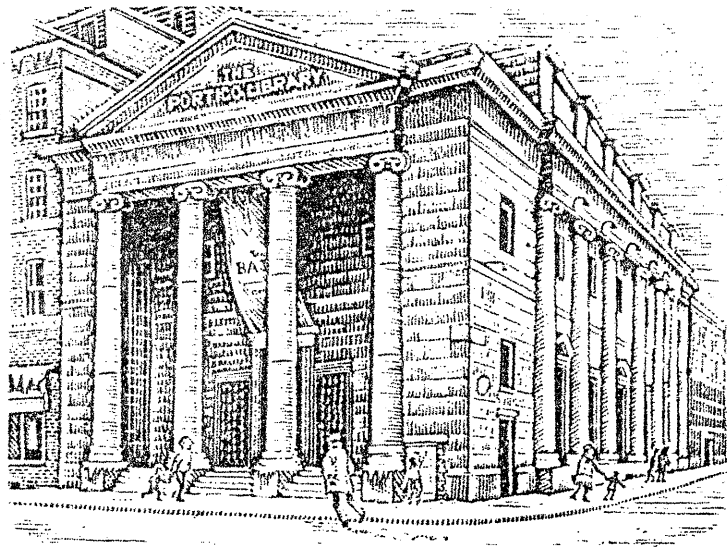
McMillan are reprinting Themes of Elizabeth Gaskell by Dr. E. Duthie, who is one of our Vice-Presidents. We are pleased to have this comprehensive and rewarding study back in print.

O.U.P Clarendon Press

OXFORD LIBRARY OF SHORT NOVELS in 3 vols. ed John Main  
Attractive, boxed set, well bound with good, clear printing, includes ECG's Mr Harrison's Confessions. This The novellas are chronological, the first being Goethe's The Sorrows of Young Werther (which Philip Hepburn in Sylvia's Lovers tried to interest Sylvia in).  
Preceding ECG's story is Castle Rackrent by Maria Edgeworth.

### THE PORTICO LIBRARY

Founded in 1806 the stated objects were 'to gratify for knowledge and promote a greater degree of intercourse among the town's inhabitants'. One of the chief promoters was Samuel Kay, a secretary of Cross Street Chapel for over forty years and William Gaskell was Chairman from 1849 until his death in 1884.



The Portico in Winter  
Wood Engraving by Anthony Christmas

One of Birket Foster's  
illustrations for  
"A Moorland Cottage"  
(December 1850)



### ELIZABETH GASKELL'S AMANUENSIS

In Cambridge University Library are a number of letters from Elizabeth Gaskell to J.M.F. Ludlow. One of them has 'forged' written on it, and indeed a comparison between illustrations A and B suggests that it was not actually written by her. Given the address in Bedford Row, I suspected that her young friend Catherine Winkworth had written the letter on her behalf, but at the time (see Notes and Queries, August 1982) did not know of any extended examples of 'Katie' Winkworth's handwriting.

Mrs Susan Kearney has now most kindly supplied a letter of about 1854 that Katie Winkworth wrote to another young friend, Agnes Sandars. I wonder what readers think of the comparison between illustrations B and C. Are they in the same hand, both written by Katie Winkworth? And just to complicate matters a little, illustrations D and E are letters to C.E. Norton written for their mother by Marianne and Meta Gaskell respectively. All these hands differ from each other to some degree, but I find when comparing them that my eyes begin to play tricks after a while!

[illegible]

UNIVERSITY  
LIBRARY  
CAMBRIDGE

UNCLASSIFIED  
DATE 11-11-2011  
BY 60322

E (MEG to CEN)

22 Plymouth Place  
New York, Feb 20 1857.

My dear Mr. Garrison

How art working away  
and away to your charming labors  
to rescue this world, that I shall  
be very soon. This letter is a  
few lines only for Heaven. I hope  
I remember her telling you  
that she had undertaken to  
write a story for Harper's.  
She finished it on Monday  
and sent it off to Sampson.  
How the American books  
published in London, the

$$D(\text{MAG to CEN})$$

As I am a Knutsfordian I grew up with Mrs Gaskell, in a manner of speaking, for the town has Gaskell Avenues, Cranford Cake shops and the newest block of retirement flats has been named Elizabeth Gaskell Court. I could hardly fail to learn all about her but it was the historical background to her writing that first fascinated me for I am, firstly, a local historian.

Mrs Gaskell's interest in history is often evident in her writing and especially in Sylvia's Lovers which must have entailed much research but in at least one instance she may have drawn on local knowledge and tradition. In the closing chapters of Sylvia's Lovers there is a background of suffering caused by war and famine.

## Chapter XLIV

'It was the spring of 1800. Old people yet can tell of the hard famine of that year. The harvest of the autumn before had failed; the war and the corn laws had brought the price of corn up to a famine rate and much that came onto the market was unsound. . . . Rich families denied themselves pastry and all unnecessary and luxurious uses of wheat in any shape'.

Did Mrs Gaskell know of a meeting held at the George Inn, Knutsford on December 10th, 1800? It was ten years before she was born but no doubt it was talked about long afterwards and there must have been similar meetings up and down the country. The result of the Knutsford meeting was a notice inserted in a number of papers and a thousand copies were to be printed

"Knutsford, Dec.20, 1800

We, whose names are hereunto subscribed, lamenting, in common with others, the general distress occasioned by the present high price of provisions and being earnestly solicitous to promote the objects of His

Majesty's gracious benevolent proclamation:



Do resolve unanimously,

That we will suffer no wheaten bread to be used in our respective families but such as is made of the whole flour of the wheat, the broad bran only being taken out, except for the accomodation of invalids and children ...

That we will not suffer cakes of any sort to be used in our families - as little pastry as possible. and of none but the coarsest flour - and that, as far as is practicable, rice shall be substituted in place of flour.

That we will reduce the consumption of malt liquor in our families, by every means in our power . .

(Use of oats and other grain for horses was to be restricted, and to diminish consumption of bread and potatoes) . . 'until the necessary articles of provision can be purchased at a reasonable price by the lower classes . . '

In Sylvia's Lovers, perhaps more than any of her

other books, ECG's love of history and tradition is obvious. She must have enjoyed doing the necessary research into whaling and the press gang. She met Rev William Scoresby, (G.L. 267a, 1855) who told her many anecdotes of Haworth from the time he was Vicar of Bradford. Did he also tell her about his days as a Whitby whaler? Might this be when the seed for Sylvia's Lovers was sown?

From her letters it is clear that she knew all about Cheshire customs, traditions and history; legislation about buttons and salt tax aroused strong feelings in Cheshire. Six Weeks at Heppenheim involves the wine growing customs in Germany and My Lady Ludlow has a background of the French Revolution; Lois the Witch and her pseudonym of Cotton Mather (Mills) echo her interest in the American Colonies. Her historical knowledge provided an authentic background to her writing and had she lived longer we might have had more history and biography from her pen.

Joan Leach

### Notes on Some Gaskell Stories

The growing recognition of Elizabeth Gaskell as a novelist has gradually led also to the recognition that her tales have their relevance for her total achievement. J.G. Sharps included a consideration of them in his Mrs Gaskell's Observation and Invention, they have attracted critical attention and no study of her complete work can afford to ignore them. Some are long stories, which almost approximate to short novels in a number of cases, others a sequence of interrelated episodes. Short stories of normal length are a much less frequent occurrence. Until comparatively recently these tales, with the exception of Cranford, have not been too easy of access. But the complete editions of Gaskell works by A.W. Ward and Clement Shorter have now been supplemented by other publications, principally those of Penguin and OUP World's Classics. It is interesting to consider briefly the impression made by the selections of the last decade.

A collection of four stories, introduced by Anna Walters<sup>(1)</sup> reflects the sympathy Elizabeth Gaskell inspires among feminist critics, which is made clear in the introduction. She herself resisted theorising and it would not be accurate to describe her position as that of a feminist. But her compassionate nature led her to a deep understanding of the hard lot of many women especially working women, and the courage with which they reacted against it, often for the sake of others. This helps to explain the admiration she arouses today in feminist critics concerned with the Victorian women writers' attitude to "the Woman Question". As Anna Walters shows, The Three Eras of Libbie Marsh, Lizzie Leigh and The Well of Pen Morfa have heroines who differ fundamentally from the conventional pattern of her time. In The Manchester Marriage, Mr Oppenshaw, the husband, is a sympathetic character, who develops in the course of the action. But it is Norah, the faithful servant, who best represents the tradition of totally disinterested devotion, and the part she plays is

memorable in its own right.

The two main collections of Gaskell stories, those in "The World's Classics", edited by Angus Easson and Edgar Wright, are complementary.<sup>(2)</sup> Between them they contain a cross section of the best tales, whose rich variety makes any rigid classification impossible. There is, however, a certain kinship between all the tales of the supernatural. Elizabeth Gaskell's first Ghost story, The Old Nurse's Story was a contribution to a Christmas number of Dickens' Household Words. The genre attracted her for more than one reason. She grew up in a country environment rich in legends and superstitions, but her deepest concern was with the malevolence of the forces of evil and the disaster they could bring if not resisted. Crime unatoned for is the most fearful of the spectres in The Old Nurse's Story. In The Doom of the Griffiths it is not the curse that is lethal in itself, it is family bitterness. The Poor Clare has a historical background. It also has with its "Doppelgänger" motif, a more obtrusive use of the supernatural. But the nexus of the situation is the struggle between the forces of good and evil. Lois the Witch, the most powerful of these tales, has a background of given historical fact, the Salem witch-hunts in New England in the seventeenth century. Lois dies rather than make a false confession of witchcraft. She is herself the most sane and innocent person in a community riddled with fanaticism and superstition. It would have been possible to expand such a situation into a full-scale novel, but that would not have been in accordance with the author's outlook. She was too much aware of the dangers of imagination when it escapes rational control and of morbid states of mind.

Not surprisingly the stories which deal with such emotions are frequently characterised by violence. It is found, for instance, in The Poor Clare and it accentuates the tragedy of Lois.

It also occurs, unaccompanied by the supernatural, in The Squire's Story, and is one of the most obvious features in The Grey Woman, both of which can be read in the "Pocket Classics Series" published by Alan Sutton.<sup>(3)</sup> In the latter a girl discovers that her supposedly aristocratic husband is in reality the leader of a gang of brigands. Elizabeth Gaskell conveys with power the suspense and terror inherent in the situation. But it is noticeable that, as in the case of the supernatural she does not give the element of violence the same place in her novels. There the theme is treated, when it does occur, with marked restraint.

But none of her tales depends on only one source for their interest. The Grey Woman itself is much more than simply a horror story. The action, partly in France and partly in Germany, is located with precision, and with that sense of presence of place which has deeper significance. And the true heroine is not "the Grey Woman" herself, timid and ineffectual, but her devoted servant, the faithful Amante. The historical sense which is another of Elizabeth Gaskell's attributes shows here, too, in the suggestion of the turbulence of a region of frontiers and post-revolutionary chaos.

The historical sense is, however, shown much more subtly in those leisurely chronicles anticipated in Mr Harrison's Confessions and of which Cranford is the finest example, where time moves so slowly and yet so inexorably. Its progress is more obvious in My Lady Ludlow, where Hanbury still appears a feudal village and yet even the liege lady has gradually to accept a degree of change. The French aristocrats who were her close friends encounter change in a starker force. Unfortunately Elizabeth Gaskell's attempt to link the two situations by an over-long story of revolutionary France does not succeed, but her instinct to do so was a sound one.

Where mode of narration is concerned, the Gaskell tales share in general the type of construction preferred by their author and common to the majority of

her stories. Even when she did not use the episodic sequence, she liked to allow herself plenty of space, and a number first appeared in serial form. This suited her preference for narratives centred not around a single crisis but round the decisive experiences which determine the shape of a whole life. The only really short story in the selections, The Half-Brothers, is less effective by comparison. Libbie Marsh has three eras, which give purpose to an outwardly drab existence. There are five acts in the life of the Westmoreland daleswoman Susan Dixon of Half a Lifetime Ago. to the young Susan, who has just given up her lover to look after her idiot brother, the future appears unending, but the old servant Peggy sees time in another perspective: "Lass, thou hast done well. It is not long to bide, and then the end will come". The Crooked Branch also presents the successive acts of a drama, this time starkly tragic in its ending, when a father is finally obliged to bear witness in court to the crime of the son who had long been idolised by both parents. Cousin Phillis, though the narrative is divided into four parts, ends while its heroine is still young. We only know that she has outlived the golden era of the pastoral, and survived its loss, and in what is probably her artistic masterpiece her creator seems content to have it so.

Dr. Enid Duthie

#### Notes

(1) Elizabeth Gaskell: Four Short Stories, introduced by Anna Walters. (Pandora Press, R. & K. Paul, 1983)

(2) Cousin Phillis and Other Tales. edited with introduction and notes by Angus Easson. (O.U.P 1989)  
My Lady Ludlow and Other Stories edited with introduction and notes by Edgar Wright (O.U.P 1989)

(3) The Manchester Marriage and Other Stories (1985), My Lady Ludlow and Other Stories (1985), Lois the Witch and Other Stories (1989). Pocket Classic Series. Pub. Alan Sutton. Short biographical introduction by Sheila Michell. No textual notes.

#### Book Review

N. Prasad, Fission and Fusion: A thematic Study of Mrs Gaskell's Novels Wisdom Publications, New Delhi. 227 pp Rs 200

Dr Prasad's inelegantly entitled volume focuses our attention on his proceeding by isolating a series of opposites and then suggesting how Mrs Gaskell reconciled them. They are set out in the various chapter-titles:- man and man (Mary Barton), woman and God (Ruth), woman and man (Cranford), stasis and flux (North and South), nature and culture (Sylvia's Lovers), instinct and fact (Cousin Phillis), and self and society (Wivers and Daughters). It hardly requires me to point out, the titles themselves make clear, that some of these pairs more evidently relate to their novels than do others.

Not only are some of the couplings appropriate only in a limited way, but the contrivance shows too in the coercion that is sometimes necessary to enforce them in detail. Dr Prasad also claims that he is making the reassessment that Edgar Wright called for in 1965, an assertion hardly borne out in the outcome, but one also less easily acceptable in the author's failure to mention, much less consider, any of the burgeoning criticism of Mrs Gaskell that has appeared in the last twenty-five years. All this is not to say that this study is lacking in intelligent perceptions. The overall thesis is at once too simple and too ponderous, but, like the proverbial ecclesiastical egg, the book is good in parts.

Arthur Pollard

### A DARK NIGHT'S WORK AND OTHER STORIES

I am preparing an edition of five of Elizabeth Gaskell's short stories for the World's Classics series published by Oxford University Press, the volume will be called A Dark Night's Work and Other Stories and apart from the title story will include 'Libbie Marsh's Three Eras', 'Six Weeks at Heppenheim', 'Cumberland Sheep-Shearers' and 'The Grey Woman'.

I have developed a particular interest in Elizabeth Gaskell's short fiction during the course of my research for a PhD on her work. While trying to obtain copies of Gaskell's short stories I realised how many were out of print. Oxford University Press has so far reprinted two collections, Cousin Phillis and Other Tales (1981) and My Lady Ludlow and Other Stories (1989). These two collections make available to the general reader thirteen of the forty or so stories and sketches Gaskell wrote for periodicals such as Household Words and All the Year Round, and provide a tantalising introduction to the wealth of Gaskell material originally published in this form. The purpose of reprinting a further five stories in A Dark Night's Work and Other Stories is to make available and to increase awareness of the great range of Gaskell's work.

In my introduction to the collection I stress both the diversity and quality of Gaskell's short fiction, and suggest that she often used this particular form to explore in a more radical way issues treated in the novels. One such issue is the place of women in Victorian society; another is the way in which unconventional 'families', which often include servants, are often more loving and supportive than the conventional patriarchal arrangement of dominant father and husband, and submissive wife and child.

I hope that the reprinting of these five stories will offer a perspective on her art not revealed by the novels. Further, I hope that the collection will also help to place Gaskell in the wider context of Victorian periodical literature, a huge body of work of great

significance to its age but less accessible to today's readers due to the impermanent medium of its original publication.

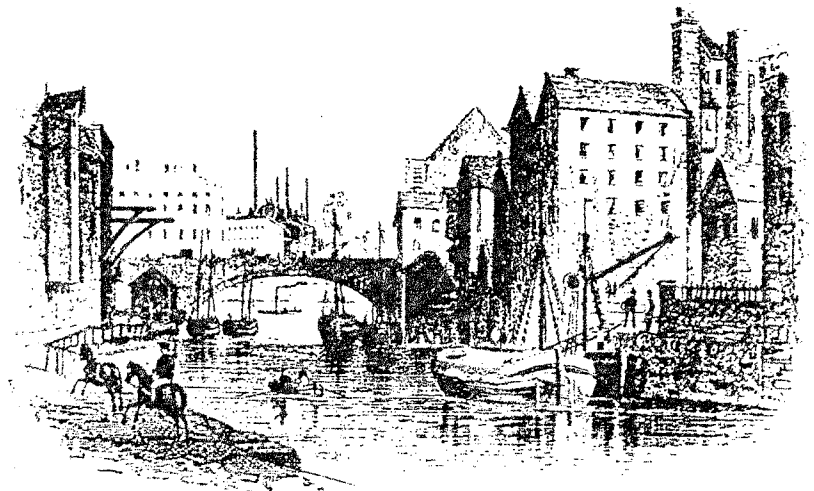
Suzanne Lewis,  
Department of English,  
University of Sydney.

ED. I am pleased to note that Suzanne Lewis and two other members have met several times to talk over Gaskell matters. Might we foresee a Gaskell Society of Australia?

I am particularly pleased to see that Six Weeks at Heppenheim is to be included in this collection. I had not read this until Professor Yamawaki mentioned it as one of her favourites. Perhaps some member with a knowledge of Germany would like to study the story for its setting and use of custom and tradition.



# The Gaskell Society



*The River Jewell & Albert Bridge, Manchester*

## NEWSLETTER

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 634668)

ISSN 0954 - 1209

AUGUST 1991

NO. 12

EDITOR'S LETTER

'A trouble shared is a trouble halved', so it is said, but surely it should follow that a pleasure shared is a pleasure doubled?

In the last six months members of our Society have shared several most enjoyable and instructive events which usually end with my regretting that more members were not able to join us in person. We hope you are able to share them through the pages of our publications.

Some literary societies exist by and for their journals and publications, and as 'reading maketh a full man' and members are all readers that is, perhaps, as it should be, but there is much pleasure in gathering together socially to share our interests and exchange ideas.

The AGM of the Alliance of Literary Societies which was held in Birmingham in April enabled this exchange and we acted as hosts with The Brontë Society, taking our 1990 Ambleside Weekend as our theme and residential conference organisation in general. The Chairman of The Brontë Society, who is also a member of our Society, rounded off a full programme with a talk about Haworth and the tourist, which might well have been entitled 'A literary shrine for the masses'. You will have heard, no doubt, about the problems this is causing for The Brontë Society and we hope they will be able to resolve them.

I did wonder whether we could relieve some of the pressure by developing Knutsford's literary potential. Heathwaite, the house in which Elizabeth Stevenson grew up, is for sale and we wondered if some benefactor might buy it for us, or even if we should start a trust to acquire it, but it is beyond our means. All we can hope for, I think, is that the new owners will be Gaskell fans, as Mr & Mrs Roberts have been, kindly allowing us to see the charming garden with its wonderful Himalayan cedar which must have been there in Elizabeth's day.

Finance prevents us from other less ambitious ventures, too. We had hoped to follow up our Sylvia's Lovers and Others Conference with a published report, but have abandoned the plan, mainly because of cost. You will be able to read some of the talks in future Journals and newsletters.

Another project for the future is publication of Gaskell Letters as a supplement to the 1966 edition of The Letters of Mrs Gaskell edited by J A V Chapple and Arthur Pollard (M.U.P.), currently our Chairman and President respectively. (If you find copies of this for sale, please let us know as they are scarce and in demand).

We have discussed, in committee, raising annual subscriptions but this might deter would-be members which we would regret; instead we feel it would be advisable to start a PUBLICATIONS FUND. We invite members to contribute to this, perhaps when paying annual dues.

Our conference at Scarborough was much enjoyed and we learnt more about organising such events. Leading up to the weekend, I had a few sleepless nights and my husband wondered if I would be so rash as to take on anything like it again; I told him I would let him know after it was over!

Well, the answer was 'Yes', as members were so enthusiastic as to start making requests, like Oliver Twist, for more of the same. We are giving advance notice that EDINBURGH JULY 1993 is under consideration (see item p.5).

Our next event will be the AGM IN KNUTSFORD ON 28TH SEPTEMBER and we hope to see many of you then.

JOAN LEACH

# AGM WEEKEND

28th-29th September in Knutsford

Our venue will be KNUTSFORD CIVIC CENTRE, close to the railway station and easily accessible.

Our speaker is Professor Philip Yarrow on Mrs Gaskell and France. This promises to be a most interesting talk, with slides.

An outside caterer will provide a buffet lunch - 12 noon for 12.30. Cost £7.50 to include a glass of wine.

After lunch it is hoped that we may pay a visit to The Sessions House, built 1819, and just across the road. This depends on the court sittings so cannot be confirmed. If we go it will be about 1.45 to 2.15, allowing the AGM to commence at 2.30 pm.

## SUNDAY 29TH SEPTEMBER

We will have an outing to Alderley Edge and vicinity. You may remember in Libbie Marsh's Three Eras, Mr Slater saying about a day out: "Why what an old fashioned chap thou be'st. Thy grandad afore thee went to Dunham; but then thou wert always a slow coach. I'm off to Alderley, me and my missus."

Getting to Dunham was cheap via the Bridgewater Canal, but the railway had made Alderley Edge accessible, much to the displeasure of the Stanley family who owned the land; however the Cottontots were not to be deterred and we shall follow their footsteps. It is a charming area with a story to tell. We hope you will join us.

## ERRATA

I take it so much for granted that items about Gaskell Letters, in the newsletters, are contributed by our Chairman, Professor John Chapple, that I neglected to append his name to contributions on two occasions. Perhaps you will amend your copies?

NL 10 'An Unpublished Gaskell Letter' p.4-8 by J A V Chapple

NL 11 'Elizabeth Gaskell's Amanuensis', also by J A V Chapple, and the letters to LUDLOW were reproduced by permission of the Syndics of Cambridge University Library.

JOAN LEACH



MANSFIELD PARK AND WIVES AND DAUGHTERS

by Dorothy F Yarrow

Although the influence of Jane Austen on Wives and Daughters has been detected (and, in particular, the resemblance between Mr & Mrs Bennet and Dr & Mrs Gibson pointed out)\*, Mrs Gaskell's debt to Mansfield Park seems to have escaped notice.

The relationship between Edmund Bertram and Fanny Price is remarkably like that between Roger Hamley and Molly Gibson. Edmund and Roger are the mentors and consolers of Fanny and Molly respectively. Both Fanny and Molly have high moral principles, higher principles than those about them. In Molly's case, this is understandable: her principles are those of her father's, the wise, beneficent, affectionate and dearly-loved Dr Gibson. The virtue of Fanny, the daughter of slovenly parents, is more surprising; but may, perhaps, owe something to the respected, though awe-inspiring, Sir Thomas Bertram. Edmund and Roger are, alike, for a time, fascinated by lively and attractive women with looser principles - Miss Crawford and Cynthia, respectively, rather similar characters. Both realise in the end that the girls they have been brought up with or long known are their real mates.

Fanny and Molly are both lonely girls, isolated within the family, and attached to one man in the family - Fanny to William, and Molly to her father. Both have a bugbear to put up with, in the shape of an older, selfish, officious, and hypocritical woman: Mrs Norris and Mrs Gibson.

The basic plot of the two novels is the same. Edmund marries Fanny, and Roger Molly; and in both cases, the young man's father overcomes his original disapproval of the unequal match. There are, of course, differences: Roger and Molly are not related, as Fanny and Edmund are; Molly's home is not squalid like Fanny's in Portsmouth; and Molly, unlike Fanny, has no brother - though Cynthia, her dearly loved sister and rival, might

be considered to combine the roles of both William and Miss Crawford.

Wives and Daughters is a complex novel, bringing together elements from its author's experience - Knutsford, contacts with France, her own family life (her father's remarriage and the life of her distant relative, Charles Darwin); but it is also coloured by her reading of the works of her great forerunner, particularly Pride and Prejudice and Mansfield Park.

\*See, for instance, A B Hopkins, Elizabeth Gaskell. Her Life and Work, 1952, pp 278-79, 283; and Edgar Wright, Mrs Gaskell. The Basis for Reassessment, 1965, pp 215-16

EDINBURGH 1993

Although this is a long way ahead we need to know NOW what support this plan would receive, and our overseas members, especially, have to plan well ahead; also reservations must be made. Letting us know that you like the idea will not commit you in any way.

Edinburgh: Life, Letters and Literature is our proposed theme, with a wide scope to cover items such as The Edinburgh Review and publishers, Scott and his circle as well as Gaskell, Carlyle and possibly Stevenson. At this stage it is too early to draw up a programme and we would welcome suggestions.

1992 WEEKEND?

Some members, after the weekend conference at Scarborough, stayed on at Cober Hill, a conference and holiday centre between Scarborough and Whitby. It was very pleasant and good value, with a weekend costing about £60 inclusive.

A SHORT STORY WEEKEND some time next summer? This would be an informal weekend with talk and discussion in the evenings but daytime free to explore the area. It has so much to offer and public transport is good.

If you are interested please send s.a.e. - suitable dates not yet fixed



GASKELL SOCIETY: SOUTH OF ENGLAND BRANCH

by Howard F Gregg

A letter from Richard J Beckley to members of the Society in the South of England brought ten members to an exploratory meeting at Francis Holland School, London, on 9th March. Here the idea of a branch for the South of England became a definite possibility. The generous offers of two members, Jane Wilson and Olive Bridge, have given the branch two venues near Sloane Square. Members hope to meet once per school term (three times a year) at the Francis Holland School, SW1. These meetings will be held on a Saturday and will begin at 2 pm. Other meetings will be held at the home of Olive Bridge, Lincoln Street, SW3, on a similar arrangement. Those attending are asked to give 50p per meeting towards the costs of refreshments.

It was agreed that the branch should be a reading and study group to discuss the life, works and times of Elizabeth Gaskell, and that this should be interpreted in the broadest possible way, so that any member may feel free to propose any subject that he or she is interested in. It is hoped that this will offer something for everyone, whatever their level of interest or degree of involvement.

Two meetings have so far taken place. On 11th May at Francis Holland School there was a wide-ranging discussion of different aspects of Sylvia's Lovers in preparation for the Scarborough Conference. These included the structure of the novel, characterisation, the historical and regional setting and moral and religious themes in the story. Members were also able to look at copies of George du Maurier's illustrations for the second edition.

The meeting at Lincoln Street on 22nd June made arrangements for a summer outing on 2nd August, and then went on to discuss themes and the use of time and place in Anne Brontë's The Tenant of Wildfell Hall and A S Byatt's Possession.

A postal chain has also been created by which relevant material on topics of interest can be circulated for reading and further discussion.

Future meetings arranged so far will take place on:

16TH NOVEMBER at Lincoln Street when MRS GASKELL'S LIFE IN THE LIGHT OF HER LETTERS will be explored. The suggested reading is J A V Chapple's Elizabeth Gaskell, A Portrait in Letters.

1ST FEBRUARY 1992 at Francis Holland School, when the topic will be MRS GASKELL AS BIOGRAPHER, "THE LIFE OF CHARLOTTE BRONTE"

Branch members are grateful to Richard J Beckley for facilitating its activities to date and to Jane Wilson and Olive Bridge for enabling us to have such a firm base for our meetings.

Meetings have proved both friendly and stimulating and we hope more members will feel able to join us. For further details of branch activities and venues, please send s.a.e. to Dudley J Barlow, 44 Seymour Road, London SW18 5JA (tel: 081-874-7727).

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LONDON MEETING

We plan to have our THIRD LONDON MEETING in Chelsea on 2ND NOVEMBER at the FRANCIS HOLLAND SCHOOL, only ten minutes' walk from Sloane Square underground station.

ED. PLEASE WILL MEMBERS WHO HOPE TO COME SEND S.A.E. FOR DETAILS which are not finalised at time of going to press. We would also like to draw up a mailing list for members who would like to go on a London/S.E. mailing list to receive information of London group meetings, etc. Please write to Dudley Barlow or me.

THE LAWN, HOLYBOURNE  
by Barbara Brill

"Mrs Gaskell had planned to have her own pony carriage in order to enjoy the drives around to such places as Selbourne, the birthplace of Gilbert White, and to Chawton, associated with Jane Austen. "So wrote Mrs Chadwick, recounting Mrs Gaskell's last days in chapter XX of her book Homes and Haunts.

It was by car, not pony carriage, that I visited Selbourne, Chawton and Alton, on my way back to London, after a holiday in Dorset, last spring. During our holiday my friend had driven me and my sister to many places of literary interest. These included Thomas Hardy's home, Max Gate, Dorchester; the Dorchester Museum with its replica of Hardy's study; the church at Bemerton where George Herbert, poet and hymn writer, had been vicar; Lyme Regis and its Cob, where Jane Austen's Louisa fell, in Persuasion, and John Fowles' hero, Charles, met The French Lieutenant's Woman; the Laurence Whistler glass engravings on memorial windows in St Nicholas Church, Moreton; the effigy of Lawrence of Arabia in St Martin's Church, Wareham. But the day most packed with delights was the day of our return journey through Hampshire.

The first stop was the Gilbert White Museum and garden at his home, The Wakes, where I bought as a memento some sweet pea seedlings of Gilbert White's own cultivation, a particularly sweet-smelling strain. In July I picked in my Bramhall garden some sprays of these deliciously fragrant pink and white flowers and was reminded of that day at The Wakes.

The next call was at Jane Austen's home at Chawton, open to the public, but happily free of a museum atmosphere and retaining a domestic aura as though Jane had just walked through these rooms, looked through the windows, sat at this table to write or to stitch this patchwork quilt.



The Lawn, Holybourne, from Homes & Haunts of Mrs Gaskell by Ellis Chadwick, 1913

Then we were bound for Alton and The Lawn. The house is now a home for the elderly and we found it without difficulty, being directed to a pedestrian crossing with sign to drive carefully. On the way we passed several roads with Gaskellian names and knew we were in the right vicinity. We were not expected by the Warden at The Lawn, so I had armed myself with a copy of the Gaskell Journal as a proof of my trustworthiness. We could not have received a warmer welcome. We were ushered into the entrance hall where the open door of a sitting room showed a gathering of residents, relaxing, reading and talking in comfortable spacious surroundings and on the wall was hanging a portrait of Mrs Gaskell. Then we were ushered into the drawing room where Mrs Gaskell had sat, taking tea on that last day. This was a beautiful room of stately proportions, white-walled, with a pretty fireplace with tiled surround, a white corner-cupboard with ornaments displayed and cretonne covered easy chairs all angled to face the long windows

for a view of the smooth sloping lawn, the feature of the garden that gave the house its name.

How happy Elizabeth and William would have been if they had known that this, their retirement home, in which they never lived, is now being enjoyed by retired folk in the twentieth century. The Lawn is the property of the organisation known as Friends of the Elderly and Gentlefolk's Help, who own eleven houses in the South of England, in all providing accommodation for 450 residents, its aim being to enable the elderly to pass their declining years in peaceful and dignified surrounds, providing everyone with a bed-sitting room furnished with his or her own possessions. The Lawn has 30 residents each with a private room, and among the communal rooms is one for crafts with facilities for pottery, painting, weaving, sewing and some indoor gardening. It is a pleasing thought that the Gaskells' other home in Plymouth Grove, Manchester, is also being put to good use for the younger generation, as the headquarters of the International Society for Manchester's Overseas Students.

The Lawn became Mrs Gaskell's property in 1865, purchased from the existing occupant, Mr White, who became its owner shortly after its conversion to a private residence from an inn known as the White Hart, once a coaching inn. Mrs Chadwick tells of a footpath once running through the grounds of The Lawn which the owner of the property closed and then gave a party for the villagers to appease them.

The circumstances of Mrs Gaskell's purchase of the property after the offer of £1,600 from Smith, Elder, for the novel and serialisation of Wives and Daughters is too well known by Gaskellians to give details here, as is her decision to keep the purchase a secret from William who disapproved of mortgages. It was not until I re-read Elizabeth's letters after I had visited The Lawn and followed in detail the whole story of the house-hunting, the purchase, the furniture-buying and the search for a tenant that I was aware of the immense strain that she was under during those months. How was she able to cope with the writing of 24 Cornhill pages for each instalment of Wives and Daughters at the same

time as travelling back and forth between Alton and Manchester by train, stopping off in London to buy curtains, carpets and furniture? She had a low opinion of Mr White's furniture which she pronounced 'hideous'! There was always the unsuspecting William's welfare to be considered as he remained at home in Manchester, so it must have been an immense relief when he went off on his annual holiday in Scotland at the same time as Mr White announced the date for vacating The Lawn, as September 29th. So Elizabeth was able to get away with an easy mind to stay at The Lawn to supervise the final furnishing in readiness for the tenant she had found, a Mrs Moray. How appropriate that on the day that the new owners took over, Elizabeth's birthday, the Alton Church bells were rung in welcome.

The sound of the church bells should have helped to dispel Mrs Gaskell's doubts about the wisdom of buying the house. She had written to Marianne on August 22nd (G.L.575a) "it's an unlucky house and I believe I was a fool to set my heart on the place at all". As it proved, this presentiment was not without substance for after her death The Lawn was labelled by the residents of Alton 'the haunted house'. Mr C W Hawkins, a local historian of Alton, wrote in his private papers "Mrs Gaskell died suddenly, after which 'things' began to happen. But this is true and must not be discounted, it was a house of ill omen. To every family who lived there came some trouble, death or sickness or financial disaster, until in the 1920s people by the name of Stokes bought The Lawn. Mrs Stokes' health began to fail, and Mrs Stokes learned the story. They packed up and went. No girl in the village would ever go there and work. The house was sold again, and this time the house was rebuilt with complete internal alterations, and from that time all went well."

What a story Mrs Gaskell might have woven about "these happenings", perhaps entitled "Footsteps on The Lawn"? But all traces of the haunting surely vanished after The Lawn was officially opened as a home for the elderly by Princess Margaret in 1959.

### THE FRENCH MASTER

by Joan Leach

A fascination for France may well have been imparted to the young Elizabeth Stevenson by her French master at Knutsford; though he is just as likely to have taught her to dance a minuet as he had done to the young William Pitt, finding it puzzling that there was nothing in his dancing to indicate the great man he was to become.

It must be admitted that there is no direct evidence that Monsieur Rogier played any part in Elizabeth's education, but he was a colourful character in the Knutsford society of her youth. His father claimed descent from a Parisian Count of the Roman Empire and had been a figurante dancer in Garrick's company, so it was that Charles Rogier also took to the stage as a dancer until the age of twenty one.

In Knutsford he "had the honour of instructing respectable families and scholars in the science of dancing, so as to promote a genteel, personal address; and likewise a useful bodily exercise, which may be innocently attained to be a health exercise".\*

A genteel personal address was certainly one of the characteristics of M. de Chalabre of My French Master (Knutsford Edition Vol II p.509)

'Another little ceremony which we had to get accustomed to, was his habit of taking off his hat as we approached, and walking by us holding it in his hand. To be sure, he wore a wig, delicately powdered, frizzed, and tied in a queue behind; but we always had a feeling that he would catch cold, and that he was doing us too great an honour, and that he did not know how old or rather how young we were, until one day we saw him far away from our house hand a countrywoman over a stile with the same kind of dainty, courteous politeness. lifting her basket of eggs over first; and then taking up the silk-lined lapel of his

coat, he spread it on the palm of his hand for her to rest her fingers upon ...'

Such detailed, graphic description and the Knutsford type setting seem evidence of the writer's personal experience so it is tempting to think of M. Rogier as the model for M. de Chalabre. And would not the dancing master have been light on his feet?

The narrator in the story is taught French, with her sister, by M. de Chalabre. They are allowed to go and meet him, being warned by their mother, '... give him the cleanest part of the path, for you know he does not like to dirty his boots ... This was all very well in theory; but, like many theories, the difficulty was to put it into practice ... when we got home, his polished boots would be without a speck, while our shoes were covered with mud'.

Henry Green, the Unitarian minister of Brook Street Chapel, Knutsford (from 1827-73) wrote in his History and Traditions of Knutsford that Charles X of France, then 'the Count D'Artois, for he was not yet a king, had a rage for rare plants, and his floral passion was known to a French Dancing Master, then resident in Knutsford, Rogier was his name. The Professor waited on the Count ...' who told him about the rare marsh saxifrage which grew on the Moor, 'together they set out exploring, -ditch after ditch they successfully cross, -when, lo! one wide and deep with peculiarly unctuous mire of the locality, arrested their eager progress; Rogier being light and a dancing master pirouetted across the abyss; but the Count being heavy and not a dancing master, floundered in ...'.

Green related that when he first took up his post in Knutsford he knew Rogier who 'was in truth an original of the purest water. He was one who delighted in obtaining introductions to persons high in authority, or in writing long letters to them upon most extravagant projects ...'

**A WORD**  
*For my King and Country.*

**A TREATISE**  
ON THE UTILITY OF A  
**Rocket Armament,**

ASSISTED BY BALLOONS,

*Where Ships of War cannot be accessible ;*

BOTH

**DEFENSIVE AND OFFENSIVE,**

TO THE

ANNOYING OF THE ENEMY'S HARBOUR.

*'That are stubborn and delight in War.*

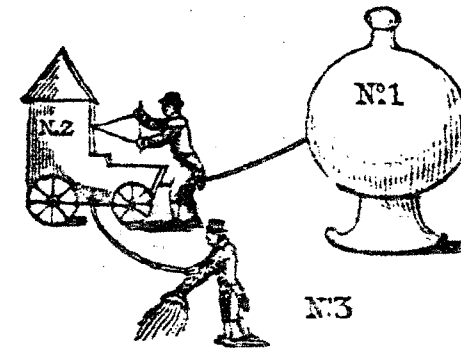
By **CHARLES ROGIER, SEN.,** PROJECTOR,  
 KNUTSFORD, CHESHIRE.

SECOND EDITION.

MACCLESFIELD:  
 PRINTED BY J. WILSON, AT THE COURIER OFFICE.

1818.

**A new Plan of defence for Gibraltar.**



*Happy he that escapeth me.*

**EXPLANATION.**

No. 1 is the reservoir of boiling water, to supply the engine, No. 2; the sentinel or engineer, No. 3, is to play from the port hole in the rock, to prevent the enemy from scaling the rock. Sea water may be easily communicated to any part of the rock. The Author's motive for proposing so cruel a plan was to prevent their being scalded; for the enemy knowing such a defence to be at Gibraltar Rock, they would not attempt it. As the Rock may be seen from the Spanish lines, the engineer might rehearse, now and then, the engine from the port hole, to deter them from their own destruction.

According to Green (Knutsford: It's Traditions and History, 1859), Rogier approached the Prime Minister, Earl Grey, who "in a spirit of waggery or whiggery referred him to the War Office", but his novel schemes were never tried!

Unlike M. de Chalabre whose loyalties remained in France, Rogier schemed to defend England in the Napoleonic wars with fantastic and entirely impractical ideas which he published in a pamphlet\*. Perhaps he held these opinions from a revulsion at the treatment of the French royal family which he shared with M. de Chalabre.

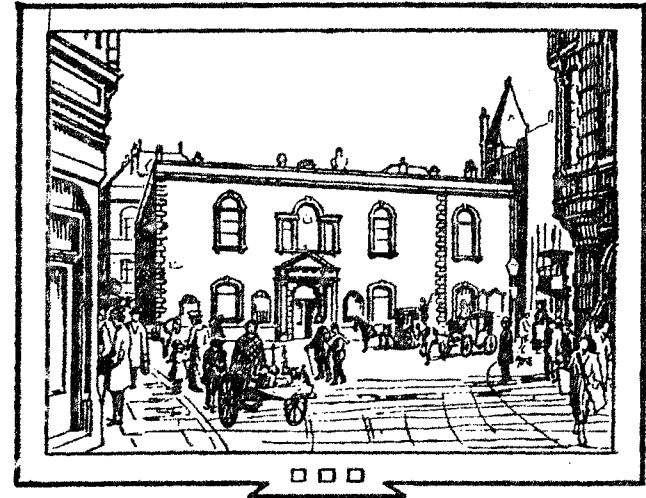
They were both inventive though the Monsieur showed talent and practicality: 'He turned silk-winders for my mother, made a set of chessmen for my father, carved an elegant watch-case out of a rough beef-bone, dressed up little cork dolls for us ...' (Knutsford Edition Vol.II p.515) Captain Brown's invention of a wooden fire-shovel to please Miss Jenkins because 'the grating of an iron one annoyed her' is more akin to Rogier's impractical ideas.

History affords us one more glimpse of Rogier through the memoirs of Reverend Harry Gray, Vicar of Knutsford (1809-24), who found him 'weak in secular matters and so improvident that I was at length obliged to raise an annual subscription, a little scanty income sufficient for himself and his wife, and dole it out to him by periodical payments'. 'A Cranfordian solution; Rogier's teaching days must have been over by then and Rev Gray warmed to him because he had been converted by hearing Whitfield preach and was 'wise and understanding in Scripture truth and experience and remarkably apt in illustrating Scripture truths by Old Testament history. His political vagaries wearied me ...'

Monsieur Rogier was almost larger than life and what part, if any, he played in the young Elizabeth Stevenson's life or awakening her interest in France cannot be known, but I hope you will pardon me for introducing him.

\*A Word for My King and Country 1818

# The Gaskell Society



CROSS STREET CHAPEL

## NEWSLETTER

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 634668)

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MARCH 1992

NO. 13

### Editor's Letter

I have tried to get this newsletter to you a little earlier than usual as our spring meeting is on 28 March, instead of at the end of April - Easter dates and Cross Street Chapel commitments make this necessary. All meeting details are on the loose sheet.

The Society has its usual programme of events, but Knutsford's 700th anniversary of its town charter is keeping me very busy in various ways. Our AGM weekend has been put on the official programme for the year and we hope Knutsford will be en fete. I am struggling to turn myself into a medieval scholar!

Elizabeth Gaskell enjoyed meeting people and having a sociable life, and we in the Gaskell Society like to get together when possible; we hold meetings in Knutsford, Manchester and London, and also take part in The Alliance of Literary Societies meetings in Birmingham. After the success of our first residential conference, with The Brontë Society at Ambleside, then Scarborough, we hope to go on to other similar events.

EDINBURGH 1993. We were planning this for the end of July and were told that our venue was available then BUT recently found that a language school takes place then so we must re-think. Please let me know if the first weekend in September would be a good alternative. How would this suit OVERSEAS members? There would be an option for members to add days before or after our weekend so that more time could be spent in Edinburgh.

We do not understand how it has happened, but we find a shortage of 1991 JOURNALS; we would be grateful for any returns and also for any Vols 1 and 2.

PLEASE return slip from loose sheet so that our address list can be updated.



Thoughts on Mrs Gaskell's  
'Life of Charlotte Brontë'  
 by Brenda Colloms

I must start by confessing that I had not read this biography before, although I respect Mrs Gaskell as a writer, and am interested in her as a woman set in her time, and in her circle of family and friends. The explanation is that I have never felt in tune with the novels of Charlotte and Emily Brontë, and indeed found myself happier with Anne Brontë, although she is a minor writer compared with her powerful sisters.

As I am a biographer, I approached the 'Life' with a personal interest. And there are two points where I found myself very close to Mrs Gaskell, one concerned with my first biography, of the Rev Charles Kingsley, and the second concerned with a later one, 'Victorian Visionaries', which is a group portrait of the Founders of the Working Men's College. I shall return to this later. Another coincidence, which I mention in passing, is that the Rev Patrick Brontë is one of my collection of clerics in 'Victorian Country Parsons'.

Indeed, I recall that when I was researching him, rather than his children, I was somewhat surprised to find him a highly interesting and even sympathetic character; surprised because obviously I had a general impression that he was a bizarre, even sadistic father. Much of that must, I am afraid, be owing to Mrs Gaskell's compelling story of her heroine, Charlotte Brontë.

Here we come to the nub of what makes her biography so interesting. It is a novelist's book, and although she did all the right things a careful researcher should do, the biography reads like a story. Indeed, Mrs Gaskell was blessed among biographers in that first, she had a passionate desire to write a memorial to her dead friend - not a literary criticism, we note, but a tribute to Charlotte's nobility of character. This would once and for all remove the imputation of 'coarseness' which had been raised by critics and readers. Mrs Gaskell, of

course, had smarted painfully under similar remarks for her first three novels, 'Ruth' especially. Second, Charlotte's father welcomed her as a biographer, Charlotte's friend, Ellen Nussey, showed her masses of letters, and even the Rev Arthur Bell Nicholls, the grieving widower who did not like Unitarians, was prepared to let Mrs Gaskell have use of Charlotte's letters, which at her death had become his property.

Mrs Gaskell journeyed to Yorkshire, soaking herself in its atmosphere, its past and the traditions and customs of its inhabitants. She went to Brussels, and saw Madame Heger, although not the Professor.

All this was in the spirit of a loyal, if not religious, duty to her friend, a gifted storyteller paying tribute to a writer of genius. However, it is the woman, and not the writer, who is the subject of this book. And what so impresses Mrs Gaskell is the religious quality of the duty which Charlotte feels, especially to her widower father. It is even possible to see that her marriage to Nicholls (and we should remember that at least two other men proposed to her, three if we guess that the curate, William Weightman, wanted to propose) was predicated on her father's consent, first, but also on Nicholls' promise to live in the parsonage, as Mr Brontë's curate, until the old man died. As it happened, Charlotte died first, and Nicholls did stay until his father-in-law died, upon which Nicholls returned to his native Ireland and began a second life. He remarried, and died in 1906.

Mrs Gaskell cannot bring herself to make Nicholls an attractive character, partly I think because she feared that with his strong Evangelical beliefs he would disapprove of her friendship with his wife, and Charlotte Nicholls would - of course - obey her husband. We know from Mrs Gaskell's letters that she was not a feminist - she believed that men had superior judgement in all serious matters, and that obedience to a husband was a sensible and natural matter.

She also believed utterly that the best chance of happiness and fulfilment for women came with marriage and children. In a letter to Charles Eliot Norton, she writes - 'I think an unmarried life may be to the full as happy in process of time, but I think there is a time of trial to be gone through with women, who naturally yearn after children.' (*Collection of Gaskell/Norton letters. Ed. Jane Whitehill. p.44, No.16. London 1932*)

I cannot help wondering whether part of Mrs Gaskell's admiration for Charlotte Brontë's devotion to 'duty' was partly due to a suspicion that she, Mrs Gaskell, might not have been able to bear to immure herself in a lonely, gloomy, bleak village, and to lead a poverty-stricken life with so few companions, duty or no duty.

At the same time, Gaskell the story-teller cannot help but be fascinated by the unusual, dare one say melodramatic, family background of the Brontës. All that set against the lonely moorland houses; the dour people taking a pride in harbouring lifetime grudges; the winter winds; the damp stone parsonage set practically inside the graveyard.

There is a special quality about this biography which its readers were quick to perceive and to praise. Let me quote Charles Eliot Norton writing to his friend, James Russell Lowell, and he says -

'... "The Life of Miss Brontë", which is almost as much an exhibition of Mrs Gaskell's character as of Miss Brontë's - and you know what a lovely and admirable character she has - - I know no biography that has so deep and touching an interest as this of Miss Brontë - none other written so tenderly, sympathetically and faithfully.' (*Whitehill collection. p.xxiii*)

Once started on her book, and assured of assistance from Patrick Brontë and Charlotte's friends, Mrs Gaskell set to work with a will, travelling wherever necessary, and writing fluently and rapidly. Deeply involved as she felt with her friend, it was inevitable that she would

have been indignant towards the 'villains' of the story - the adulterous wife who led young Branwell astray, and the owner and manager of the school which she believed was responsible for the deaths of the two eldest Brontë girls. Moral indignation led her to paint them in dark hues, throwing into sharpest contrast the shining purity of Charlotte Brontë.

After Mrs Gaskell's visit to Brussels, where apparently Madame Heger showed her some of Charlotte's letters to her husband, Mrs Gaskell became aware of the extent of Charlotte's emotional attachment to Clementin Heger, the 'crush' of a clever pupil for her professor. (Incidentally, one of the features which Miss Brontë admired so much about her professor was his voluntary social work. Was she looking for a father figure? Did she see likenesses between the Belgian and Patrick Brontë?)

After much deliberation, Mrs Gaskell decided to tell the truth, that Charlotte wrote him some letters, but not the whole truth, that is, any comment on the tone of the letters. Here Mrs Gaskell behaved exactly as a nineteenth century biographer was supposed to behave - with discretion. Literary figures, knowing the temptations which could beset future biographers, sometimes took steps to confound them, by destroying letters and papers, leaving instructions to heirs that such things should be done, or writing to correspondents demanding their letters back, so that they could be destroyed. Harriet Martineau had done the latter. Mrs Harriet Grote destroyed all letters in her possession because of her disapproval of contemporary trends in biography - and she died in 1878, over twenty years after Mrs Gaskell wrote the biography. Among the Grote collections were a number from Sidney Smith, who once said, speaking of her eccentricities, that Mrs Grote was the origin of the adjective 'grotesque'.

At this point I might make a personal point. The Kingsley book was my first attempt at a full-scale biography, and I learned that an old lady, a descendant

of Kingsley had some interesting letters, but that she did not want them used in a biography. At the time I was busy on other things, and by the time I was free to visit her, she had, alas, died, and the letters had gone to a younger relative, a niece who placed no such embargo upon them.

It so happened that I was dealing with Kingsley as much from a social history point of view, as from a personal one, whilst unknown to me at that time Susan Chitty was writing a psycho-biography of Kingsley the man. She visited the niece, obtained permission to publish, and revealed to her readers that Kingsley, a highly-sexed man, frustrated by his long courtship of Fanny Grenville, flagellated himself every Friday night. (The equivalent, I suppose, of the English cold bath. Incidentally, according to a television programme, certain members of the Catholic organisation, 'Opus Dei', are instructed to flagellate themselves regularly. It is, I take it, only one step further than a hair shirt?)

The reason I mention it is because had I seen the letters before Lady Chitty, I should have had to decide how much to disclose. It would, I feel, have been impossible not to mention the flagellation, but I certainly would not have made a song and dance about it. Faced with a similar dilemma, Mrs Gaskell in the mid-1850s, effectively concealed both Charlotte's need for love, and her attachment to M Heger.

Here I would like to quote George Orwell, from a passage used by Michael Sheldon in his recent biography of Orwell. Orwell in 1944 is reviewing a new biography of the French poet, Baudelaire -

'What is one to think of a "life" of Baudelaire which never once mentions that Baudelaire was syphilitic? ... This is not merely a piece of scandal: it is a point upon which any biographer of Baudelaire must make up his mind. For the nature of the disease has a bearing not only on the poet's mental condition during his last year

but on his whole attitude to life.' ('Orwell' Michael Sheldon. London 1991. p.5, Introduction)

For those interested in reading fine print, the disagreement between Charlotte Brontë and Harriet Martineau about 'too much love' in Charlotte's books, a disagreement which pained Miss Brontë excessively, is part of the Belgian experience. And anybody reading 'The Professor' can see that the need for love was a crucial part of its author's make-up.

Discretion by biographers has not been confined to the nineteenth century. I have been reading a new biography of Barbara Leigh Smith, later Madame Bodichon, by Sheila Herstein, originally her PhD thesis for Yale University. In 1949 Hester Burton had published a biography, entitled 'Barbara Bodichon', and in the 1970s Burton wrote to Herstein, confessing that the Smith family had prevented her from mentioning the illegitimacy of the Smith children (an open secret at the time, and one of the factors which made Mrs Gaskell hesitate to like Barbara); Barbara's long-drawn out love affair with John Chapman; or the mental instability which apparently troubled both Barbara, and her Aunt Julia.

Let me touch upon what some late twentieth century women might regard as self-sacrifice taken to an impossible degree - Charlotte's 'duty' to her father. Here is Mrs Grote, writing to a friend in 1856 - almost exactly when Mrs Gaskell was writing the 'Life' -

'Many a time have I reflected upon the usefulness of Protestant Sisterhoods, whose lives at least could wear away without perpetual conflict with worldly temptations. What more unfair than to tie a living being to a post in sight of all manner of enjoyments and various curious objectives! Yet this is what happens to a single woman in civilized society. Accordingly, self must be crushed if she would avoid anguish. The safe course is to engage in a course of self-sacrifice, which supplies lively emotions, even though they be of an ascetic character, and thus the individual escapes the

pitfalls which beset the paths of pleasure. (*Elizabeth Rigby's 'Life of Mrs Grote', p.150*)

Poor Branwell. He certainly did not escape the pitfalls. His sister, Charlotte, made sure that she did.

I quote Mrs Gaskell. 'Her life at Haworth was so unvaried that the postman's call was the event of her day. Yet she dreaded the great temptation of centring all her thoughts upon this one time, and losing her interest in the smaller hopes and employments of the remaining hours. Thus she conscientiously denied herself the pleasure of writing letters too frequently, because the answers (when she received them) took the flavour out of the rest of her life; or the disappointment, when the replies did not arrive, lessened her energy for her home duties.'

(I am reminded of Barbara Pym's splendidly reserved novels of Christian ladies with a sense of duty.)

In with my own book, 'Victorian Visionaries', I was, like Mrs Gaskell, writing for a cause - to introduce the founders of the Working Men's College to the general public, so I can well understand her cause of wishing to introduce the 'true' Charlotte Brontë to the general public.

Lastly, and very briefly, coming to the book as a whole, which is what my local library would call 'a good read', I found so many deft touches, so many set-pieces, so many sudden surprises, that I do not know where to start. Take the first chapter - the matter-of-fact description of what Mrs Gaskell calls a 'common-place' church - and then suddenly, the reader is faced with a facsimile layout of that tragic Brontë family history given by the sparse memorial tablets on the wall at the side of the communion table.

After that initial shock, Mrs Gaskell uses the device of 'flash-back' to build up interest as sympathy for her

heroine. And what could be 'stranger than fiction' than the amazing literary creations of the young Brontë children, politicised at an early age by their Tory father, and devoted to public heroes like the Duke of Wellington?

I also remember some touching lines when the biographer-friend counters Charlotte's own description of herself as 'small and plain' with the remark that 'the grave, serious composure which, when I knew her, gave her face the dignity of an old Venetian portrait.' (*Chapter VI, pp.124-5*)

Lastly, I enjoyed immensely all the descriptions of the Yorkshire countryside, and its inhabitants and past history. These, I felt, set the Brontë family very firmly in a realistic background.

#### Visit to Holybourne

by Howard F Gregg

On Friday 2 August, after some of us had visited Jane Austen's Cottage at Chawton, 8 members of the South of England branch met for lunch at the White Hart at Holybourne. We were pleased that John Chapple was able to join us from Hull. After lunch we walked to the Church of the Holy Rood where Mrs Gaskell went for afternoon service on the day she died. The bells had been run some weeks before to welcome the new occupants of The Lawn. By the church we saw the pond, much overgrown, which is the source of the Bourne, which flows through the grounds of The Lawn, to which we re-directed our steps.

We were given a warm welcome by the Manager, Mrs Septekin, who allowed us to wander round the lovely grounds, enhanced by a beautiful summer day, and see the Bourne with miniature cascades and footbridges and

complete with ducks - an anxious mother seeing three young ones into the water at our approach. Roses were still in evidence and the lawn, parts of which were left wild, swept up to the house.

We were given a splendid tea in the drawing room where Mrs Gaskell died, at afternoon tea, on 13 November 1865. There is a reproduction of the Richmond portrait with Elizabeth Gaskell's signature underneath on one wall of the room. The spacious room had lovely views of the garden to the Bourne on one side and to the 250 year old cedar tree on the other. This last inspired a poem by Victor Brydges, "To Mrs Gaskell", written on the centenary of her death which Brenda Colloms was able to copy. It was easy in this setting to see why Mrs Gaskell so liked the house and poignant to recall, in Thurstan Holland's words, 'she had just got everything into order and readiness and was rejoicing in the carrying out of her wish.'

The photograph of the house in Winifred Gerin's biography, opposite page 239, shows the drawing room with three large windows on the lower storey of the building. The two on the left look down to the Bourne and the third, facing the lady in the photograph, looks towards the cedar tree. The house is now a home for the elderly with much new building added, recently visited by Princess Margaret. We were shown around and were impressed by the accommodation and facilities and the care and affection which exists there. Mrs Septekin showed us a portrait, possibly of Elizabeth Gaskell, but none of us could identify the artist.

We were glad to be encouraged to visit The Lawn again and are going to present Mrs Septekin with a copy of Winifred Gerin's biography as a mark of our appreciation for a happy and moving visit. The brief association of the house with Mrs Gaskell is clearly cherished. Our thanks to Richard J Beckley for arranging the visit.

### William Gaskell's Peaceful End

On 12 June 1884, Beatrix Potter wrote in her diary:

'Papa heard from Mr Steinthal (minister at Cross Street Chapel) that Mr Gaskell died at five yesterday morning. Dear old man, he has had a very peaceful end. If anyone led a blameless peaceful life it was he. There has always been a deep child-like affection between him and me.'

When she was 8 she had knitted a scarf for his birthday present and he wrote to thank her: 'Big as I am I could not have done it one-tenth as well. Every time I put it round my neck, which during the winter will be every day, I shall be sure to think of you.'

On 14 June 1884 she added to her diary:

'Four o'clock Saturday afternoon. Mr Gaskell is just being buried beside his wife. We have sent some flowers.'\*

This was the scene on that day:

'The earthly remains of the late Rev William Gaskell were buried on Saturday in the grave-yard of Knutsford chapel, beside those of Mrs Gaskell. Only a few friends had been asked to attend, but a large number, including many members of the Cross-street congregation, were present; among whom were Unitarian ministers from all parts of the northern district, the Mayor of Manchester, and several prominent citizens, as well as deputations from a number of institutions and public bodies. The hearse, followed by a single carriage in which were the Misses Gaskell, left the city early, proceeding by road to Knutsford. The other mourners went by a train which arrived about half-past four. The funeral carriage was upon the railways bridge when the train came in, and as the mourners passed into the road it went slowly by, the people falling in behind it. The hearse was open and admitted a view of the coffin, which was covered with white flowers. It is only a few yards from the railway gate to the Unitarian chapel. In the small burying ground which adjoins it Mrs Gaskell is buried. It is a quaint old-world place. The little chapel, built 200 years ago, is covered to the eaves with ivy. Scarcely



BROOK STREET CHAPEL

1947

by John Carsberg

anything of it is visible but its grey sloping roof. The burying ground is shut in on all sides with green branches, and a great plane tree in front of the chapel overshadows almost the whole of it. When the funeral party entered the air was vocal with the singing of birds, and an odorous breeze rustled in the sun-lit leaves. The coffin, with its load of flowers, seemed hardly to forbid this gladness of the summer. The chapel was soon filled. There was, indeed, room only for a small proportion of the mourners. In the dimly lighted edifice a solemn feeling rested on the silent congregation. The bare white walls seemed cold and sombre in the pale green light which came upon them through the trees. The silence was broken by the organ, and as "O rest in the Lord" was softly filling the chapel the coffin was brought in and set down in front of the pulpit.' (From the Unitarian Herald, June 1884)

\*Information from William Gaskell 1805-1884 by Barbara Brill. Manchester Literary & Philosophical Publications 1984

An Oxford Ghost

by Barbara Brill

Augustus J C Hare was a prolific Victorian writer, with travel and guide books being his speciality: Walks in Rome was widely read (it went into 22 editions). Wanderings in Spain, Florence etc and he also wrote autobiographical works including Memorials of a Quiet Life and The Story of My Life\* from which the following extracts are taken. He was related to the Stanleys of Alderley and Leycesters of Toft and was nephew of Archdeacon Julius Hare. His taste for continental travel and his Cheshire connections may have encouraged a friendship when he met Mrs Gaskell at Oxford in 1860 and they continued to correspond.

He wrote, "Everybody liked Mrs Gaskell. I remember that one of the points that struck me about her at first was not her kindness but her extreme courtesy and deference to her own daughters.

While she was at Oxford the subject of ghosts was brought forward for debate at the Union; she wished to have spoken from the gallery and if she had she would probably have carried the motion in favour of ghosts at once. Here is one of her personal experiences:"

Hare goes on to relate how Mrs Gaskell was staying with Quaker cousins at Stratford-on-Avon when they took her to Compton Winyates. They stopped at Eddington for tea on their return and talked about spirits; Mrs Gaskell asked if there were any ghost stories associated with the village and she was reproved by the father of the house for light and vain talking. After tea she went for a walk with the cousins and was told about a former resident of the village who had gone as a lady's maid to London leaving behind her fiancé, a carter. In London she met and married another man.

After his death some years later, she returned to her native village, re-met the carter and, after a fortnight's short courtship, they married. A few weeks later she returned to London to sell up her property.

Her husband did not like London so did not accompany her but she did not return home and shortly the husband heard that she had been found dead in the street.

The carter husband became unaccountably ill and told people it was because his wife sat beside him moaning and lamenting all night long so that he could not sleep.

Mrs Gaskell asked to meet the man and hear his story. She and her cousin called at his cottage. They got no reply at the front door but saw through the window a woman in a lilac print gown looking out. As they could get no reply at the back door either they called on a neighbour who told them the man was out for the day and there was no one in. 'Oh!' said Mrs Gaskell, 'we have seen a woman in the house in a lilac print gown'. 'Then' said the neighbour, 'you have seen the ghost. There is no woman in the house but that is she'.

\*The Years with Mother by August J C Hare  
Paperback edition by Century Publishing. In Century Lives and Letters series.  
This is an abridgement of the first 3 vols of The Story of My Life

Ed. As we said, Hare was prolific! His first guide/travel books were for Murray's Handbooks - Berks. Beds. and Oxfordshire, and Northumberland and Durham. 1861-3. Many others followed with a number on Italy and France, also Holland, Scandinavia and even Russia. He also wrote a two volume Life and Letters of Frances, Baroness Bunsen 1879; Life and Letters of Maria Edgeworth (2 vols) 1894. His own autobiography The Story of My Life took 6 volumes and was his final work completed in 1900.

He also throws light on the remark in GL 108a:  
'How are the Dickens? Wretch that he is to go and write MY story of the lady haunted by the face; I shall have nothing to talk about now at dull parties.'

Hare was at a house party at Birtles Hall near Macclesfield in Cheshire, in 1866, when Mrs Birtles related the story of 'the lady haunted by the face' as 'it had been told to her by Mrs Gaskell the authoress, who said that she felt so greatly the uncertainty of life, that she wished a story which might possibly be of consequence, and which had been entrusted to her, to remain with some one who was certain to record it accurately. Three weeks afterwards, sitting by the fire with her daughter, Mrs Gaskell died suddenly in her armchair.' (The Years with Mother p.246) Hare dutifully records the story at length. Please can a Dickens scholar identify this story?

If Hare is correct about Mrs Gaskell having told this story in 1865, then Dickens' plagiarism did not deter her from continuing to relate the story in drawing rooms and who can doubt that she did it with memorable effect?

Sir Henry Holland, Mrs Gaskell's cousin, moved in high society in London (and was one of Prince Albert's doctors in attendance at his death). He is said to have refused a title several times but accepted for the pleasure of his second wife, Saba, daughter of Sydney Smith. She used to say jokingly that she was not the real Lady Holland as, of course, the name was familiar to all from the Holland Park set. Hare recorded in his diary 'the bon mot of Mrs Grote, when asked how this Lady Holland was to be distinguished from the original person of that name said, "Oh, this is the New Holland, and her capital is Sydney".'

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COBER HILL. SHORT STORY WEEKEND  
26-28 June

This is now fully booked unless we double-up on single rooms.

Book Notes

by C Lingard

'Countries of the mind: the meaning of place to writers' by Gillian Tindall. The Hogarth Press, £18.00

A study of the use of place in a wide range of nineteenth and twentieth century British and French novels. The author is, herself, a novelist and biographer, setting several of her books in France. Novels discussed in her book were written from personal experience and show that the varying use of place is a metaphor crucial to the writer's aims.

In the chapter Those Blue Remembered Hills she discusses novelists who appear to present a nostalgia for a romantic rural ideal. Gaskell, however, while seeming to fall into this category in North and South is in fact much more realistic and honest in dealing with the changes of her time.

Sex and Subterfuge: women writers to 1850 by Eva Figes. Pandora Press, £8.99

This book, also written by a novelist is a reprint of a book originally published in 1982. It discusses the reasons for the increase in the early nineteenth century of the number of novels written by women. Fanny Burney marked the beginning of a movement in which women came to dominate the novel and created a new classic form. Books were shorter than in the eighteenth century and much less likely to be restricted by the serial format used by men. Mrs Gaskell was particularly unhappy using this method.

In fact, she marked several new departures. She was not restricted by the home as the centre of her world, for her experiences as a minister's wife gave her a broader view of life. She was unique among her contemporaries in giving her working class characters a voice of their own.

She believed problems were caused by the inability of the rich to communicate with the poor and used women as an instrument of change. Mary Barton is compared with Shirley to make the point. Though laying themselves open to accusations of political naivety both authors identify with their characters and do not patronize.

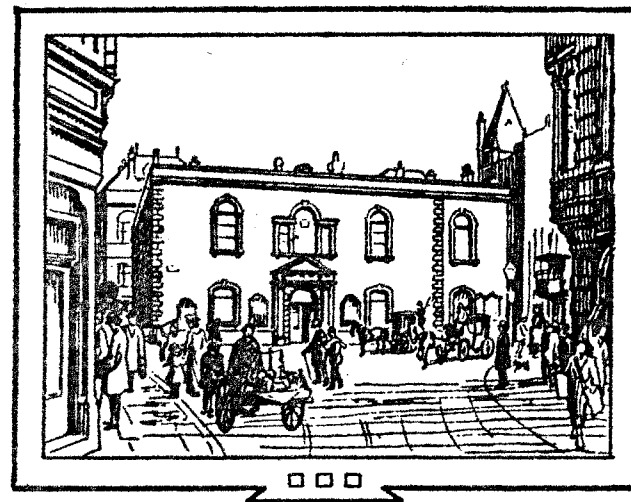
'Problems for feminist criticism' edited by Sally Minogue (of the University of Kent). Routledge, £35.00

This is a collection of essays by several authors intending to analyse and challenge feminist critics as well as providing a critique in its own right. It also includes essays on Shakespeare, Milton, Dickens and Laurence among others.

In her essay Gender and Class in Villette and North and South the editor herself makes several similar points as Ms Figes - giving the working classes a voice of their own and the use of women as an instrument of change. By discussing books in terms of one oppressed group - women and excluding the class issue, modern feminist critics have failed the novels justice and have missed the universal truth they contain.



# The Gaskell Society



CROSS STREET CHAPEL

NEWSLETTER

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 634668)

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AUGUST 1992

NO. 14

# EDITOR'S LETTER

I think this is going to be a very full Newsletter and, like the Journal, there is more good material than we can find space for at present.

PLEASE LET ME KNOW IMMEDIATELY IF YOU HAVE NOT RECEIVED THE 1992 JOURNAL; we are sorry that it was delayed this year, but hope to revert to the usual May publication next year. It was worth waiting for, was it not?

If you are short of space on your bookshelves we would be grateful for the donation of any back numbers. We cannot afford to print a large overrun but our Society continues to expand and our new members, academics particularly, then wish to have a complete run of the Journal.

Several of your committee members will be travelling to Scotland shortly for an on-the-spot planning meeting for Edinburgh '93 weekend; expect our programme details soon. It promises to be an excellent occasion. We will take full advantage of Edinburgh as 'The Athens of the North' and aim to have a variety of talks, visits and entertainment. You may also wish to take advantage of The Edinburgh Festival.

This year our AGM weekend is linked to Knutsford's 700th Charter Year, so others besides members will be invited to some events.

We hope all members who are able to do so will support some of these events and bring a friend to share them with us.

CRANFORD is being staged by Knutsford Amateur Dramatic Society from 14-17 October, and we hope to support this.

You can expect an extra Newsletter for Christmas so that I can print material I am having to omit this time. I am sure you will read Marjorie Cox's article on Kossuth, Hungary and Mrs Gaskell with special interest in the

light of the troubles in that region now.

Our Chairman, John Chapple, sends us a rare William Gaskell letter; John has been researching steadily for his book on Elizabeth Gaskell's early years, which we can look forward to.

Jenny Uglow also has a Gaskell book at press; I forgot to ask her when this is to be issued - perhaps you will be able to ask Father Christmas for it!

We regret to announce the death of John Nussey, a founder member of our Society and a much valued link between us and The Brontë Society. He will be sadly missed and fondly remembered.

JOAN LEACH

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#### ELIZABETH GASKELL AND LONDON

It is probable that most people who have some knowledge of Mrs Gaskell but are not members of this Society believe that she was born in Knutsford, the original of the much-loved Cranford. She was of course a Londoner by birth, a phrase which she used in a letter to Mary Howitt in 1838, though she left the capital when her mother died in her first year, the prototype of many motherless daughters in her fiction. Her father remained there with her brother John, twelve years her senior. It is for the psychologist rather than the literary student to penetrate the possible effect of a sense of severance from one's roots. Certainly her visits to London in childhood and adolescence do not seem to have been exceptionally happy or unhappy. She retained a certain ambivalence about the city of her birth, one which was not at all unusual among her contemporaries.

The metropolitan dominance over wealth and culture which London had exercised for centuries was diminishing in

the early part of the nineteenth century. Although provincial cities were gaining respect among their own citizens, and more gradually in the world at large, London was still regarded as the centre of trade and fashion. The presence of the court and the migration of titled families for the 'season' were factors that could not be ignored. The coming of the railways made London more accessible to the rest of the country; it led to the death of Captain Brown as he was 'waiting for the down train'. There were many like Mrs Goodenough in Wives and Daughters who could 'remember it being a three days' journey'.

Yet the division between north and south which gave her one of her titles was still strong. It is a division, sometimes a tension, that often appears in Elizabeth Gaskell's fiction. A character in the novel of that name knows that Hampshire is 'beyond London', and shows himself better informed that Jem Wilson's mother who only knows that America is 'beyond London a good bit'. The trauma suffered by the Hale family in leaving the south is sympathetically followed as they walk in London through 'well-known streets, past houses which they had often visited'. Arriving in Milton, Margaret finds the people 'well-dressed as regarded the material, but with a slovenly looseness which struck [her] as different from the shabby, threadbare smartness of a similar class in London'. Her attempt to comfort her mother with the reminder that 'the fogs in London are sometimes far worse' than the smoke of Milton receives the reply, 'but then you knew that London itself and friends lay behind it'.

Although Mrs Gaskell could feel for the Londoner, she was herself fully a citizen of Knutsford. Mary Smith can be proud of the peculiarities of Cranford - 'Have you any red silk umbrellas in London?' she teasingly asks - and she knows that the pride if Mr Hoggins were sent for by Queen Adelaide or the Duke of Wellington would be tempered by the fear, 'if we were ailing what should we do?' When her marriage took her to Manchester, she gave herself with equal loyalty to its

life and traditions. Manchester was by 1832 a place of some importance, with a civic pride justified by its industrial and commercial position. Her husband became increasingly committed to local affairs and stayed in the city when Manchester New College moved to London in 1853. He was proud of Manchester, as Mrs Thornton is of Milton, 'dirty, smoky place as I feel it to be' her daughter Fanny comments. Perhaps with something of the same sense of loyalty, Mrs Gaskell herself professed her ignorance of 'people working for their bread with head-labour ... in London'.

She sometimes chafed against the restrictions of Manchester and took opportunities to travel within Britain and abroad. A visit to Oxford in 1857 prompted the reflection 'I believe I am Mediaeval, - and unManchester'. It was to Alton in Hampshire that she looked for a retirement home. She was certainly not limited in knowledge of the world or in her interests. She read widely, was acquainted with the affairs of the day, and knew many famous contemporaries either personally or by correspondence.

Her visits to London in adult life were frequent enough to keep her abreast of life in the capital. Some were for domestic reasons, as when she found a school for her eldest daughter in Hampstead after seeing for herself 'the various school-mistresses that have been recommended to us'. Her social conscience was exercised in London as well as in Manchester; in 1851 she visited the Convent of the Sisters of Mercy in Bermondsey, which she describes as 'a very bad part of London'. In the following year she was obliged to decline an invitation to go to London for the Duke of Wellington's funeral - 'a sight I should dearly have liked'. While she often went quietly as a private person, her growing reputation as a writer brought her into the more public area of London life. She visited Dickens, Carlyle, Samuel Rogers, John Forster and Richard Monckton Milnes, among others. She came also into the Pre-Raphaelite circle. 'I think we got to know Rossetti pretty well', she wrote to Charles Eliot Norton in 1859; 'I went three times to

his studio, and met him at two evening parties - where I had a good deal of talk with him'. But she records drily that Rossetti rushed away from her when a woman with 'a particular type of reddish brown' hair came in and concluded that 'he is not as mad as a March hare, but hair-mad'.

London as seen through her fiction is generally less attractive than the reality which she knew. It may lead in the world of fashion; she always had an eye for both style and value in clothes. The humble choice of Ruth is 'for white linen and soft muslin, which she had chosen in preference to more expensive articles of dress when Mr Bellingham had given her carte blanche in London'. Margaret Hale's London-bought dress attracts the admiration of Mary Higgins, and Mrs Thornton is sorry that Fanny refuses her brother's offer 'of having the wedding clothes provided by some first-rate London dressmaker'. Cynthia in Wives and Daughters comes back from London 'looking fresher and prettier than ever, beautifully dressed'. London also still has superiority in other matters of taste and culture. The ladies of Cranford are pleased that the comedies written by Lady Anne's husband are 'still acted on the London boards' and advertisements for them 'made us all draw up and feel that Drury Lane was paying a very pretty compliment to Cranford'. Margaret, 'with her cultivated London taste, felt the number of delicacies to be oppressive' at Mrs Thornton's table.

On the whole, however, the disadvantages and perils of London seem to outweigh the good things. It is a fast-moving and bewildering city. 'London life is too whirling and full to admit of even an hour of that deep silence of feeling which the friends of Job showed', she comments in North and South. Squire Hamley regards his wife as 'all that was worth having out of the crowd of houses they called London'. The importance of the capital could be inconvenient, as Mrs Gaskell discovered in 1860: 'it was Cup Day at Ascot, a thing which in my ignorance I did not know would fill up every possible & hireable bed in London'. It was chronically expensive as

compared with the north - a complaint which has never ceased to this day. When her daughter Florence was married, she remarked, 'They will have to live in London ... and will have to begin economically'; and when Thurstan was starting his career at the Bar she confided, 'the 300£ a year his father allows will not keep house in London, and pay law-expenses too'. Miss Browning's opinion of London is that 'it's no better than a pickpocket and a robber dressed up in the spoils of honest folk'.

There are graver perils than overcrowding and high prices. Mrs Goodenough hopes that Cynthia's going to London 'won't turn her head'. Richard Bradshaw's head is certainly turned by his time in London; he deteriorates from deceiving his father about going to the theatre to forging Mr Benson's name on a share certificate. It is in the area of sexual morality that London is particularly menacing. It is the scene of Ruth's seduction; Mr Bellingham's appeal: 'Ruth, would you not go with me to London?' seals her fate for the contemporary reader. In 1854 Elizabeth Gaskell sent her servant Margaret Preston to seek a sister who had fallen into evil ways in London and to get advice from a friend who is 'a solicitor and agent for some protection Society which ... makes him well acquainted with what snares to avoid in London'.

She was ahead of her time in compassion for sexual frailty. Her sterner mood is kept for political corruption. The novel Mary Barton which first brought her into public notice contains a strong indictment of the mischief done by London influences in the north. The 'gentleman from London' who comes to address the workers' meeting is described satirically but with disapproval:

'You would have been puzzled to define his exact position, or what was the state of his mind as regarded education ... The impression he would have given you would have been unfavourable'

Bad things can come from London, and honest men can be ruined by going there. John Barton is pleased to be chosen as a Chartist delegate, with his 'childish delight of seeing London', but he comes back bitter and disillusioned from a city 'as big as six Manchesters', having policemen who speak in a 'mincing way (for Londoners are mostly tongue-tied and can't say their a's and i's properly'. The refusal of Members of Parliament to receive the delegation is 'not just as a piece of London news ... [but] will bide in my heart'. And the sympathetic author tells us, 'Poor John! He never got over his disappointing journey to London'; and it is after this experience that he turns to violence.

Elizabeth Gaskell is essentially a regional novelist, never dwelling for long on life in London. She made the capital city into a metaphor for many of the perils which threatened the honest people whom she loved and often succoured. She always claimed to write about the places and people that she knew best. Her own experience of London was at the comfortable level and she did not come close to its darker side as she did in Manchester. Like Margaret Hale in North and South she was wise enough to know what she did not know:

'There might be toilers and moilers there in London, but she never saw them; the very servants lived in an underground world of their own, of which she knew neither the hopes nor the fears.'

RAYMOND CHAPMAN

Ed: The first LONDON meeting of the Gaskell Society was held at Clerkenwell Church when Professor Chapman gave this talk in November 1989. Note Journal Vol 6, p 42, is not quite correct; however the 1990 meeting saw the establishment of the South East group and regular meetings.

WILLIAM TO ELIZABETH GASKELL

How did William Gaskell get on with his wife after some twenty-seven or more years of marriage? We must thank Rutgers University Library for this full text of a letter hitherto printed only in part by A B Hopkins, Elizabeth Gaskell (1952). Mrs Gaskell was in Heidelberg staying at Müller's Hotel with Florence and Julia, whilst Marianne was at Kreuznach with Eleanor Bonham-Carter and Hearn.

Plymouth Grove  
July 25 1860

My dearest Lily,  
I'm not writing because I've much to say, but because of a melancholy piece of intelligence which Mary Ewart has had from Knutsford. You would perhaps hear at Kreuznach that Frederick [Holland] had got worse instead of better, and had returned to England. He was not able, however, to reach Ashbourne, and died at the Victoria Hotel, Euston Square, on Saturday. I have not heard any particulars, except that he had suffered very much before. It seems sad to died in an Inn, and sad that his poor wife should be left with the charge of 7 children, and the prospect of another in September. But he had fought his life-battle well, and borne his sufferings with wonderful resolution and patience. I'm glad he came over to our Work[ing] Man's College Meeting, and that we saw him for a short time before he went. He will be very much missed and mourned at Ashbourne. This news, and Polly's illness didn't make my birthday a very bright one, but I tried to take right views of both. I had quite forgotten it was my birthday, till a letter from Nancy came to remind me of it in the morning. They were remaining at Barmouth another week, and would be sorry to leave it, they liked the place very much - 'such nice sands for bathing, pleasant boating excursions, & plenty of nice inland walks'. They intended to return home by Bettws & Conway, calling at Llandudno, to see what it is like. Nancy says she is wonderfully improved in health, but Mr Robson has not derived so much benefit from the change. Miss Remond and Miss Meyer were there with them.

Your notes didn't arrive till evening. I suppose Chelius is a clever man; and he seems to have hit at once on the truth of the matter. The one point which I demur to is his saying that she 'must be the best judge of what agrees with her best' - or rather, perhaps, that she consults her judgement. If I were asked, professionally, I should say that the 'cakes and coffee', of which letters have made mention, were not the most fit and proper diet - and that I had my doubts about 'sour milk' - especially remembering that when I was travelling with Mr James he durst not touch wine that was the least acid, because it brought out pimples. I dare say Kreuznach will set all to rights, if properly tried - The 'iodine and bromine, and iron' sound promising. But I'm convinced, from what I have heard, that the root of the evil has been what I referred to once before - irregularity in a point which would render me uncomfortable through the day. Of course, the idea of compressing the time of cure, by taking two baths a day, was sheer nonsense. If a thing is to be tried, let it be tried fairly.

About the home-coming - I shouldn't feel easy in Hearne[sic] taking charge of Flossy and Julia, because of her ignorance of German, and they might be placed in circumstances of difficulty, where she would scarcely know how to act. And I don't like the plan of getting H.W. to advance money. I would much rather send it myself - if you would tell me how much it is to be, and what is the best way of getting it to you. I shan't be sorry when you are all on English ground again. Can you give me any idea when it is likely to be. I ought to fix when I am to go to Scotland, as the Potters are getting their beds filled, and my holidays are slipping away. What I said to Mr P. was that I would be with them at the beginning of August, but I hear of a great number who are going up then. I don't see how you can be here by that time, if Kreuznach is to be taken properly. Another thing is - to see that you don't knock yourself up, with scientific pursuits, and soaring too high, and trying to make out what the sun is made of. (Tell Polly it is strontium, not sium). With

respect to your gout, I never knew you wished it to be a secret - though it might shew a want of goût in me to mention it - but Polly's pimples shall be sacred. Thank the children all for their notes and good wishes - )but, between you and me, their spelling is a trifle too phonetic, and we must try to reform it.)

And now can you keep a secret? Mr Greenwood is going to be married! Who to? Why, Miss Taylor - sister of the one whom his brother married. Of course, you mustn't let out to Dr [Henry] Roscoe that you have heard this - though, perhaps, Mr G. may inform his friends before long. that is my only piece of news. I went to Dukinfield on Sunday, and dined at Mr David Harrison's, with Mr Bass, who, though a Churchman, always comes to hear me when I am in his neighbourhood. Mr Aspland, surgeon, was there too, but going to dine afterwards at the Jas Worthington's here. I heard that Lord Hatherton had been staying at Sam Brooke's and that there had been grand dinnerings, and visits to his great tunnel, and land jobbings &c. I got home a little after 6, and ran tea and supper into one. They wanted me to stay at Dukinfield, but it was rainy and cold, and I felt I was 'a-whom'.

On Monday I dined at the Edmd Grundy's - Mr Wildes, Shuttleworths - to meet me. I fixed my own day. Mrs S. told me that Pilkington Jackson's marriage is put off, in consequence of the illness of some relation of the lady's, but you will probably have heard from Loui. Mrs Grundy said she had written to you some time ago, asking if you wd allow your name to be on a Committee of ladies, who are providing help for Garibaldi's sick and wounded - F. Nightingale, Ldy Shaftesbury &c in London, are taking it up. And, on learning that Mrs Pender and some others belonged to the Committee, I gave Mrs G. permission to use your name, though I said you would not be able to do any thing. She said that was all she wanted. She had already got £50 herself.

They mentioned that Mr Schmidt had been coming back from the continent with his wife and children, and an old gentleman had said to him that they had placed a

state-room at his disposal, but as he didn't want it, it was quite at the service of Mrs S. and her belongings. Very much obliged to him, of course, and took his offer. When, however, they were approaching Engld, a great bustle began on deck, and much preparation, which turned out to be for the plain old gentleman, who turned out to be Lord Clyde. He is gone to visit the QUEEN at Osborne, and they are going to give him a military dinner in London, Duke of Cambridge in the Chair. Herbert Grundy has just come down from his Examination for B.A., and was feeling a little uncertain about his fate, as his mathematics had been rather weak. He seemed gentlemanly, and I liked what I saw of him. The evening ended with a few Christy Minstrel songs, in which Mrs G., two of the girls, and one of the sons took part. I walked home in the rain. Mr Wildes wanted me to go with him in his cab, and take it on - Not very likely, was it?

There was nothing of special note occurred yesterday beyond what I have referred to. I made one or two calls, and did a little reading, and wrote to Mr Ham about the Barnett bequest, having first had an interview with Mr Baker - and that was pretty nearly all. Mr Drummond came in this morning just to know about Sunday, and when the young Brahmin convert (Gangooly) is to be here. He has been educating for two years in America, and is returning to India in about two months. He preached in Liverpool last Sunday, and seems to have produced a very favourable impression there. He is a Bengalee, and, I believe, of the highest caste. H.A. B[right] wrote to me about him. He was going to dine at Sand Heys. Did you get the two Newspapers I sent last Saturday? The schoolmaster Hopley, who flogged the boy Cancellor to death, has been sentenced to 4 years' penal servitude. The half sister, Constance Kent, has been taken up and put in prison at Devizes, on suspicion of having murdered the poor child at Roade [Rode], near Frome. One hardly like[s] to let one's suspicions rest on her, and yet several circumstances seemed to point to her as the most likely to have done it. It is said, she preserves a dogged silence. Her mother and grand

mother, it appears, as well as an uncle, were deranged; and her own conduct at times has been strange. And now I've nothing more to say. I hope Polly will go on well at Kreuznach, and that you will keep well wherever you are. With best love to all the children,

Ever your affectionate husband

Wm Gaskell

J A V CHAPPLE

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THE RYBURN LIBRARY EDITION OF MARY BARTON

A new high-quality hardback library edition of Gaskell's Mary Barton, edited by Angus Easson, will be published by Ryburn in September. It is available in an Imperial Bonded Leather 250-copy limited edition with superior matt coated paper and head and tail bands (ISBN 1 85331 040 9 for £28) as well as in Hardback (ISBN 1 85331 020 4 at £25). Both editions are sewn in 16-page sections and promise to be of interest to the library and academic markets as well as to Gaskell enthusiasts.

The text of this edition of Mary Barton has been carefully researched, employing the fifth edition as Gaskell's final and most careful overseeing of her work but incorporating 74 substantive variants. The edition also includes William Gaskell's "Two Lectures on Lancashire Dialect", three appendices and comprehensive explanatory notes which, together with Angus Easson's stimulating introduction, place the novel firmly in its regional, topographical, historical and literary contexts.

To order copies of the new Ryburn edition of Mary Barton, please send your order - clearly indicating which binding you require and your name and address - along with a cheque for £25 (Hardback version) or £28 (Imperial Bonded Leather version). Orders and payment - in sterling please - should be made to The Gaskell Society and sent to Mrs B Kinder, 16 Sandleigh Avenue, Knutsford, Cheshire WA16. For arrangements to pay in dollars, please contact Mrs L Magruder, Box 1549, La Canada, CA 91012.

BOOK NOTES

A Dark Night's Work and Other Stories by Elizabeth Gaskell. Edited by Suzanne Lewis, World's Classics: Oxford University Press, 1992. £4.99\*

World's Classics continues its publishing venture with this volume of some of Gaskell's neglected short fiction. A superficial glance at the publishers blurb suggests a collection of stories of the macabre but the only unifying theme in this volume is the wide variety and range of her writing.

The Dark Night's Work (1863) deals with the effect of a murder of a family while The Grey Woman (1861) is indeed a Gothic tale of terror and suspense. On the other hand Libbie Marsh's Three Eras (1847) is a touching story of a working girl's devotion and self sacrifice and Six Weeks in Heppenheim (1862) - the story of a loveless marriage.

Also included is the much shorter Cumberland Sheep Shearers (1853)

As Lewis's introduction also compares Gaskell's treatment of her female characters in a range of class and environments. Libbie Marsh is a Manchester seamstress; Thekla - a German servant girl - while Elinor Wilkins and Anna Scherer are of the middle classes and not required to work, but all have to fight their own battles.

\*The Short Story Weekend at Cober Hill in June was much enjoyed by members, using the above as a course book

Elizabeth Gaskell: the Critical Heritage. Edited by Angus Easson, Routledge. £100

This long established series now adds Elizabeth Gaskell to its list of over a hundred authors. It comprises an anthology of 135 pieces of literary criticism aiming to show the author's reception from 1848 to 1910. Most of it is expressed in formal magazine critiques but the more personal comments from private letters, including some of her own reactions to the critics, are also quoted.



The controversial nature of her work and her publishing policy result in something of an imbalance. Mary Barton and Ruth and Life of Charlotte Bronte, which were first published in book form to a mass of publicity comprise the biggest sections; while Cranford went almost unnoticed by the critics. The later novels were serialised and were less controversial. There are no reviews of the shorter fiction.

The book is also a valuable reference tool. Many of originally anonymous reviewers have been identified, such as Charles Kingsley and Henry James. There are copious biographical notes and brief descriptions of the journals.

Fictions of Modesty: Women and Courtship in the English Novel by RUTH Bernard Yeazell, (University of California, Los Angeles), University of Chicago Press, 1991, £19.95

Discusses how women's modest delaying tactics are a central feature of English fiction, in particular Richards (Pamela), Cleland (Fanny Hill), Burney (Evelina), Austen (Mansfield Park), Bronte (Villette) and Gaskell (Wives and Daughters) with a chapter 'Molly Gibson's Secrets' - and speculates on their influence on Charles Darwin and Havelock Ellis. In particular comparisons are made with Mansfield Park.

Reaches of Empire: the English novel from Edgeworth to Dickens, by Suvendrini Perera (University of Newcastle, Australia) Columbia University Press, 1991. £29.85

Draws complex parallels between the rise of English novel with the growth of the British empire, and challenges the conventional distinctions between domestic and colonial novels. She justifies the allusions to Margaret Hale's sailor brother Frederick and defends the book's happy ending. The ending of Mary Barton is discussed in comparison to Carlyle's 'Chartism'.

CHRISTINE LINGARD

## SOUTH OF ENGLAND BRANCH REPORT

So far in 1992 the branch has had two meetings. The subject of the meeting on 1 February was Mrs Gaskell's 'Life of Charlotte Brontë' and Brenda Colloms' introduction has since been published in the March Newsletter of the Society. On 25 April, Sylvia Burch led a consideration of Mrs Gaskell as a short story writer, reminding us of her range and achievement in this field, and concluding with a detailed look at 'Half a Life-Time Ago'. Members shared the reading of extracts from this moving story in a Wordsworthian vein.

On 12 September we shall be meeting at the Francis Holland School, 39 Graham Terrace, London SW3 8JF (near Sloane Square) when Gillian Cumiskey will give an address on 'Mrs Gaskell and the Visual Arts'. Gillian is completing a doctoral thesis on this subject. The meeting will be at 2 pm.

The Annual London Meeting of the Society will also take place at the Francis Holland School on Saturday 7 November at 2.15 pm. John Chapple, our Chairman, will speak on the same theme as he addressed at the Brontë Society earlier this year: 'A Sense of Place: Mrs Gaskell and the Brontës'. All members are welcome.

Full details of next year's programme are yet to be finalised, but the Annual London Meeting of the Society for 1993 has been arranged. This will take place at the Francis Holland School on Saturday 6 November 1993, when Edward G Preston, the Honorary General Secretary of the Dickens Fellowship and a member of the Gaskell Society, will speak on some aspect of Dickens and Mrs Gaskell.

For further details of meetings and venues please contact Dudley J Barlow, 44 Seymour Road, London SW18 5JA (Tel: 081 874 7727)

HOWARD F GREGG

MRS GASKELL, LOUIS KOSSUTH AND  
THE HUNGARIAN REVOLUTION

In this article I want to relate Mrs Gaskell to an unusual context, not that of the social and economic 'condition of England', but to the Europe of the revolutions of 1848. She showed her awareness of this contemporary background and of its relevance to her own work in a letter of April 28, 1850 to the American critic, John Seely Hart. In it she wrote of Mary Barton that 'A good deal of it's [sic] 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.' Elsewhere, in her Life of Charlotte Brontë, she touched on English provincial awareness of these revolutions. Writing of the characteristics of the West Riding of Yorkshire, she observed: 'The class of Christian names prevalent in a district is one indication of the direction in which its tide of hero-worship sets. Grave enthusiasts in politics or religion perceive not the ludicrous side of those which they give to their children; and some are to be found, still in their infancy, not a dozen miles from Haworth, that will have to go through life as Lamartine, Kossuth, and Dembinsky', names of heroes of the revolutions respectively in France, Hungary and Poland. Closer to home, William Shaen, the husband of her friend, Emily Winkworth, meant to call his first-born child after Joseph Mazzini, but it proved to be a girl. In a letter to Emily Shaen in 1853 Mrs Gaskell expressed enthusiastic interest in Mazzini, and she wrote a preface to a translation of Col Vecchj's Garibaldi in Caprera, published in 1862, though she declared the task 'imposed on me by force, not adopted of my own free will'.

Here, however, I am concerned with one of the 1848 revolutions - that in Hungary against the Habsburg autocracy, led by Louis Kossuth and the Magyars. What is called the 'lawful revolution' of March 1848 secured for Hungary from the Habsburgs, beleaguered by risings

in Italy, Prague and Vienna, parliamentary government, freedom of religion and the press, and the abolition of serfdom. But Habsburg determination to reimpose their rule from Vienna made use of the nationalism of other ethnic groups in Hungary - Croats, Slovaks, Serbs, Romanians - overridden by the proud, historic Magyar race. From September 1848 a bitter war was fought across Hungary for almost a year, with 50,000 killed on each side. Kossuth defiantly, unwisely, proclaimed Hungary independent, with himself as governor, and his followers fought heroically and desperately. Ultimate Habsburg victory was achieved by the military intervention of the classic autocrat, the Tsar of Russia, and followed by brutal Austrian reprisals. Kossuth fled into what is now Bulgaria, which was then part of the Ottoman Empire.

The Hungarian struggle caught the imagination of liberals and radicals in England and the USA: to them it was an echo of their own countries' constitutional conflicts and they were ignorant of the ethnic complexities. One such was Professor Francis Newman (brother of John Henry), a friend of the Gaskells from his time in Manchester (1840-46) as Professor of Classical Literature at Manchester New College. He was a member of the Hungarian Committee in London and saw Hungary as a nation whose liberties 'as ancient as those of England, were crushed by the conspiracy of two Emperors'. A lead in the Manchester Examiner and Times in November 1856, recalled the feelings of 1849: 'Every mind was preoccupied with it. Every despatch was awaited with intense emotion. Every Austrian defeat was welcomed with universal joy'. Mrs Gaskell shared this emotion: to Eliza Fox she wrote in ? early November 1849, 'I wonder if you ever see Mr Newman's papers on Hungary or if you care to; - Kossuth is coming here to visit a friend of ours, so I mean to see him by hook or by crook'. This is a curious statement since Kossuth was then a refugee in Turkey: possibly the fact that in November the Austrians ceased to press for his extradition may have led to rumours that he might be free to travel to England.

Kossuth was a charismatic figure - handsome, idealistic and energetic, and a great orator. In Hungary his portrait was said to be in every peasant cottage and in England he and his cause inspired over 100 books and several thousand articles. In England it was to his advantage that he had been born a Protestant, and even more that, during a two-year imprisonment in Budapest, he had taught himself English from the Bible and Shakespeare. This was the foundation of that oratory which captured Anglo-Saxon audiences: his English admirers later presented him with a splendid copy of Shakespeare.

The Sultan, bolstered by the British Government, refused to extradite Kossuth to Austria, but shelter meant internment in 'Asiatic Turkey'. Only in September 1851 was he allowed to leave Turkey, carried on a US frigate, for safety, to Marseilles. It was the start of half a lifetime's exile: he had left Hungary at 47 and he died in Turin 45 years later. In exile he never ceased to campaign against Austria and Russia and for the causes of Hungary and the Italian Risorgimento.

Kossuth arrived in his 'Paradise England' at the end of October 1851. He was besieged by requests for visits from towns all over Britain and in the next few weeks he made numerous speeches. From December 1851 to July 1852 he was in the USA. There his popularity waned, but on his return it was still strong in Britain, where he lived until 1860. Though based in London, he naturally, in view of its importance, paid a number of visits to Manchester, notably in November 1851, November 1856 and May 1859.

There are signs in Mrs Gaskell's letters that Hungary was a topical subject before Kossuth came to Manchester: even a joke shows this. Writing to Eliza Fox on April 26, 1850, she retails a series of riddles of which the first is 'Why is the Emperor of Russia like a beggar at Xmas? Because he's confounded Hungary and wants a slice of Turkey'. Socially she met Hungarian refugees: in

February 1852 she was at a gathering where 'the party consisted almost entirely of Germans, it being Ash Wednesday when many English don't like to visit. There were several Hungarians'. One family she mentions several times - the De Merys - whom she and Mr Gaskell met in August 1851 at a 'sociable tea' at Mr Leisler's.

M. de Mery (Mrs Gaskell's spelling) or de Mérey (the Winkworths' spelling) was a wealthy nobleman, a staff officer and a friend of Kossuth. All his property had been confiscated and as his only accomplishments were soldiering and music, he gave lessons in Manchester on the violin and in Hungarian. His wife, who had fled to Paris with the children, joined him in Manchester in October 1850. Mrs Gaskell's friends, the Winkworth sisters, thought her 'a most interesting person, very clever and highly educated'; she gave lessons in French and German. For safety's sake the De Merys lived at first under the assumed name of Marton. Their true identity was a source of intrigued speculation among their Manchester acquaintances, who read the 'Memoirs of the War of Independence in Hungary' by Klapka, one of Kossuth's generals, to try and solve the mystery. Furthermore, an article in Bentley's Miscellany on 'Kossuth's Domestic Life' was known to have been written by Mme Marton. Stephen Winkworth wrote to Catherine (October 16, 1850): 'I am almost inclined to think with you that M. Marton cannot be C.C.B. [Count Casimir Batthyani] as Mrs Gaskell guessed, because she [Mme Marton] praises him so, and if he is not, what "well-known" name is there left to guess?' Mme Marton apparently planned to write accounts of other distinguished Hungarians.

Mrs Gaskell clearly tried to help Mme de Mery, originally in a literary way: to Grace Schwabe c. May 1852, she wrote 'Mme de Mery has just called; and I have persuaded her to let me try Her Hungarian Legend at Household Words. I think they will take it'. She asks Grace to send it off to W H Wills with her compliments 'just that they may know which MS to open, when I write to them about it'. (A footnote remarks the absence of an

article of this title but the appearance of 'The Golden Age of Hungary' in Household Words on December 25, 1852.) After her husband's death in 1853 Mme de Mery ran a successful millinery business, with Mrs Gaskell among her customers, until her death in 1855.

As early as October 1850, M. de Mery told Stephen Winkworth that he thought Kossuth would come to England and, if he did, 'of course to Manchester'. In fact Kossuth came in November 1851, just over a fortnight after his arrival in England. He came to the Manchester of the 'Manchester School' of Cobden and Bright, where the Anti-Corn Law League had triumphed. Kossuth's visit in 1851 was an event in a class by itself. 'The stirring intellectual city of the Irwell was in a ferment' wrote a supporter, and the radical Manchester Examiner and Times devoted a special supplement to it. Even The Times, which was hostile to Kossuth, covered it fully, giving a vivid account of his progress through the town. 'Carts, waggons, omnibuses, cabs, stage-vans and cotton trucks were ranged up by the footpath, 2, 3 and 4 deep, piled up with human beings who cheered as if for their lives'. At the Examiner and Times office a large flag was hung out with the words 'Free Trade, Free Press, Free People, Welcome Kossuth'. At the evening meeting in the Free Trade Hall The Times correspondent felt the enthusiasm equalled even the [Jenny] Lind mania and that the hall was 'crowded as it never was even in the palmiest days of the League'.

It was this meeting, on November 11, that Mrs Gaskell attended, and her friends, Mrs Fletcher and Mrs Davy came down from Lancrigg and Ambleside to stay with her on purpose to go to the Kossuth meeting. Emily Winkworth observed a remarkable link (which Mrs Gaskell would surely not have missed) between 1848 and the French Revolution. She reported to Susanna (writing from London later in November 1851) 'I wonder if Mrs Fletcher met Kossuth after all? She had not done so before that evening, because Mazzini, who had seen her, was telling him about her, and how she was eighty-six, and had known Brissot and somebody, and had now come

after Kossuth, all across England, to hear his speeches'. Brissot had been one of the leaders of the Girondins and was guillotined in 1793 during the Terror.

The occasion was full of emotion: Kossuth spoke with superb, impassioned oratory for 1½ hours, ending with the appeal: 'People of Manchester, people of England speak - speak with manly resolution to the despots of the world'. He spoke, too, as the Examiner and Times noted, with 'wonderful sagacity', showing grasp of 'the political tone that prevails in Manchester'. Such a declaration as 'commerce is the locomotive of principles' was calculated to appeal to his Manchester audience.

Mrs Gaskell's great friend, Catherine Winkworth, gave a detailed account of the meeting to her sister, Emily, on November 13. She described the press at the door nearly an hour before it opened: the stewards allowed ladies in early and protected them from being knocked down. Catherine and her friends got 'very good seats just in front. Lily [Mrs Gaskell] was close to us, with Mrs Fletcher and Mrs Davy, and behind them Mr and Mrs Forster - Jane Arnold that was'. (These were W E Forster and his wife, the sister of Matthew Arnold.) Kossuth was cheered by everyone at the beginning and end of his speech, given in 'wonderfully fluent English for a foreigner'. (Elsewhere she speaks of his 'very foreign accent'.) 'Unfortunately, he could not make his voice heard through that immense hall ... We could hear every word, but it required close attention to keep up with him'. 'His speech was magnificent, an absolutely satisfactory speech; not a word that one could have wished altered, not an atom of rant or clap-trap'. In another letter she declared 'I thoroughly liked all that Kossuth said ...'. Altogether, Catherine Winkworth was a most enthusiastic admirer.

Mrs Gaskell's reaction to the occasion is in a letter to Eliza Fox of Monday (? 17 November 1851). It is much briefer and less factual than Catherine Winkworth's, but throws light on her personality. She was fully aware of

the charisma of Kossuth, but head as well as heart were at work, and she retained a degree of analytical detachment. 'What do you think of Kossuth [;] is he not a WONDERFUL man for cleverness. His speech was real eloquence, I never heard anyone speak before that I could analyze as it went along, and think what caused the effect but when he spoke I could only feel;- and yet I am not quite sure about him, that's to say I am quite sure about his end being a noble one, but I think it has so possessed him that I am not quite out and out sure that he would stick at any means, it's not for me to be poking into and judging him ...'.

Did she wish to follow up her interest in Kossuth and Hungary? In 1852 (see Gaskell Society Journal, 5) Mr Gaskell borrowed from the Portico Library, of which only men could be members, Kossuth and Magyar Land, published in 1851 by Charles Pridham, former correspondent of The Times. But Mr Gaskell, too, was enthusiastic for Kossuth: he had attended a large private meeting, for gentlemen only, on the day after the Free Trade Hall meeting, at the house of the Mayor of Manchester. There he had been moved almost to tears (as he told the Winkworth sisters) by Kossuth's speech, and saw 'many of the hard Manchester faces covered with tears'.

Kossuth's later visits to Manchester in 1856, 1857 and 1859, though enthusiastically received, had not the succès fou of 1851, when he had been a novelty, fresh from his heroism in war and his detention in Turkey. But he could still fire audiences of thousands, especially when, in 1856, he attacked the papal concordat with Austria, telling his audience that Hungary had enabled Luther and Calvin to carry on the Reformation, and when, in 1856 and 1859, he united the causes of Hungary and Italy. Mrs Gaskell, however, makes no further reference to him in her letters, and the Winkworth letters confirm that the peak of interest in Kossuth in these Manchester circles had passed.

MARJORIE COX

Quotations from letters are taken from The Letters of Mrs Gaskell (1966), ed. J A V Chapple and Arthur Pollard, to whom and to Manchester University Press I am grateful for permission to quote, and from Letters and Memorials of Catherine Winkworth ed. by her sister (1883)

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### DICKENS AND THE GHOST STORY

Letter to the Editor:

You raised the question in the new Gaskell Society Newsletter No.13 of a version by Charles Dickens of a story of Mrs Gaskell's recounted by Augustus Hare in "The Years with Mother".

This story of the lady haunted by a face, and its various versions, was discussed in The Ghost Story Newsletter No.9 of December 1991. I began it myself by asking, in the previous newsletter, about a Victorian story I remembered vaguely which was obviously the source of E F Benson's "The Face", included in his "Spook Stories" (1928): he gives it an English setting. Hugh Lamb identified this source as "The Man with the Nose" by Rhoda Broughton, from her "Twilight Stories" (1879): he included it in his anthology "Victorian Nightmares" (1977): the setting is Lucerne. Kev Demant further stated that Rhoda Broughton's story is a fleshed-out version of "To be Read at Dusk" by Charles DICKENS, which has a Genoese setting. Peter Haining included it in "The Ghost Stories of Charles Dickens" (Volume 2, 1985) and stated that it originally appeared in "The Keepsake" of 1852.

MURIEL SMITH

### THE DRAGON OF WANTLEY.

The Gaskells spent their honeymoon in North Wales in September 1832. In a join letter William described their movements to his sister, Eliza (NL 9 gives this text), then the bride continued the letter (GL 2). After saying that the Welsh mountains agreed with them and they were very well, Elizabeth added:

"You would be astonished to see our appetites, the Dragon of Wantley, 'who churches ate of a Sunday, Whole dishes of people were to him, but a dish of salmagunde' was really a delicate appetite compared to ours."

She would be quoting from memory.

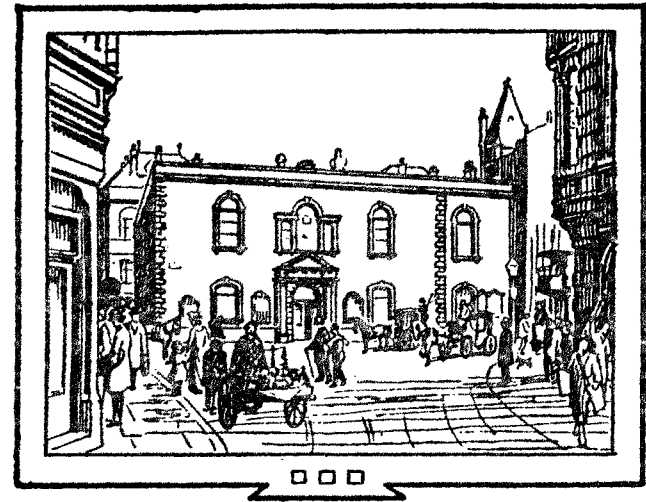


I happened to come across this charming woodcut in a book (? collected magazines) called *The Reliquary*, for April 1878. The original broadsheet was entitled 'An Excellent Ballad of that most Dreadful COMBATE fought Between Moore of Moore-hall and the Dragon of Wantley. To a Pleasant Tune much in request'.

It is believed that the setting of the story was the Derbyshire/Yorkshire borders.

JOAN LEACH

# The Gaskell Society



CROSS STREET CHAPEL

## NEWSLETTER

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 634668)

ISSN 0954 - 1209

JANUARY 1993

NO. 15

### EDITOR'S LETTER

As there is very little space to spare in this newsletter and with pressures mounting as Christmas rushes on me, I am not in a cool, collected state, so I will be brief.

We manage to keep our membership fees down by economising on printing, which is a major expense and postage costs rise steadily. It is a great help if membership dues are paid promptly.

We hope to surprise you with a special publication during the year but it is too soon to reveal our plans. Our meetings in 1992 were well attended and it is good to meet friends; you will always find a welcome. We are very much looking forward to 1993.

Our thanks are due to Arthur Pollard for his sterling service as our President in our first seven years. Also retiring is our librarian, Mrs Mary Thwaite. Both become honorary life members. We welcome Geoffrey Sharps as our President.

Joan Leach

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### EDINBURGH WEEKEND CONFERENCE

This is proving very popular and WE MUST HAVE YOUR BOOKINGS AS SOON AS POSSIBLE OR THERE IS LIKELY TO BE DISAPPOINTMENT.

We have put together a most attractive and varied programme and allowed time for exploring Edinburgh. There is also the option of extra days, eg B&B at £18.65.

There are some flats, 3 bedrooms at £265, and 4 at £330 a week, but this does not include conference charges. There is a very convenient bus service into town. The College has spacious grounds and a swimming pool etc.

Some of use hope to travel by train from Cheshire on Thursday 19 August, benefiting from group travel rates. If you need more information or a copy of the programme, please write to the Hon Secretary.



### FORTHCOMING EVENTS

New Year Lunch in Knutsford on 4 January at The Methodist Rooms, Princess Street, 12.45 for 1.00 pm. This is an informal lunch, to mark the retirement of Mrs Mary Thwaite from our committee. We are having the services of the caterer we had for our AGM meeting in 1991. Cost £5. Please book with Secretary, Joan Leach. Pay on the day

Spring Meeting at Cross Street Chapel  
20 March at 2 pm. George Eliot and Elizabeth Gaskell from the Biographer's Point of View by Jenny Uglow. We hope to have copies of Jenny Uglow's new book on sale. This meeting is earlier in the year than usual for various reasons; firstly The Manchester Literary and Philosophical Society are holding a seminar on The Literature of Manchester on Saturday 17 April, which we think some of our members will wish to attend and, secondly, the Alliance of Literary Societies has its AGM in Birmingham on 24 April.

#### Annual Outing

As it is several years since we went to The Lake District, we hope to go to Morecambe Bay, Silverdale and Cartmel, on Sunday 23 May (to be confirmed)

Further details of our year's events will be sent out with the Journal which will be ready for distribution at the Spring Meeting.

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### THE BRONTE SOCIETY

Christine Sumner was elected Chairman of The Brontë Society at the last AGM in June. Sadly she died suddenly and will be greatly missed for her total commitment and tireless work for the Society.

J G Sharps represented us at the funeral on 4 November and offered our condolence.

### AGM WEEKEND

2-4 October 1992

by Muriel Easter and  
Alice Reddihough

Since joining the Gaskell Society two years ago, we have had it in mind to visit Knutsford; the programme for the AGM weekend seemed to be a good opportunity.

In spite of heavy rain, Society members and Knutsfordians gathered on Friday evening for Mrs Joan Leach's talk, with slides, on "Mrs Gaskell's Knutsford and Cheshire". This was a fascinating account of the community which Mrs Gaskell would have known, and the town as it is today. As we walked round Knutsford next morning, the slides and interesting anecdotes fell into place.

On Saturday, about seventy Members gathered for a very good lunch at the Royal George. This was a suitable venue as the eighteenth-century assembly rooms, referred to in Mrs Gaskell's fiction, are still in use here.

At the AGM, we all regretted Professor Pollard's announcement that he had decided not to stand again for the position of president. The Society is considering registration as a charity, which will involve some changes in the constitution. Some points were raised immediately, and there will be much discussion to come.

Mrs Akiko Aikawa then gave a talk, "Nursery Rhymes in 'Wives and Daughters'". To us, apart from the opening of the book, these had gone unnoticed. Perhaps because nursery rhymes are not part of the Japanese tradition, their use struck her more forcefully, and this will shed new light on our re-reading of the novel. The talk was delivered in excellent English, and Mrs Aikawa participated enthusiastically in the whole programme.

As the Australian speaker was unable to be present, Professor John Chapple then gave an address, "Place and People in Elizabeth Gaskell's Work". He had recently

been researching German records of Mrs Gaskell's visits to Heidelberg and the surroundings. On their first visit in 1841, she and her husband were welcomed into a wealthy and artistic circle. He emphasised the contrast between Manchester in 1841 and Heidelberg, a medieval town in a romantic setting. He illustrated this with evocative slides of contemporary paintings and lithographs. He also commented on Mrs Gaskell's use of German customs in her story, Six weeks at Heppenheim. She showed an accurate knowledge of the neighbourhood, but was ready to depart from actual scenes to suit her fictional needs. In his inimitable way, Professor Chapple shared with us his erudition and enthusiasm.

On Saturday evening, we visited Tabley House. Mrs Gaskell remembered the old hall, and picnicking in the park. We were shown a series of rooms with interesting family portraits and other paintings from the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries. This was complemented by "An Evening with the Victorians at Tabley House". Joan arranged and presented readings, including extracts from privately published diaries, giving a picture of the family living in the house, and of outstanding Victorians such as Tennyson and Gladstone. We were privileged to have the extracts read by Delia Corry, who evoked such varied characters; and we were grateful to the museum staff for sharing their enthusiasm with us. It was a memorable evening.

On Sunday morning, the sun shone. We were invited to share in the service held at the Brook Street Unitarian Chapel, an interesting building erected in 1689, where Mrs Gaskell worshipped as a girl. The readings and hymns were carefully chosen, the words of one hymn being by William Gaskell, and one of the readings from "Ruth". The address stressed the divergences of Christian thought, and the importance of works to Unitarians. This was exemplified by the Gaskells, and is as relevant for us today.

After the service, Joan laid flowers on the grave in which Mr & Mrs Gaskell and their two unmarried daughters

are buried. It was fitting that just then a skein of calling geese flew overhead.

On Sunday afternoon, Joan led a "Cranford" walk, starting from Aunt Lumb's house, which was surprisingly large. Although the owners were absent, we were allowed to explore the garden, dominated by an unusual Himalayan cedar.

Knutsford is celebrating the 700th anniversary of the granting of its charter. It is a friendly town, and we were grateful to the ladies who offered refreshments on every occasion. Our warmest thanks go to all those who contributed to the success of the weekend, especially to Joan, who was involved in every activity, but still had time for us individually. We spent a happy and stimulating weekend, meeting old friends and making new ones. We look forward to visiting Knutsford again.

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#### SE GROUP PROGRAMME FOR 1993

6 February at Francis Holland School, 39 Graham Terrace, SW1W 8JF (a few minutes walk from Sloane Square underground station). 2 pm Gaskellians of a Past Generation by J G Sharps, President of the Gaskell Society

8 May at 15 Lincoln Street, SW3 2TP (also close to Sloane Square). 2 pm Cousin Phillis introduced by Brenda Colloms

17 July at Francis Holland School. Ruth introduced by Howard Gregg

The Annual London Meeting to which members of the Dickens Fellowship will be invited will be on 6 November at Francis Holland School at 2.15 pm. Edward Preston, Secretary of The Dickens Fellowship, will speak on Elizabeth Gaskell and Charles Dickens.

If you have any queries about the meetings in London, please contact: Dudley Barlow, 44 Seymour Road, London SW18 5JA (081 874 7727)

Another letter from William Gaskell, traced by J A V Chapple, printed with the kind permission of Rutgers University Library:

Plymouth Grove  
April 15, 1857

My dear Miss Nussey,

Among a huge heap of letters awaiting me on my arrival from Newcastle last night (where I had been since Thursday) was the enclosed. As you may suppose, it was any thing but agreeable to think what you must have been setting me down as - an unlettered, unmannered, ungrateful, good-for-nothing sort of brute. I send the envelope by way of exculpation, though perhaps it leaves me open to the charge of defect - but I was obliged to write in a hurry, and was not sure whether to put on Halifax or Leeds. I hope your copy of the Life, and the one for Miss Wooler came safe.

All the notices that I have seen have been favourable, and some of the best exceedingly so. I have had a considerable number of letters too from distinguished men expressing high approval. Mr Brontë too, I am happy to say, is pleased, and I can only hope that Mr Nicholls will (as Sir J.K. Shuttleworth says) 'learn to rejoice that his wife will be known as a Christian heroine, who could bear her cross with the firmness of a martyr saint.'

I have not time to give you any long account of the travellers. They were to leave Rome for Florence yesterday, after going through all the crushing, and excitement of the Holy Week. I only hope they won't be kilt and spilt entirely. They intend to go as far as Venice, and then, I suppose, will turn their steps homeward. My two chickens here are very well, and if they were not gone to School would send their love.

Hoping your weather is better, I am, my dear Miss Nussey,  
Yours very hastily, but sincerely  
Wm Gaskell

Ed. Mrs Gaskell, with her two elder daughters, Marianne and Meta, left Manchester on 13 February 1857. In a letter dated 8 February she was still sending 'copy' (presumably proofs) of The Life of Charlotte Brontë to her publisher, George Smith.

# THE CHARM OF BARBARA BODICHON

by Barbara Brill

In recent months I have fallen under the spell of Barbara Bodichon, whose name I first met with when reading Mrs Gaskell's letters. In July 1850 (GL 73) she wrote to Eliza Fox, "Do you know I've a great fancy for asking Barbara Smith" (Mme Bodichon was born Barbara Leigh-Smith) "to come and pay us a visit. Do you think she'd come?" I think Mrs Gaskell had got wind through mutual friends of Barbara Smith's charm.

Perhaps it was because I share Barbara Bodichon's initials that the name penetrated my memory, as it proved to be a name that constantly was thrusting itself out at me from the pages of books on varying subjects. I seemed to be haunted by her as I pored over books on late nineteenth century celebrities whose paths seemed so often to cross hers: Gertrude Jekyll, famous woman gardener; the novelists Trollope, George Eliot and 20th century Virginia Woolf; the Pre-Raphaelite painters - all seemed to be impressed by Barbara. I became charmed by her and felt I had fallen under her spell, and I hope when I tell you a little about her you will feel the same attraction.

Her claim to fame is in her work for women's rights, founder of Girton College and instigator of the Married Women's Property Act. She was a pre-cursor of the Suffragettes but never actively joined them, preferring to wage a solitary and earnest battle for the equality of the sexes with her pen, her paintbrush, her power of oratory, her personality and presence, and her purse.

She was born in 1827 and was able to date her earliest meeting with one of her feminist friends, Bessie Parkes, to the day of Queen Victoria's coronation, when as children they both attended a family party to celebrate the occasion.

Barbara's family background hardly conformed to accepted Victorian middle-class standards. She was the eldest of

five illegitimate children of an unmarried member of Parliament, Benjamin Smith. Mrs Gaskell referred to the circumstances of her birth in a letter to Charles Norton (GL 461) written on April 5th 1860, when she referred to her as "an illegitimate cousin of Hilary Carter, F. Nightingale, - and has their nature in her; through some of the legitimates don't acknowledge her. She is - I think in consequence of her birth, a strong fighter against the established opinions of the world, - which always goes against my - what shall I call it? - taste - (that is not the word) but I can't help admiring her noble bravery, and respecting - while I don't personally like her."

Barbara inherited her father's fighting spirit. He was an active anti-Corn Law campaigner and dedicated Unitarian, holding strong views on the importance of education particularly with regard to equal educational opportunities for both sexes. He had all his children taught at home and in addition had a large carriage, like an omnibus, in which he took his children with tutors and servants on long journeys throughout the British Isles and later on the Continent, as part of their education. When Barbara came of age, as with all his sons and daughters, he made her an allowance of £300 a year which Barbara used to found a school, open to both sexes, to all classes and all religious creeds. In addition she started evening classes for ladies to learn drawing with the exceptional opportunity provided of an undraped nude model. The Royal Academy Schools were not at the time open to women, so Barbara got up a petition to campaign for women's acceptance and was successful, though she had to wait until 1894 before the first painting by a woman was accepted at the Royal Academy Exhibition, and even this was due to an error, the artist's sex not having been revealed.

Barbara herself attended life-drawing classes at Bedford College and soon displayed an exceptional talent as an artist. Her paintings were bold and vivid and her water colours particularly showed a touch of genius. Mrs Gaskell was attracted by her paintings of the American

scene and referred to them in her letter to Charles Norton (GL 461) previously quoted. "What gave me the best idea of America, or a piece of it, was an oil painting of Mme Bodichon (née Barbara Leigh Smith) ... She married two or three years ago a Dr Bodichon, of Algiers, a Breton by birth - and they went for their honey-year to America, - and in some wild luxuriant terrific part of Virginia? in a gorge full of rich rank tropical vegetation, - her husband keeping watch over her with loaded pistols because of the alligators infesting the stream. - Well! that picture did look like my idea of America."

Barbara married Eugène Bodichon in 1857 at the Unitarian Chapel in Little Portland Street, London. They met in Algiers where Barbara spent several winters on account of her health, Algiers being at that time a favourite centre where the sick ladies of Europe retreated to recuperate. Barbara found much to appeal to her artistic tastes in this new French colony, painting the scenery, collecting the pottery, studying the wild flowers and wearing the native Moorish costume. Most important of all was her meeting with Dr Bodichon, a resident there for many years. He was skilled at the treatment of patients wounded by wild animals during hunting expeditions and made a special study of the treatment of malaria, then rife in the colony, tracing the cause of the illness to the lack of trees. He was a keen anthropologist, studying the habits of Arab tribes.

With their mutual concern for their underprivileged brothers and sisters and desire to reform the world, Eugène and Barbara were drawn to each other as fellow idealists and eccentrics. Their respect ripened into love. Barbara described him to a friend at the age of 46 as "being very young for his age; has black hair and eyes, the brownest skin you ever saw and a magnificent head. I think him the handsomest man ever created. He is tall, grave, almost sombre in aspect and very eccentric in dress. He never wears a hat and has black hair as thick as a Newfoundland dog's coat. Some people think the docteur ugly and terrific." Bessie Parkes

believed the marriage was made in heaven and said, "I have never regarded her marriage to that singular man with any regret".

They must have made a striking couple. Barbara was robust and healthy and was described by Rossetti as being "blessed with a large portion of tin, fat, enthusiasm and golden hair. She thinks nothing of climbing up mountains in breeches and wading through streams in none." Barbara rebelled against the tightly corseted fashions of the day and always went uncorseted in simple free-flowing clothes. Her golden hair was her crowning glory and it captivated George Eliot, who chose to base the character of Romola in her novel of that name on Barbara. Romola is introduced in chapter V of the novel in these words:

"The only spot of bright colour in the room was made by the hair of a tall maiden of seventeen or eighteen who was standing before a reading desk. The hair was of a reddish gold colour enriched by an unbroken small ripple, such as may be seen in sunset days on grandest autumnal evenings. It was confined by a black fillet above her small ears, from which it rippled forward again, and made a natural veil for her neck above her square cut gown of black serge. Her eyes were bent on a large volume placed before her, one long white hand rested on the reading desk and the other clasped the back of her father's chair."

What a charmer!

For further details of Barbara Bodichon, refer to BARBARA BODICHON 1827-91 by Hester Burton, published by John Murray 1949.

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AN INTRODUCTION TO  
ELIZABETH GASKELL'S SHORT STORIES

by Sylvia Burch

Talk given to South of England Branch  
of the Gaskell Society - 25 April 1992

This talk was given in two parts, the first consisting of a general Introduction to the Short Stories for which I am indebted to Angus Easson's chapter in his biography Elizabeth Gaskell (1979) and to Geoffrey Sharps' Mrs Gaskell's Observation and Invention (1970). The second part was a reading and discussion by the group of one of the stories - Half a Lifetime Ago (Ed: There is only space for the first part)

Mrs Gaskell's reputation with modern readers rests securely on the foundation of her full-length novels, and it is for these that she is most appreciated. But, if we are to realise the true wealth of her creativity we have also to consider her short stories. These come to us in great variety of form and subject matter and the best of them hold the reader's attention in much the same way as they did over a century ago. Elizabeth Gaskell delighted in story telling; her friend, Susanna Winkworth, said:

"No one ever came near her in the gift of telling a story. In her hands the simplest incident - a meeting in the street, a talk with a factory-girl, a country walk, an old family history - became picturesque and vivid and interesting."

(Quoted by A Easson in "Introduction to Cousin Phillis")

There are about thirty short stories in all, and it was not for nothing that Dickens dubbed their author "Scheherazade". She, herself, wrote vividly about her story-telling experiences while visiting Heidelberg in 1841 -

"We all told the most frightening and wild stories we had ever heard - some such fearful

ones - all true - "  
(Letter to Eliza Holland, August 1841)

Certainly 'frightening and wild' are apt descriptions of her ghost stories - especially The Old Nurse's Story and The Poor Clare with its supernatural curse! Although we use the term "short stories" it quickly becomes obvious that some of them are really novellas. With the exception of The Moorland Cottage (published as a separate Christmas Book) they all appeared first in periodicals.

In his Introduction to the Knutsford Edition (London 1906) of My Lady Ludlow and Other Stories, A W Ward skilfully made the connection between Mrs Gaskell's home and family life and her stories. He noted that she was as well able to date her stories "from my own apartment" as Steele had been for "The Tatler" and also that she used Round the Sofa as the title to her own Introduction. Speaking of the Stories, he observed that the all -

"remain instinct with the human kindness and sympathy which were part of herself, and of the atmosphere breathed by her in her home life."

The frontispiece of the Knutsford Lady Ludlow volume has a picture of the Gaskell drawing room at 84 Plymouth Grove and Ward elaborates on this room -

"Where more than one of her stories ... may have found their earliest readers, and where their writer may have first welcomed the clear-sighted criticisms of a watchful affection."

Although the range of theme and material covered by the short stories is enormous, the closeness between the work and the writer's life and experience can never be overlooked. Mrs Gaskell's own thoughts and beliefs permeate her writing, and her humanity and moral code are always clearly shown. Her first published short story was Libbie Marsh's Three Eras (1847) and it soon

became apparent that this type of writing was a useful money-maker and a great help to the family finances. The stories paid well and could be sold twice - once to a magazine and then again to a publisher in volume form. By April 1850, she is writing to Eliza Fox -

"Do you know they sent me £20 for Lizzie Leigh? I stared, and wondered if I was swindling them but I suppose I am not; and Wm. has composedly buttoned it up in his pocket. He has promised I may have some for the Refuge."

Holidays could be paid for in this way; in July 1858 she wrote from Silverdale asking C E Norton -

"Given £105 and 2 months (I am republishing my HW stories under the title of "Round the Sofa" - to get this money -) and 3 people, and where can they go at the middle or end of October? Now do try and answer this."

And, later in May 1862, she again proves she has her feet firmly on the ground when she writes to Marianne -

"My dearest Polly, my story is found! And is going to bring me in a good price! £150. Only don't tell anyone."

The stories - on the whole - show great variety but there is some unevenness of quality. Also, some themes were repeatedly used or there was a re-working of the same material under a different title. The beginnings of Cranford, for example, can be traced in a piece entitled The Last Generation in England (1849) and also in Mr Harrison's Confessions (1851). Mrs Gaskell's plots were often loosely constructed and proper names bore a great deal of repetition. the brother and sister motif was one which went through much of her work - we can observe it in The Moorland Cottage (1850) and later in North and South (1854-55). However, this seems generally to have been a favourite topic in Victorian literature and was used by George Eliot in The Mill on the Floss, Dickens in Hard Times, etc. In all these tales, the main woman character (or the sister) shows great inner growth and spiritual development, in

contrast to the more worldly aims of the man (either brother or lover, as the case may be). The Crooked Branch is another example, where the son of the elderly couple is shown totally lacking in any moral scruple while the adopted niece displays true virtue and Christian compassion.

All Mrs Gaskell's stories demonstrate the same splendid evocations of time and place and detailed observation of life and feeling as we find in the novels. Throughout, she makes us aware of her belief in a guiding power greater than that of her individual characters. We sense her own firm religious beliefs forming her guidelines for the way life should be lived. Based on love, kindness and tolerance, such guidelines still have validity for us today. But, she also builds on the Romantic as well as the Christian tradition. Wordsworth was always an inspiration for her, from the earliest days when writing of The Poets and Poetry of Humble Life she quoted (or slightly misquoted) from "The Old Cumberland Beggar" -

"We have all of us one human heart"

(Letter to Mary Howitt, August 1838)

And it is this feeling of the "oneness" of the human race that provides so much of her writing, from the novels like Mary Barton and North and South right through the finest of the short stories and sketches such as Half a Lifetime Ago and An Accursed Race.

Five collections of stories appeared in Mrs Gaskell's lifetime; these were:

Lizzie Leigh and Other Tales - 1855

Round the Sofa - 1859

Right at Last and Other Tales - 1860

Cousin Phillis and Other Tales - 1865

and in 1861, the Tauchnitz edition of "Lois the Witch and Other Tales". Many stories were set in the recent past, while others entailed quite a lot of historical research (eg "Lois the Witch") on the author's part. Holiday experiences helped with foreign backgrounds ("Six Weeks at Heppenheim") and nearer to home the Welsh setting of The Doom of the Griffiths.

That selections of the short stories are still being published and read today (eg The Manchester Marriage and Other Stories 1985, reprinted 1990, and A Dark Night's Work 1992) is surely proof of the enduring quality of this part of Mrs Gaskell's work.

Angus Easson (see his "Elizabeth Gaskell" 1979, for a fuller elaboration) has surveyed the stories in three main groups and has usefully divided them into:

- 1 The earliest tales: these were published in a variety of magazines from about 1847-48 and include the first published story Libby Marsh's Three Eras and some "Sunday School" stories, eg Bessy's Troubles at Home which Mrs Gaskell wrote of later as "complete rubbish"!
- 2 The second and most important group of stories were those written for Dickens - for "Household Words" and "All the Year Round". This was Mrs Gaskell's main market and most of her stories (twenty) went here, although she was later to speak slightly of it, referring to a story as "not good enough for the Cornhill Magazine - but might be good enough for Household Words" (letter to G Smith, Dec. 1859) and also to worry when Dickens became unpopular after his separation from his wife. However, from the very first issue of "Household Words" (March-April 1850) when Lizzie Leigh appeared, Dickens and his periodicals were the chief means of publication for her stories. Some of these were for Dickens' Christmas Number and he envisaged them being told to listeners around the Christmas fireside. The Old Nurse's Story came out in the 1852 Number and we can easily imagine the warmth and companionship of the hearth, forming a strong contrast to the chill and horror of that ghostly tale!
- 3 The third group of stories were those published in The Cornhill Magazine (founded 1860) and of these the greatest was Cousin Phillis, more a novella

than a short story - and almost perfect. This was published from November 1863 to February 1864, and has been called an idyll by countless readers and critics alike. It may deserve this title, however - if it does - it is an idyll firmly rooted in the reality of everyday rural life but which - at the same time - is pervaded by a sense of quiet calm and tranquillity. On the surface at least! Perhaps, as strong feelings and passions lie underneath Cousin Phillis as any that thread their way through the Brontës' stormy sagas!

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#### OBITUARY

We are sorry to report the death of John T M Nussey, who was a loyal and supportive founder member of our Society; he attended the commemorative lunch at The Royal George in Knutsford for the 175th Anniversary of Elizabeth Gaskell's birth held on 30 September 1985, and was at the inaugural meeting of our Society three weeks later.

John, the great great nephew of Ellen Nussey, was a staunch supporter of The Brontë Society and an invaluable link between our two Societies. He reported, in The Brontë Society Transactions on the formation of The Gaskell Society and personally introduced me to Council members at Haworth Parsonage.

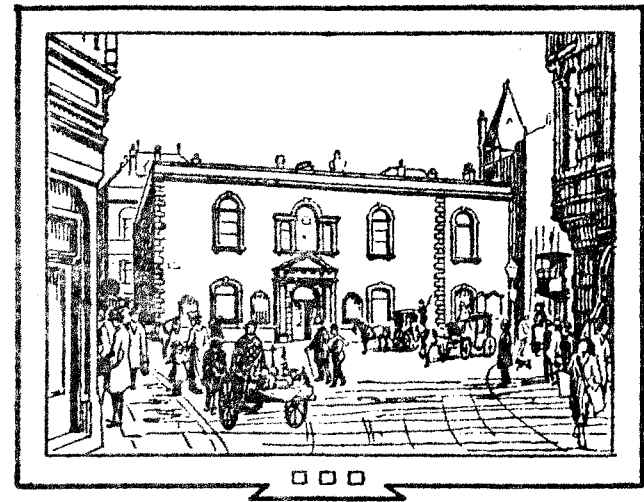
He had an encyclopaedic knowledge of South Yorkshire and Birstall in particular, generously sharing his genealogical knowledge which was the result of careful recording and research in family and Yorkshire archives over many years. He had an infectious enthusiasm which was much appreciated by fellow researchers and Brontë scholars.

With the quiet, unobtrusive courtesy, a gentlemen of the old school, John had a ready twinkle in his eye and a wry sense of humour. He will be sadly missed at our meetings, but remembered with affection.

Joan Leach



# The Gaskell Society



CROSS STREET CHAPEL

## NEWSLETTER

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 634668)

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NO. 16

# EDITOR'S LETTER

As I type this letter I am trying to master my new word processor, provided from Society funds - not a very sophisticated one because I am incapable of coping with much technology, but I hope this will at least help to keep the mailing list in better order. It has taken me several attempts even to set the margins!

Uppermost in my mind is the forthcoming Edinburgh Conference, from 20th to 23rd August, when nearly a hundred members will gather to enjoy a varied programme of talks and events. This will be the climax of a busy year.

We are particularly pleased with the steady progress of our South of England branch; the meetings have been well attended and resulted in stimulating exchange of ideas. At the Annual London Meeting on 6th November we will be joined by members of the Dickens Fellowship.

Details of the AGM Weekend are on a separate sheet. Please make a note in your diary of the Spring Meeting in Manchester on 26th March.

Lucy Magruder, our USA representative, has assisted in the final design and production of our badge which we think will win your approval.

We have been trying to keep membership fees down but with ever increasing printing and postage costs a rise may be inevitable. We appreciate a grant from Manchester University to aid our Journal production.

We welcome any suggestions to improve service to members.

Joan Leach

SECOND THOUGHTS ON 'COUSIN PHILLIS'  
by Brenda Colloms

Let me confess at once that I have never been a fan of 'Cousin Phillis'. The story, begun in Mrs Gaskell's usual meticulous and leisurely style, was slow in getting to the point - if indeed there was going to be a point - and dwelt far too long on the emotional and physical collapse of Phillis. Was she a heroine, or an anti-heroine? Finally, it was all suddenly and brutally ended in a page or two, like an impatient cleaner sweeping the dust away under the carpet.

Why, oh why, must Phillis, the rustic beauty, the scholar-farmer, physically strong, always busy, much-loved and an heiress to boot - (she will inherit a prosperous 50 acre farm) - be condemned to droop, dwindle and drown in unrequited love when she is not yet out of her teens? Where is the robustness of Mary Barton, of Margaret Hale, of Molly Gibson? Phillis is not a medieval princess, sheltered from the world. She is reading Dante's 'Inferno' with the aid of a dictionary. She has been taught to read the Greek and Roman classics in the original. She works hard in the fields and harder in the house. She reads the newspaper. She is aware that the railway is already planned to run through the district, near the farm.

I found it a great puzzle and abandoned Phillis to her fate until I consented to lead a discussion on 'Cousin Phillis' at the May 8, 1993 meeting of the South of England group of the Gaskell Society. This necessitated re-reading the novella, but now I had assistance. From March, when I began the enterprise, I had a modern guide, Jenny Uglow's fine biography of Elizabeth Gaskell, and on pages 551-552 I discovered why I had been so discomfited. The ending I had disliked was not the ending which Mrs Gaskell intended. Phillis was meant to recover, and face the future with confidence. So I began to read 'Cousin Phillis' with zest, searching for clues, and my 'second thoughts' have revealed a different Phillis, capable of recovering from her

disappointment over Edward Holdsworth and able to say 'I will overcome' instead of 'I will return to the old days'.

Hitherto, received wisdom, which I suspect came chiefly from male critics reared on the classics, suggested that 'Cousin Phillis' was a well-nigh perfect story, exquisitely crafted, and of precisely the right length. '... a diamond without a flaw', as a reviewer wrote after Mrs Gaskell's untimely death. Hints were even made that had Mrs Gaskell lived longer, she might have abandoned the ponderous three-decker novel in favour of the novella form, wherein she would display her true literary genius to best advantage.

A delightful fancy, but a fancy all the same. The truth belongs to the workaday world. From the outset, Mrs Gaskell had the entire plot of 'Cousin Phillis' clearly in her head, beginning, middle, end. This was her invariable habit with stories and novels. Once she began writing with the scheme already fixed, she 'lived' her novels, not in the sense of becoming her characters, but in the sense of being an objective observer, recording details seen and heard, a video camera in fact.

From Jenny Uglow's book we learn of a hitherto uncollected letter of Mrs Gaskell's to George Smith, publisher of Mrs Gaskell's later novels and also of the 'Cornhill Magazine' edited by Thackeray, and just founded in 1860. This reveals that towards the end of 1863 (the first instalment of 'Cousin Phillis' appeared in November 1863) Mrs Gaskell gained the impression that Smith wanted the story to end with the old year. She was still in the midst of it on December 10.

She felt disappointed at having to cut it short, believing it would destroy her chosen ending. None the less, George Smith was one of her good friends upon whom she relied greatly; she was also trying to amass enough money to buy a house; and she duly dashed off a hurried conclusion. Nevertheless, she could not help including

her real ending, again seen through Paul Manning's eyes, to show Smith what she meant to do. She explained that she had been planning 'a sort of moral - "Tis better to have loved and lost, than never to have loved at all"' (p.552).

From this letter, we know that Mrs Gaskell was foreseeing Paul Manning, many years afterwards - (maybe 20 years, bringing it up to the time she was writing?) - a married man, who, finding himself at Heathbridge, makes a detour to visit nearby Hope Farm, curious to see what has happened in the long interval. He finds that Minister Holman is dead and Phillis is in charge of the farm, which of course now belongs to her. There is a summer outbreak of typhus in the district - a common scourge in agricultural districts - and Phillis is using survey plans of a marshy area made by Edward Holdsworth to help her direct her labourers in a very workmanlike drainage scheme. Paul remembers having seen Phillis and her father, being instructed by Holdsworth who was using his theodolite to survey the area.

Paul is very impressed by Phillis's competence. He is also interested to observe two little children out there with her, and learns afterwards that they are orphans whom she has adopted. So Phillis has come through her ordeal strengthened, and is coping serenely with her life, fulfilled as a mother although not as a wife.

Charged with this knowledge, I could hardly wait to read 'Cousin Phillis' again, and I found a fascinating array of subtle clues leading inexorably to this intended ending. The novella positively overflowed with hints and half-hints exhibiting Mrs Gaskell's exuberant fascination with other people's lives, joys and problems - especially their problems. Like William Gaskell, her husband, Mrs Gaskell was in her own way a teacher. The 'morals' of her stories were her lessons.

Once readers have stopped being seduced by the rich embroidery of the word pictures - Hope Farm (is it a symbolic name?) with its garden and close interiors like

17th century Dutch paintings, and always Cousin Phillis with her pale gold hair and white skin at the still centre - have stopped smiling at the minister's pawky humour in naming the grand, never-used front door the 'rectory' and the commonly-used back one, the 'curate' - have stopped enjoying the lively accounts of hay-making, corn-harvesting and apple-gathering - then they can search for familiar Gaskell themes.

For Mrs Gaskell was a realist as well as a moralist. Not for her a stream of consciousness approach. Paul Manning, the gauche young cousin, is her recorder. He is the one who notices that soon after his first visit, Phillis discards her child-like pinafores in favour of pretty linen aprons in the morning, and a black silk one in the afternoon. This is a telling point, showing Phillis silently emerging from her shell and asserting herself. Minister Holman is too busy to see any difference; her mother is too proud of Phillis's good looks to make any comment. Phillis is not sexually interested in Paul, who is young for his age but he is likeable, and he is male: she enjoys looking nice for him. Paul registers the change of attire, mainly because he thought the pinafores 'obnoxious'. He does not regard her as a potential sweetheart. She is much too clever, and besides, she is considerably taller than he is. He has to look up to her, in all senses of the word.

It is obvious to the reader that a suitable mate for Cousin Phillis cannot be found in the environs of Hope Farm. Some dramatic mechanism must produce him, a stranger, out of the common mould. Mrs Gaskell needs a pantomime device which can disclose her prince in a puff of coloured smoke, - and reality comes to her rescue with the entrance of Edward Holdsworth, chief engineer of the advancing railway line and the puffing locomotives, introduced to the Holman family, albeit rather doubtfully, by Paul, who is his assistant.

Although Paul hero-worships Holdsworth, he is not sure whether Holdsworth's kind of 'goodness' is quite up to

the standard of the Holmans' 'goodness', and wonders how they will get on together.

Come he does, the friendly, sophisticated young man who charms the Minister, and Phillis, and - to a lesser extent, Mrs Holman. Only Betty, the trusted family servant, shrewd and unsentimental, remains aloof from him. Expensively educated, travelled, a long sojourn in Italy (how Mrs Gaskell must have enjoyed including that touch!) - Holdsworth is a prime example of the ambitious, hard-working engineer. He is fast rising to the top of his profession, and holds himself in readiness to go anywhere in the world at a moment's notice if called upon to do so.

Unlike Paul, who still sees Phillis as a rather awkward girl, Holdsworth instantly recognises her as a beautiful woman. His connection with the Holmans steadily grows. Even the Minister is fascinated and Phillis falls in love. Inevitably Holdsworth falls in love also, but only half in love because he is not a man of deep feelings. When he is unexpectedly summoned to go at once to Canada, he does not complain or protest. His job comes first.

He does, however, confide to Paul that he loves Phillis. He talks of her as he packs his bags, telling Paul that he expects Phillis to remain just as she is, untouched, an unsullied sleeping beauty, who will not change during the two years he must be away. When he returns, he will woo and win her. Like her father, Minister Holman, Holdsworth wants her to remain as she is, and where she is.

Paul's father, John Manning, who is a successful, self-educated inventor, visits Hope Farm, and becomes good friends with the minister. He is interested to meet Phillis, whom he sees differently from Holdsworth or her father. His view of the girl, however, is equally male-centred. John Manning thinks she would be an excellent wife for his Paul, who needs a strong wife behind him. Paul rather diffidently mentions Phillis's

other attributes, especially her love of scholarship, but his father brushes all that aside. She'll forget that once the babies come, says he. Paul remains silent, but he knows Phillis better than his father, and does not agree with him.

In the 1840s such ideas were commonplaces of male perception of young women. The profound and complex love of Minister Holman for his daughter, his only child, and his intellectual companion, is however far from commonplace, and represents a theme to which Mrs Gaskell returns more than once - the danger to all concerned of obsessive love. Squire Hamley's for his eldest son; Philip Hepburn's for Sylvia. Mrs Gaskell herself had once been afraid she would make 'an idol' of Marianne, her first child, such was her overpowering love. One can imagine the strength of her love if her son had actually lived, instead of dying in infancy, leaving a grieving memory forever just below the surface of her heart. (The Holmans, too, had lost their baby son.)

Another of her themes is the father-daughter relationship - Mary Barton and her father; Margaret Hale and hers; Sylvia Robson and Daniel; Molly Gibson and the ironic doctor. The paradox is that in the Gaskell family itself nothing suggests that William Gaskell was anything but a caring and intuitive father, prepared to let his daughters make their own decisions. Florence (Flossy) Gaskell, only eighteen, promised to marry her young man (an immensely suitable partner), without first going through the conventional hoop of discussing it with her parents. William Gaskell remained calm, being already acquainted with the young man, but Elizabeth Gaskell had a hard time coming to terms with the loss of her daughter. Could her use of the father-daughter relationship in the stories be a substitute for what was so important in her own life, the mother-daughter relationship?

Another theme which recurs in Mrs Gaskell's work is the notion of 'sinning' - humans are programmed to 'sin' in

one degree or another, and their natural development both as individuals and responsible members of society is therefore dependent upon their making amends - 'atonement'. This is what Mrs Gaskell, the minister's wife, believes, and what she considers to be a healthy happy ending to a story or novel. It is one of the bedrocks of her morality. Frequently the 'sin' is committed with the best of intentions. Paul Manning discloses Holdsworth's confidence, although he has no right to do so, but is driven to it because he sees Phillis's deep distress at Holdsworth's departure. Not only is Paul 'sinning' in betraying a confidence, he is also 'sinning' by making an error of judgment, having expected in his simplicity that Holdsworth meant what he said. And it is true that Holdsworth meant it at the time, but a more worldly observer would have doubted whether Holdsworth, half a world away, would really have kept to it.

Holdsworth's 'sin' was to put into words the wishful thinking which fills his heart when he is in an emotional state - and taken by surprise by the sudden call away to Canada. His remarks to Paul were private and unpremeditated. He did not expect they would be passed on to Phillis, but on the other hand he took no steps to protect her by telling Paul not to tell Phillis what he had said.

Phillis's 'sin' is similar to Paul's. As a consequence of her sheltered life, her worldly inexperience and her strong desire, she takes Paul's remarks to be tantamount to a definite proposal of marriage by Holdsworth. (Many popular Victorian novels were based on the fact that in the 1840s a very slight remark could, and often was, construed as a serious proposal, which if broken, might disgrace a girl for life.)

'Cousin Phillis' also follows other Gaskell stories with its theme of an agricultural society, hardly changed for many years, dragged by modern industrialisation and the railway network into a new and difficult way of life. Although Hope Farm appears utterly remote, in a time

warp, it is in fact near a fair-sized town. Its days of eighteenth century tranquility are numbered and not even Minister Holman with all his strength and intelligence can prevent it. Mrs Gaskell, acquainted with the ideas and policies of the great Manchester industrialists, never under-estimated their importance, and understood that stubborn opposition to factories and machines was wasted effort. That mellow sun shining on Cranford and Hope Farm is the nostalgic sun of memory.

In the months following Holdsworth's departure Phillis pines and begins to look ill. Paul becomes anxious for her sake, and to cheer her up, secretly tells her of Holdsworth's last words concerning her. Immediately she blossoms in mistaken assurance of Holdsworth's loyalty. Her father, with a blinkered view of his child, does not see her radiance just as previously he had not seen her sadness.

Finally, Holdsworth blithely writes Paul with news of his impending marriage to a French-Canadian girl. It is clear Phillis has become just one of the Holman family. He promises to send wedding card announcements to them. This puts Paul in a dilemma, but he feels it essential to tell Phillis the truth. She is stunned. Then, with great dignity, she makes him promise never to discuss it with her. Paul realises that her secret love must remain even more so. She could not bear the pain of other people's knowing.

But the arrival of Holdsworth's wedding cards in a letter to the Minister makes everything all too clear and triggers the emotional storm between Phillis and her father. This is the human equivalent of two earlier intense electric summer storms which play an important part in the development of Phillis's love. This bitter confrontation between father and daughter, watched by the conscience stricken Paul and the uncomprehending mother, is the dramatic climax of the novella. When Phillis hears her father blaming Paul for her unhappiness, she stands forth and bravely admits her love for Holdsworth, whatever kind of a man he is.

Paul, although involved in the quarrel, is still the bystander, recording the events. He realises that Betty was correct when she alleged that the minister would never have seen the growing friendship between Phillis and Holdsworth because he still saw his daughter as a child. Holman's love for Phillis has never been the measured love of a Puritan minister but the emotional devotion of a romantic scholar. The very name he gave her, Phillis, was a Greek name, a Pagan name, loved by Virgil, Holman's favourite author, a name redolent of verdant vegetation, the sweetheart of pastoral poetry. It betokened a special kind of love, and as the girl grew up to be a fine scholar, his prized student, sharing his interest in the classics, his proud and possessive love for her grew even fiercer. He could not admit she was becoming a woman because that would bring closer the day when she would leave home, taken by another man.

The battle of wills and recriminations between the two, who have so much in common, and are now virtual opponents, proves too much for Phillis, who collapses, semi-conscious. The Minister, distraught, proves useless in an emergency. His wife, kind and sensible although no scholar, takes charge, helped by Paul, who rides swiftly for the doctor. The physician is out, so the message is left with the assistant. This young man, unconnected with the Holmans, knows Phillis by sight - and immediately identifies her as 'that good-looking young woman'. Paul inwardly compares that remark to the Minister's broken phrases, 'my only child, my little daughter'.

The doctor's examination confirms that Phillis is seriously ill and needs utter quiet and careful nursing to recover completely. Her father seems to grow older overnight, and his strength leaves him. When Brother Robinson and a friend, both fellow Dissenters, come to pray with him, Holman cannot join them. (One is reminded of the king in 'Hamlet'.) Holman cannot even lead the customary family prayers after supper, and old John, his trusted labourer, does it instead.

Whilst Phillis slowly and reluctantly recovers, her long golden hair cropped short during the worst of her fever - Mrs Gaskell sharpens her minor characters. I am fond of Timothy Cooper, the 'half-wit' labourer, whose independent action in keeping the noisy market-day traffic of heavy carts away from Phillis's bedroom shows that he is far from being a 'half-wit'. Paul reflects upon this incident - Paul is growing up, too. He realises that the Minister's impatient temper was so often tried by Tim's slowness and poor memory that Holman dubbed Timothy a 'half-wit' and left it at that. Paul had followed suit. The truth was that Timothy was very slow but still capable of learning. When Paul explains to the Minister what Timothy had taken upon himself to do as a contribution to helping Phillis recover strength, he was full of remorse, and changed his attitude towards the man.

An important character, whether on centre stage or in the wings, is Betty, who nursed Phillis as a baby, and gave her baby brother 'his last earthly food'. She acts as a kind of Greek chorus to Paul's narrative. In the 'Cornhill' ending to the novella it is Betty's blunt rebuke to Phillis to stop being languid, and start helping herself to recovery that has the desired effect. Phillis at once takes the first step back to health, planning a long visit to Paul's parents in Birmingham, before returning home to the 'peace of the old days'.

We are not told whether Betty was satisfied with that promise - or whether Paul was. He knew that he was also due to be moved to another railway posting. Did these two prosaic persons believe that the 'peace of the old days' would last forever, as Phillis seemed to believe? Phillis was not yet twenty. She had the rest of her life to live. Thanks to George Smith, we do not know. Cousin Phillis was a victim, not of Holdsworth, or her father, or her cousin, but of the circulation manager of the 'Cornhill Magazine'.

Finally, allow me to comment upon two introductions of one-volume editions of 'Cranford' coupled with 'Cousin

Phillis'. The first, published by John Lehmann in 1947, edited by Elizabeth Jenkins, describes 'Cousin Phillis' as 'a single thread' compared with the 'fabric' of 'Cranford'. (Mrs Gaskell talks of 'Cousin Phillis' as 'a complete fragment'. Elizabeth Jenkins, whilst admiring the 'originality' of the characters of Phillis and her father, dismisses the novella as a reworking of the hackneyed theme of the 'mutual attraction of a man of the world and an inexperienced girl'.

Paul Keating, editor of the 1976 Penguin edition of 'Cranford' plus 'Cousin Phillis', alleges that Holman, Paul and Holdsworth are all guilty of lack of foresight in their conduct towards Phillis and accordingly must take some of the blame for what happens. 'It is this, together with the passivity of Phillis and the way she is associated with natural forces and the movement of the seasons that gives a mood of inevitability to her suffering.' A fair comment, given the circumstances, but the words 'passivity' and 'inevitability of suffering' strike a minor chord. Mrs Gaskell's intended ending, however, strikes a distinctly major chord.

It is my contention that in view of what Jenny Uglow called the 'alternative ending' and what I prefer to call the 'intended ending', 'Cousin Phillis' is due for a thorough reappraisal. Far from being an unexpected departure from Mrs Gaskell's other works, I submit that it is firmly in line with her beliefs, interests and literary style. 'Cousin Phillis' can be compared to an Old Master, dark with age which has for years hung in a neglected corner of the gallery. When a new director orders a thorough cleaning, the result is a bright new painting which the spectators can view with new understanding and admiration.

#### CHELTENHAM FESTIVAL OF LITERATURE

Jenny Uglow is on the programme and will give a lecture on Elizabeth Gaskell at 10.15 am on Sunday 10 October

#### ANOTHER BIRTHDAY PRESENT FOR ELIZABETH

by C C Waghorn

In the second chapter of her book 'Elizabeth Gaskell: a Habit of Stories', Jenny Uglow deals with Elizabeth's childhood reading. She mentions a birthday present the future author received on her eleventh birthday:

'Aunt Lumb believed in handing on proven knowledge: Knutsford Library has a well-thumbed copy of 'The Monitor, or a Collection of Precepts, Observations etc' published in 1804, fondly inscribed to Elizabeth:

"from her affectionate Aunt Hannah Lumb, Sept the 29th 1821" - her eleventh birthday. Beneath the inscription are the pencilled ghosts of another, suggesting the little book had already done service to other relations.'

As I read this, my mind went to two little volumes which have had a place in my own library for thirty years or so. They are the two volumes of 'The Female Mentor or Select Conversations' by Honoria, the Second Edition of 1798.

These were also given to Elizabeth Gaskell on the occasion of her eleventh birthday. The donor this time was her father, as the inscription on the fly leaf shows: 'E C Stevenson from her Father on her birthday Sep 29 - 1821'.

My records of my book buying all those years ago are now somewhat incomplete, but I believe 'The Female Mentor' was bought from a catalogue of an Edinburgh bookseller; the price would have been modest by the standards of today, in part a sign of the partial neglect of Elizabeth Gaskell at that time. The volumes are in the original boards, though the spine has at some time been renewed with "Mrs Gaskell's copy" on the lettering piece.

'The Female Mentor' seems to complement Aunt Lumb's present. The 44 chapters or 'conversations' fall into two categories: those, chiefly in the first volume, which deal with some well-known historical figure, and those, chiefly in the second volume, which deal with such topics as On Novels, On Learned Ladies, On Modesty, On Dancing, On Marriage, On Dissipation, On Vanity, On



THE  
FEMALE MENTOR:

OR,

SELECT CONVERSATIONS.

(*Mr. Phillips*)

IN TWO VOLUMES.

THE SECOND EDITION.

VOL. I.

LONDON:

PRINTED FOR T. CADELL, JUN., AND W. DAVIES,  
IN THE STRAND.

1798.

*E. C. Stevenson  
from his Father  
on her birth day  
Sep. 29 - 1821*

Politeness, On Humane Institutions, On Female Friendship and On Maternal Affections. The historical figures are all women: they include Lady Elizabeth Gray, Boadicea, Catherine of Arragon, Anne Bolen (sic), Catherine Parr and, most interesting of all in terms of the adult Elizabeth Gaskell, Madame de Sévigné.

In her biography of Elizabeth Gaskell, Winifred Gerin writes: 'The purpose of the visit [to Paris in 1862] was to allow her to pursue her research into the project book on Madame de Sévigné, for which she had George Smith's blessing, and with which she was much more engrossed than with finishing 'Sylvia's Lovers'. It is a great loss that the book was never written, for no one was temperamentally better suited to the subject than Mrs Gaskell. She was immensely attracted to the seventeenth century 'grande dame', whose devotion to an only daughter inspired a correspondence that must rank amongst the finest in any literature ... They were two of a kind, as Mrs Gaskell obviously felt in wishing to introduce the French writer to the English public.' One can only wonder whether that chapter in 'The Female Monitor' played some part in the beginning of the "immense attraction".

Of the history of that copy of 'The Female Monitor' between the Gaskell birthday and my discovery of it in that Edinburgh catalogue, I know nothing. I do know that in the thirty years since it has served regularly as a teaching aid to introduce my former pupils to Elizabeth Gaskell and her work. Almost without exception they have been surprised that such a 'dry' book of moral instruction should have been given to one so young, 'but at least it showed that her father had not forgotten her'. Those who were from one parent families perhaps appreciated that most keenly. 'The Female Monitor' had helped them to think of Elizabeth as a real person.

I would like to think that she would have approved of this use of her birthday present.

'SO DIFFERENT A LIFE ...'

by Anna Unsworth

Elizabeth Gaskell arrived in Oxford at the beginning of November 1857 when making the first of the round of visits advised by her doctors to escape the rigours of winter in Manchester.

As predicted by a friend of Charlotte Brontë's, Elizabeth stirred up 'a hornet's nest' about her ears with her 'Life of Charlotte Brontë' published in February 1857, and all the summer a storm had raged about what she believed to have been the truth about the Brontë family. While this was going on she had had to act as an official hostess at the Exhibition of Art and Literature held in Manchester that summer. So it was a bruised Elizabeth Gaskell who arrived in November at Teddesley Park, Staffordshire, the home of Lord Hatherton, a whig politician, and his wife, an old friend from her Cheshire girlhood (formerly Mrs Caroline Davenport of Capesthorpe), to spend a few days with them on the way to some relatives who lived near Devizes. It was the Hathertons who reminded her that Oxford was a place she would pass through in her railway journey to Devizes and that she should take the opportunity of visiting the city, if only very briefly.

With many connections in the university, they at once wrote letters 'right and left' as Elizabeth put it in one of her subsequent letters, 'facilitating every pleasant arrangement'.

She and her 19-year-old daughter, Meta, were met, on their arrival at the Star Inn, by Dr Wellesley, Lord Hatherton's brother-in-law and Principal of New Inn Hall, who took them on 'a race up past X where Ridley and Latimer were burnt thro' the Radcliffe Quad to All Souls Quad into High St - back to his own house to lunch; donned a scarlet robe himself, having to attend convocation, & rushed off (with two scarlet wings flying all abroad) with me on his arm, to deposit us at the Theatre to hear A. Stanley's lecture.'

Arthur Stanley was another old Cheshire friend and now Professor of Ecclesiastical History. She went on: 'I saw Matt Arnold who was getting ready for his inaugural poetry lecture.' Elizabeth was a friend of Arnold's mother, the widow of the famous Dr Arnold of Rugby.

In the morning a breakfast had been arranged at the Stanleys' house in the High Street where she met Dr Acland, Professor of Medicine, John Connington, Professor of Latin, Dr Brodie, Professor of Chemistry and Matthew Arnold again, together with the wives. She had to catch the 11.30 train to Devizes but all those present insisted that she and Meta should make another visit on their return journey and, in the time left, Stanley took them to Christ Church and 'into the meadows up to the Bridge at one end of the High St. Anything more lovely than that morning cannot be conceived - the beech-leaves lay golden brown on the broad path-way, the leaves on the elms were quite still, except when one yellower than the rest came floating down. The Colleges were marked out clearly against the blue sky and the beautiful broad shadows made the lighter portions of the buildings stand out clearly in the sunshine. Oh, I shall never forget Oxford ...'

On her return journey, she spent three days with the Brodies, at their home, Cowley House, saw more of the University, heard Frederick Temple, newly appointed headmaster of Rugby, preach at St Mary's, was amazed at the lunch served to the students of New College, 'stewed eels, minced chicken, beef-steak with oyster sauce and College Pudding', saw the treasures of the Bodleian and the Pre-Raphaelite paintings at the Union. Back at home before Christmas she was once again 'desperately busy' but found time to write: 'I dearly like to call up in my mind pictures and thoughts of so utterly different a life to Manchester ...'.

The Gaskells and Brodies exchanged several visits over the years between 1857 and Mrs Gaskell's death in 1865. The Brodies' house was situated a matter of yards from the famously beautiful Magdalen Bridge, the official

entrance to academic Oxford, crossing the River Cherwell with its background of the Botanic Gardens and lawns leading to the equally famous Christ Church meadows mentioned by Mrs Gaskell. The house is now part of St Hilda's, one of the University Colleges which I found after considerable research in year books, street maps etc. I had the pleasure of visiting the College and was shown by the librarian the part of the College which was the Cowley House visited by Mrs Gaskell. I was particularly delighted to stand in the charming drawing-room which must be much as it was in her time with its huge French windows through which one could walk down wide steps to the gardens along the river and see across fields on the opposite side the 'dreaming spires' of Oxford.

In 1893 the house was sold to Miss Beale, one of the great Victorian figures in the education of women. It was named St Hilda's College as it is still today and celebrates its centenary in 1993 when a history of the College by one of the Fellows is to be published. I was fortunate that I was able to draw her attention to Mrs Gaskell's letters and the relevant material is to appear in the books, as well as the fine sketch of Mrs Gaskell which appears as the frontispiece to Winifred Gérin's biography. The house has now been vastly extended, but the house as Mrs Gaskell knew it is still quite distinctive with its Victorian decorative brickwork.

#### OUR SOCIETY BADGE



This MAY be available at Edinburgh, but will CERTAINLY be on hand for AGM and at the next South of England Branch meetings.

Otherwise £3.50 payable to "The Gaskell Society" will secure you one post free.

American and Japanese members will be supplied directly, please await further details.

#### BOOK NOTES

by Christine Lingard

ELIZABETH GASKELL by Jane Spencer, Macmillan, £9.50. 156pp.

The latest addition to Macmillan's series Women Writers whose coverage ranges from Fanny Burney to Margaret Atwood. Each volume consists of a short systematic critical analysis of the author in question and makes a good introduction to the subject for the beginner.

The biographical information is brief but stresses her relationship to her contemporaries and the problems she faced combining her role as mother and author in Victorian England. The influence of religion is also dealt with. Chapter two was previously published as Mary Barton and Thomas Carlyle in the Gaskell Society Journal, vol.2, 1988.

The rest of the book adopts a chronological approach and The Life of Charlotte Brontë is given equal treatment to the other major novels, but there is little mention of her short stories. The book is completed with copious notes and perceptive comments on critics. There is an extensive bibliography.

REWRITING THE VICTORIANS; THEORY, HISTORY AND THE POLITICS OF GENDER, edited by Linda Shires, Routledge, 1992. £10.99

This collection of essays is a rarity in that it contains an extremely scholarly treatment of My Lady Ludlow in the chapter The "female paternalist" as historian by Christine Krueger. She discusses why this novel has been comparatively neglected by critics and argues that time is ripe for feminist re-evaluation. It provides a link in the development of Gaskell's use of history between The Life and the major historical novel Sylvia's Lovers. The character of the eponymous narrator is re-assessed with full reference to a range of feminist and Marxist critics.

VERSATILE VICTORIAN; selected writings of George Henry Lewes; edited with introduction by Rosemary Ashton. Bristol Classical Press, 1992. £25

A modern edition of a selection of reviews by the Victorian critic now chiefly remembered for his relationship to George Eliot. Unlike his partner Lewes was known to Gaskell and she approached him for information during the writing of Life of Charlotte Brontë which the editor recounts in her introduction. Lewes' review Charlotte Brontë "Villette" and Mrs Gaskell "Ruth" appeared in Westminster Review of April 1853 and is reprinted here in full. It is highly appreciative -

'Ruth, then, besides being a beautiful novel, satisfies the highest moral sense by the pictures it suggests' though he objected to the intensity of grief which the child suffers on learning he is illegitimate.

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SOUTH OF ENGLAND GROUP

Members have enjoyed stimulating and friendly meetings and hope to meet more of you at THE ANNUAL LONDON MEETING to which members of the Dickens Fellowship will be invited. This is on 6 November at Francis Holland School, 39 Graham Terrace, SW1W 8JF at 2.15 pm. Edward Preston, Secretary of The Dickens Fellowship, will speak on Elizabeth Gaskell and Charles Dickens.

PROGRAMME FOR 1994

Saturday 5 February, 2 pm at Francis Holland School. Hidemitsu Tohgo to speak. Subject to be arranged (he will let us know at Edinburgh)

Saturday 6 May, 2 pm at Francis Holland School.

Rev Ashley Hills: 'Mrs Gaskell's Unitarianism'

Saturday 3 September, 2 pm. Venue to be decided.

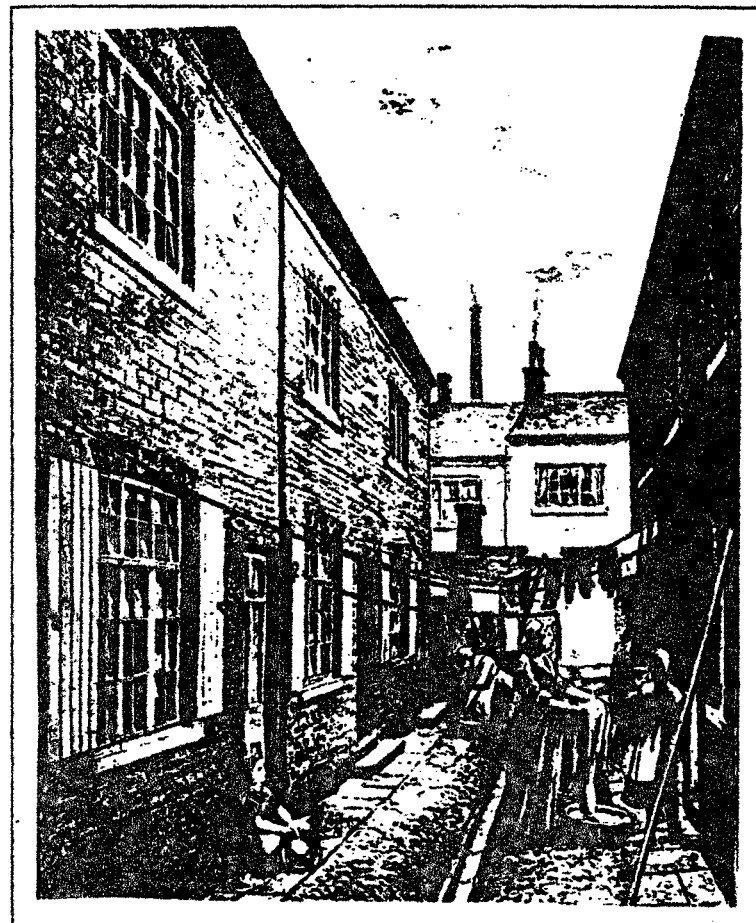
Elizabeth Hubbard: 'Mrs Gaskell and Adolescence'

Saturday 5 November

Annual London Meeting

For further details, please contact Dudley J Barlow, 44 Seymour Road, London SW18 5JA (081 874 7727)

# The Gaskell Society



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 634668)

ISSN 0954 - 1209

## NEWSLETTER

**FEBRUARY 1994**

**NO. 17**

## EDITOR'S LETTER

by Joan Leach

My life at present seems to be so involved with forward planning that I hardly feel I'm living in today; however, I hope to reap rewards eventually.

Furthest in the future is OXFORD '95 for our next conference; we hope to visit Manchester College and Wadham in March to make arrangements. The date for the conference will depend on availability of venue and speakers and it is clear that no date will suit everyone; the last week in July, or first or third in August seem likely.

AGM will be in Knutsford on 24 September; more details will be sent with the Journal mailing, which will not be before May, a little later than usual but expect a bumper edition with Edinburgh papers included. With this newsletter you will receive last year's AGM minutes wherein you will note a forthcoming rise in membership dues, but I think you will agree that we have done well to keep it down until now with printing and postage costs rising; indeed it has only been possible because Manchester University has been generous with support for the Journal.

We are concerned about the condition of the Gaskell home at Plymouth Grove. When we noted some deterioration in 1990 we were assured by the University that it was not structural, but since then they have taken no further interest in the building. It is used by The International Society who have been informed it may be sold and they have been offered less suitable premises which they rejected. We are alarmed at this casual attitude to the Grade 2\* listed building, one of the few large, early 19th century houses left in Manchester, quite apart from its literary associations. The conservation committee of the Victorian Society has been consulted and we will keep you informed.

I have just been reading the Letters of Anne Thackeray Ritchie and was intrigued to find she visited Julia and Meta, at the Plymouth Grove house, in November 1891:

'O what kind ladies! O what a delicious dinner!

O what a nice room! O how extraordinarily rejuvenated and cheered I feel', she wrote to her husband.

We hope some of you will be able to attend meetings during this year, either here in Knutsford or Manchester; the South of England group which meets in Chelsea or perhaps at the Alliance of Literary Societies AGM in Birmingham on 23 April.

A REMARKABLE GASKELL COLLECTION  
by J A V Chapple

Jenny Uglow surely struck a chord when she wrote in her *Elizabeth Gaskell: A Habit of Stories* (Faber & Faber 1993) of being intrigued by Mrs Gaskell's notorious 'charm'. A birthday letter to her youngest daughter Julia in September 1854, written from the Isle of Man, provides a perfect example. It is one of no less than fifty-two letters or fragments of letters written by Elizabeth Gaskell now generously placed on permanent loan in the Brotherton Library of Leeds University by Mrs Gaskell's direct descendants, Mrs Rosemary Trevor Dabbs and her son and daughter.

The fundamental interest and value of these letters may be judged very swiftly from the standard edition of the *Letters*, in which they were originally printed by kind permission of Mrs Dabbs' mother, Mrs Trevor Jones (source 8). What would be known of Elizabeth Gaskell's early married life if Letters 3, 4, 10, 11, 13, 14 and 18 had been unavailable? There are many other remarkable letters to Marianne Gaskell in the collection, but again, the quality of their love for each other can be quickly judged by glancing at the amusing 'Precepts for the guidance of a Daughter' printed in appendix F, where a poem entitled 'Night Fancies' also appears. Both are now part of the permanent loan, together with a copy of an obituary in the *Examiner* of 18 November 1865, some unidentified verses sent by Meta Gaskell to a friend and notes on the Coppock family of Stockport (from whom Sandlebridge was inherited); also testimonials of Mr Samuel Gaskell (printed) and probate and double probate copies of the Will of Hannah Lumb.

The loan also includes seventeen volumes of Mrs Gaskell's published works, bound in red and stamped with Marianne's initials after she had married Thurstan Holland. The most important item of all, however, comes from Marianne's childhood, the manuscript notebook her mother began when she was a baby. It was published in a

very limited edition of fifty copies by Clement Shorter in 1923 and entitled '*My Diary: The early years of my daughter Marianne*'. Recently studied by Anita C Wilson in the *Gaskell Society Journal* for 1993, it can now be given the wider circulation it deserves.

The Society has good reason to be grateful to Mrs Trevor Dabbs and her son and daughter for making available in the Brotherton Library this exceptional collection of material.

\* \* \* \* \*

EDITOR'S NOTE

Your committee invested £30 of our funds in purchasing this 'letter' complete with penny red stamp, and dated May 12th, 1852.

The correspondent Charles J Herford may be the same Charles whose wedding to Mary Robberds the Gaskells attended in May 1852 (GL 126 written 19th a day after the wedding). If so, he didn't indulge in a long honeymoon!

Brother Edward Herford was also at the wedding and your will hear more of him in the next Newsletter.

MANCHESTER AND Salford ASSOCIATION FOR SECURING  
THE BETTER REGULATION OF PUBLIC HOUSES AND  
OTHER PLACES OF ENTERTAINMENT.

SIR,

A MEETING of the EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE  
will be held at the Town Hall, on *Thursday*  
Evening next, *at 7 o'clock* when your  
presence is particularly requested.

I am, Sir,

Your obedient Servant,

CHARLES J. HERFORD,  
HON. SEC.

32, King Street. *11 May*

*Important business*

Draw & conveyance 1 pf. 11. Hay on  
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Since October I have been teaching a WEA class in Skelmersdale. We started by doing a novel by each of the Brontë sisters and now we are studying North and South. One thing that has struck us has been the careful noting of materials. In the first chapter in London, Margaret goes to find the Indian shawls that are going to be part of her cousin Edith's trousseau. In Jenny Uglow's biography she tells us of Elizabeth Gaskell going to see Caroline Davenport's trousseau at Capesthorpe in 1852 (Chapter 15 p.299)<sup>1</sup>. There were 'six beautiful Indian shawls'. Uglow refers to a letter to Agnes Sandars that describes the colours of the shawls as 'lilac, crimson and blue, embroidered and fringed with gold'. Margaret is wearing an Indian shawl when Mr Thornton first sees her in the hotel in Milton (Chapter 7). She wore it 'as an Empress wears her drapery'.

Mrs Thornton is more austere when we first see her for she is dressed in 'stout black silk' and mending a large tablecloth 'of the finest texture' (Chapter 9). When Mr Thornton goes to have tea with the Hales he sees Margaret in a 'light coloured muslin gown which had a good deal of pink about it'. Mrs Hale has been doing worsted work (Chapter 10). We wondered if this meant knitting or tapestry. Soon after Mr Thornton takes his mother to see the Hales. She disapproves of the embroidery that Margaret is doing on a small piece of cambric. It is an article of clothing for her cousin's baby. Mrs Thornton thinks, 'Flimsy useless work'. She approves more of the sensible double knitting being done by Mrs Hale (Chapter 12). In that same chapter Mrs Hale notes and admires Mrs Thornton's lace 'of that old English point which has not been made for this seventy years'. She infers that it must be an heirloom and that Mrs Thornton must have worthy ancestors.



Margaret and her father return the visit and are ushered into the Thornton's drawing room. There is a bright, floral carpet but it is covered in the centre by 'linen drugget, glazed and colourless' (Chapter 15).

Bessy Higgins likes to touch the soft materials worn by Margaret 'with a childish admiration of their fineness of texture' (Chapter 13). Bessy's sister has to go to the mill to do her fustian cutting. One of our group told us that her husband always calls his corduroy trousers his fustians. We talked about the days when corduroy was a coarser material.

In all, we felt we needed a textile expert in the group. Obviously Elizabeth Gaskell was very interested in materials and used them to give reality to her characters and their settings.

Jenny Uglow refers us to the Gaskell Society Newsletter, August 1990, for the unpublished letter to Agnes Sandars (p.649)

(Ed: Have you been listening to the serialisation of North and South on Woman's Hour read by Janet McTear? It would make a fine audio tape, and letters from members to BBC Enterprises might convince them to issue it.)

\* \* \* \* \*

THE COVER ILLUSTRATION is from the KNUTSFORD EDITION (1906) OF MARY BARTON entitled: 'A court in Hulme'

# THE BRADFORDS OF SEEDLEY by J A V Chapple

'My dearest girls', wrote Elizabeth Gaskell to MA and ME some time around 3 September 1846, 'I think we shall all gladly subscribe the shilling necessary (I believe) to have the name of Laetitia altered. I don't think we should any of us like it, and I cannot think what made Papa think of it'. They were successful. Their last daughter was baptised at Cross Street chapel by the Reverend J G Robberds on 17 March 1847 and given the names of Julia Bradford.

Julia seems a fair exchange for Laetitia, but why Bradford? It is clear from the *Letters* (pages 18, 26, 38, 50 and 825) that the Bradfords were rich friends who lived in some style at Seedley near Pendleton, certainly from July 1838 and some years into the next decade - how many is not clear. He was an American who had married 'a Miss Taylor sister of that pretty Mrs W Holland'. It is tempting to chase after the latter, who 'was too pretty', according to Sam Gaskell. He said that 'he never could take his eyes off her - that in walking the streets it must be painful to her to excite the notice such beauty must' (unindexed, p.39). The former was very probably the 'dear Julia Bradford' of letter 16a who used to advise Mrs Gaskell not to kill her children with lessons. No first name appears for her husband, however.

The Plymouth Grove sale catalogue has 'Works of S D Bradford and ten others'. Is this the Samuel D Bradford, LL.D, who can be found amongst Harvard College alumni that received honorary degrees? In 1814 he was of Middleburg. The 1841 volume of Manchester's Ministry-to-the-Poor Reports notices a donation in the previous year from S D Bradford Esq. Cross Street Chapel register lists John Henry, son of Samuel Dexter Bradford (merchant of Seedley) and Julia Emma Taylor, born 11 September 1843, baptised by Robberds 12 February 1844\*. In March 1849 J E Bradford reviewed *Mary Barton* for *The Christian Examiner* (Boston). It looks as if Julia Gaskell was named after this Samuel Bradford and his wife Julia (née Taylor).

In an unpublished letter of 11 February 1857, Mrs Gaskell writes of a Mr and Mrs. Bradford of Roxbury. Acting on the advice of my Hull colleague Professor Philip Taylor, I have been able to contact immensely helpful American experts. Mrs Betty H Payne of the New York Genealogical and Biographical Society sent material from the index to

the *New York Times*: S D Bradford (Hon) died in 1866 and a Samuel Bradford in 1885. Also, much later, a Samuel Dexter Bradford married in Portchester, NY, a widow, born Louise Angela, daughter of the late James Sheldon Merriam, a lawyer of New York, on 27 July 1914. (The New England Historic Genealogical Society also sent items about this marriage from *The Boston Evening Transcript* - shades of T S Eliot!)

Finally, Mariam Touba of the New York Historical society was good enough to consult a fragile copy of Bradford's *Works* (Boston, 1858) on my behalf. She writes that it has a dedication, dated from West Roxbury, January 1st 1858, to his sons, Samuel Dexter Jr, and John Henry, which contains material of an autobiographical nature. In addition, his published letters and speeches are arranged chronologically: 'Those items from 1837 to 1842 are dated from Manchester or published in the *Manchester Guardian*. The items after 1848 suggest he lived most of the next seven years in the Boston area.' He was actually raised in Roxbury, spent some time in England and together with his son begins to appear in New York city directories as merchants in 1858.

Much would have more. Had they returned to America by the time Julia was christened? Have any Gaskell letters to or from Samuel and Julia Bradford survived? Was Elizabeth Gaskell right to be so impressed by them? A combined British-American research effort might be worthwhile.

Editor's Note: The baptism record of John Henry Bradford at Cross Street Chapel is on the same page as that of Florence Elizabeth Gaskell, a year before, 11 January 1843.

Records for Meta (Margaret Emily Gaskell) baptised 28 September 1838 follow Samuel Dexter Bradford, 4 July 1838.

A six months' gap between birth and baptism was usual.

I think the shilling subscribed to change the name Laetitia to Julia Bradford would be for the official entry at the Registrars.

Christine Lingard has found a column in the *New York Times* for January 7 1866 with the 'Will of the late Hon Samuel D Bradford (from Boston Traveller Dec 26) Total amount of property \$1,500,000'.

\*\*\*\*\*

[Printed by authority of the Registrar General.]

CERTIFIED COPY of an  
Pursuant to the Births and  
Deaths Registration Act 1953



ENTRY OF BIRTH  
Deaths Registration Act 1953

CJ 585660

B. Cert.  
S.R.

Registration District <u>Manchester</u>				in the <u>County of Lancashire</u>			
No.	When and where born	Name at birth	Name, and surname of father	Signature, description and residence of individual	When issued	Signature of Registrar	Name (unless after certification)
117	Third September 1846 121 Upper Rimford St.	Julia Bradford	William GASKELL	Elizabeth Clapham GASKELL formerly STEVENSON	William GASKELL Fadar 121 Upper Rimford St.	Thirteenth October 1846	PM Melland Registrar.

See back enclosed.

Certified to be a true copy of an entry in a register in my custody.

Alfred Leonard Deputy  
Superintendent Registrar  
25 January 1946

CAUTION.—It is an offence to falsify a certificate or to make or knowingly use a false certificate or a copy of a false certificate meaning it to be accepted as genuine to the prejudice of any person, or to possess a certificate knowing it to be false without lawful authority.

## BOOK NOTES

by Christine Lingard

Pilgrim edition of the letters of Charles Dickens, edited by Graham Story, Kathleen Tillotson and Angus Easson. Clarendon Press, 1993, vol 7 1853-1855.

The latest volume of this epic undertaking includes twenty letters to Elizabeth and two to William Gaskell. They chart the progress of Cranford, Old Nurse's Story, Squire's Story, Company Manners and the beginning of the serialization of North and South indicating the taut relationship of the two authors. An additional feature of this volume is an addenda to the previous six volumes of newly discovered letters not yet published in full, including a letter of 27.2.1850 in Dickens' typically flattering style praising Lizzie Leigh.

Two new editions of Gaskell novels have been published in 1993. Mary Barton, edited by Angus Easson, Ryburn Publishing £25, is the only hardback edition currently available in this country. It is scrupulously edited based on the text of the fifth edition of 1855, the last that Gaskell took a personal hand in editing, and also contains the text of William's lectures on Lancashire dialect, her own outlines of the novel, and the verse Sketches among the Poor that they jointly submitted to Blackwood's Edinburgh magazine in 1837.

North and South, edited by Jenny Uglow, Everyman £4.99, is a paperback edition with introduction and notes most notable for a supplement surveying the novel's critical reception from Henry Chorley to Patsy Stoneman. (More Everyman Gaskell editions due soon)

Nineteenth Century Stories by Women, an anthology edited by Glennis Stephenson. Broadway literary texts (Ontario) includes stories by over twenty North American and British authors of whom Gaskell, Mary Shelley and Louisa May Alcott are the most well-known. Less familiar names include Alice Howells Frechette and Constance Woolson. Others are Kate Chopin and Mrs Oliphant. The two Gaskell stories are Lizzie Leigh and Old Nurse's Story.

## WHITBY IN 1793

by Muriel Smith

Since the plot of Sylvia's Lovers turns on the activities of the press gang, the following glimpse of Whitby life has its Gaskellian interest. I found it in an unexpected place, a volume which the Society for Theatre Research published in 1984: Sybil Rosenfeld's The Georgian Theatre of Richmond, Yorkshire and its circuit: Beverley, Harrogate, Kendal, Northallerton, Ulverston and Whitby.

The theatre company concerned, managed by Samuel Butler from 1773 to 1812, worked the circuit in a two-year cycle, playing at Whitby for about three months every other winter, beginning in 1793. In that year, the season opened on 2 December 1793 and finished 14 February 1794. The whaling fleet was home and the press gang was busy, whalers being prime material for the navy. This was the first winter of the war: war was declared between Britain and France following the execution of Louise XVI on 21 January 1793. With the navy expanding from peace-time levels, laid-up ships being made ready and so forth, the need for sailors will have been particularly acute. However, the playbills for the season all bore a most unusual announcement:

"Captain Shortland pledges his word of honour that no seamen whatever shall be molested by his people on Playnights [three nights a week] from the hour of four in the Afternoon to Twelve at night; after which time the indulgence ceases."

The point presumably was not so much to give the whalers a chance of attending as to prevent disturbances in the streets which might deter the gentry and middle classes from going to the play.

\* \* \* \* \*

The Writing of COUSIN PHILLIS  
by J A V Chapple

Members will be interested to read the full text of the letter to George Smith so nicely deployed by Brenda Colloms in the last Newsletter (16). Some thoughts on 'Cousin Phillis'. The text was printed in Etudes Anglaises:

December 10th [1863]  
46 P.G.

My dear Mr Smith,

I have followed your advice to the letter ; I have sent the (signed & dated) agreement to Mr Shaen, & copies of all the late correspondence since Novr 6th between Mr F.C. & me to Mr Shaen ; & begged him to call upon you ; & given him directions to write to Mr F Chapman in my name &c, exactly as you bid me<sup>1</sup>. I don't quite understand what you mean about Phillis ending - & my putting a few lines in addition to the Proofs, which I now return. Do you want it to *end with the year*? I shall be sorry for it is, at present, such a complete fragment ; but, if you wish it, I will send you up a line or two, or else I think I had two more nos in my head, one of which is part written & would have been wholly written by now, if I had not been so much annoyed about this Chapman & Hall business. On looking it over I cannot see how it *is* to be made to end now, even with any exculpatory "few lines". I will tell you the story in brief, as it is in my head.

I (writer) get a letter from Holdsworth saying he is going to be married directly to some Canadian lady. I have to tell Phillis. She comforts *me* at first for the blunder I made in telling her ; but becomes irritable for the first time in her life - her father gets uneasy, questions me, when every one is gone to bed. I confess my having told her, - he (irritable too) is angry with me. Phillis hearing her father's loud voice comes down, a cloak over her nightdress, & exculpates me by telling out how I had seen her fretting & read her heart. But

the telling &c &c, brings on a brain fever & she lies at death's door. Stupid brother ministers come (like Job's friends,) to *comfort the Minister*. He rebels against *them*, & is very humble in private. She recovers, asks for a change - goes to my fathers - & in a town, among utterly different people & scenery, cures herself, - but it is a sort of moral 'Tis better to have loved & lost, than never to have loved at all- last scene long years after. The minister dead, I married - we hear of the typhus fever in the village where Phillis lives, & I go to persuade her & her bedridden mother to come to us. I find her making practical use of the knowledge she had learnt from Holdsworth and, with the help of common labourers, levelling & draining the undrained village - a child (orphaned by the fever) in her arms another plucking at her gown - we hear afterwards that she has adopted these to be her own.

I think it will be a pity to cut it short but on the other side you will find the ending that I suppose *must* do if you want to end it this year. I like the illustrations to Sylvia *much* - but I must end

Yours most truly  
E C Gaskell

... Alas ! this was the last time I ever saw Phillis radiant & happy ; the last time I ever saw the girlish bliss shine out upon her face. I had raised her high in hope ; it fell to my lot to dash her down from her height. Not many weeks after I heard from Holdsworth, telling me of his approaching marriage to one Lucille Ventadour - a french Canadian. I had to go, and tell Phillis this - I cannot bear to think of the piteous scene ; all the more piteous because she was so patient. Spare me the recital ...

<sup>1</sup>Ed: Gaskell letters 539, 540, 541 and 545 also refer to the copyright problems with Chapman

DIES CALENDONIAE

by Brenda Colloms

The 1993 Edinburgh Conference officially lasted only from 20 to 23 August, but many Gaskellians seem to have organised their stay so as to have a few days extra to enjoy the Edinburgh Festival. To accommodate nearly a hundred Society members, Joan Leach and her organising committee arranged bookings at Queen Margaret College on the outskirts of the city. This was a seven pound journey out by taxi, but fortunately this daunting fare fell to seventy or eighty pence if delegates took a bus, with a recognised stop near the College. Meals and lectures were held in the College.

Proceedings commenced with an ingathering of Clan Gaskell and an early supper, to give time for an illustrated talk by William Ritchie. His title, 'The Athens of the North', referred to the glittering epoch of Edinburgh literary, social and professional life in the early nineteenth century, before the railways extended northwards and made London more accessible to ambitious young Scots. This proved an inspired choice for an opening lecture, giving us a background which would be invaluable for the lecture of the next two days.

Lectures were slotted in to Saturday and Sunday mornings, subjects having been chosen for their variety whilst at the same time remaining firmly linked to Mrs Gaskell, or to her father, William Stevenson, or to her friend, Charlotte Brontë. The general background was early nineteenth century Scottish literature and periodical writing.

This gave considerable scope for variety and individuality, and the speakers conveyed their own enthusiasm for their selected subjects. The only real criticism of the programme was that shortage of time precluded any questions, answers and discussion, which would have allowed participation by the audience. It will be interesting to hear whether answers to the

Questionnaire suggested that one of the afternoons should have been given to lectures so as to give more time. This would have meant giving up one set of coach trips, but perhaps evening outings could have been offered instead? Choices, choices!

Recalling the lectures in random order: Ian Campbell's lecture on 'The Scottish Writers' Response to the Industrial Revolution' was fascinating by itself, but doubly so in view of Mrs Gaskell's realistic attitude to the Industrial Revolution as seen at close quarters in Manchester. The last lecture of all, 'The Novelist's Use of Dialect', by Rosalind Slater, was also a joy for Gaskell and Brontë readers. It proved that Rosalind Slater, Lancashire born, had lost none of her mastery of native dialect after years of living in Canada. Listeners became aware of the difference between the use of realist dialect to strengthen characterisation, and use of semi-humorous, often patronising, dialect to create an effect.

The first lecture on Saturday morning, 'Early Nineteenth Century Scottish Literature', by David Finkelstein, was a model of a rigorously-researched text which set the standard for the lectures to come. The information so painlessly imparted by William Ritchie the previous evening proved an invaluable preparation for Dr Finkelstein's lecture, and also for John Chapple's contribution, 'William Stevenson and the Edinburgh Literary Scene, 1800-1820', which neatly followed on. William Stevenson is rather a shadowy figure in the complex tapestry of Mrs Gaskell's life, and Professor Chapple closed many gaps in our knowledge. (Ever alive to the hunt for clues, he was overheard at Dalmeny House asking the guide discreetly, but hopefully, whether the name 'Cleghorn' had cropped up among the Rosebery papers.)

Two stimulating lectures, utterly dissimilar in content, dealt with 'Blackwood's Magazine', the famous 'Maga'. Christine Alexander made a convincing case for pinpointing 'Blackwood's' as a prime influence on the

Brontë children's juvenalia, and Douglas Mack captured his audience with a description of James Hogg, poet and story-teller, 'Maga's' 'Ettrick Shepherd' of the famous 'Noctes Ambrosianae'. (Hogg was indeed bred up as a shepherd boy and cowherd, and had almost no schooling.) Douglas Mack yearned to believe that his hero had some influence on Mrs Gaskell's stories, but he hastened to confess that there was no direct evidence as yet!

More confident was William Ruddick whose 'Scott and his Influence on Gaskell and the Brontës' brimmed over with fascinating hints and details. Sir Walter, of course, had a gigantic Romantic influence upon countless British writers, poets, musicians and artists, practically inventing the Scottish Highlands. In brief and witty contrast, racing against the clock, came Wendy Craik who grouped three writers - Susan Ferrier (who deserves to be read more widely) and Mrs Oliphant for Scotland, and Mrs Gaskell for England. Entitled 'Men, vain Men', her lecture shed a wryly hilarious light over the comments of those writers on the male sex.

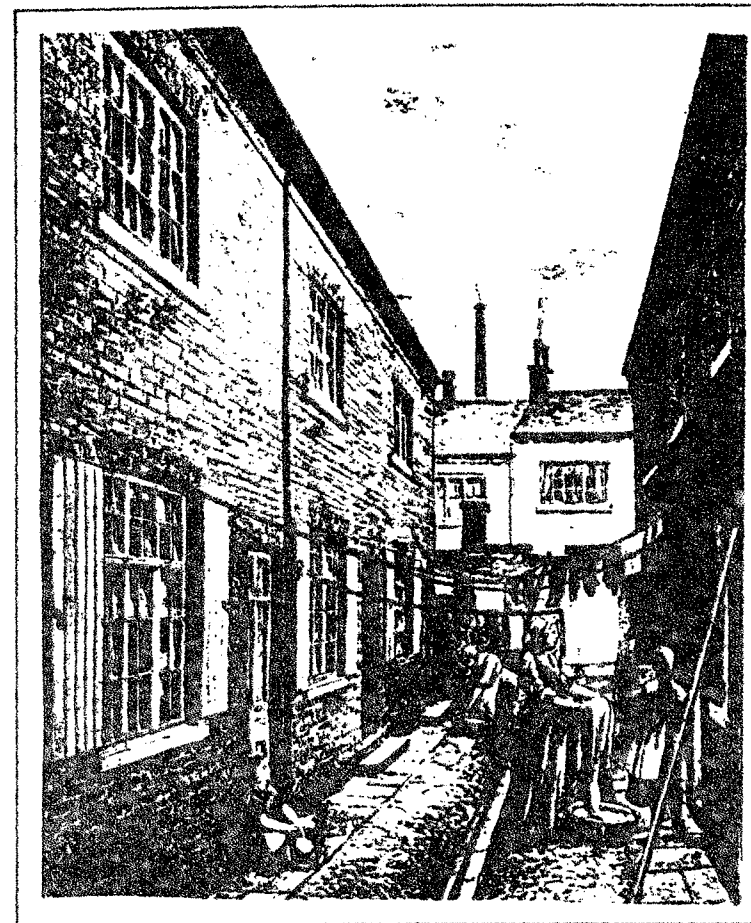
Such was the formal, intellectual content of the Conference, but a Society must by definition be social and the Gaskell Society was no exception. Members came from Canada, Australia, the United States, New Zealand, Germany, France and Japan, as well as all parts of the United Kingdom. Professor Yuriko Yamawaki, President of the Japanese Gaskell Society, gave a detailed report on that organisation's work, disclosing the fact that her students are already well advanced on their task of translating the Gaskell novels into Japanese.

For the rest, there was the book stall for browsing and buying. There was a commodious bar for meeting friends and making new ones. There were several excursions arranged round and near the city in the afternoons, and two evenings of authentic Scottish music, song and readings. A stalwart piper rounded off Sunday evening. Although some of the audience felt he would have sounded more authentic marching round in the open air instead of being confined to the cramped space between the lecture

platform and the first row of seats in the lecture hall, it must be agreed that as an octogenarian he was a living advertisement for the health-giving property of playing the bagpipes.

(Editor's Note: We will apply our learned experience at Oxford '95 by having morning sessions of three lectures followed by a discussion/question panel of the morning's speakers.)

# The Gaskell Society



## NEWSLETTER

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 634668)

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OCTOBER 1994

NO. 18

## EDITOR'S LETTER

This year's Journal was unavoidably late in publication and this has meant that the Newsletters are late, too. To avoid heavy postage costs, we have delayed it so that we can send out the information about our Oxford weekend conference in the same package; this event celebrates our tenth anniversary and we are looking forward to it greatly.

Our recent AGM meeting in Knutsford (24th September) was well attended; it was pleasant for members to meet socially, which a longer programme made possible, and we will keep to this format.

There will be no mailing at Christmas, but you can expect a Newsletter early in the New Year.

PLEASE HELP US TO SAVE 84 PLYMOUTH GROVE, THE GASKELL HOME (SEE PAGE 8).

### Forthcoming Events

The Annual London Meeting will take place on Saturday 5th November at Francis Holland School, 39 Graham Terrace, London SW1W 8JF, at 2.15 pm.

Heather Sharps will speak on Elizabeth Gaskell and Sir James P Kay-Shuttleworth - a Literary Relationship.

To reach the school from Sloane Square underground station, turn left into Holbein Place, then the second turning on the left is Graham Terrace.

London and South East Group meets, usually here, four times a year. Information can be obtained from Dudley Barlow, 44 Seymour Road, London SW18 5JA (SAE please) or phone 081 874 7727.

Joan Leach



ANNE THACKERAY RITCHIE AND 'MARY BARTON'

The survival of a copy of Mary Barton belonging to Anne Thackeray Ritchie may be of interest. It is an early Tauchnitz edition with her signature on the series title-page ("Collection of British Authors", No.182) and her initials "A.I.T." on the spine of the special binding. This copy was given to me in 1954 by a previous owner who may have had it from a relative of the Martineaus. I have ascertained that it is Tauchnitz's "second setting" (Todd and Bowden p.66) of which the date is uncertain, but before August 1862, with 400pp of text as against 423 of the first (1849) which has more lines to the page. Both are rare; the British Library's only copy, though still, as was usual, including the 1849 title-page, is later than 1866 on evidence of imprint and was acquired by the Library only in 1981. The novel's great success after its publication in October 1848, with three more editions in 1849, was unexpected; there was no question of setting advance sheets, as probably with Ruth (Todd and Bowden, p.79) and as Mrs Gaskell had sold the copyright of Mary Barton to Chapman and Hall outright for £100, it is good to think that Tauchnitz had already, in 1849, made his usual payment to her.

It would add to the association interest of this copy if we knew when 'Anny' bought it or had it bought for her - evidently in Paris, as it is stamped "Seine-Colportage"; and perhaps as early as the mid-1850s when she and her sister were again living with their grandparents and had been encouraged by their father to read more novels. Born in 1837, Anny said later that she had loved Mrs Gaskell's novels since her girlhood. In her many recollections (as Anne Ritchie) I have found no comment specifically on Mary Barton, and it is likely that Cranford for which she wrote an introduction in 1891, and Wives and Daughters, appealed to her most. She had almost no personal contact with Mrs Gaskell, but was introduced, in 1859, to her daughters, who became close friends especially after Thackeray's death.

Kathleen Tillotson

LETTER FROM META GASKELL TO CHARLES ELIOT NORTON  
FROM ASHBOURNE HALL, MAY 9th 1859

Dear Mr Norton

I am staying here alone with some cousins of mine. Mama went home this morning for two days. Before she went she left it in charge to me to write and thank you very much indeed for your kindness in enquiring about the price she could get for a tale in America. We hope you will not regret your trouble but forgive her having caused it you, when you hear that it has been useless. The offer that Messrs. Tickner and Fields make is so very small in comparison with what she gains here that she does not think it worth accepting. Mr. Sampson Lowe has just offered her £1,000 for a tale but little longer than the one Messrs. T. & F. bid for. Privately speaking I am so glad that she should thus give up the resolution she formed in 1857 of publishing for the future in America. It always pained me when she mentioned it. Her abandoning her natural and wonted publishing field for a new and foreign one, would I thought seem like an attempt to revenge on the English reading public (who have so warmly received and appreciated her works) the sorrow caused her by a small party - or rather by two families in consequence of the publication of her last book. C.B. I dare say that I am mistaken: and see it in too narrow a light; but I cannot help feeling glad at this termination to the negotiations which you so kindly conducted. I should so like to know what you think about it; but pray do not mention the unofficial part of what I have written, in your next letter, as any allusion to what happened in 1857 about the Life of C.B. seems to open the old wound. Thurstan Holland stayed with us for a few days in Easter week and had to stand a great deal of catechising about Shady Hill and its inhabitants. I was very sorry to hear from him how ill Mr Childs' Miss Sedgwick is. I hope that by this time she may be better. Mama is a great deal stronger than she has been lately. Country air and hours always suit her and she has gained a great deal from her week here. It is an old rambling house;

standing at the end of the street of the little town, with a large terrace-like garden, and beyond - fields and a wood rising up into prettily-moulded hills. The house is haunted: by a Madam Cockaine, who every night drives up the avenue in a coach and six. The spectral coachman and horses all headless. The village has been in a great state of excitement about the S. Derbyshire election. Captn. Holland the cousin with whom I am staying was Chairman of the Committee of Ashbourne for the election of a young Liberal member, instead of Mr Mundy, an old Tory of 70. But unfortunately the veteran has won the day; and what is most aggravating, by the very smallest possible majority - by one vote and that his own; for it seems candidates have votes as well as other men, but of this the Liberal candidate had neglected to take advantage. The Mundyites spared no pains to gain votes. They went to fetch one labouring man to the poll in a "one-horse shay" into which he indignantly refused to step, as Dick, his neighbour had just been carried off in a carriage and pair to the booth of the other party. The gentlemen who were determined to lose no vote for want of perseverance and energy, hastened back to Ashbourne to procure a second horse; and when his wounded vanity was thus appeased the man kindly consented to give his vote to Mundy. Another poor farmer was willing to go and vote as requested but said that he daredn't for shame to show his face he was so dirty with his fieldwork and apparently too lazy to remedy the defect: which however the two gentlemen sent to bring him to the booth did by acting as valets and literally with their own hands scrubbing shaving and re-dressing him .... When are you coming again to England? Ever Yours very truly M.E. Gaskell

(This letter also contains an interesting description of Holman Hunt's painting of The Christ Child in the Temple with the Doctors)

Barbara Brill

### A SMALL SCRAP

Meta and Julia Gaskell kept their Mother's name alive, living on at Plymouth Grove in Manchester. This brief letter signed M.E. Gaskell surfaced recently and was bought by Lucy Magruder, our US honorary secretary.

'Dear Madam,  
I am sorry that I can only send you such a small scrap of my dear Mother's writing for your collection; but I have very, very little available for such purposes, and am often asked for pieces.'

*After some consideration he resolved to  
go that very evening to Hayter's Bank, and have some  
talk with either Sylvia or her mother; whilst the exact  
nature of this purposed conversation should be the best*

Perhaps you will be able to decipher this 'autograph' excerpt from Sylvia's Lovers.

The text of the novel is held by The Brotherton Library, Leeds. Inspection might reveal an incomplete page, but it is more likely that this was from a draft copy.

\*\*\*\*\*

### EDWARD HERFORD'S DIARY

You may remember that, in our last Newsletter (17), we gave an excerpt from Edward Herford's diary which is partly in cipher, an early form of shorthand. We had hoped that someone might recognise this and help with transcription, but John Chapple has been able to decipher it. We did promise you more details but think you must wait for the book on which John is working.

BOOK NOTES

The Woman Reader 1837-1914 by Kate Flint (Oxford University) Clarendon Press. £25

Though making only brief mention of Gaskell, this book makes interesting background reading, dealing as it does with the whole subject of women's reading and education. It describes public reaction to Ruth in particular. Working class reading is covered as well as periodicals and there are interesting surveys of the most popular reading in girls' schools where Cranford is the most popular but only Gaskell novel read.

Victorian Heroines: representations of femininity in nineteenth century literature and art, by Kimberley Reynolds and Nicola Humble of Roehampton Institute of Higher Education. Harvester Wheatsheaf. £12.95

Another general background study combining literature and art criticism. It deals briefly with Gaskell's description of her heroines' physical appearance, in particular Margaret Hale and Esther in Mary Barton, showing how dress creates stereotypes and predetermines men's attitudes to women.

North and South is now available for £1 in the Penguin Popular Classics series - a simple no frills edition without notes or modern introduction.

BRIEF NOTICES

A new edition of Mary Barton is now available published by the Everyman library at £9.99 in hardback as a companion to the recent edition of North and South. It comprises the text as edited by Angus Easson with an introduction by Jenny Uglow.

CARROLL, DAVID, A literary tour of Gloucestershire and Bristol, Alan Sutton, £8.99, contains an illustration and description of Dumbleton, the home of her cousin Edward Holland which Elizabeth Gaskell often visited.

Christine Lingard

EXTRACTS FROM CHRISTINE ROSSETTI  
BY FRANCES THOMAS (published Virago 1994)

After discussing the effect of marriage and family life on authorship, Frances Thomas concludes:

"Only Mrs Gaskell, a creature of superhuman energy, was wife and mother as well as writer and her early death and the flawed masterpiece of Wives and Daughters suggest that her frenetic activity diminished the potential quality of her work."

There are two references to Cranford:

- i) In 1867 when Christina was 37 -  
"She settled firmly and prematurely into middle age, taking the spinsters of Cranford which she admired greatly as her pattern."
- ii) In 1882 shortly after the death of her brother, Gabriel, Christina met the Irish woman poet, Kathleen Tynan. Frances Thomas describes the meeting -  
"They talked of Cranford and Christina laughed aloud as she read favourite passages."  
"Kathleen Tynan described the house. 'Entering it you felt the presence of very old age, a silence that draped and muffled the house. It was not like any other silence and seemed to muffle sound. Christina had surprised Miss Tynan at first by her cheerfulness and her unbecoming short skirts and her boots which did not seem sufficiently poetic.'"

Mrs Gaskell never met Christina Rossetti but described her meeting with Dante Gabriel Rossetti vividly in GL.444 which is quoted in this book.

Barbara Brill

# Help save 84 Plymouth Grove

The Society is extremely anxious about its future.

*For over 60 years this beautiful and historic  
Grade II\* listed building  
was the home of Mrs Gaskell and her family.  
Now its cracking fabric is in urgent need  
of repair and restoration.*

The Gaskell Society is campaigning to persuade the University of Manchester, who own the building, to restore it.

\*

In 1992 a structural survey of 84 Plymouth Grove commissioned by University of Manchester recommended immediate action. The foundations needed underpinning, and large cracks in the interior walls and the later collapse of two ceilings showed the

serious condition of the building.

The University indicated to the International Society, who use the building as a centre for overseas students, that the repairs would be carried out in 1994, but nothing has been done apart from boarding up the ceilings and painting the interior.

Substantial grants might be forthcoming from English Heritage and other sources, but no applications for these seem to have been made.

The University is now proposing to move the International Society to another site.

## YOU CAN HELP BY:

*Signing the Society's petition.*

*Writing letters asking that the building is restored to:*

Professor Martin Harris  
The Vice-Chancellor  
University of Manchester  
Manchester M13 9PL

Mr Richard Furter  
Director, Estates Department  
University of Manchester  
Manchester M13 9PL

*Supporting our appeal by coming to the meeting at 84 Plymouth Grove  
on the evening of Friday 9th December.*

## THE STAR INN, OXFORD

If you walk down the left-hand side of Cornmarket Street, away from Carfax in the centre of Oxford, you will soon see Littlewood's, a branch of the nationwide chain store of that name. You would be surprised, to say the least, to know that once The Star Inn stood on that site, the inn at which Mrs Gaskell and her daughter Meta 'alighted' on their arrival for what was to be a memorable first visit to Oxford in November 1857. They had been staying with Lord and Lady Hatherton at Teddesley Hall at the beginning of a round of visits in the southern parts of the country, Mrs Gaskell's annual escape from the rigours of the Manchester winter. When the Hathertons heard that their next visit was to be Devizes (they were travelling by train) it was insisted that they should break their journey at Oxford.

With many connections in the University, the Hathertons at once wrote letters 'right and left', as Mrs Gaskell put it in one of the letters she was to write later, 'facilitating every pleasant arrangement'. At The Star Inn, she wrote, they were met by Dr Wellesley, Lord Hatherton's brother-in-law and Principal of New Inn Hall, who invited them to lunch at his house in the High Street, something which 'entailed 'a race up past X [cross] where Radley and Latimer were burnt, thro' the Radcliffe Quad and All Souls Quad into High St'. After lunch Wellesley 'donned a scarlet robe ... having to attend convocation, & rushed off (with two scarlet wings flying all abroad) with me on his arm, to deposit us at the Theatre [Sheldonian] to hear A. [Dean] Stanley's lecture'.

Everything that Mrs Gaskell saw on this visit and on the following one a few days later, when she stayed with Professor and Lady Brodie at Cowley House (now part of St Hilda's College), can still be seen today, except for The Star Inn, which was demolished in 1863, only six years after Mrs Gaskell had stayed there in 1857. One would, therefore, think it was probably already decrepit at that time - Mrs Gaskell is known for always taking

fairly modest accommodation so long as it was respectable!

However, The Star has an extremely interesting history. Originally it was known as 'Marshall's Yard - a tenement', but in 1450 it was called The Star, in 1642 as 'The Sign of the Starre', indicating a religious origin. In 1771 it became a coaching and posting inn. When demolished in 1862 it became the Clarendon Hotel after Edward Hyde, 1st Earl of Clarendon, Founder of the Oxford University and Clarendon Press. In 1955 it became a branch of Woolworth's and, possibly in 1961, the present Littlewood's.

During the earlier part of the Civil War period the King and Queen made their headquarters in Oxford, residing at Christ Church, but eventually were driven out by Roundheads under the command of Lord Saye who made his headquarters at The Star. After the King and Queen had left Oxford, the Roundheads entered and raided Christchurch looking for silver, which they found hidden in the wainscots and carried it away 'to my Lord's lodging at the Star'; there was a large cellar there. There were duels and fights at the inn between the Roundhead soldiers, the colleges were in an uproar and nearly all the books in the Bodleian Library were burnt in the streets. In the 19th century The Star was used as headquarters for electioneering.

Near the site of The Star is The Crown Tavern, still in good condition today and doing a brisk trade in food and drink (in good weather in the inn yard which has a pump and an entrance big enough to admit a coach, and a large iron gate, still locked at night). According to John Aubrey, Shakespeare used to stay here on his annual journey between London and Stratford. Sir William Davenant, Poet Laureate and a great friend of his, had been born at the Crown and lived there with his father, 'the vintner'. Davenant had a son William, whom Aubrey says was 'contented enough to be thought Shakespeare's son' presumably by Davenant's wife, according to Aubrey 'of very light report'. Part of what was the original

Crown building is now offices and one of the upper rooms, called 'The Painted Room', where Shakespeare is believed to have slept, can, by permission, be seen.

This street has other ancient buildings, some of which have survived in one form or another and would certainly have been there when Mrs Gaskell stayed the night at The Star in 1857.

Anna Unsworth

#### SOURCES

The Letters of Mrs Gaskell 1966, M.U.P., ed Chapple and Pollard. 380, 383 and 384

Cavaliers and Roundheads, Christopher Hibbert, 1993, Harper Collins

Aubrey's Brief Lives, Penguin English Library, 1972

Oxford Pubs, Past and Present, Paul J Marriott, Oxford, n.d.

'So Different a Life ...', A Unsworth, Gaskell Society Newsletter August 1993

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#### SOUTH OF ENGLAND BRANCH TO CRIX

On a visit to her Unitarian friends, the Shaens, Elizabeth Gaskell wrote: 'Well! Crix is far more beautiful than I expected, not the house, that is only a great large red brick house. But I never saw such beautiful grounds ...' in a letter to Marianne and Meta dated Sunday [December '48?] (GL.19).

On Saturday 23 July members of the South of England Branch were given a warm welcome, by Mrs Strutt and other members of her family, to the Shaen home at Crix, Hatfield Peverel. It was a hot July afternoon and both the house and grounds could be seen to good advantage. The present house replaced an Elizabethan manor house, no traces of which survive. Through the generosity of our hosts we were able to see the principal rooms on the ground floor and some of the bedrooms above, including the bedroom it is thought Elizabeth Gaskell used. A lady from the Essex County Museum showed us a pair of Rebecca Shaen's shoes and gave us some additional information on the family and the house.

The storm of October 1987 had enabled Mrs Strutt to restore the porch, from a previous ornamental grandeur to a more appropriate Unitarian simplicity. From the porch you step straight into a spacious hall from which several main rooms are reached with ease. Some rooms have been altered in their use since the Shaen years so we began in the Billiard Room which had been their Library. The Drawing Room was cool and well proportioned but the maids slept in the attics facing the garden "where they boiled in the summer". The cube shaped Library had a splendid collection of books arranged around the room with stairs to the garden below. The spacious Lounge included a Landseer portrait of a dog and a Dolls House, from the turn of the century, to which each generation of the current owner's family had added something. The cat sleeps in its roof garden! The fireplaces elsewhere appeared to be of marble but were in fact made of wood and iron.

'Our bedrooms looked out upon a lawn ...' There was a wonderful view of the garden stretching down to two old oaks and to fields beyond in the glorious sunshine. The bedroom Elizabeth and William Gaskell are thought to have used is now occupied by Mrs Strutt's grandson who has decorated it in a highly individual but effective way. What Elizabeth Gaskell would have thought about it is an interesting speculation!

In another bedroom, with an equally lovely view, enhanced by a bow window added about 1902, we were able to look at some framed Victorian valentine cards, some by no means simple in their overall design.

The visit was concluded with a stroll in the garden and a splendid tea in the Summer House. Members subsequently showed their appreciation for the kind hospitality and generous access given to us by sending a cheque, which we are pleased to learn will enable Mrs Strutt to develop part of the grounds as 'the Gaskell garden'. We also thank Richard Beckley for making the visit possible.

Howard F Gregg

### MRS GASKELL'S BONNET

Emily Shaen wrote in a letter of July 1855<sup>1</sup>:

'Lily in radiant spirits again, half - I say - because she has got an espiegle french bonnet, half because F.D.Maurice had asked her to see him again'. What a revealing comment on two sides of Elizabeth Gaskell's character - female vanity and social/religious concern.

John Chapple has a letter addressed to him in 1968, soon after The Collected Letters was published and the writer had received an invitation to a lecture he gave.

'Dear Mr Chapple,

I have long wanted to tell the following story to someone interested in Elizabeth Gaskell. I am nearly 80 and my mother told me the story. She spent part of her early life in Manchester - where she must have heard it....

Here it is:-

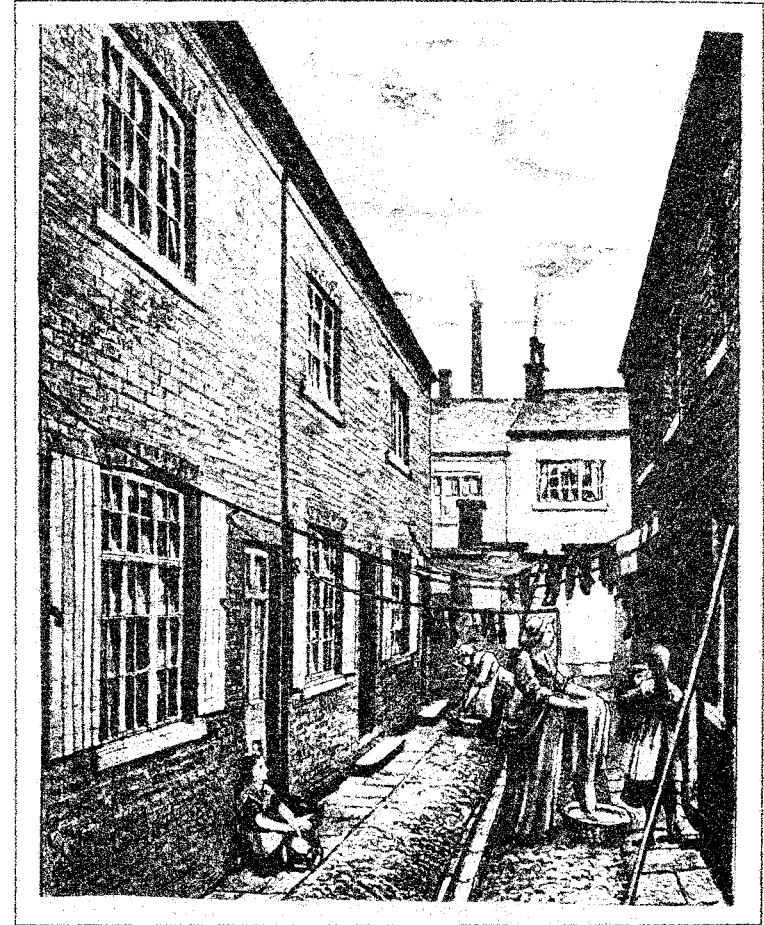
Mr Gaskell installed in Cross Street Chapel addressed the congregation as Mrs Gaskell arrived a little late and adorned with a new hat, and said, 'Here comes Mrs Gaskell with a chest of drawers on her head'.

The correspondent speculated that the hat had been bought with the proceeds of the sale of a piece of furniture, but I wonder if the hat was too flamboyant for the Rev Gaskell's taste?

Joan Leach

<sup>1</sup> Letters and Memorials of Catherine Winkworth Vol.1, p.346

# The Gaskell Society



## NEWSLETTER

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: 01565 634668)

ISSN 0954 - 1209

**FEBRUARY 1995**

**NO. 19**

## EDITOR'S LETTER

Dear Members

1995 promises to be a full year for the Society with our Oxford Conference drawing members from far and wide to share a stimulating weekend celebrating our tenth anniversary. Though those years have passed so quickly, I think they have been a time of achievement for the Society, growing steadily and offering members an excellent Journal and a variety of events and meetings which have established many friendships.

During the winter months a group has met monthly in Knutsford for a buffet lunch followed by reading and discussion. The South of England group meets quarterly in London.

The AGM in Knutsford will be on 30th September. As this will be only a month after the Oxford Conference, there will not be a weekend of events.

The Alliance of Literary Societies AGM will be held in Birmingham, as usual, at the BMI on 29th April. The programme will be presented by The Friends of Keats House. Please let me know if you would like to attend and I will send details when available.

Please remember that an SAE is always appreciated, and that all cheques should be made payable to The Gaskell Society.

THERE ARE STILL A FEW PLACES AVAILABLE  
FOR OXFORD - 25-28th August - BUT DO NOT DELAY  
Further details will be sent soon  
to those who have enrolled

Joan Leach



## AN INTRODUCTION TO MANCHESTER COLLEGE

On 22nd February 1786<sup>1</sup>, a group of gentlemen met in Manchester to discuss and, after deliberation, decide to establish an academy in that city. The gentlemen, who included the first Josiah Wedgwood, the famous potter, were Dissenters, whose sons were excluded from Oxford and Cambridge because of their inability to assent to the Articles of Religion of the Established Church, and the academy was intended to train such young men for the professions and the Dissenting ministry. Thus began Manchester College, one of several such institutions which provided an education much superior to most of the grammar schools and, in some respects, the universities. A high priority was given to science, business studies, the new Higher Criticism of the Bible coming out of Germany at that time and, indeed, German was taught at these academies long before it was taught at Oxford. These colleges were open to all without any religious test and several men who later became famous, such as James Mill, utilitarian philosopher; Ricardo, the economist; Malthus, theorist on population; and Disraeli, future Prime Minister, all received part of their education at one of them, while John Dalton, the famous scientist, William Stevenson, father of Mrs Gaskell, William Gaskell, Francis Newman, brother of John Henry Newman, and James Martineau, the last honoured by nine universities for his philosophical works and a former Principal, all taught at Manchester College for many years.

Financial difficulties beset all the Dissenting Academies however, and in 1802 Manchester College left the city of its birth and, for nearly a century, led a peripatetic existence until finally settling in Oxford, having inherited the valuable library of the Warrington Academy, one of the most distinguished of these institutions which had, like the others, failed for lack of financial backing.

It was in 1889 that it was finally decided that Manchester College should settle in Oxford, the University by then having been opened to Dissenters, or Nonconformists as they were becoming increasingly known. Their first

premises were the upper rooms of No.90 High Street, previously student lodgings, and in 1893 the present fine Victorian Gothic building in Mansfield Road, incorporating a row of 17th and 18th century houses in Holywell (recently restored) also student lodgings, were opened. It was in 1893 too, that the college admitted its first woman student.

Enshrined in letters of stone over the main entrance to the college are the words, Veritas, Libertas, Pietas - Truth, Liberty, Religion. These principles had been strictly adhered to through all its vicissitudes and the college itself, in Oxford, the then bastion of orthodoxy, was a place of learning freed from all dogmatic restraint. Though staffed, governed and supported by Dissenters of the Unitarian tradition, at one period, William Addis, a distinguished Anglican graduate of Balliol, held the Chair of Hebrew and Old Testament studies.

The opening ceremony in 1893 began with a procession of some 700 people, from all parts of the country, from the original premises in the High Street to the new building, where a service was held in the chapel. The latter is unusually ornate for a Nonconformist chapel, with oak panelling, benches, screen and choir stalls, a mural of the Last Supper above the Communion Table and a large number of stained glass windows designed by Edward Burne Jones and executed by William Morris which have been highly praised as amongst their best work. The organ, well known in Oxford, is by Nicholson the great organ builder, and specially commissioned communion plate was presented by former students.

The opening service was addressed by James Martineau, then eighty-eight years of age, and at the luncheon which followed, attended by the Warden of Merton and Representatives of Balliol and All Souls, mention was made of William Jowitt, Master of Balliol, who had given the college much encouragement over the past four years and had intended to be present, but had recently died.

A prominent feature of the college is its library of over

5,000 volumes which is, with the separately housed Carpenter Library of Comparative Religion, generally accepted as the best theological library in Oxford, particularly with reference to the history of Dissent. It also houses a vast collection of archive material, including the letters of Harriet Martineau (1802-76), Unitarian novelist and writer on political economy, archive material on Mrs Gaskell, globes that belonged to Joseph Priestley (1733-1804), discoverer of oxygen and Unitarian Minister, his famous portrait by John Opie, and a white marble statue of James Martineau.

Distinguished figures associated with the college have been Max Müller, pioneer in the study of Oriental language and religion, J Estlin Carpenter, the University's first Professor of Comparative Religion, and L P Jacks, philosopher and novelist. During the latter's period as Principal (1915-31), lectures were given at the college by the Indian poet Rabindranath Tagore; Evelyn Underhill, eminent Anglican writer and lecturer on the religious life; Dean Inge and R Tawney. Gilbert Murray, Greek scholar, was a Visitor to the college and Sir Alister Hardy, Emeritus Professor of Zoology at Oxford, its President until shortly before his death. Sir Adrian Boulton was an Honorary Fellow and one of its most enthusiastic supporters.

William Gaskell became Chairman of the College Committee when it removed from Manchester to London in 1853 (largely because of the founding of Owen's College, which eventually became the University of Manchester) and in 1859 he was also Visitor, both of which offices he performed for the remainder of his life.

Manchester College removed from London to Oxford mainly through the influence of the well-known Victorian novelist, Mrs Humphrey Ward, a great admirer of Martineau and her belief that he, and therefore the college, were insufficiently recognised in London. She proposed the vote of thanks in 1919 when the very impressive Arlosh Hall, much in demand for concerts, receptions, conferences etc, was opened by the generosity

of a gift of money from the Trustees of a Cumbrian Unitarian family. Its walls are lined with portraits of distinguished Unitarians as are those of the Refectory, one of the latter being of William Gaskell. A new music building has recently been built in memory of Sir Adrian Boulton. In the ground-floor corridor are busts of Frances Power Cobbe (1822-1904), Unitarian writer and philanthropist, and the Revd J J Tayler, distinguished theologian and Principal of the College when it moved to London (1853-69). Mrs Barbauld (1743-1824), teacher at the Warrington Academy, one of the first writers of books for small children, an example of which is in the college library, poet and friend of Wordsworth and Coleridge and their circle, appears in the Warrington Academy window in the Library.

The college is now a mature student hall of the University, offering degrees and courses for students of 25 years and over, in English, Geography, History, Law, Philosophy and Economics, Theology and certain Joint Honours Schools, an Oxford University certificate in Theology and a Manchester College (Unitarian) Ministry Certificate. Places are also available for graduate degrees and Sabbatical and Research Study. Close relations have, over the years, been developed with other Oxford colleges and in 1986 when the college celebrated its Bicentenary of the actual day of the birth of the college in Manchester, the bells of its nearest neighbour, New College, were rung.

<sup>1</sup>Warrington Academy was in serious decline and closed in midsummer 1786. William Turner had been a student there.

Anna Unsworth

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In July 1994 an inaugural meeting of The Martineau Society was held at Manchester College. The aims of the Society are to preserve the collection of Martineau papers and 'To study and commemorate the principles of freedom of conscience, advocated by Harriet Martineau and her brother, Dr James Martineau, and to encourage their application in modern life'. Details from: Mr Alan Middleton, 49 Mayfield Avenue, Grove, Wantage, Oxon OX12 7ND

## BOOK NOTES

FORMS OF SPEECH IN VICTORIAN FICTION by Raymond Chapman, Emeritus Professor of English, University of London. Longman, 1994. £30

A study of the use of dialogue by Victorian authors to describe character and the relationship between individuals. It focuses on dialect, slang, class euphemism, the use of Christian names as forms of address, and religious language. The author quotes over a hundred books to illustrate his point rather than analyse an author's work individually, so Gaskell references appear throughout the book.

DISCOURSE OF SLAVERY: APHRA BEHN TO TONI MORRISON, edited by Carl Plase and Betty J Ring. Routledge. £35

A collection of essays, one of which is "Elizabeth Gaskell, Harriet Beecher Stowe and the Iron of Slavery" by Elizabeth Jean Sabiston of York University, Toronto. It finds interesting parallels between the two authors who met in 1848 - both were mothers (a rarity amongst Victorian authors) who turned to writing comparatively late, after the death of a child. Both have suffered many decades of neglect at the hands of critics but are at last coming into their own and getting the recognition they deserve. Their work highlights the social evils and sexual exploitation suffered by the working classes.

MARY HOWITT: ANOTHER LOST VICTORIAN WRITER by Joy Dunicliff. Excalibur Press of London, 1992. £8.95

Though the connection is not expounded, this modestly produced book is the only modern account of the life of the author who played such an important part in encouraging the literary career of Elizabeth Gaskell.

CHARLOTTE BRONTE AND HER 'DEAREST NELL': THE STORY OF A FRIENDSHIP by Barbara Whitehead. Smith Settle. £19 (paperback £11.50)

This splendidly illustrated book tells the story of Charlotte Brontë's best friend, Ellen Nussey, with whom Mrs Gaskell corresponded in the writing of *Life of Charlotte Brontë*. There are scholarly references to their letters.

Christine Lingard

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### GASKELL LETTERS

MICHAEL SILVERMAN, dealer in autograph letters, historical documents and archives, reports that Gaskell Letters are in demand, so if you have any to sell they would be interested. But first of course make sure we know all about them and have a photocopy, at least! Michael Silverman's address is PO Box 350, London SE3 OLZ (Tel: 081 319 4452, Fax: 081 856 6006)

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### FRIEDRICH ENGELS AND MANCHESTER

A one day school on this subject is to be held on Saturday 11th March at Manchester Metropolitan University, Oxford Road. The programme includes a talk by Alan Shelston: "Family Values? Friedrich Engels and Mrs Gaskell". After lunch there will be a short walk around some of the areas that Engels knew.

Details from Christine Davies, Room 36, Cavendish Building, Manchester Metropolitan University, Cavendish Street, Manchester M15 6BG

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PLYMOUTH GROVE - I had intended to write an article about the House, its history and current position, but now plan to produce a booklet later. Joan Leach

The Valentine, sent by George Smith to Elizabeth Gaskell, is mentioned by E S Haldane: Mrs Gaskell and Her Friends 1930 (pp.272-273).

It was then in the possession of Mrs Lamb, Stephen Winkworth's daughter. Miss Haldane describes it thus: 'It is an amusing representation of Mrs Gaskell as a dairy woman, while her would-be publisher is on his knees begging for his manuscript'.

I saw it, about 1960, when it was owned by Dr Winifred Lamb, whom I assumed to be a granddaughter of Stephen Winkworth, albeit I never met her nor have I checked. Dr Lamb posted to me the original which I had photographed (in Oxford) before returning it. I do not know its present whereabouts. It is reproduced in my Mrs Gaskell's Observation and Invention facing p.544.

Here, it might be appropriate to correct a misunderstanding.



Jenny Uglow reproduces the Valentine in Elizabeth Gaskell: A Habit of Stories (between p.338 and 339) and implies in her list of illustrations (p.vii) that the original is in the Bodleian Library, Oxford, but it is my B.Litt. thesis, with the photograph, which is deposited there.

You might like to try to decipher some of the drawings, several seem to be from Cranford, others from Sylvia's Lovers and perhaps the castles represent The Grey Woman.

Above all, the Valentine shows the delightful relationship between George Smith and Mrs Gaskell.

J S Sharps

Ed: The bottom right hand corner depicts ECG as St Sebastian tied to a wheel; remember she said that was how she felt after the publication of Ruth.

SIR JAMES KAY-SHUTTLEWORTH, MRS GASKELL  
AND CHARLOTTE BRONTË

On November 5, 1994 a stimulating lecture was given by Heather Sharps at the Francis Holland School, Sloane Square, on Sir James Kay-Shuttleworth and his literary relationship with Mrs Gaskell and Charlotte Brontë. Some members of the Brontë Society joined the South of England Group of the Gaskell Society for the occasion. Ms Sharps spoke of Sir James, the literary novelist, and drew striking comparisons between his novel 'Ribblesdale' and Mrs Gaskell's 'Sylvia's Lovers'. She also introduced us to four Kay-Shuttleworth scholars - Frank Smith, B C Bloomfield, David Warwick and R J W Sellick.

Heather Sharps kindly divided her lecture into four sections, kindly because her wealth of enthusiastic detail might otherwise have overwhelmed her more ignorant listeners. She reminded us that he was born in Rochdale in 1804, trained in medicine in Edinburgh and became a doctor in Manchester where he saw the deprivations of the poor. In 1835 he was made a Poor Law Commissioner and in 1839 became First Secretary of the committee of the Privy Council on Education. It is, of course, as a pioneer educationalist that he is best remembered. He set up teacher-training schools, widened the school curriculum, introduced school inspectors and ensured financial support for schools from local and government funds.

He also both lectured and wrote about social conditions in the town slums, especially Manchester. Friedrich Engels, who later on wrote about the condition of the English working class, quoted Kay-Shuttleworth as one of his sources. Ill-health and an abrasive personality removed him from strenuous public life in 1849, by which time he had married a rich heiress and lived in Lancashire. He continued his interests in poverty and education, combining them with a wide social life. He always maintained that education was the key to a full life.

He tried his hand at novel-writing, 'Scarsdale' published in 1860 and 'Ribblesdale' published in 1874. His literary mentors were Sir Walter Scott, the romantic historical novelist, and dour Thomas Carlyle, the romantic historian. Ms Sharps analysed the structure of the historical novel, suggesting it should take a period at least 60 years in the past; that it should include big historical events and at least one outstanding historical figure. The main characters should be seen to respond to historical changes which would shape their destinies. Both 'Sylvia's Lovers' and 'Ribblesdale' fulfil these criteria. Both are also influenced by the Whig theory of history, that optimistic belief in a natural progression towards moral improvement.

However, 'Ribblesdale', dealing with Lancashire in 1812, is far more a novel with a message than is 'Sylvia's Lovers'. The latter novel is richer in artistic values than 'Ribblesdale', which has a distinct flavour of propaganda, as Sir James details the poverty and diseases of weavers and their families, hit by the Industrial Revolution. Also, Sir James draws his characters from the outside, unlike Mrs Gaskell, who creates life by drawing from the inside. Sir James explores the class barriers at a certain period, in a certain place, whereas Mrs Gaskell, although also aware of class conflicts, deals with more universal themes.

It was in June 1850 that Sir James persuaded Charlotte Brontë, whose work he much admired, to stay with him and his wife at Gawthorpe Hall, near Burnley. The following August Lady Kay-Shuttleworth, who already knew Mrs Gaskell, invited both the Gaskells to Gawthorpe Hall to meet Charlotte Brontë. Mr Gaskell had prior engagements, but Mrs Gaskell accepted eagerly, and the two novelists liked each other immediately, in spite of having some points of disagreement. Poor Sir James came off badly. Both women appreciated his kindness and his undoubted intellect, but felt estranged by his self-importance. Charlotte Brontë suspected he had an instinctive antipathy to imaginative writers - which both she and Mrs Gaskell were.

Indeed, Mrs Gaskell seemed to prefer Lady Kay-Shuttleworth to the latter's husband. They were in frequent correspondence, both doing charitable work in Lancashire, and Mrs Gaskell was glad of brief stays in the comfort of Gawthorpe Hall when exhausted by her strenuous life. However, after Charlotte Brontë's unexpected death, and Mrs Gaskell's ready acceptance of the Revd Patrick Brontë's request that she, and only she, should write a memoir of Charlotte's life, it was to Sir James that Mrs Gaskell turned for help. After visiting Brussels and meeting the Hegers, Mrs Gaskell had become aware of Charlotte's passion for her tutor. It was the key to a new reading of 'Villette', and Mrs Gaskell feared that her novel, 'The Professor', so far unpublished, might reveal more of her secret love. Charlotte's widower, the Revd Arthur Nicholls, had the manuscript and refused to part with it.

Sir James, however, was a formidable ally as he accompanied Mrs Gaskell to Hawarth. Ignoring Nicholls' protests, he and Mrs Gaskell went off with not only 'The Professor' but also the opening of 'Emma' and the miniature 'Gondal' and 'Angria' stories. Sir James wished to edit the manuscript of 'The Professor' for publication, and although Mrs Gaskell agreed on the need for editing, as she thought it contained more coarseness and profanity than any of Charlotte's other novels, she thought Sir James was too heavy-handed to be entrusted with it. As it happened, Nicholls settled the matter by editing it himself for publication. The novel, to Mrs Gaskell's relief, disclosed fewer of Charlotte's secrets than had 'Villette'.

She always retained doubts about Sir James' literary potential. She warned George Smith, her successful publisher, that Sir James had lately finished a novel and it was bound to be mentioned when the Kay-Shuttleworths were next in London and took tea with the Smiths. Her instinct proved correct. Not long afterwards his novel, 'Scarsdale', was published by Smith, Elder & Co.

Brenda Colloms

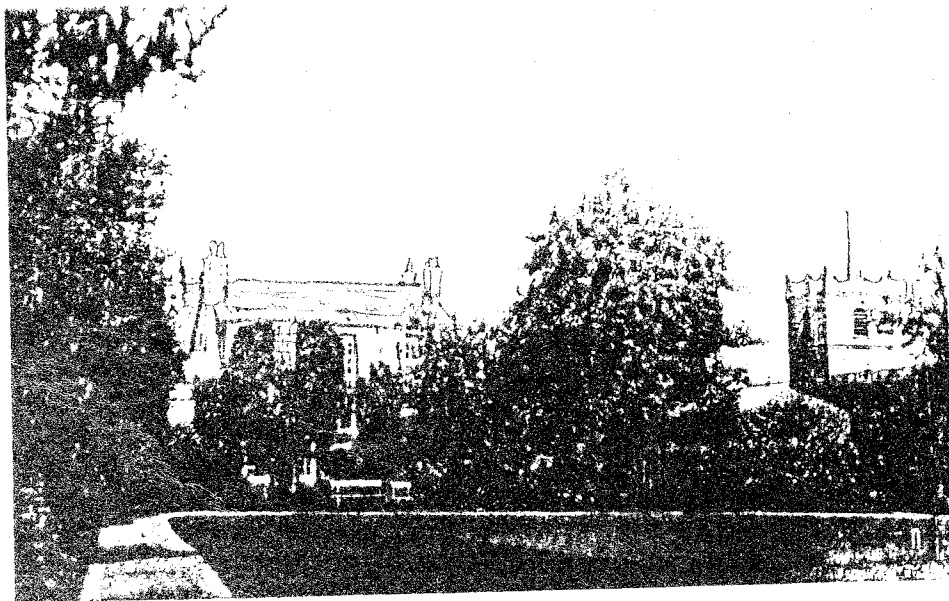
### EDMUND SHARPE 1809-1877

I like biographies. When I chanced on one in the local library with an attractive auburn-haired lady on the cover and a note on the flyleaf saying, 'This book is in demand and the loan cannot normally be renewed after 4 weeks', I had no hesitation in borrowing Jenny Uglow's recent biography of Elizabeth Gaskell. I was well rewarded by a very enjoyable and informative narrative about an attractive subject, but also, to my surprise, by coming face to face, on page 19, with my great-grandfather, Edmund Sharpe, at 5 years old, riding 'in a very nice little Carriage ... which we thought it impossible could be turned over', in company with 'a little niece of Mrs Lumbs [Elizabeth]'. In the event, the carriage could be turned over and Edmund broke his arm; fortunately 'Mr. H[olland] came home from his daily ride' at that moment and set it. As all the fuss was about Edmund, we must assume that Elizabeth, who was a year younger, escaped unhurt.

Who was this Edmund Sharpe who was a playmate of Elizabeth's in her earliest years? His father, Francis Sharpe, had married Martha Whittaker, sister of Peter Holland's second wife. The Whittakers, Sharpes and Hollands formed a close-knit group in the Knutsford society of the time and the Sharpes remained in contact even after their removal to Lancaster after Francis Sharpe's death when Edmund was 14 years old. Francis was organist and choirmaster but also earned a very good income as a teacher of music, travelling throughout Cheshire to visit his pupils, who included some of the leading 'county' families. His children were all musical, but Edmund was of a more practical bent.

After education at Runcorn Grammar School, at Dr Burney's at Greenwich and at Sedbergh, he entered St Johns College, Cambridge, where he caught the eye of that eminent Lancastrian, Dr Whewell, Master of Trinity. In 1832 he was elected Travelling Bachelor of Arts for the University and spent 3 years in the study - which became the love of his life - of architecture, particularly church





*C.1900 - CHURCH HOUSE KNUTSFORD  
now HOLLINGFORD HOUSE*

*Home of Dr Peter Holland and his daughters Mary and Lucy, and possibly Dr Gibson's house in Wives and Daughters. The garden where Edmund and Elizabeth had their mishap.*

architecture, in France and Germany; in 1835 he became MA. This was followed by a year's pupillage under Thomas Rickman, architect, of Birmingham.

From 1836 to 1851, he practised as an architect in Lancaster, latterly in partnership with his brother-in-law, Edward Paley, designing about 40 churches, chiefly in the north of England, often in terra-cotta; in 1851, married with a son and 2 daughters and another son to come, he turned, in his capacity as Civil Engineer, to railway construction, in the north, in North Wales and on the continent, at Geneva and Perpignan.

In 1848 he became a member of the RIBA and in 1875 received their Gold Medal. At 60 years old, in 1869, he retired almost wholly from his practice and devoted himself to his first love, church architecture. He joined the Architectural Association, from whose members he invited small groups of young men to accompany him on architectural study tours, which he organised himself with the efficiency of a Thomas Cook. Initially in the English Midlands, these were soon extended to the continent; the last of these before his death, in Charente, was commemorated by the Architectural Association by the collation of the materials collected in a handsomely bound memorial volume.

He died in Milan on May 8th, 1877, while travelling with his younger children to study the churches of Northern Italy; his body was brought back to Lancaster to be buried beside his wife who had died the previous year.

His character was ably summarised in this extract from a paper read before the Architectural Association in 1877:

Those who were only acquainted with Mr Sharpe in his public life could scarcely know how tender and sensitive a nature he possessed. He took the greatest interest in the welfare of others; his generous, hearty sympathy won for him the confidence and esteem of all who knew him. He had always a ready and helping hand for those who needed it. In the company of younger men he was always genial - his superior knowledge was put at their service without dogmatism or patronage.

If 'the child is father of the man', we can gain a good idea of the character of the little boy, who was Elizabeth's playmate so many years before.

Timothy Mannix

### SOUTH OF ENGLAND GROUP

This active, friendly group has a programme of talks and visits very well organised. The next talk will be on 29th April at The Francis Holland School, Chelsea at 2.00 pm. Dr Gillian Cumiskey will speak on: Art and Illustrations in the Works of Elizabeth Gaskell.

Other dates for your diary are 7th September and 11th November.

A new venue is being arranged. Our thanks are due to Jane Wilson, who has arranged for us to meet at The Francis Holland School hitherto.

For any queries or details about this group please contact: Dudley Barlow, 44 Seymour Road, London SW18 5JA. SAE please.

The group very much enjoyed a visit to Crix, Hatfield Peveril, last summer (see NL18). The gardens are to be opened on two occasions this year:  
22nd May from 2.00-6.00 pm in aid of the Red Cross, and  
22nd June at 6.00 pm - Beating the Retreat - in aid of the Army Benevolent Fund.

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### MEMBERSHIP LISTS

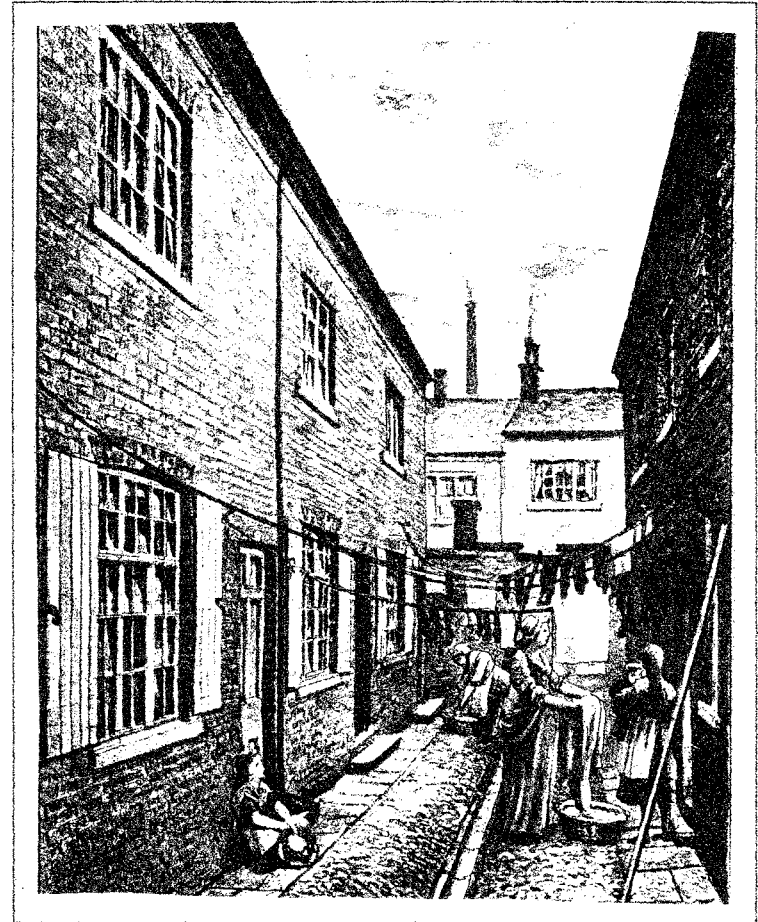
Keeping these up to date and accurate is difficult. Some members do not reply to reminders or send in a resignation, so one has to assume that they are no longer interested, but it does not help accuracy.

To keep down postage costs, I have two mailing lists so that distant members do not get notified of local meetings. All receive the Journal and two Newsletters.

Joan Leach



# The Gaskell Society



## NEWSLETTER

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: 01565 634668)

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AUGUST 1995

NO. 20

## EDITOR'S LETTER

by Joan Leach

By the time you receive this Newsletter the Society's Oxford Conference will be over. It has been over a year in the planning and over a hundred members will be joining us. The theme is Life, Learning and Literature. We hope that some of the papers will find their way into the Journal.

Elizabeth Gaskell made two visits to Oxford and packed a great deal of sight-seeing into a short time - we shall not be at a Christ Church Ball until 4.00 am! She also met some of the influential men of the University - Arthur Stanley, whose lecture she attended, Howett, Max Müller and Matthew Arnold, just appointed Professor of Poetry. She wrote afterwards of the visit 'I am Medieval and unManchester and unAmerican' (she was writing to C E Norton (GL386)).

We feel we are treading in her footsteps, especially as St Hilda's has absorbed Cowley House where she stayed with the Brodies. They later visited her several times, in Manchester. She made and cherished friendships; we hope that our Society keeps this tradition, and I know that friendships are made between members at our various events.

We are still in some anxiety about the Gaskell House at Plymouth Grove. Manchester University intends to remove the International Society to the campus and will then have no further use for the house. Our Society cannot seek Heritage or lottery funds until a viable plan can be drawn up for the restoration and future use of the house.

Before the University owned it, about 30 years ago, the Unitarians in Manchester were offered money to buy the house (£10,000 by Sir Felix Brunner, Anna Unsworth - believes). We dare not hope for such a charitable offer, but we will keep you informed.

*Unitarian Minister's  
widow*

## GHOST STORIES

Elizabeth Gaskell enjoyed telling stories around the fireside and particularly enjoyed a ghost story. (See NL13 An Oxford Ghost by Barbara Brill and NL14 Dickens and the Ghost Story by Muriel Smith)

The MSS of this story has no heading as in the form of a letter or any indication that it was to Elizabeth Gaskell's publisher; one can only guess that it was enclosed with some other item. Like the fragments of ghost stories in Vol VII of The Knutsford Edition she perhaps meant to finish and polish it at a later date, if and when a ghost story was needed.

"October 5, 1862  
Midnight"

You have been asking me to tell you a ghost story: suppose I write you one, which I heard last year from very good authority; from one who had heard it from the very person by whom the apparition was seen.

A Yorkshireman, half-farmer, half-manufacturer, had been to Wakefield to dispose of his produce, and the woollen yarn, which had been spun by his wife and daughter. For this he had received a tolerably large sum of money, for him, and in that place. He had a long way to go home, over many a moor and rocky fell, and night was coming on. However he drove well; his horse was good, and his gig light; but by and by he began to feel as if some one was sitting by him on the empty seat. It was, at that moment, too dark to see even the nearest objects distinctly; but as soon as he emerged into the moonlight, he made an effort, and turned his head to look at the creature who sat beside him; and he recognized, within a foot of his own face, the face and features of his brother, dead fifteen years ago! He turned his head back to its former place, and drove straight on without a word, his flesh creeping on his bones. The road lay before them white in the moonlight, but with great pieces of rock on the fells on either side. From the black shadow of one of

these two men started forward with evident intent to stop the horse. But they drew back suddenly, one saying to the other,

By---, there are two of them!

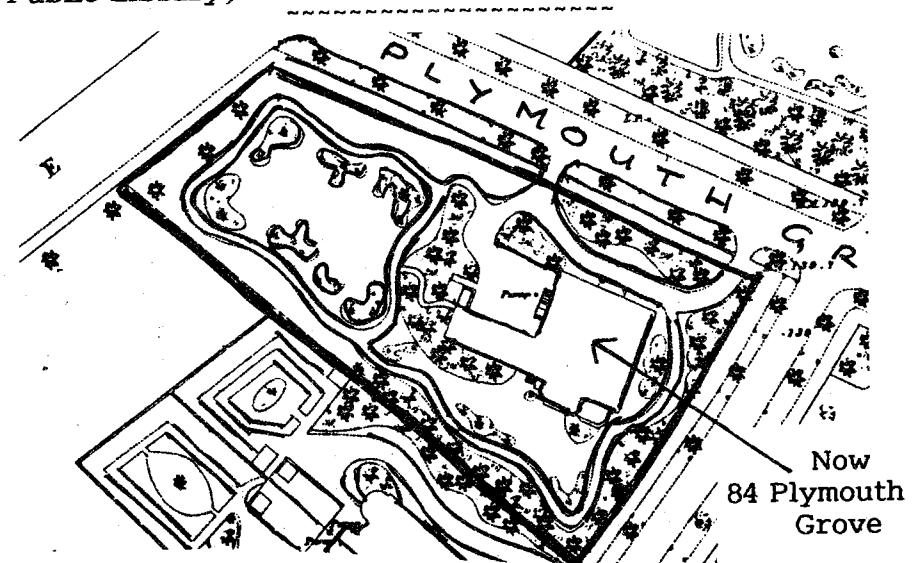
Then the man drove one, faster than ever; and presently the wild moor was enclosed in little patches of fields here and there; and, on descending a little hill (or as they call them "brows" in that country) there were the scattered glimmering lights of a village to be seen not far off.

Then the man took heart of grace; and would fain have known how his dead brother had managed to get out of his grave in Burnley Church-yard, just in the very nick of time, so to speak.

But when he turned once again to his silent companion to ask him this question, there was nothing but vacant air and the empty seat.

E C Gaskell"

*(With acknowledgements to the Berg Collection, New York Public Library)*



Local Studies Unit, Manchester Public Library. O/S carried out 1849 - published 1850/1. Sheet 45 Manchester and Salford. 5 feet to the mile!

NEW LIGHT ON ELIZABETH GASKELL AND HER FAMILY  
by J A V Chapple

The splendid loan deposit of Gaskell letters and other material made by Mrs Rosemary Trevor Dabbs to the Brotherton Library of the University of Leeds (NL17, February 1994) is now joined by a valuable group of papers entrusted to its care by Mrs Portia Holland, wife of the late John Swinton Holland. It is, as the Brotherton Librarian, Mr R P Carr, says, 'an imaginative way' of making such documents available to users of the special collections.

The Holland deposit contains many items, ranging from scraps of eighteenth-century Gaskell letters to the lengthy parchment will of Edward Holland, Elizabeth's cousin, and his elaborate Contract for erecting a mansion house at Dumbleton in the county of Gloucester, 9 January 1833. Payments of £19,800 in instalments are listed to 9 September 1837. Probate and double probate of Hannah Lumb's will of 31 December 1834, proved at Chester on 8 May 1837, has an obvious interest. There are several copies of such family wills.

Coincidentally, there is a diary of the infancy (from four weeks to three years) of Edward Thurstan Holland, kept by his mother, Sophia, in two small notebooks (a third is missing). This is being edited by Anita Wilson and J A V Chapple, and should appear this year along with Elizabeth Gaskell's diary of Marianne and Meta that Mrs Dabbs recently deposited in the Brotherton. The greater coincidence, we realise, is that Marianne married Thurstan Holland in 1866.

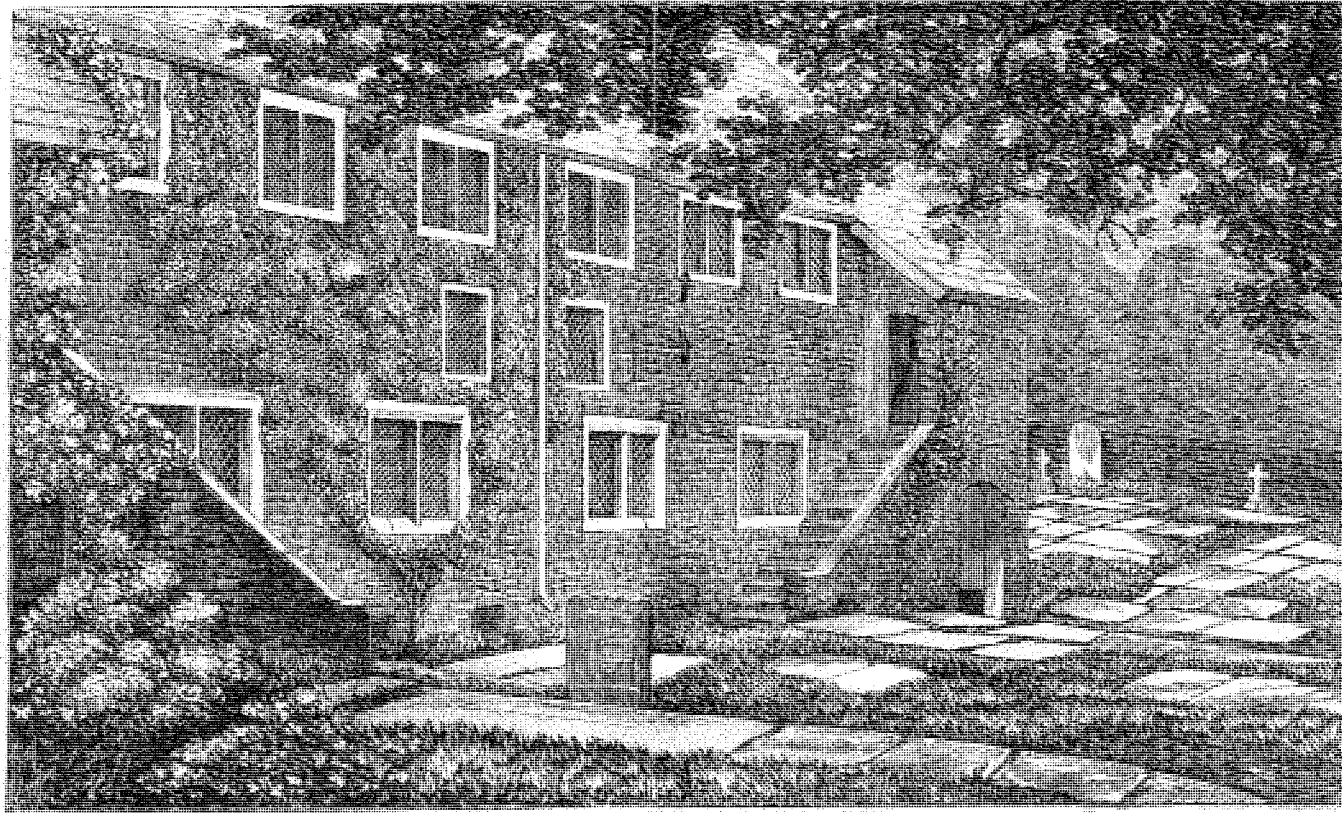
Space forbids mention of all that exists in the new collection of papers, but the 'Diary and Expences & Journal of a Voyage & Journey from Liverpool to Trieste via Hull & Toninguen in the Summer of 1805' and 'Do of Do from Malta to Falmouth and Sandle Bridge in the Spring of 1810' are particularly fascinating, as are the many documents relating to the Dumbleton estate so often visited by Elizabeth Gaskell - its printed Particulars of 1822,

Estate Survey, and the like. Once again, Gaskell Society members have cause to be truly grateful that such a collection of family papers is made available. A set of transcripts made by Mrs Holland ensure that many of the longer documents are easily consulted.

It will not come as a surprise if I add a note that a diary brought to our attention by the Society's serendipitous Secretary in NL17 is proving to be of exceptional interest. Its keeper, Edward Herford, eventually ended his career as Manchester city coroner and a churchman, but at about the age of fifteen in the spring of 1830 he had come to live with the reverend John Gooch Robberds of Cross Street Chapel and his wife Mary, William Turner's daughter. He was then a rather callow youth in his 'teens committed to the study of Greek, Latin and French with Robberds. He attended Cross Street Chapel, read assiduously, loved parties and entertained radical notions. From January 1832, there are references in his diary to a 'Miss Stephenson', and by the end of that month he had met the sister of 'Parson Gaskell'. He was in just the kind of swim we might have hoped for.

Callow he might have been, but his diary covers the period in which Elizabeth became engaged to William Gaskell and throws new light upon the lively Unitarian circles in which they moved. Not everything was professionally serious and parsonical. This diary adds immensely to the last chapter of the book I am even now concluding on Elizabeth and her background up to her marriage in 1832. The generosity of descendants, Joan Leach, Geoffrey Sharps, archivists, librarians and many others in facilitating my access to such documents means that almost every chapter has benefited from new discoveries.

BROOK STREET CHAPEL, KNUTSFORD



BURIAL PLACE OF MRS. GASKELL.

This charming etching of Brook Street Chapel appeared, with an article on the Chapel's history, in a magazine known as *The Christian Freeman*; it is dated August 1868.

After giving details of the Chapel's history the article concludes:

'Nine years ago, in 1859, the chapel was renewed, the old fashioned high-backed double pews being exchanged for lower single ones; several other improvements were made. It may be added that under the cross nearest the west end of the chapel lie the remains of the late Mrs Gaskell, the well-known authoress, who passed her youth up to her marriage in Knutsford.'

### A DAY WITH THE ENGINEERS

Extract from The Life of Sir David Brewster:

Thence we went to Manchester, paying a most interesting visit to Mr Fairbairn, which was shared by the late Mr Hopkins, of Cambridge, the celebrated private tutor in mathematics, whose society always afforded my father peculiar pleasure. No sight, no kind of information, ever came amiss to the latter, who was, as of old, deeply engrossed in "examining" the Manchester factories, the locomotives, and engineering improvements of his host, and the steam-hammer and numberless curious experiments and inventions of another Scotch friend, Mr James Nasmyth. One day's expedition he counted as "a white day" of his life. It was a visit to Saltaire in company with Mr Fairbairn, his accomplished daughter Mrs Bateman, and Mrs Gaskell, the popular authoress, now, alas ! no more. He was deeply interested in the alpaca factory, in the flourishing flock of alpacas, in the model town of 1000 workers and their families, in which was church and school, and not one public-house, and, most of all, in Mr (now Sir) Titus Salt, the creator and proprietor of all this well-regulated power and wealth, and in his beautiful and refined home, "The Crow's Nest".

### NORTH AND SOUTH

North and South is now available on audio tape, complete and unabridged, issued by Chivers Press Limited in a pack of 14 double sided cassettes at a cost of £18.95.

Juliet Stevenson reads in authentic Lancashire accents with subtle variations to give character identity; she also evokes emotions well - sympathy, anger, pain, tension and love - which involve the listener with the story.

This audio set will provide a 'book at bedtime' or for leisure hours, an aid to study or discussion or assist the imaginative mind during boring routine tasks such as ironing or decorating.

Gaskell fans will enjoy this sensitive production. Every library should have a copy.

There is a direct mail service, and you might like to send for the catalogue and newsletter 'Audio Times' from: Chivers Press Limited, Windsor Bridge Road, Bath, Avon BA2 3AX

### SOUTH OF ENGLAND BRANCH

Following the early retirement of Jane Wilson, the deputy head, it was thought that the Francis Holland School would no longer be available for our meetings. However, the Headmistress has generously told Jane that for the time being we may continue to use the school during termtime. We are most grateful for this.

Our next meeting will be held on Saturday 9 September 1995 at Pimlico School, Lupus Street, London SW1V 3AT, commencing at 2 pm. (For travel details telephone Dudley J Barlow 0181 874 7727). Frances Twinn will speak on "A sense of 'Place' in the works of Elizabeth Gaskell with specific reference to 'The Life of Charlotte Brontë'".

Subsequent meetings to be held at Francis Holland School, 39 Graham Terrace, London SW1W 8JF (near Sloane Square underground station) are as follows:

Saturday 11 November 1995 - "Humour in Mrs Gaskell's Letters" - Dr Graham Handley

Saturday 27 January 1996 - "Mrs Gaskell, William Fox and 'Tottie', his artist daughter" - Brenda Colloms

Saturday 27 April 1996 - "Snobbery: a light-hearted look at Class Consciousness in the novels of Jane Austen and Elizabeth Gaskell" - E Margaret Perry

All meetings commence at 2 pm

BOOK NOTES

by Christine Lingard

Reclaiming myths of power: women writers and the Victorian spiritual crisis by Ruth Y Jenkins; London and Toronto: Associated University Presses. £27

Case studies of four contemporary Victorian women - Florence Nightingale, Elizabeth Gaskell, George Eliot and Charlotte Brontë and their religious influences.

The chapter on Gaskell is entitled 'Stand with Christ against the World' and provides an extensive analysis of Ruth. It explores Gaskell's relationship to the Christian socialists and also the influence of her husband on her writing, with the aim of showing how traditional Old Testament traditions have preserved patriarchal values and Church institutions have limited female position.

There is also reference to female hymn writers and minor writers such as Sarah Ellis and Mrs Humphry Ward.

GASKELL COLLECTION IN MANCHESTER

The Language and Literature Library, 2nd floor Central Library Manchester, has produced a leaflet with details about the Gaskell Collection there. Christine Lingard, librarian, is also a committee member of the Society. SAE to the Library if you would like a copy.

THE CHARLOTTE M YONGE SOCIETY

The Charlotte M Yonge Society was conceived during a Barbara Pym Weekend held at St Hilda's College in 1993. There will be an inaugural conference at Friends House, Euston, on 18th November. AGM is likely to be in Birmingham in the Spring and a Northern Regional group

may meet earlier in York. CMY's best known book is The Heir of Radclyffe; there will soon be OUP and Wordsworth editions.

If you are interested in the Society (£5 membership), write to: Mrs J M Shell, 78 Sunningfields Road, London NW4 4RL

THE MARTINEAU SOCIETY

The Martineau Society was officially launched on Saturday 16 July 1994 at Manchester College.

Mrs Gaskell knew both James and Harriet Martineau. While on holiday in Wales in 1853 she wrote 'All the James Martineaus come tomorrow ... I wish they weren't coming - I like to range about ad libitum & sit looking at views etc not talking sense by the yard.' GL163

Details of the Society (£10 membership) from:  
Mr Alan Middleton, 49 Mayfield Avenue, Wantage OX12 7ND  
(SAE please)

REMINDER

1996 subscriptions are now due  
Please pay them promptly, either at the AGM or London meeting on 9 September, or to our Treasurer, Brian Williams, 13 Cawley Avenue, Culcheth, Warrington WA3 4DF. SAE appreciated.

£7; or £10 joint, corporate and overseas

ERRATA, Journal vol 9 (You might like to insert this in your copy)

p.1 For Lovell, read Lowell  
p.8 For (1834-1905) read (1843-1905)  
p.9 For In Memoriam, read Memoriæ Positum R.G.S.  
p.11, n.11 For 1987, read 1897



# The Gaskell Society



## NEWSLETTER

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: 01565 634668)

Hon Treasurer: Brian Williams, 15 Cawley Avenue, Culcheth, Warrington WA3 4DF

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NO. 21



## EDITOR'S LETTER

It is fortunate for our Society that Elizabeth Gaskell was not as attached to Manchester as her husband William was. She enjoyed travel, new scenes and society and we have been able to follow her footsteps for our conference venues and outings - the Lake District, Whitby and Scarborough, Edinburgh and Oxford.

At our most recent conference at Oxford we almost felt under an obligation to enjoy it as much as she had done on her several visits. All our members will share our lecture programme through the next Journal. Our outings to Dumbleton Hall, once the home of her cousin, Edward Holland and to Barford where she first went to school were relevant and pleasant. Some of us also saw Stanton Harcourt Manor, which she visited in 1864 and Sudeley Castle, though the Cotswolds were baked brown by the hot summer. We think we got the right mix between our academic programme and outings, but what makes our conferences special is the pleasure shared and the meeting of friends.

We are always happy to get feedback (on all our programmes) and will try to allot more time for discussion in our next conference. This will be at Chester so that we can have a Welsh theme.

Several of our members have not been in the best of health recently. We send good wishes for their recovery to Geoffrey Sharps, Dudley Barlow and Richard Beckley.

We have had a very pleasant and unexpected boost to our finances. Member Mrs Daphne Carrick from Norfolk died in August and named our Society as a legatee. We share one sixth of the residue of her estate with The National Trust, Friends of Norwich Cathedral, The Brontë Society, The Dickens Fellowship and The George Eliot Fellowship. We hope this will help us in efforts to preserve the Plymouth Grove house, to refurbish the Gaskell grave in Brook Street Chapel graveyard and similar endeavours. We are only sorry that we cannot thank the donor, because it is much appreciated.

I am very grateful, too, for the gift made to me by the Society to mark our 10th Anniversary: The Life of Charlotte Brontë (2 vols 1857) and Cranford with Hugh Thomson illustrations in colour, all specially bound.

MRS GASKELL AND CHARLES ELIOT NORTON  
by Graham Handley

In 1932, well before the modern interest in Mrs Gaskell, Jane Whitehill sensitively edited the correspondence between the novelist and Charles Eliot Norton, the young American whom she had met in Rome in 1857. Owing to the warmth of her letters to him, biographical speculation has suggested that Mrs Gaskell may well have been in love with this talented and cultivated young man (he was born in 1827) who was brought up in the Unitarian faith which she also embraced. Certainly the feeling in the letters they exchanged is imbued with loving concern, a harking back to those halcyon days in Rome, a recognition of mutual interests, sympathies, and a delight in each other's different, shared-at-a-distance family joys and tribulations. Norton is much more than Elizabeth's (I can't call her Gaskell) epistolary toy-boy, and she is much more than a surrogate mother to him (his own mother in fact died 14 years after Mrs Gaskell, in 1879). His first letter to her is prelude to the relationship and sets the sympathetic tone which always subsists between them. He tells her how Cranford, so often read aloud in the Norton family home at Shady Hill, provided his dying father with diversion and solace during his last days, adding 'You may imagine what sacred associations it [Cranford] now possesses for us'. Within two years they had met each other, and when she returned to Plymouth Grove Elizabeth wrote him the first of a memorable sequence of gossipy, warm, confiding and stimulating letters, in which her daughters feature markedly (obviously they were drawn towards Norton too). Her own interests are in turn stimulated: she wants to go to America (more, and typically, she wants Mr Gaskell to go but he refuses to budge), and she wants Norton to visit them, telling him affectionately, kiddingly, 'I don't believe from what I hear of your looks, that a republic agrees with your health; do try a little aristocracy, and as a step to it try a visit to us, who are admirers of that "effete institution"'. She writes of her pride in her daughter Meta, reflects on her husband's dislike of change, tells Norton how she lost the chrysanthemums she had been lovingly nursing by leaving them outside so that they were

frozen. And she is anxious, too, to record for her literary friend her admiration for Scenes of Clerical Life, "Janet's Repentance above all, still", and providing him with a potted (and inaccurate) sketch of 'Miss Marianne Evans'. Her critique of Darwin's Origin of Species (1859) includes the delicious 'At any rate I wait to be convinced that I am nothing but a modified fish'.

Mrs Gaskell's humour in these letters sometimes takes the form of whimsy, as when she tells him that she dreams that she is in America, but that it always looks like home 'whh I know it is not'. In relation to 'My girls, my darlings' Unitarian young men don't appear to be forthcoming, and those of wider cultivation are restrained by the more bigotted fathers of the last generation from too much intimacy with Unitarians'. Like her, Norton is a morally, spiritually and socially committed activist but with a practical emphasis: he tells her of 'our model lodging houses' for the poor. In response she goes up-market, telling him of her visit to Oxford in 1860. Touchingly, he can't remember exactly what she looks like, and welcomes the fact that she is sending him a photograph of herself. Their exchanges are an intimate fond record, full of lively debate and sympathetic mutuality, even to the extent of Elizabeth telling him how much he is liked in the downstairs world of her servants ('We wish he'd come again'). This is no flurry of flattery, but a genuine delight in his warmth of personality: there *is* love between Mrs Gaskell and Norton, but it is a giving love, an unselfconscious recognition, a quietly insistent joy. When he receives a letter from her he feels that he hears her voice describing the events. He lectures her on art, maintaining that its one end 'is truth', asserting that the real artist's aim should be 'the development of character through his work'. We note the rigour and vigour of Norton's mind, but we note too his natural sympathetic sincerity when he feels for Mrs Gaskell's servant Mary, whose fiance has been seriously injured. He explains to her the perspectives of the American Civil War, she tells him of the current English prejudices about it (and the suffering): always she probes for the truth, being dismissive of the celebrated war correspondent of the Times, W H Russell, noting his 'Panorama painting'.

In March 1862 he tells 'My dearest Mrs Gaskell' of his forthcoming marriage, asking her, Meta and Marianne to love his wife, to let her 'share' what they have given him in abundance, the generous affection which for him is one of 'the permanent blessings of life'. She responds warmly to 'My dearest Mr Norton', saying how glad she is that he is going to be married, feeling 'almost as if you were my own son'. It is a revealing emphasis. She greets the birth of the Nortons' first child much more perfunctorily, passing on to discuss the war situation, but her last letter to him (written in September 1865) is filled with her self-hugging delight in confiding the secret that she has purchased the house near Alton which she has chosen for her husband William's retirement. It is a positive assertion of her intimate need of him.

There is a postscript to this which, I think, provides a wry indication of their mutuality. In 1863 Sylvia's Lovers, which had cost her much labour, was published. Norton is greatly moved, and tells her that 'having had the happiness of knowing you loving you' he has read it 'with such feeling'. His wife too is part of the experience, and the novel is 'happy & yet half sad, quickening all true sympathies, widening our charity, & making part of our united, sacred secret treasury of precious common memories and affections'. We should read this in the context of Mrs Gaskell's dedication to the first American edition of Sylvia's Lovers, published some two years before the end of the Civil War. 'This Book is Dedicated To all My Northern Friends with the truest sympathy of an English Woman, and in an especial manner to my dear Friend Charles Eliot Norton And to his Wife who though personally unknown to me is yet dear to me for his sake'. This has all the rushing impetuous sympathy which is characteristic of Mrs Gaskell: it subserves her anti-slavery stance, and is bold, even courageous as a public utterance. The dedication of the first English edition of the novel may be set beside it: 'This Book is dedicated to My Dear Husband By Her Who Best Knows His Value'. This is dutiful and studied, and the tone of each dedication is superbly a measure of the personality of the recipient. Norton, himself a distinguished man of letters, called out in the distinguished novelist a warmth and

immediacy, a relaxed freshness of utterance which was part of her personality. Convention ensured that they did not even use each other's Christian names, yet their underlying love for each other is clear, unencroaching, expressive and unpossessive. I suggest that it gave her a greater fullness of being, and that Sylvia's Lovers and Wives and Daughters, as well as Lois the Witch and Cousin Phillis, owe something at least to the radiance Norton cast on her life and which she so fully returned to him.

(All references in the above are to Letters of Mrs Gaskell and Charles Eliot Norton 1855-65: Edited with an Introduction by Jane Whitehill, Oxford University Press, 1932)

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MEETING MRS JANE WHITEHILL  
by J Geoffrey Sharps

Mrs Jane Whitehill was the Jane Revere Coolidge whose incomplete typescript of a study of Mrs Gaskell is in the Brotherton Collection at the University of Leeds Library (see bibliography of my Mrs Gaskell's Observation and Invention).

For many years she lived near Boston, USA, her husband holding a high position at the Boston Athenaeum. When in England some years ago she visited my wife and myself at Scarborough, where she also met Professor J A V Chapple. A gracious lady, she was an admirable pioneer American Gaskell scholar; and both Charles Eliot Norton and Mrs Gaskell would have been delighted for her to edit their transatlantic correspondence.

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Our new cover picture, from a George du Maurier print, is available as a notelet, one of a series of ten. These are sold in packs of 5 at £2.20 or £2.50 by post.

This one illustrates North and South.

Our US Secretary, Lucy Magruder, had these made for us from woodblock prints she owns, all illustrating Gaskell works.

## WIVES AND DAUGHTERS - AN ALTERNATIVE ENDING

The Knutsford Edition of Wives and Daughters ends with 'Concluding Remarks', by the editor A W Ward. Although Elizabeth Gaskell died before the ending was written, her daughters were able to tell how they thought their mother intended the story to end.

Members of a WEA course held at Stamford, Lincolnshire, enjoyed reading the book and set themselves the task of writing the last chapter. Here is Pamela Sharp's version. Another member of the class, Peter Scriven, conjectured Wives and Daughters as the first book in a trilogy and outlined the second and third parts.

### Wives and Daughters a new Conclusion by Pamela Sharp

Whilst Roger was away he sometimes feared that Molly might not have missed him or would still think him fickle. But Molly's letters were long and full of little pieces of news and served to keep her dear image before his eyes. How different from the short, uncaring, self-centred missives which Cynthia had sent to him. And so, Roger, by turns, felt both pessimistic and optimistic of Molly's love for him: he felt that perhaps Molly was being her own kind self in writing these letters, to make him feel less lonely while he was away. Suppose, thought Roger, another man should have come along to pay his attentions to the sweet girl.

At last, the months wore away until Roger (and Molly, too, but unbeknown to him) could count now in weeks the time until the traveller's return. How their reunion would take place had much exercised Roger's mind, alone in his little hut in Africa: how should he greet his beloved? Should he tell her that he was coming ... or should it be a sudden surprise when he arrived at Hollingford?

It so happened that at about the time of Roger's return, Cynthia and Walter Henderson were staying at Hollingford with their new son and heir. They had come to show off this bonny child to his Grandmamma and Aunt. All

Hollingford was in a bustle, and the house not a little put about to accommodate the proud parents, the doted-upon child and his nurse. Indeed, for poor Molly, it was the first real distraction to her secret thoughts and longings to see dear Roger again.

On a fine, sunny, June morning Cynthia had the Henderson carriage brought around to the front door, as she wished to go into the little town to choose some fresh ribbons for young Walter's cradle. Mrs Gibson had decided, as the day looked fine (and she had a new gown), to accompany her daughter.

It was thus that, as Cynthia and her mother were examining the wares in Dunn's drapery store, Mrs Gibson chanced to look up and to see passing by an upright, well-built figure of a man:

"Look Cynthia, I declare that is Roger Hamley", she cried, waving strenuously in his direction, and hoping to catch his eye, as he passed the bow window of the shop. For all her poise and self-confidence, for a moment, a tremor ran through Cynthia's body.

"Hush Mamma, we do not want Roger coming in here - er - into a woman's store, I mean", she faltered. In spite of herself, Cynthia blushed deeply. Events in her life had not left her time to speculate upon how she would behave towards her former lover when he returned from Africa. The serious matter of ribbon selection soon put Roger's appearance out of the minds of mother and daughter, and in time - a much longer time that Mr Gibson had expected, for he was at home awaiting his dinner - they returned. Baby Walter had to be petted and kissed and the ribbons essayed on his cradle before the meal could be placed upon the table. Then a detailed account of all their doings and deliberations had to be recounted for the benefit of husband, grandfather and aunt. It was not until the dessert was set before them that Mrs Gibson remembered another piece of news ...

"Oh! Mr Gibson, you will not be able to guess who I saw in town today", she began, completely oblivious of the impact of her impending disclosure upon Molly. Molly looked up.

Her heart pounded; the colour arose in her cheeks, and she thought that she would choke.

"Can you think who it could be, Molly, child", she asked, looking at Molly across the table. Cynthia remained silent. Walter interjected: "Could it be that explorer fellow, Hamley?" "I heard from the groom that he was back last night."

Roger back - and he had not come at once to see her? Molly's eyes filled with tears.

"Yes, and looking so well", went on Mrs Gibson, pleased at the impact of her news. "I suppose he will come to call upon us when he can find the time. He will be so pleased to be acquainted with your husband, Cynthia, and, of course, he will know nothing of darling little Water", she babbled on.

Mr Gibson looked grave. He was not unaware of the constancy of Molly's feelings for Roger, and he kept his eyes averted from his daughter, as she murmured some excuse and stumbled from the table.

His eyes followed her into the garden, where he saw her hastening towards the arbour and the old rustic seat within it, where she had spent so many hours with a book in her lap, over the past months.

Molly was all of a tremble - she did not know how to calm herself - her mind was in a whirl, and she needed time to think.

"Roger back - where was he? Would he come this very day?" "Or was she not the first thought in his mind, as he was in hers?"

Molly closed her eyes: the thought of Roger being home and not having come at once was like a knife in her heart. Suddenly, she felt a shower of petals fall from the rose whose branches grew around the sweet-smelling arbour. Opening her eyes and looking down at her lap, she saw that they were not fresh petals, but petals of a much darker hue - dried and made brown by long-keeping. As

she looked up, it seemed to Molly that time had flashed back: back to that other time when she had sat perplexed and Roger had come to her ... for there he was again, watching her with tenderness upon his face.

This time he did not ask her what was troubling her, but came and sat beside her and took her in his arms.

Mr Gibson, who had followed Molly into the garden, as soon as he had been able, saw them from afar, and a deep feeling of contentment stole over him - he who had seen so much of life and death. He shed a tear for his own long-lost love, and, indeed, for the impending loss of his beloved Molly: then he marched determinedly towards the stable for his horse, as he remembered the round of afternoon visits to be made.

Time enough, later, for all the announcements to be made inside the house - this present interlude was for Molly and Roger alone.

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If you were to go into Hollingford Church, and to look there in the Register of Marriages, you would see there an entry in a fine copper-plate hand, which runs thus:

29th August 183 - Roger Stephenson Hamley (batchelor)  
natural philosopher, Fellow of Trinity  
College, Cambridge      aged 26 years

to  
Mary Sarah Gibson (spinster)      aged 20 years

In the presence of:  
Robert Alexander Gibson (father)  
and Cynthia Clare Henderson  
Witnesses

JULIET BARKER, THE BRONTES AND MRS GASKELL

(Juliet Barker: 'The Brontës'. Weidenfield & Nicholson 1994)

by Roy Winstanley

This book was formally reviewed in the Gaskell Society Journal, Vol 9, last year. What follows here is to be regarded in the light of an extended footnote, expressing my own personal opinion and point of view.

In many ways, 'The Brontës' is an excellent book. The author has made good use of her time as Librarian of the Brontë Society at Haworth. Her volume is comprehensively researched and written in a lively and attractive style. It is emphatically both a work of considerable scholarship and a "good read".

It is all the more disconcerting to find that, in the matter of interpretation and judgement passed on the various personalities in the Brontë story, the author's otherwise finely balanced sense of proportion appears sometimes to desert her. Looked at in one way, the book is not far from being a celebration of three persons, all men, who are strictly speaking peripheral to the story of the three famous literary sisters. Their father, "that selfish old man", as Mary Taylor, far and away the most intelligent of Charlotte Brontë's Yorkshire friends called him, is written of in terms almost of hero worship. He is called "Patrick" throughout - I think mistakenly.

We could look at him in the light of certain actions in which a modern reader might conclude that he played anything but a sympathetic part. Soon after his wife died, he approached a Mary Burder, whom he appears to have jilted some years back, with the glib suggestion that she should marry him and look after his six motherless children. Her reply to this enticing proposal, only part of which is quoted by Ms Barker, is a masterpiece of controlled indignation. He made two more attempts to persuade a woman into matrimony, before he reconciled himself to a celibate life. Not long after this, he shipped off four of his five daughters, including Emily who was all of five years old, to the notorious Clergy

Daughters' School, which Charlotte implicitly believed had killed two of her sisters. Ms Barker imputes only the very highest motives to him. It was vital for them, she says, when they grew up, to earn their own living, since as children of a poor man they would not have the dowries, without which their chances of contracting a satisfactory marriage would be remote. Accounts of Mr Brontë's relations with his daughters comes mostly from a time after they had grown up. It is possible that he did not care much for the proximity of very young children. At all events, he did not apparently take much notice of what was going on at the school - its appalling mortality rate, for example - and he did not bring them away until two of them were actually dying.

Then there was Branwell, for whom few commentators on the family history have ever spared a kind word. The author undoubtedly finds Branwell an attractive personality. She greatly overpraises his ability as a writer, and the only tedious part of her book is that which deals with the fantasies of his imaginary realms, treating them as though they were serious history. It is true that his sisters began in the same way, but the immeasurable distance between them was that they were able to break clear of "Angria" and "Gondal" and write work which could be produced in public, while he remained helplessly trapped in this dream-literature, so long as he was able to write anything at all. Ms Barker's account of the affair with Mrs Robinson of Thorp Green - if indeed that is what it was, and not a web of lies or monstrous self-delusion on his part - is seen entirely from his standpoint. And in her anxiety to turn Branwell into a complete man of the world, Ms Barker even provides him with an illegitimate child, based on some of the shakiest evidence I have ever seen.

The last of this triumvirate of favoured characters is Arthur Bell Nicholls, Charlotte's husband. There can be little doubt that Charlotte was intellectually slumming when she accepted this man, perhaps the most unsuitable of the four suitors who proposed marriage to her. She began by disliking him intensely, and lampooned him as one of the comic curates of 'Shirley'. It is through

manifestations of the principle like the Nicholls marriage that we see with the utmost clarity how desperately unfair it was to women. Not only was marriage and subjection to a masculine will held to be the crown of every woman's aspiration, but women themselves largely accepted and believed in it. Charlotte Brontë, a highly successful creative artist, so rapturously happy in her new and diminished role, was far worse off than she had been in her father's household, where the three sisters had managed to save and preserve the inventive, individual part of their lives. But there was no escaping Mr Nicholls and all we can say is that she did not live long enough for an otherwise inevitable disillusionment to emerge. The marriage saw the extinction of her literary gift, reflected in his crass remark, after she had made an attempt to begin writing again, a small pitiful venture that did not get beyond a few pages. It began in a school and the husband, probably thinking of 'Jane Eyre', said that the critics would accuse her of repeating herself. But for Ms Barker, Nicholls can do no wrong. Even the harmless Ellen Nussey, upon the whole a good friend to Charlotte, and one who never resented the heavily patronising way in which Charlotte treated her, is harshly criticized, and for no better reason than that Ellen could not bear Nicholls at any price.

Ms Barker rather sweepingly assumes that the work of all previous Brontë biographers has gone into the creation of legend. "The Brontë story is riddled with myths". If Charlotte herself began this process in what she wrote of her sisters, it was Mrs Gaskell, our author says, who was most influential in her enthusiastic embroidering of the legends. The authors of the Brontë novels, books which lay beneath the imputations of immorality and coarseness, were turned into what Ms Barker calls "graduates of the school of adversity, writing in all innocence about the barbarous society in which they lived because that was all they knew". There is a certain amount of truth in this judgement. But elsewhere in her long book its author pays just tribute to the power and eloquence of the famous Gaskell biography.

Ms Barker strikes me as being on firm grounds when she

deals directly with the three famous sisters who, after all, must be at the heart of all the books about the family. She is good on Charlotte, well analyzing her complex and not altogether attractive personality. She highlights Emily's ruthless egotism, in preserving her own way of life from Charlotte's well-meaning attempts to run it for her. She deals quite devastatingly with many of the famous Brontë stories, such as the one which has Anne Brontë in love with the handsome curate William Weightman. At the same time, I am not sure whether we can follow her when she states that it was Charlotte herself who was greatly attracted to Weightman, and that she began to jeer at him, calling him "Miss Celia Amelia" in letters to her women friends, only after he had shown his lack of interest in her.

The reader of 'The Brontës' will have the argumentative pleasure of disagreeing with perhaps a small part of the book, and the much greater satisfaction of admiring and responding to most of it. It is a biography that everyone with a sympathetic interest in the Brontës, as writers or simply as human beings, should not miss reading.

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#### JOURNALS AND NEWSLETTERS

Back numbers are out of print but in demand. We plan to reprint but would welcome returns (£2 a copy for Journals).

Please send to our Treasurer: Brian Williams, 15 Cawley Avenue, Culcheth, Warrington WA3 4DF

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#### AVAILABLE FOR SALE AT MEETINGS OR BY POST:

Lancashire and Cheshire Antiquarian Society offprints:  
Family values: Friedrich Engels and Elizabeth Gaskell by Alan Shelston, from Vol. 90 (1994) £1.50 or £2 by post

Elizabeth Gaskell's Mary Barton: A Novel of 1848? by Angus Easson from Vol. 86 (1990) £1.50 or £2 by post



## BOOK NOTES

by Christine Lingard

Elizabeth Gaskell 'We are Not Angels'; Realism, Gender, Values, by Terence Wright (lecturer in the Department of English, University of Newcastle). St Martin's Press, £35. A straightforward yet detailed analysis of Gaskell's writing, which does not try to score points against other novelists but lets the quality of the books speak for itself. Each novel (Life of Charlotte Brontë is omitted) is devoted a chapter. Cousin Phillis, My Lady Ludlow, and most welcome, Lois the Witch are given equal treatment with the longer books and there is a full chapter on the short stories. All goes to show that the variety of her writing parallels the variety of the woman herself, and above all reveals a sensitive and poetic style.

Moorland Cottage and Other Stories by Elizabeth Gaskell, edited by Suzanne Lewis of the University of Sydney; World's Classics, OUP, £5.99.

A companion volume to Dark Night's Work edited by Lewis in the same series. This collection also includes Sexton's Hero, Christmas Storms and Sunshine, The Well of Pen Morfa, Heart of John Middleton, Morton Hall, The Manchester Marriage, and Crowley Castle, a selection which is loosely connected by the theme of love. Many of them, incidentally, were published as Christmas books. There is an extensive introduction which provides welcome critical analysis to a neglected section of Gaskell's work.

Curious, if True: Strange Tales by Mrs Gaskell, selected by Jenny Uglow; Virago Modern Classics, £6.99

Another selection of shorter writings, never published together before, namely Old Nurse's Story, The Poor Clare, Lois the Witch, The Grey Woman, as well as the title story. These serve to illustrate Gaskell's fascination with the macabre and uncanny.

Elizabeth Gaskell by Kate Flint (University Lecturer in Victorian and Modern English Literature and Fellow of Linacre College, Oxford); Writers and their work, Northcote House in association with the British Council. £6.95

This is a comparative rarity among Gaskell studies - a short, basic introduction for the general student. It is part of a series which will cover more than fifty authors. There is a brief biography, a chapter on each of the major novels including Cousin Phillis but omitting Life of Charlotte Brontë. The short stories are included in the chapter on Cranford.

Subversive Heroines: Feminist Resolutions of Social Crisis in the Condition of England Novel, by Constance D Harsh, Associate Professor in English at the Colgate University. University of Michigan Press, £27.60

A new evaluation of the social problem novels of the 1840s and 50s with which Gaskell is so often compared. Mary Barton and North and South are discussed, alongside Hard Times, Sybil, Alton Locke, Michael Armstrong (by Frances Trollope) and Helen Fleetwood (by Charlotte Tonna) in particular the way in which social problems are so frequently resolved by the female characters. A final chapter shows the effect of these novels on later books not always seen as industrial novels, such as Wives and Daughters, Felix Holt and Little Dorrit.

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## 321104 - SEPARATE SPHERES

Lectures by Fran Cannon, BA MLitt Linda Shaw, PhD

Although rarely studied\*, Mrs Gaskell's fiction is valuable both as literature and as social history. Both these aspects of her work will be studied in this course which will re-evaluate Mrs Gaskell's "industrial" novels and selected short stories and will show how her portrayal of tensions in the family and the workplace reflect the rapid changes in society during the first half of the nineteenth century. We will also explore Mrs Gaskell's Manchester connections in her work and with a field visit.

A book list will be sent on enrolment.

Thursdays 10.30 am-12.30 pm University Humanities Building. 10 meetings beginning 18 April 1996. Fee £32 (£25/£17). Enrol by 4 April. Further information from Courses for the Public, Humanities Building, University of Manchester, Oxford Road, Manchester M13 9PL

\*Please note these lecturers will be introduced to The Gaskell Society to correct such misapprehensions.



CULTURAL AND POLITICAL PERSPECTIVES IN "AN  
ITALIAN INSTITUTION" BY E GASKELL

Elizabeth Gaskell has recently been rediscovered in Italy. In fact the publication of La vita di Charlotte Bronte (1988), Storie di bimbi di donne e di streghe (1988), and of Mia cugina Phillis (Marisilio 1993), adds to the 1929 edition of La cugina Fillide, two existing versions of Cranford (1935, 1951), the 1981 translation of Mary Barton, and to the essays on her works produced mainly from the end of the '70s. In her novels, which today maintain a great appeal, not only for their artistic content but also as documentaries of the period, Gaskell narrated a generation's reaction to the oppressing experience of industrialism, class conflicts, and the former rural world, describing the obscure existence of weavers and labourers, prostitutes and unwed mothers.

A friend to artists and progressive intellectuals, Elizabeth Gaskell was an active philanthropist and a reformer as is testified also by the socio-political character of many of her non-narrative writings. On March 21st, 1863, Gaskell published an article on the Neapolitan Camorra [*Camorra - a mafia-like protection racket*]. The piece, which has a strong literary flavour in the dramatic picture of the action, was motivated by the attention given by Gaskell to themes of social relevance and the consideration of the effects of the class differences. She aims to give to the English public opinion an image of the Camorra that goes beyond the folklore clichés of the time in the representation of the South of Italy, and substitute the traditional oleographic description of the methods of the "organization", with a critical reading of what might have been the socio-cultural and political causes of the phenomenon. "An Italian Institution" which the review *Segno* publishes in the first Italian version, appeared in London in the Dickensian periodical "All the Year Round" to which Gaskell was a contributor as she had been to "Household Words".

She had been to Italy in 1857 and on that occasion may have visited Naples, since on her second journey in 1863 it seems she arrived only as far as Civitavecchia. She must

have gathered other information on the subject not only from conversation (especially with William Wetmore Story) and from correspondence (with another admirer of Italy and intellectual companion Charles Eliot Norton, whose Notes of Travel and Study of Italy - 1960 - she admired), but, presumably, also from texts on the subject such as the one registered among the volumes of her library by The Gaskell Sale Catalogue (namely La camorra by Mareo (sic) Mounier).<sup>1</sup>

The camorra question would not have been new to the English reader - the customs and habits of the South were part of the fashionable model Italian itinerary of the time. What was uncommon was the image communicated to the vast heterogenous public of such a well-known periodical, so different from the rhetoric of the clichés and from the merely "observant" tone of other English representations of the time.

Speaking first about the camorra as a 'system of extortion' grown to "institution", "so extended and organized as to apply to every walk in life and every condition of human industry", with a government that protects it and uses its protection, the article did not limit itself to the description of the 'methods' of the organization, but aimed at exploring the causes of the phenomenon, exposing them with a certain sense of drama made more incisive by a bitter ironic spirit. Charles Dickens himself who in Pictures from Italy had noted his many impressions of Naples, had preferred not to make any "grave examination into the government or misgovernment of any portion of the country", abstaining himself "from the discussion of any such questions with any order of Italians ...". Gaskell's clearly critical approach, though not without some populist overtones, expresses the desire of liberal artists and intellectuals to understand better - even from a historical point of view - the social reality of the South by tracing it back to its political context rather than relying on easy commonplaces or, what was worse, fixing, once and for all, the traditional representations of the Neapolitan "character", on the basis of a sort of "anthropological explanation".

Certainly the text reflects the movement among English progressives and reformers of attraction to and solidarity with the Italian cause.

Besides confirming the authorship of the article, documents and letters provide evidence of Gaskell's discussions with Patrick Bronte about Italian politics, exchanges of information on Garibaldi's activities with Charles Eliot Norton, and relations with Emily Winkworth, her friend and fervid supporter of Mazzini. We also learn about the possible existence of a second article of the author's on the camorra ("that unlucky piece of work") refused by "The Cornhill". Did it perhaps criticize the 'current governors'? "An Italian Institution" is, at any rate, marked by scepticism, if at the beginning the author declares herself to be still 'far from believing that the current governors are able to dominate the phenomenon', she closes the article laconically by affirming that the camorra 'has penetrated and now permeates every public branch, abounding in the 'ranks of the army''. The social commitment of Elizabeth Gaskell in all her work, and which is so evident in this article, while inspired by her unitarian principles, deserves much more appreciation given the reticence of the writers of the time on such subjects, given the range of the audience to which the piece was addressed and, especially, given all the implications of the fact that the author of the piece was a woman.

<sup>1</sup> For source information we relied particularly of J G Sharps (ed.) Mrs Gaskell Observation and Invention, London, Linden Press, 1970. The Italian version is based on the text contained in the Knutsford Edition, The Works of Mrs Gaskell, edited by A W Ward, London, Smith, Elder & Co., 1906, vol. VI, pp. 531-34.

This article is an edited translation of Professor Daniela Corona's introduction to the Italian version: E Gaskell, "La Camorra, un'istituzione italiana". *Segno*, Anno XVI n.117-118 settembre-ottobre 1990 pp.34-42

One aspect of the Camorra as described by Mrs Gaskell seems relevant today:

'In the lottery, the Camorra played a distinguished part, the news of the successful numbers being transmitted hither and thither by the fraternity ...

... As the lowest venture in the state lottery is four carlini, or about a franc and a half, on the Saturday, the last day of the venture, it is rare for the poor Neapolitan who has played during the entire week to find a single grain in his pocket. With, however, the very smallest coin he can scrape out of it, he repairs to the office of some secret Camorristo and by his intervention is able to associate himself with others as poor as himself, and by whose conjoint efforts the requisite sum is made up.'

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The Spectator - 24th February 1996  
Books on Tape review by Robert Cooper

Wives and Daughters, Mrs Gaskell's final novel, (Cover to Cover, unabridged, £44.99) has been called the most underrated novel of the 19th century. Listening to Prunella Scales read this classic tale of 'youthful folly' you can see why. It was written in 1866\*, and Mrs Gaskell died barely a chapter from its completion, leaving just a few loose ends to be tied. Andrew Davies, the reigning King of TV adaptations, is said to be making a close study of Gaskell's work. Let's hope that Wives and Daughters is high on his short list: sharp witty, dialogue with no shortage of tragedy and a host of memorable characters - Prunella Scales should play them all.

Finding a way to fill the void after being gripped by 25 hours of rural life may be a problem. Fathers and Sons by Ivan Turgenev (Cover to Cover, £19.99) could be the answer.

\*Ed. note: Hardly likely as Elizabeth Gaskell died 12th November 1865!

SOUTH OF ENGLAND BRANCH  
1996 MEETINGS

Saturday 27 April

2 pm Francis Holland School

'Snobbery: a light-hearted look at Class-Consciousness in the novels of Jane Austen and Elizabeth Gaskell' -

E Margaret Perry

Saturday 14 September

2 pm Pimlico School, Lupus Street, London SW1V 3AT

'Sybil' and 'Mary Barton: A Historian's Perspective' -

Howard F Gregg

Saturday 9 November

2 pm Francis Holland School

'Gaskell's Gothic' - Jenny Uglow, Vice President of the Gaskell Society, author of 'Elizabeth Gaskell: A Habit of Stories' and other works of literary criticism.

When meetings are held at the Francis Holland School anyone who wishes to do so is invited to meet at 12 noon at the entrance to Sloane Square underground station for a light lunch at the Royal Court Tavern (also on Sloane Square).

Please note that the April and November meetings will be held at the Francis Holland School. The September meeting will be in the library at Pimlico School.

For travel directions or other information please contact Dudley J Barlow, 44 Seymour Road, London SW18 5JA (Tel: 0181 874 7727)

# The Gaskell Society



## NEWSLETTER

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: 01565 634668)

Hon Treasurer: Brian Williams, 15 Cawley Avenue, Culcheth, Warrington WA3 4DF

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NO. 22

## EDITOR'S LETTER

We hope you received your 1996 Journal safely and enjoyed reading it.

It helps to keep the mailing list accurate if dues are paid at the correct time, that is 1st September or at AGM or London meeting on 14th September. We have included details about paying by banker's order. Membership cards are not necessary and will only be sent if SAE is included. We must try to keep down postage costs and regret that in future Journals will be sent surface mail to overseas members. US members may pay dues of \$18 to Lucy Magruder, The Gaskell Society, Box 5424, Fullerton, CA 92838.

During our summer season we have enjoyed three outings; the first to Lancashire where we visited Hall i' the Wood for its connections with Samuel Crompton and textile history, next we went to Derbyshire to well dressings at Mayfield and Sudbury Hall where scenes from the TV version of Price and Prejudice were set. A hot Saturday in July found us in Conway and Beaumaris following in Gaskell footsteps; we cooled off by sailing round Puffin Island; this tour may be part of our itinerary at the Chester Conference. You will hear more about this with a Christmas mailing but put the date in your diary, 8-11th August 1997, and the chance to add a day at either end. At Oxford all our speakers were members and we now issue a CALL FOR PAPERS. The conference will be titled: "The Victorians at Leisure".

We have a busy Gaskell year ahead with various events and activities planned for you and we hope that you will be able to share these with us.

It promises to be a good year for publications too. Manchester University Press have in hand Professor Chapple's text for Elizabeth Gaskell: The Early Years, which he has been researching assiduously for some years. We anticipate publication about March.

Enclosed with this Newsletter are details of Private Voices by Chapple & Wilson (Keele University Press) which will have a wide appeal.

Member Anna Unsworth, who read a paper at our Oxford Conference and was a Gaskell enthusiast and scholar well before the Society was formed, has a book due to be published in October - Elizabeth Gaskell: an Independent Woman, Minerva Press £12.99.

All these books will be available to members at Society meetings.

As a token of our appreciation for the legacy given to us by Daphne Carrick (see NL 21) we will remember her by naming our AGM talk as THE DAPHNE CARRICK LECTURE.

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#### ALLIANCE OF LITERARY SOCIETIES

The Mary Webb Society is to provide the speakers for the post-AGM programme of the Alliance of Literary Societies in Birmingham next April. The author and poet, who lived in Shropshire, died 70 years ago next year. The Mary Webb Society (Tel: 01952 244810) was founded in 1972 and its president is Dr Gladys Mary Coles, the prize-winning Merseyside poet.

Two new officers were appointed at the 1996 annual meeting of the ALS - Mr Bill Adams (chairman of the George Eliot Fellowship) has become the new hon. secretary and Ms Thelma Thompson (chairman of the Shropshire Literary Society) is the new hon. treasurer.

Half the literary societies in the UK are not affiliated to the ALS and Bill Adams has promised a special mailing to non-member societies advising on the benefits of membership.

The newest 'recruit' is the Romany Society (Tel: 01625 504507).

KENN OULTRAM

#### BEHIND THE SCENES: SOURCES AND CONTEXTS

by J A V Chapple

The diary Elizabeth Gaskell kept for a few years after the birth of Marianne in 1834 was published in a limited edition of 50 copies by Clement Shorter in 1923 and is very rare indeed. After Anita Wilson had published her article entitled 'Mother and Writer: A Study of Elizabeth Gaskell's Diary' in the *Gaskell Society Journal* for 1993, she thought that such an early, significant composition would have a broad general appeal and proposed a critical edition of the whole text to the journal's editor.

Alan Shelston suggested that she should collaborate with me and put us in touch with a publisher for the book now with Kelle University Press, to be entitled *Private Voices*. It will be based on Mrs Gaskell's original manuscript and on the parallel manuscript journal kept by Sophia Holland (née Isaac) about the babyhood of Thurstan (Newsletters 17 and 20). Some associated material, especially a long letter William Turner wrote to his daughter Mary shortly after her marriage in 1811 to William Gaskell's senior colleague at Cross Street Chapel, John Gooch Robberds, and Mary's own short autobiography composed in the late 1860s, will be printed in an appendix.

This recital of the bald facts ignores the warm hospitality offered by Mrs Rosemary Trevor Dabbs and by Mrs Portia Holland and her late husband, John Swinton Holland. It was a pleasure to see all the pictures and memorabilia that found an honoured place in their homes - a large oil painting of Marianne, small portraits of Peter Holland and Hannah Lumb, a silhouette of the Reverend William Willets, father-in-law to Peter and Swinton Holland as well as William Turner, and so on. Many of our members will recall the library of Manchester College Oxford, where, through the good offices of the Chaplain and Margaret Sarosi, the Librarian who welcomed the Society at our Oxford Conference, I was able to consult the Robberds manuscript now owned by Miss Barbara Hartas-Jackson. Scores more acknowledgements await the publication of my book on Elizabeth Gaskell's background and early influences, now with Manchester University Press.

February 10th  
1834

Edward Thurston

I am the first  
I showed great fear  
of getting patching  
and holding tight  
being thing close  
to his hands

Facsimile of Sophia Holland's Diary (actual size)

The transatlantic collaboration with Anita Wilson could not have been more gratifying. She has been responsible for the critical and historical introductions to the diaries, whilst I had the easier task of transcribing. It sometimes seems that others do most of my work. Even my most recent little discovery was a double gift of Fortune. In the course of showing a visitor to Hull the panoramic view of the city from the top floor of the University Library, I happened to notice that we possessed a good run of the *Lancet*. A few days later I began to look through the volume for 1832 for information about cholera in Manchester. The word 'Boddington' positively leapt off the page.

The second thing I thought of was my feeble note in the *Gaskell Society Journal* for 1990 ('Boddingtons: not identified'), keyed to Elizabeth's account on 8 August 1832 of cousins of Sophia Holland who had been struck by

To my dear little Marianna I shall "dedicate"  
this book, which, if I should not live to give  
it to myself, will I trust be reserved for her  
as a token of her mother's love, and extreme  
anxiety in the formation of her little  
daughter's character. If that little daughter  
should in time become a mother herself,  
she may take an interest in the experience  
of another, and at any rate she will  
perhaps like to become acquainted with  
her character in its earliest form. I  
wish that (if ever she sees this) I could  
give her the slightest idea of the love  
and the hope that is bound up in  
her. The love which passeth every earthly  
-ly love, and the hope that however we  
may be separated on earth, we may  
look of us so behave while sojourning here  
that we may meet again to renew the  
dear & tender ties of Mother and Daughter.

Elizabeth Gaskell's Diary (actual size)

lightning on their wedding tour. Their umbrella had served as a conductor 'and afterwards the steel in Mrs Boddington's stays, conveyed the fluid to within a straw's breadth of a vital part in her leg', wrote Elizabeth dramatically.

The *Lancet* for 15 September 1832 contains an account by Benjamin Boddington, Esquire, which draws upon a communication by Dr Faraday to a scientific periodical, the *London and Edinburgh Philosophical Magazine*. Benjamin's address is given as Badger Hall and the wedding couple are identified as a Mr and Mrs T T Boddington.

On Friday, 13th April 1832, they had placed the servants inside their post chariot whilst they themselves mounted the barouch-seat behind, so that on their journey from Tenbury to Bromyard they could enjoy the scenery of the Abberley Hills near Worcester. But a 'slight' storm arose. Then, 'a flash of lightning struck them both senseless, threw the horses on the ground', killing one of them, 'and cast the postboy to a considerable distance'. (This postillion was not so much struck by lightning as thrown by his unfortunate horse.)

Benjamin's account is, as one might expect, partly scientific. Readers of Patricia Cornwell's *Potter's Field* will not be surprised to hear that the steel of the busk proved to be magnetised. Benjamin provides a neat diagram for this. But there are numerous other fascinating details.

The wires of Mrs Boddington's shattered umbrella (which had no ferule) passed the 'electric fluid' to the wire round the edge of her bonnet by her left eye, from which is circled to the back of her head, singeing her hair, 'zigzagged along the skin of the neck to the steel busk of her stays, leaving a painful but not deep wound', perforated the brown paper case of the busk and fused a quarter of an inch of its upper surface. Thereafter there was no mark or discoloration of busk or case until the lightning discharge exited at the bottom of the steel busk in the same way, causing a deep wound dangerously close to her left femoral artery. Though Mrs Boddington's

gown, petticoat and seat cushion were singed, pierced and rent, nothing actually caught fire.

Mr Boddington was less fortunate. His clothes were severely torn and burnt. His wife and a servant had to put out the fire whilst he was 'apparently lifeless'. His gold shirt buttons were fused and thrown some distance away, leaving a flesh wound; a knife in his waistcoat pocket was the cause of another wound. He was wearing a thick old navy pea-jacket, which was torn to pieces, but his waistcoat was 'merely perforated' by a pea-sized hole on one side and by a similar hole next to a gold pencil-case, 'where it passed out, setting fire to his trowsers and drawers, and inflicting a deep wound round his back, the whole of which was literally flayed.'

The back of the barouche seat was made of iron, which was broken in two. Its fractured parts almost touched the carriage spring, the discharge passing to the earth by the tires of the wheels, leaving four holes in the road where they had been in contact at the time of the shock. Two months after the accident, two pairs of Mrs Boddington's scissors in a work-case were found to be magnetised. Parts of Mr Boddington's watch, especially the balance wheel, were also highly magnetised. When it was shown to Dr Faraday he 'set it afloat on a cork, and found the poles so well defined' that it was eventually mounted as a compass. Significantly, none of these objects were in the direct tracks of the lightning discharge.

As usual, possible lines of enquiry proliferate. Who were the Boddingtons? (JGS might here consider a series of puns on ale and brewing.) How were they related to Sophia Holland? Was Badger Hall in Shropshire? It is hard to forget that Henry Holland's friend Michael Faraday had just a few months before the accident discovered electromagnetic induction and invented the dynamo - the beginning of the mighty electric power industry. When Sir Robert Peel on a visit to his laboratory pointed to the experimental machine and asked what use it was, Faraday is said to have answered, 'I know not, but I wager that one day your government will tax it' - a story told in a splendid biography of the great scientist by L Pearce Williams. Plus ça change ...



PRIVATE VOICES: The Diaries of  
Elizabeth Cleghorn Gaskell and Sophia Isaac Holland  
 Edited by Anita C Wilson and J A V Chapple  
 Keele University Press. £17.95

This book includes two first-hand and contrasting accounts of motherhood in the 1830s.

Elizabeth Gaskell's diary of Marianne's babyhood from 1835-8 (originally published as "My Diary" by Clement Shorter) shows her early promise as a writer. Sophia Holland's chronicles of Edward Thurstan Holland's earliest years from 1836-9 is more prosaic. Thurstan, of course, later married Marianne. There is excellent introductory material to each diary.

As a piece of social history, these diaries document the challenges, dilemmas and rewards of Victorian parenthood. As a piece of literature, there is no doubt that, in cultivating the powers of observation to be found in her diary, Elizabeth was laying the foundations for the wider social vision to be found in her novels.

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The Audio Book Collection now includes Mary Barton read by Juliet Stevenson. 12 cassettes for £17.95 (ABC 136s). Excellent value. You might persuade your library to buy it. Freepost (BA 1686/1) BATH BA2 3SZ for catalogue

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Those of you who are technical wizards may already know that there is a Gaskell page on the internet organised by Professor Mitsuoka Matsuoka, who will be carrying out research at Manchester University this autumn. Find him on

<http://lang.nagoya-u.ac.jp/~matsuoka/Gaskell.html>

BOOK NOTES  
 by Christine Lingard

Novel possibilities, fiction and the formation of early Victorian Culture by Joseph W Childers (University of California, Riverside), University of Pennsylvania Press, £30.95.

A discussion of the important role played by certain social problem novels in influencing official texts generated by parliamentary and radical bodies in order to bring about social change. In many cases the novel provided the inspiration for the social text. Mary Barton is compared to Engels' The condition of the working class in England, and many parallels are found. Charles Kingsley's Alton Locke, and Disraeli's Coningsby are also discussed.

The language of gender and class: transformation in the Victorian novel by Patrician Ingham (St Anne's College Oxford), Routledge, £37.50.

Starting from the premise that the representation of gender is always involved with the representation of class, the author uses six major Victorian novels to explore the way language is used to describe romantic conflict and yet still succeed in avoiding stereotypes. The novels in question are Shirley, North and South, Hard Times, Felix Holt, The Unclassed (George Gissing) and Jude the Obscure.

Walking the Victorian streets, women, representation and the city by Deborah Epstein Nord, Cornell University Press.

Dickens and Gaskell are the two most prominent authors discussed in this book about the depiction of urban life. Section one deals with the role of the narrator who was invariably male; section two with the fallen woman and section three with new women and the end of the century. It deals at length with Gaskell's observation of the street life of Manchester and makes many references to modern critics, in particular Raymond Williams' The country and the city. The book is not confined to the novel. Some parallels are made with a French travel write Flora Tristan, whose Promenades dans Londres was published in 1840.

FIRST MEETINGS  
THAT LED TO LASTING FRIENDSHIPS  
 by Barbara Brill

In preparation for the reading of the correspondence between Charles Eliot Norton and John Ruskin which I shall shortly be embarking on, thanks to the availability of the book in Manchester Central Library, through the kindness of Christine Lingard, I have been reading Ruskin's 'Praeterita'. In volume III chapter 1 I was particularly interested in Ruskin's account of his first meeting with Charles Norton on the boat between Vevay and Geneva in 1886.

"It was hot on deck and we all went down into the little cabin, which the waves from the paddle wheels rushed past the windows of, in lovely wild masses of green and silver. There was no one in the cabin but papa, mamma, old Anne and me, and a family whom we supposed rightly to be American, of the best sort. A mother with three daughters and her son - he in charge of them all, perhaps five or six and twenty; his sisters younger; all of them quietly and gracefully cheerful. Neither of the groups talked but I noticed that from time to time the young American cast somewhat keen, though entirely courteous looks of scrutiny at my father and mother.

In a few minutes after I had begun to notice these looks, he rose with the sweetest, quiet smile I ever saw on any face (unless, perhaps, a nun's, when she has some grave kindness to do) crossed to our side of the cabin, and addressing himself to my father, said, with a true expression of great gladness and of frank trust that he knew who we were, was most thankful to have met us, and that he prayed permission to introduce his mother and sisters to us.

The bright eyes, the melodious voice, the perfect manner, the simple but acutely flattering words, won my father in an instant. The rest of the time till we reached Geneva passed too quickly; we arranged to meet in a day or two again, at St Martin's.

And thus I became possessed of my second friend, after Dr John Brown and my first real tutor, Charles Eliot Norton."

This account of a first meeting reminded me forcibly of the meeting of Charles Norton with Elizabeth Gaskell and Marianne and Meta in Rome in 1857, described many years later in a letter to Norton written by Meta who kept up a correspondence with him after her mother's death:

"I shall keep the anniversary of that Carnival Day when we first saw you 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. I can see your face and smile now (as distinctly as if I was just turning away from them) when you caught at some confetti that Mama was dangling from a long stick from the balcony - and Mama said "Oh, look, what a charming face!" and Mr Story (I think it was) said "Oh, that's Charles Norton" and there was a chorus of welcome and bidding you come up." (*From Letters of Mrs Gaskell and Charles Eliot Norton 1855-65, Introduction p.XIX. Ed. Jane Whitehill. London 1932*).

In Praeterita (volume III chapter 1) Ruskin refers to Norton's concern for the health of his daughter Lily. Norton wrote from his home, Shady Hill, on April 9th 1887:

"The winter has been long and hard with us ... We have had the usual winter pleasures and all my children have been well, though Lily is always too delicate, and ten days hence I part with her that she may go to England and try there to escape her summer cold. She goes out under Lowell's charge, and will be with her mother's sister and cousins in England."

It is interesting to conjecture whether the Gaskell daughters saw anything of Lily Norton during this visit as they had a special interest in the child who was christened 'Elizabeth', after their mother, and like her was called 'Lily'. In one of Meta's letters to Norton she refers to the christening and to the appropriate christening present she and her sisters had sent out. She wrote on January 13th 1867 from Plymouth Grove:

"Thank you, dearest Mr Norton, for telling me of darling

little Lily's christening. It must have been in every detail the very best that we could have wished or imagined possible. A christening service is so beautiful and solemn and such a glad happy thing - I am going to send Lily a simple locket with some of Mama's hair in it - which I would give to very few. Do you think it would be safe to send it by post, registered? I do so like the think of the flowers on the table, when little Lily was being christened, for all lovely bright things seem symbolic of Mama whose soul seemed to clasp all beauty as the gift of God." (*Letter 2611*)\*

There appears to have been an exchange of locks of hair as on March 28th of the same year Meta wrote from Cowley House, Oxford:

"Dearest Mr Norton

I have heard this morning from Julia that the locket with darling little Lily's hair has reached home and I hasten to thank you for it, though as yet unseen. It is so kind of you and dear Susan (as she tells me I may call her) to have thought of this gift for me, and though I could never need anything to remind me of your child and Mama's namesake I long to have it in my hands and to begin to carry it always with me." (*Letter 2612*)\*

She wrote again after seeing her locket:

"I wish so much that I could see Lily and it is with quite a pang that I think that perhaps we may never meet. It is only in looking forwards that I feel how separate our lives are. In the past it has made no real difference; and every time that I write to you it seems as if I had only just parted from you. I thank you again and again with all my heart for this gift, dearest Mr Norton.

If the locket with Mama's hair in it has reached you, you will perhaps have thought that the lock of hair was clumsily put in, so I wished to tell you how I had not trusted it in the jeweller's hands, for fear of its being changed (which is said often to happen), but our dear old Hearn put it in as neatly as she could [Here a note has been added 'The locket is now in the Gaskell Mem. Hall, at Knutsford']. I have been away from home for sometime

stopping with Marianne and Florence before I came here. It is so pleasant to see Marianne so perfectly happy as she is. She and Thurstan fit into one another beautifully." (*Letter 2610*)\*

I hope very much to find in the Ruskin-Norton correspondence the same delightful intimacy.

\*The quotation from the letters of Meta to Norton are published by permission of the Houghton Library, Harvard University (Nos. 2611, 2612, 2610)

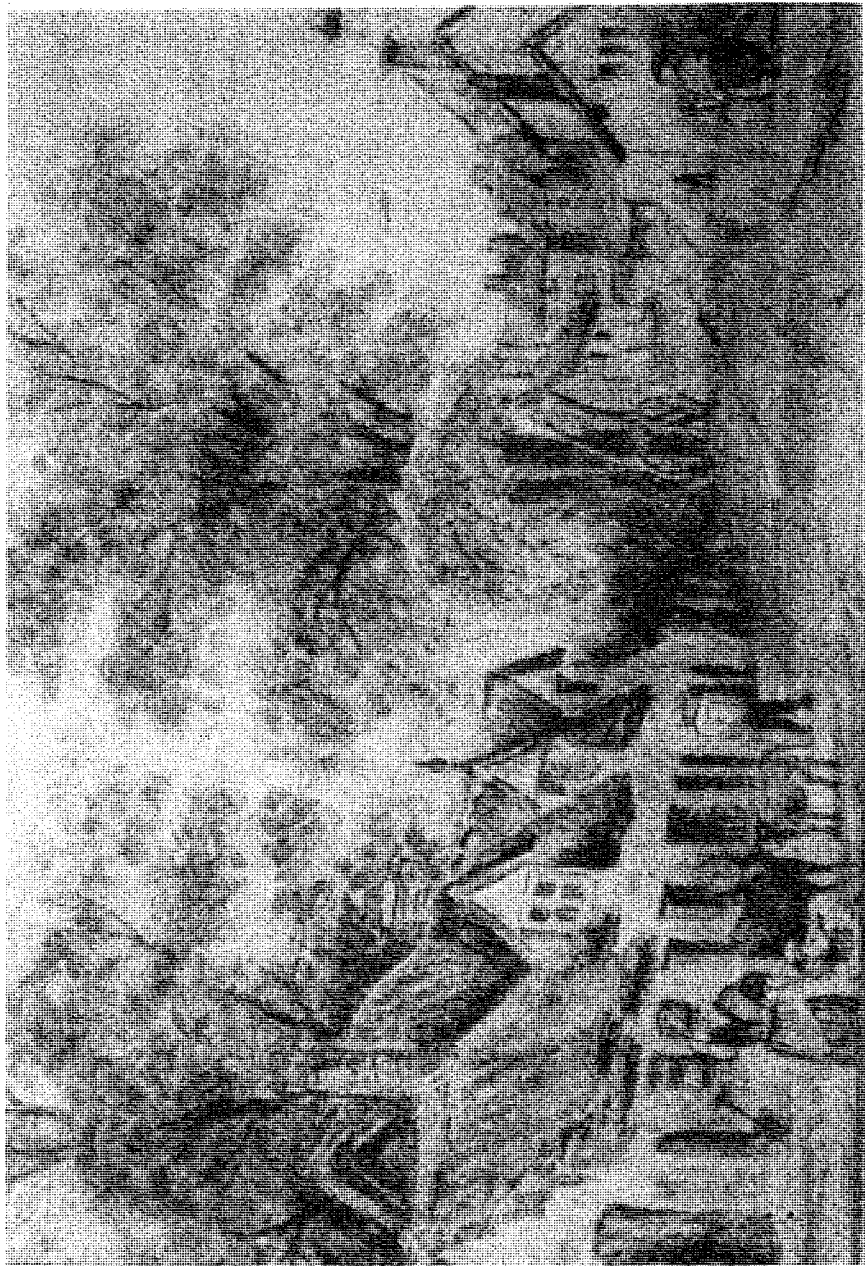
# ~~~~~ RIVISTA DI STUDI VITTORIANI

This is a new Journal published quarterly from the Centre of Victorian and Edwardian Studies at Pescara University.

The Editor is Francesco Marroni, a Vice President of The Gaskell Society; John Chapple and Alan Shelston have both been appointed to the editorial board, which includes a number of eminent Victorian scholars. RSV will publish scholarly articles on all aspects of Victorian and Edwardian literary culture, in Italian and English. Editor Francesco Marroni, in the opening number, contributes an article on Thomas Hardy's poem 'An August Midnight' and Anna Unsworth writes on Italian references in Cousin Phillis: 'A purer aether, a diviner air'.

The journal also carries substantial reviews of recent scholarship.

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A valuable addition to Gaskell works in Italian translation has been published by Maria Costantini (Edizio Danilo): *Storia di un Signorotto di Campagna e altri Racconti*. It includes *The Squire's Story*, *The Sexton's Hero* and *The Heart of John Middleton*, with a useful introduction, notes and bibliography.



This Victorian watercolour scene of King Street, Knutsford, about 1860, before the railway came, will soon be available to members as a postcard. Geoffrey Sharps has kindly made it available from his collection. The artist is believed to be Lucy Holland

ELIZABETH GASKELL AND MANCHESTER  
Day School organised by Manchester  
Metropolitan University, Gaskell Society, and  
Lancashire & Cheshire Antiquarian Society

Saturday 26 April 1977

at

Manchester Metropolitan University  
Mabel Tylecote Building, Cavendish Street

Fee: £9.00; £6.00 (members and concessionary)

~~~~~  
PROGRAMME

- 9.00 am Registration and Coffee
- 9.30 am Unitarianism in Victorian Manchester  
Ian Sellers (University of Manchester)
- 10.15 am Views of the North in Victorian Literature  
Brian Maidment (University of Huddersfield)
- 11.00 am COFFEE and BISCUITS
- 11.30 am Footnotes in Mary Barton  
Terry Wyke (Manchester Metropolitan  
University)
- 12.15 pm Folk Song and Mrs Gaskell  
Carolyn Jackson-Houlston (Oxford Brookes  
University)
- 1.15 pm LUNCH (those attending to make own  
arrangements)
- 2.30 pm Afternoon Visits  
Tour 1. Plymouth Grove (Robin Allan)  
Tour 2. Portico Library and Mosley Street  
(Alan Shelston)  
Tour 3. All Saints and Book Street (Terry Wyke)

This will be in place of our usual Spring meeting. It seems very early to book for this but it may be over-subscribed.

Booking forms available at meetings, or send SAE if you have not received one.

### HOLIDAY IN GERMANY

Plans are now in hand for this to take place from 6-12th May by air. Arrangements are being made with Moswins, a specialist firm for German holidays. Our hotel will be a new one, complete with swimming pool (fancy a swimming gala?!) at Mannheim, convenient for our itinerary, a \*\*\*\* hotel at \*\*\* price for us. We will have half board.

Moswins has the advantage of being able to arrange flights from Heathrow, Manchester or Bristol to Frankfurt.

Day 1 - Travel and settling in

Day 2 - We will visit Heidelberg, the castle, monastery church, lunch at the Wolfsbrunnen restaurant, all known to ECG. We will have a one-hour boat trip down the Neckar Valley

Day 3 - The Odenwald Valley and Heppenheim (sorry we cannot spend six weeks there but we will visit a vineyard)

Day 4 - Worm, Bingen and Mainz - old cathedrals etc

Day 5 - Explore Heidelberg at will. Afternoon trip to Speyer

Day 6 - Down the Rhine Valley and over the French border to Strasbourg to the mountain area as setting for The Grey Woman

Cost £518, plus travel insurance £15. Single room supplement £80, but you may like to share

We have some spare places. If you would like to see more details, please let me know. We will have with us John Chapple (and Kate if her recent hip operation lets her) who has travelled Gaskell country here and tells me his German is adequate for ordering drinks! I am sure we can rely on Professor Peter Skrine who lectures in German to manage as our spokesman.

Mrs Gaskell had a spot of trouble in Mannheim over RUM! but we will be more careful. Like to join us?

### MONTHLY MEETINGS IN KNUTSFORD

These were popular last year and will recommence on 28th October. We will use A Dark Night's Work as course book. A leaflet is available if required; please send SAE or collect at meetings.

### NEW YEAR LUNCH

Make a note of the date in your diary - 11th January at The Parish Church Rooms - details later.

### LONDON & SOUTH EAST GROUP

SATURDAY 14th SEPTEMBER at Pimlico School, Lupus Street, London SW1V 3AT, 2 pm.

"Sybil' and 'Mary Barton': A Historian's Perspective" - Howard F Gregg

SATURDAY 9th NOVEMBER at Francis Holland School, 39 Graham Terrace, London SW1W 8JF, 3 pm.

"Gaskell's Gothic" - Jenny Uglow

For further information send SAE to Dudley Barlow, 44 Seymour Road, London SW18 5JA

# The Gaskell Society



## NEWSLETTER

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: 01565 634668)

*Senior Citizen*

Hon Treasurer: Brian Williams, 15 Cawley Avenue,  
Culcheth, Warrington WA3 4DF

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NO. 23

Editor's Letter

by Joan Leach

The Society has a busy year ahead and we hope that you will all be able to join our activities either in person or spirit. Firstly, we have a monthly lunch and lecture from October to May here in Knutsford, which has been well attended and much enjoyed.

Our London and South East group meets five times a year for an excellent series of lectures; one of these forthcoming is to be shared with The Dickens Fellowship.

Forty-two members are looking forward to their tour to Germany 'In the footsteps of Elizabeth Gaskell' from 6th to 12th May. We hope to take some photographs to share our experiences with others.

With this Newsletter you will receive details of a meeting in Manchester on 22nd March. On 26th April you will have a choice between lectures in Leeds, London or Manchester!

Those of you who can reach Birmingham may like to join the AGM meeting of the Alliance of Literary Societies on 19th April when the Mary Webb Society will be hosts. SAE for details, please.

We have two publications to look forward to: Elizabeth Gaskell: the Early Years by our Chairman, John Chapple. Many hours of research and fascinating discoveries have gone into the making of this book, which will be published by Manchester University Press in April.

MUP have also decided to reprint The Letters of Mrs Gaskell, edited by J A V Chapple and Arthur Pollard. This will be a paperback edition.

These books will be available at our meetings at discount rates or direct from MUP.

The programme for our Chester conference is nearly complete. The trips into North Wales will be very pleasant, and any members who choose to stay an extra day on Monday 11th August may like to visit Knutsford and Gaskell country.

IF you are not able to get to our meetings, you might think of arranging a literary lunch in your area which might result in the formation of a group who could meet to read and discuss Victorian literature.

A Study of Mrs Gaskell's Handwriting  
by Caroline Arnaud

Whether or not you believe in graphology as a science, I think you might be interested in reading the following study of Elizabeth Gaskell's handwriting. It was made by a graphologist I happen to know personally - Madame Coulet - who was kind enough to do it for me out of friendship. Madame Coulet is no specialist of the Victorian Era, and, as a Frenchwoman, she knows nothing at all about Elizabeth Gaskell's life and writing. This "naïveté" might be regarded as a drawback. On the other hand, it could be viewed as an asset, since I would imagine it must be difficult for an English graphologist not to be biased when dealing with the handwriting of someone so famous.

The three samples Madame Coulet has had the opportunity of studying are unfortunately not original manuscripts - as I possess none - but photocopies of them. However, I was glad to be able to supply her with various extracts (since you should never draw conclusions from one document only). All of them come from the Central Library of Manchester. Two of them are extracts from letters to Mrs Schwabe. They are dated "1852" (librarian's hand) and "April 30th 1852" (Gaskell's hand). The third one is not dated. It is a sample of Mrs Gaskell's writing followed by Meta's words "This is my mother's writing/M.E.Gaskell-/2 March, 1909". They are referred to in the library as Gaskell manuscripts numbers 2, 3 and 10.

But let us delay no further the analysis of the handwriting itself, which I have tried to translate for you as accurately as possible.

*Mrs Gaskell was a most dynamic and energetic woman. She was quick at repartee: her conversation must have been very fast as well as full of quick, clever and amusing remarks. Mrs Gaskell was not one to bend to other people's will or authority. She was quick to rebel. She was easily moved to enthusiasm too, and took on lost causes. She felt she had missions in life. Her energy was the most striking part of her temperament. She was always ready and willing to fight and argue. She had a remarkable fighting spirit.*

*She sometimes found it difficult to refrain from doing what she felt she had to do. At times, she even fought too much, that is, to the point of becoming muddled. She knew how to define clearly what she meant and to lay emphasis on what she wanted to say. Her authority sometimes verged on authoritarianism. Thanks to her energy and her capacity for decision-making she was something of a leader. She was one to spring into action. Even though she was an attractive character, she was not liked by everybody, as she did not try to make herself pleasant to everyone. She could be disagreeable and unpleasant when she wished to be. Once convinced that she was doing the right thing, she would fight her battles to the end. She regarded people who disagreed with her as mere fools. The Era in which she lived partly accounts for this personality of hers. There were such strong-minded matrons in the nineteenth century. She was not one to follow the lead of her husband. Her handwriting belongs to the "animus-type"<sup>2</sup> rather than to the "anima-type". She had a critical mind as well as a very inquisitive one: she was a keen observer of what took place around her, even though she focused on things that interested her and tended to forget everything else. She became totally involved in what preoccupied her. Her mind was very active. Indeed, she was mentally superior. She could clash with people. Hers was not a restful temperament. She enjoyed shaking up both people and set ideas. There was something of the pioneer within her, as she was good at starting things. It was certainly more difficult for her to carry on doing what she had initiated. Daily life and habits tired her out. When she was no longer interested in what she was working at, she needed to start up something new again so as to regain her enthusiasm. Hers was a passionate nature. It is not certain that she could remain attached to the same person for a long period of time. Affections did not come first and foremost in her life. They were not what counted most for her. She would bravely - not to say obstinately - champion the cause she believed in. When her beliefs and her feelings happened to clash with one another - as they were bound to in such a one - the former would win over the latter. She did not treat people diplomatically. She did not pretend to agree with what she disagreed with. She was not a shy person. She knew what she wanted to say,*



and said it. Even though she could be very thoughtful towards people, she certainly was not always easy to get on with on a daily basis. She must have been a very socially attractive person. Her intellectual honesty was not to be questioned, but she would not let herself be distracted with details. When she was engrossed in something, you should not disturb her with something else either. She was driven by her passions. She never knew when to stop. She must have been liable to breakdowns since there are signs of regular exhaustion in her handwriting: she felt drained now and then. She would pass judgments and make choices first, and then think them over afterwards. She needed to fight for a cause that shook her to her very soul. She would champion this cause passionately, without ever considering in the least whether it was in her interest to do so. She would spare no trouble: this is what was most attractive about her. There was not the slightest shadow of hypocrisy about her. She could be carried away by unusual fits of anger. All in all, her personality is a most interesting one, and it really is worth studying: Elizabeth Gaskell was an exceptional woman.

Madame Coulet privately concluded by confessing that although Mrs Gaskell's handwriting is a most beautiful one, she would not have liked living in the same house with her.

I would conclude by saying, in a nutshell, that I for one was struck, shaken and ultimately utterly convinced by this analysis of Mrs Gaskell's handwriting made by Madame Coulet. I would be most happy to know your opinion about it. It is no easy task to picture to oneself the temperament of someone you only know through her writing. Doesn't this analysis of her handwriting made us more familiar with this fascinating and wonderful woman?

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<sup>1</sup>Emile Caille thus defines the "animus" woman: her way of thinking may be qualified as "masculine". It is very likely that she sometimes wished she were a man (translation mine). Emile Caille, *Graphologie analytique* (Paris: Masson, 1990) 63

## Humour in Mrs Gaskell's Letters (1) by Graham Handley

Reading the letters of a great writer - and Elizabeth Gaskell's claims to greatness are being steadily advanced - one feels all the time the consciousness of connection to the published work. Forty years ago I read the first seven volumes of Gordon Haight's edition of *The George Eliot Letters*, listening to the voice of the serious evangelical Mary Ann Evans, then to the cry from the heart after her father's death, then pondering the self-conscious Journal entry on HOW I CAME TO WRITE FICTION, and so on through the writing, the forms of publication of the individual works, the utterances on art, morality, life, domesticity. It was both fascinating and salutary, and at times I felt that the eye of the writer was firmly fixed on posterity. Just over ten years on from that reading I turned to *The Letters of Mrs Gaskell* edited by Chapple and Pollard. The complete contrast of tone with that of George Eliot, the constant familial emphasis, the wonderful rush of enthusiasm, emotion, warmth frustration, were underpinned by a running, delicious range of humorous innuendo, sometimes self-mocking. The eye was firmly fixed on the present in unselfconscious commentary. To read Mrs Gaskell's letters was to know her.

Mrs Gaskell's humour is present from her very beginning in *Mary Barton*, that otherwise sombre novel being irradiated, for example, by Job Legh's feeding the baby. *Cranford* is impregnated with comic modes, life's little ironies, Amazonian snobberies, the tragi-impersonation of poor Peter and the whimsy sentiment of his return. Deft touches made servants aggressively funny in *Ruth* and *North and South*, and Dn'l Robson moves from comic obstinacy to bloody-minded tragedy in *Sylvia's Lovers*. There would, I suspect, be general agreement about the pre-eminence of *Wives and Daughters* in Mrs Gaskell's comedy canon. None of her contemporaries, I suggest, outdid Mrs Kirkpatrick, her inflexible egoism even surviving the reined-in bluntness of Mr Gibson. She anticipates Rosamond Vincy: the difference is that Rosamond is not funny.

The humorous elements in Mrs Gaskell's letters have often a

natural and bubbling spontaneity, a vivacious curiosity, a rambling triviality or a gossipy flow. Perhaps their most endearing quality is her capacity of self-mockery (more of this later) and, sometimes, an innocent enjoyment in her own achievement. Take this almost throwaway account of how *Cranford* was informed with real-life incidents which she still treasures: this from a letter to Ruskin is some twelve years after its publication:

... whenever I am ailing or ill, I take 'Cranford' and - I was going to say, *enjoy* it! (but that would not be pretty!) laugh over it afresh. And it is true too, for I have seen the cow that wore the grey flannel jacket - and I know the cat that swallowed the lace, that belonged to the lady that sent for the doctor, that gave the emetic ...

(L 562, late February 1865)

And she goes on to tell the story of the servant-girl who had been taught by two maiden ladies 'to vault or jump gracefully' over the 'white places' in the carpet 'lest her feet might dirty them'. In fact her own public writing finds humorous mention in her casual letters. Before her suffering over *Ruth* there is a smaller worry over *Mary Barton*:

I find every one here has most convincing proofs that the authorship of *Mary Barton* should be attributed to a Mrs Wheeler, nee Miss Stone, and authoress of some book called the 'Cotton Lord'. 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 that I am the author ... (L 31, Novr 13/1848)

Three weeks later she received a cheque for £50 from her publisher Edward Chapman. When she gets one for £20 for 'Lizzie Leigh' she ponders whether she is 'swindling them but I suppose I am not', adding wryly 'Wm has composedly buttoned it (the cheque) up in his pocket'. (L 70, Apr 26 1850). *Ruth*, 'a prohibited book in *this* as in many other households' (L 148 27 Jan 1853) provides anguish rather than humour, but even here Mrs Gaskell sees the funny

side. She tells her dear friend Tottie Fox of two men who burnt the book and of a third forbidding his wife to read it - 'they sit next to us in chapel, and you can't think how "improper" I feel under their eyes' (L 150 Feb 1853). And she repeats what Sir Francis Doyle had said to her as she fretted about people looking at her as if she were the author of *Ruth*, 'Can't you tell them, my dear, that you're Ruthless?' (L 211, Oct 1854).

Working on *North and South* enabled her to indulge that tone of self-mockery which is one of her warmest and most endearing qualities. Look at the repetitive and deliberately mechanistic nature of the prose here as she writes to Emily Shaen about the novel:

I've got to go (with Margaret - I'm off at her now following your letter) when they've quarrelled silently, after the lie, and she knows she loves him, and he is trying not to love her; and Frederick is gone back to Spain and Mrs Hale is dead and Mr Bell has come to stay with the Hales, and Mr Thornton ought to be developing himself - and Mr Hale ought to die - and if I could get over the next piece I could swim through the London life beautifully into the sunset glory of the last scene. (L 218, Oct 1854)

This laconic affectation of writer's block, a quiet laugh at work in anything but progress, is supplemented by her remarks on the same novel to Dickens: 'I think a better title would have been "Deaths and Variations". There are five deaths, each beautifully suited to the character of the individual.' (L 220, Dec 1854). But sometimes the humour at her own frustration has an edge of rejection. This was written while she was at work on *Wives and Daughters*:

I hate intellect and literature and fine arts and mathematics! I begin to think Heaven will be a place where books and newspapers will be prohibited by St Peter: and the amusement will be driving in an open carriage to Harrow, and eating strawberries and cream for ever. (L 561, Feb 20 1865)

Mrs Gaskell is richly curious, and the mystery of George Eliot becomes something of an obsession with her. She is lyrical about *Scenes of Clerical Life* and *Adam Bede* ('Janet's Repentance' is her favourite) and full of praise for the new writer. But the author as woman ('Madam Adam' she calls her later) is what really intrigues her. Writing to Mr 'Gilbert Elliot' in June 1859, she observes:

Since I came up from Manchester to London I have had the greatest compliment paid me I ever had in my life. I have been suspected of having written 'Adam Bede'. I have hitherto denied it; but really I think if you want to keep your real name a secret, it would be very pleasant for me to blush acquiescence. Will you give me leave? ... After all it is a pity so much hearty admiration should go unappropriated through the world. So, although to my friends I am known under the name of Mrs Gaskell, to you I will confess that I *am* the author of *Adam Bede*, and remain very respectfully and gratefully,

Yours,

Gilbert Elliot (L 431, June 3)

It is humour which doesn't quite come off, and with Josiah Liggins claiming the authorship of the novel, as well as of *Scenes of Clerical Life*, it is arguably in bad taste. Mrs Gaskell supported the Liggins' rumour for some time, but was generous enough to admit her error and heap further praise on her competitor in a letter from Whitby to George Eliot some five months later. She says, however, not without a certain sardonic humour, 'I should not be quite true in my ending, if I did not say before I concluded that I wish you were Mrs Lewes.' (L 449, Nov 10 1859).

There are other instances of her sense of fun in the literary and artistic areas. Consider her remark to Lady Kay-Shuttleworth that she feels that the difference between herself and Charlotte Brontë is that 'she puts all her naughtiness into her books, and I put all my goodness (into mine) ... my books are so far better than I am that I often feel ashamed of having written them and as if I were a hypocrite.' (L 154,, Apr 1853). She notes when she visits

Mr Brontë 'this little deadly pistol sitting down to breakfast with us, kneeling down to prayers at night, to say nothing of the loaded gun hanging up on high, ready to pop off on the slightest emergency.' (L 166 Sept 1853). She visits Wordsworth's widow, and recounts how 'shortly after her confinement when quiet had been particularly enjoined', Coleridge roused the house 'about one in the morning ... to ask for eggs and bacon, and similar vagaries.' (L 139, 28 Oct 1852). And there is the wonderful account of her meeting Rossetti a few times and always getting his attention until ladies with beautiful hair appeared:

It did not signify what we were talking about or how agreeable I was; if a particular kind of reddish brown crepe wavy hair came in, he was away in a moment struggling for an introduction to the owner of the said head of hair. He is not as made as a March hare, but hair-mad. (L 444, Oct 25 and 30 1859)

We have noted her generosity over George Eliot, and it is seen too in her praise of *Framley Parsonage*. Like everyone else she is dreading the final part of the serial publication of the novel, and she cannot repress a little joke about one of Trollope's least likeable characters, the archdeacon's eldest daughter, saying 'I hope he will make the jilting of Griselda a long while a-doing.' (L 456, Mar 1860).

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The Historical Novel Society has been founded recently. Membership costs £8 per annum. There will be two issues each year of the magazine "Solander" with reviews, and information and articles by historical novelists including Bernard Cornwell, Joanna Trollope, Richard Woodman, Melvyn Bragg etc.

Write (with SAE) for information to:

The Historical Novel Society  
Marine Cottage, The Strand, Starcross, Devon EX6 8NY  
Tel: 01626-892962

The Royal Literary Fund  
by J A V Chapple

Despite my lucky identification of the Boddingtons, I believe the surest way to make discoveries is to keep following up some of the hundreds of clues that exist rather than rely on chance. Thus, in Letter 180 to James Crossley, Elizabeth Gaskell wrote that she had applied to the Literary Fund on behalf of a poor inhabitant of Knutsford and her two widowed daughters. Through the courtesy of Dr Christopher Fletcher, Curator of Literary Manuscripts at the British Library, I was shown Case File No. 1247, which contains a number of applications made to the Literary Fund of behalf of Mrs Selina Davenport of Knutsford.

There are six sets, which happen to contain no less than four unknown letters by Mrs Gaskell. The constant appearance of new letters in salerooms and elsewhere presents a time-consuming editorial task of some magnitude, which causes me to welcome the decision of Manchester University Press to reissue the 1966 edition of the *Letters* in paperback during the summer, together with a preliminary list of corrections and amendments. The 1850 date of Mrs Gaskell's first letter to the Literary Fund, for example, now enables her missive to Crossley to be firmly assigned to 1852 - a suggestion first made by Geoffrey Sharps.

The very definite concern for individuals that is manifest in these documents is consistent with Elizabeth Gaskell's position in her famous 'quarrel' with Florence Nightingale, who was 'too much for institutions, sisterhoods and associations', though with the typically charitable proviso that 'anything like a judgment' of such an extraordinary being must be 'presumptuous' (Letter 217).

The first form of application, dated 10 May 1850, was made out by Elizabeth herself, stating that Mrs Davenport was 71 years old and kept a very small shop in Knutsford. The most she gained from this was one shilling a day, and frequently nothing. She had no other income apart from £10 a year allowed to her by a relation, out of which she had to

maintain herself and the two penniless, middle-aged daughters who lived with her. Eleven three- or four-decker books had been published by Mrs Davenport, with titles like *The Queen's Page*; *Italian Vengeance*, & *English Forbearance*; and *The Daughters of the Viscount and the Sons of the Earl*. It sounds as if they were all in the best possible taste, of the time. Mrs Davenport's three recommendations were signed by Mrs Gaskell, the Vicar of Bowdon and Mary Holland.

It turns out that Mr R A Davenport, himself an author, had been a pensioner of the Literary Fund for some years but had claimed to be a widower. They had evidently been separated and on the worst of terms for many years. His letter of self-exculpation to the authorities is in the files, claiming that he wished to conceal the 'disgrace of being allied to such a character'. It is accompanied by a brief covering letter that dryly suggests 'faults on both sides'.

In the event, Mrs Davenport was successful and on the 12 June T Crofton Croker noted that she was granted £30, sent to her through Mary Holland. In April 1852, another application was made, backed this time by Lucy Holland, Susan Deane (née Holland) and the Vicar of Knutsford. £20 was voted. The next application, in April 1853, is unusual. Miss Holland, apparently, would not sign again, so the request is backed by Mrs Davenport's landlord Henry Barber, chemist, Thomas Gallimore, draper, and Thomas Howarth, book and print-seller, all of Knutsford. No grant was made then, but similar small sums were in later years.

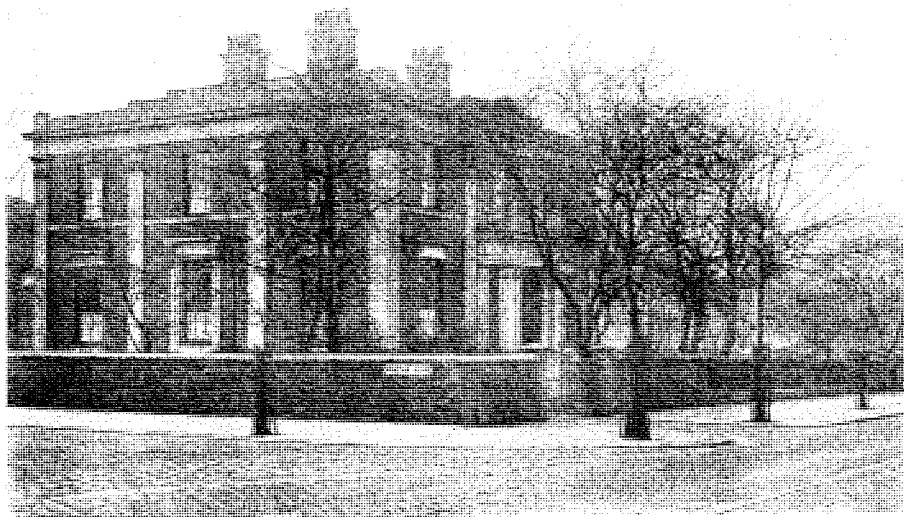
Elizabeth Gaskell's letters of support seem to have been sparked off by her Knutsford cousins Mary and Lucy. If so, they were also successful in enlisting the aid of Emily Leicester of Toft Hall, Knutsford tradespeople, various vicars, a surgeon, a solicitor and the chaplain of Knutsford's House of Correction.

This contrasts with what we find in Case File No. 652, which adds to the little we know of Mrs Catherine Stevenson, Widow of Mr William Stevenson, of the Record Office. In April 1829, £40 was voted to her. Her case was

made in a letter to the relevant committee by the inhabitant of Grove House, Brompton, whose signature is quite illegible. An addendum slip advises delay in payment until Dr A T Thomson had settled his brother-in-law's estate: any grant 'might be interfered with' by William Stevenson's creditors.

So far, so good. The Payment was made eventually, Katharine Thomson signing for her husband. But a few years later came a desperate letter from Mrs Stevenson, dated 18 January 1833 from 57 Albany Street, presumably the one at the Calton Hill end of Edinburgh's New Town. She says that her husband's death had left herself and her children 'perfectly destitute', that she had tried to run a boarding house without success and contracted debts. 'However small a sum', she cried, 'it will be most thankfully received'. It is a very sad letter, but quite unaccompanied by other recommendations or letters of support. Nor was she, like Mrs Davenport, an author. There is a bald annotation, 'Already relieved as a Widow'.

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84 Plymouth Grove in 1910  
(see article on page 14)



### Book Notes

by Christine Lingard

*Victorian love stories: an Oxford anthology*; edited by Kate Flint. Oxford University Press, 1996. £17.99

An extensive anthology of thirty short stories covering the whole of Victoria's reign including authors not normally associated with the period such as Somerset Maugham. Gaskell's *Right at last* is one of the earliest stories in the collection which also includes such familiar names as Trollope, Hardy, Henry James, Wilkie Collins, Kipling and Wilde alongside less familiar ones such as Nora Vynne, Ella Dickens, George Egerton, and Flora Henniker. The latter is the 'little mite - Flora Milne' whose birth is recorded in Mrs Gaskell's letter to her father Richard Monckton Milne in 1855. She grew up to become a close friend of Hardy. A general introduction and very brief biographical notes are provided.

*Talking classics: the world's great novels on CD or cassette*. Vol 67 - Elizabeth Gaskell's *Mary Barton*. An Orbis classics collection. 1996. £3.99

A fortnightly publication consisting of a recording (compact disc or tape) read by Maggie Ollerenshaw and a 12-page glossy pamphlet (recommended to be read after listening to the tape). The booklet is interesting for its unusual illustrations taken from a 1964 BBC television production of *Mary Barton*. *North and South* was issued as part 53 in this series.

Anna Unsworth, *Elizabeth Gaskell: An Independent Woman*, London: Minerva Press, pp.244, ISBN 1 86106 179X 1996, paperback, £12.99

This book seeks to further our understanding of Elizabeth Gaskell, the woman and writer. Anna Unsworth's knowledge of the Unitarian Church and Christian Socialism is particularly valuable. The book is an illuminating treatise that draws our attention to many of the ideas that informed Elizabeth Gaskell's writing. At the same time we are given a clear understanding of a woman who really could not "be bound by another's rules".

(Full review will appear in the Journal)

Irene Wiltshire

84 Plymouth Grove

The future of Elizabeth Gaskell's Plymouth Grove house continues to concern us. Back in December 1994, the Vice-Chancellor of Manchester University wrote that it had in fact assumed ownership in 1973 but that it was concerned about 'the apparent cost of repairing' the house 'relative to the property's value'. (Very considerable sums have been estimated to put right structural and other defects.) Also, he stated that the University now wished to relocate the International Society in a better place.

The Gaskell Society Committee and a number of individual members have therefore kept this matter under constant review. A great deal of quiet work has gone on behind the scenes, both with the University and more generally. In particular, it has seemed valuable to investigate the history of the house, not only in Elizabeth Gaskell's time but thereafter. Her husband and daughters played a part in the public life of Manchester after 1865 that adds considerably to its significance in the City's history.

The Plymouth Grove house was again carefully discussed at the Gaskell Society Committee's February meeting. Although the University will have no future use for the house, it has not yet identified funds for the transfer of the International Society to a more central location in its campus, nor has it yet found premises requiring little or no adaptation. We are also told that it is 'highly improbable that 84 Plymouth Grove will become vacant before the summer of 1998 at the earliest' and that any discussions concerning its eventual sale are at present 'premature'.

The Committee does not believe that the Society could assume such a major responsibility alone, but recommends that we associate ourselves with other groups possessing a strong interest in Manchester's heritage. City improvements of many kinds are in hand or under consideration. It is thought that at this stage the establishment with others of a charitable association, The Friends of 84 Plymouth Grove might be the most effective way of proceeding.

J A V Chapple & Joan Leach

Programme for London & South East GroupSaturday 26 April

2 pm at Francis Holland School, 39 Graham Terrace, London SW1W 8JF

'Marriage in the Life and Work of Elizabeth Gaskell' - Sylvia Burch

Saturday 13 September

2 pm at Pimlico School, Lupus Street, London SW1V 3AT

'*Wives and Daughters*' and '*Middlemarch*' as Provincial Novels'- Dr Graham Handley, Vice-President of the George Eliot Fellowship

Saturday 8 November

2 pm - venue to be arranged

'The Early Years of Elizabeth Gaskell' - Professor John Chapple, Chairman of the Gaskell Society and author of '*Elizabeth Gaskell: The Early Years*' to be published in April

Tuesday 16 December

6.30 pm (doors open at 6 pm) at Swedenborg Hall, Swedenborg House, 20-21 Bloomsbury Way, London WC1 (entrance in Barter Street)

'Elizabeth Gaskell, Charles Dickens and the French Revolution' - Howard F Gregg.

This will be a joint meeting with the Dickens Fellowship.

Further information from Dudley Barlow, 44 Seymour Road, London SW18 5JA

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University of Leeds Day School - Saturday 26 April

Although this is the same day as the Manchester Day which we are sharing with The Lancs and Cheshire Antiquarian Society, some members may be interested.

For information send SAE to: Marilyn Moreland, School of Continuing Education, University of Leeds, Leeds LS2 9JT

Forthcoming Events22nd March: MANCHESTER MEETING at the Freemasons Hall

10.30 Coffee and biscuits

11.00 Professor Peter Skrine, Professor of German at University of Bristol will speak on Elizabeth Gaskell's German StoriesJ Geoffrey and Heather Sharps will speak on The Gaskells and Uhland

The meeting will finish about 1.00 pm. We are disappointed that the Palace production of Hard Times is not on until the next week, 24-29th.

Transport from Knutsford can only be arranged if a minimum of 15 book. We would return at 3.00 pm from Manchester to allow time for shopping, etc. PLEASE ENCLOSE SAE IF YOU HOPE we will transport you and REPLY PROMPTLY.

You will see from the map that the venue is only a short walk from the Metro at St Peter's Square.

19th April: Alliance of Literary Societies AGM in Birmingham, hosted by the Mary Webb Society

26th April: Day School jointly with Lancs and Cheshire Antiquarian Society. You should have booked for this by now.

Monday 19th May: This is the last date of the season of monthly classes; we intend to meet from 10.45-12 noon then have a coach to travel to Cholmondley Castle Gardens for lunch etc. If you are not a class member but would like to join us please let me know.

Sunday 29th June: A trip to Wycoller, an idyllic and historic village, the hall in ruins is reputedly the model for Mr Rochester's house Ferndean Manor.

We intend to leave Knutsford at 9.45 and stop in Haworth for lunch. At Wycoller in the afternoon the senior ranger of Wycoller Country Park will give us a short slide talk on its history, followed by a guided walk.

Booking form for the Wycoller trip and another (date to be arranged) to Arnold Bennett Country, will be sent with the Journal in April.

Joan Leach

# The Gaskell Society



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: 01565 634668)

Hon Treasurer: Brian Williams, 15 Cawley Avenue, Culcheth, Warrington WA3 4DF

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**NEWSLETTER**

**SEPTEMBER 1997**

**NO. 24**



### Editor's Letter

We have had such a busy year so there is scarcely room in this newsletter to bring you up to date. Major events were the trip to Germany in May, a most enjoyable experience, which will be fully reported in the next Journal, and the weekend conference at Chester in August.

By the time members in the UK read this they may have forgotten the August heat wave in which I am now writing, but delegates found North Wales sweltering and only found relief in Samuel Holland's slate mine! Again you will find more on this event and some of the papers read at Chester in the 1998 Journal.

Alan Shelston has done sterling service in editing our Journal since its launch and he feels it is time to step aside, especially as he will be busy working with John Chapple in editing Gaskell letters. Jo Pryke, having served as associate editor will now take over from Alan as editor.

We will be working on a collection of items from Newsletters which we hope to publish in 1998.

Did you miss early volumes of Journals and Newsletters?  
We have reprinted Journals 1-3 (£4 each) and Newsletters 1-7 (£1 each).

### Subscriptions

In future our Society year will begin on 1 January. You will receive a reminder in December. Fees are now £8 per annum, or £12 for joint, overseas and corporate membership. We are encouraging members to pay by banker's order where possible, as it makes less work for all concerned. Our account is at TSB Princess Street, Knutsford (sort code 77-48-04), the account number being 07633660.

I can now be reached on e-mail at  
JoanLeach@aol.com  
 and will soon be au fait with the internet, I hope!

Our Treasurer, Brian Williams, is at  
BDandEMW@aol.com

Lucy Magruder our US hon. sec. is at  
lagruder@aol.com

If you have an e-mail number and would like to be on our mailing list, please send details.

The Society is deeply indebted to Mitsuoka Matsuoka for all the work he has done in establishing our home page on the internet

<http://lang.nagoya-ac.jp/~matsuoka/Gaskell.html>

I hope to manage this soon. He has also entered E-texts of Gaskell novels and most short stories. Mitsu has been over here in Manchester studying but has now returned to Japan, an ambassador between our Societies.

#### Future Plans

A four or five day trip to Paris is being planned for 1998, most likely for the second or third weekend in September, but possible between about 20 and 25 May. Any ideas on travel or accommodation welcome.

Our next conference will be in LONDON in 1999. Suggestions for venue will be welcome. Although our experience of college accommodation is mixed, it still seems the most reasonable in cost, especially as most of our members need single rooms. Our lecturers and teacher members are free in the summer vacation, but we will consider other options for dates if members make their wishes known.

#### 2000 Millennium Year

Plans are afoot to celebrate this in Knutsford with a LITERARY AND ARTS FESTIVAL. This would be during the last week in September to coincide with our AGM and Elizabeth Gaskell's birthday on 29 September.

#### The Well of Penmorfa by Dewi Williams

Sometime during 1917, a translation of this tale by Elizabeth Gaskell was published in "Yr Herald Gymraeg" (Welsh Herald) a Caernarfon based weekly with a wide local circulation. The translator was Edward Davies, the postmaster of Penmorfa between 1904-20, best known for his "Janes Porthmadog" (History of Porthmadog) 1913, which is still highly regarded by local historians and very well written.

I came across Edward Davies' fair copy of his translation amongst his papers in the possession of one of the family. He had seen the "Household Words" version and had no idea as to the identity of the author. Ironically, his local history contains a biography of Samuel Holland; little did he suspect that Holland's cousin was the mystery author. Edward Davies died, aged 82, in 1959.

A further item of interest among the papers is the response of another local historian to the tale which Edward Davies drew his attention to. Robert Isaac Jones was the Tremadog-based pharmacist and printer and a well-known minor literary figure. He also published an important volume on local history in 1892, entitled "Gestiana" (Gleanings from the Gêst area). Robert Isaac died in 1905, therefore Edward Davies must have long mulled over the identity of the author before the publication of his translation.

R I Jones states that he has no idea about the identity of the principal characters, namely *Eleanor Gwynn*, Nest her daughter and *Edward Williams* of Penamser farm (The End of Time). A possible explanation, he suggests, might lie in the testimony of the Reverend Jeffrey Holland (no relation of Samuel) as written on the flyleaf of the 1799 Penmorfa register:

"There has been a most shameful neglect for 20 years in this parish without any account of burials, marriages and christenings owing to a drunken curate, Mr Davies, lately dead."

Robert Isaac Jones identifies the following minor characters in the story:

1 John Griffith of Tu hwnt i'r bwlch - alive during the second half of the 17th century. *Edward Williams* suggests that only such a man of means could marry the crippled *Nest*. John Griffith pre-dates the other characters.

2 John Griffith, who first cared for the lunatic Mary Williams. A person of this name was alive in 1761 and was the landlord of Ty Mawr, one of the inns in the village.

3 *Rowland Roberts*, the doctor who treated *Nest Gwynn* after her fall. A Rowland Jones, late 18th century, acted as the village apothecary.

4 *Mrs Thomas*, the innkeeper - a Robert Thomas kept Bwlch y Fedwen, the principal inn of the village at this time. In the "Doom of the Griffiths", Martha Thomas is the name of the landlady of the "Goat" inn at Penmorfa.

5 *David Hughes*, the Wesleyan travelling preacher - could have accompanied Wesley when he visited Penmorfa in 1797. Not known to R I Jones.

R I Jones also identifies *Eleanor* and *Nest's* cottage, with its south-facing visage, 'by the roadside on the left hand as you go from Tre-Madoc to Pen Morfa'. He names it as "Pwll goleulas" (Light blue pool) by which name the terraced houses on the spot are still called. Unfortunately, the Tithe map of 1843 places the cottage (of which not a stone remains) on the right of the road rather than the left.

How much credence should be attached to this tale as recounted by Elizabeth Gaskell? It certainly has not survived in folk memory. She might well have known of such a folk tale in Cheshire perhaps and decided to place it in a Welsh context with which she certainly was well acquainted. The preponderance of John Griffiths and Thomases in the area would also make it easy to "identify" characters who could be either fictitious or based on contemporary figures in the Penrhyndeudraeth area whom she knew.

Lastly, what of the well, the focal point of the tragedy? J C Sharps, in a footnote<sup>1</sup>, acknowledges the information he received in 1960 from Colonel M I Williams-Ellis, that it was the well of Saint Beuno. Subsequent research has uncovered a more likely identification. Saint Beuno's well can be found on the side of the lane leading to Penmorfa church, much higher than the "Dôl Fawr" location. Robert Isaac Jones locates the well at Ty Cerrig, "sharp down under the rocks" (Mrs Gaskell) and refers to the "slippery stones on the time worn path leading to it". It has long disappeared as has the cottage whose name it bears, a field's length away from the reputed home of Eleanor and Nest. The present owner of the land assures me that the ground suggests the presence of water. A divining rod could well pin-point the site of the well so fateful in the life of *Nest Gwynn* "many, many years back - a lifetime ago".

<sup>1</sup>Mrs Gaskell's Observation and Invention, J G Sharps (Linden Press 1970), p.99

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*Editor's Note: We are very grateful to Dewi for guiding us to the Well of Penmorfa across the fields on our outing on 10 August. This is now more a spring than a well. Nobody slipped on any stones!*

Notes on The Moorland Cottage and Other Stories  
 World's Classics p/b edn 1995  
 by Muriel Smith

There is an item in the Winter & Spring 1997 joint Newsletter of the Ancient Monuments Society and Friends of Friendless Churches, about two redundant Welsh churches which it is hoped will this year be vested in the Friends, and one of them has something of a Gaskell connection.

"These are St Beuno, Penmorfa, Gwynedd, and St Ellyw, Llanelieu, in Powys. Both are delightful buildings, two-cell in plan form, Medieval in origin and, for the most part, in fabric."

St Beuno is not mentioned in *The Well of Penmorfa*, but Mrs Gaskell was presumably acquainted with it.

Another story in the volume, *My French Master*, concerns the French emigrant, M de Chalabre:

"He had a genius for using his fingers. After our lessons were over, he relaxed into the familiar house friend, the merry play-fellow. We lived far from any carpenter or joiner: if a lock was out of order, M de Chalabre made it right for us. If any box was wanted, his ingenious fingers had made it before our lesson day. He turned silk-winders for my mother, made a set of chessmen for my father, carved an elegant watchcase out of a rough beef-bone, dressed up little cork dolls for us - in short, as he said, his heart would have been broken but for his joiner's tools."

That these were typical emigrant activities is confirmed by *Nez de Cuir* (Leathernose), Jean de la Varende's 1937 novel dealing with Normandy of the immediately post-Napoleonic period, and based on his own family traditions:

"Chess was all the rage in Normandy after the return from emigration and it was from Normandy that the taste invaded Paris and all France. Norman châteaux still possess an astounding number of sets of chessmen. Exile and its dispiriting lack of occupation had something to do with it, but also there was the odd mania among the gentry of the time: turnery. Jean-Jacques Rousseau had advocated craft work, but surely he never envisaged such a craze. Every house had its turnery room, its glory-hole ... And chessmen were the perfect product for this buzzing activity: useful, reasonably difficult to make and suitable as gifts ... Just the job for emigrants, for the impoverished gentleman with his borrowed lathes who, holding his breath and bowed over the object between the centres, tries to forget it all."

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84 Plymouth Grove

The University now plans to move the International Society from Mrs Gaskell's house during 1998. In conjunction with the Manchester Civic Society we are setting up a steering group to study options for the future of the house - possibly a combination of exhibition space and residential units. When plans are a little further advanced, we hope to set up a charity and The Friends of Plymouth Grove.

Meanwhile we are anxious to trace the original contents of the house, both those sold at auction after Meta's death and other items which were moved from the house before 1914. Any leads will be gratefully received! Please get in touch with Janet Allen, 10 Dale Road, New Mills, High Peak SK22 4NW (phone/fax 01663 744233).

The Recording of Mrs Gaskell's North & South  
BBC Radio 4  
 by Delia Corrie

In April, I went to BBC Manchester to record Elizabeth Gaskell's *North & South* for Radio 4. I was playing Mrs Hale and Aunt Shaw, not to mention various other very minor rôles in crowd scenes, and it proved a most enjoyable job.

The book had been adapted for radio most beautifully by Charlotte Keatley, and with Emily Mortimer cast as Margaret and David Threlfall as Mr Thornton, I felt it really couldn't fail.

The actors' part of it took six days in all. The book had been divided into three hour-long episodes, so we spent two days on each episode. On the first day, the whole cast met and read through the script before going into the studio. This is obviously a very important stage, seeing how the whole story comes together in radio terms and hearing everyone's character, but it is also great fun and breaks the ice.

Once in the studio, we 'rehearse/record', which means that each scene is read through in front of the microphone before actually recording. Modern microphones are so sensitive that the actors don't just stand in front of them as they used to a few years ago. We move around, sit down, lie in bed - I did quite a lot of that as Mrs Hale! - and whatever else the director wants us to do. In some cases you even wear long skirts to give a period feel and sound. Sometimes you feel you could do with another pair of hands to hold the script and, for example, drink from a cup.

This particular production had a very happy team of actors. I had worked with several of them before so there

was a lot of social catching-up to do in the Green Room. Some knew Elizabeth Gaskell already, as I did, but several didn't and went out to buy copies of the book. All of them loved it.

When the actors' work is done, it is over to the director, in this case Michael Fox, and the technicians. They spend several more days editing it all down and adding the music and sound effects which give so much of the atmosphere in radio plays.

I thought the finished result was wonderful. Even knowing how it all happens, I was still transported with Margaret and the other characters, bringing to life Elizabeth Gaskell's words. What a great book it is.

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Cross Street Chapel, Manchester, in 1856

Cross Street Chapel  
by Geoffrey Head  
Chairman of Trustees

The building on the historic Plungen's Meadow site of "The Observatory", of which the new Cross Street Chapel will form the ground and mezzanine floors, proceeds apace. The Chapel premises is scheduled to be delivered to its Trustees in late September this year and, after internal fitting out, should be ready to open in November.

Provision has been made for a concourse surrounding a circular Chapel seating about 180, an office, a resources centre, a choir vestry and a divisible community suite with associated kitchen facilities. This community facility will seat up to 100 for meetings and will be named the "Percival" suite after Thomas Percival FRS (1740-1804), a Chapel Trustee, largely responsible for the founding of the Manchester Literary and Philosophical Society and the Manchester Academy. The mezzanine floor provides for a high quality panelled board room (the Gaskell Room), the Minister's Vestry, a congregational room, a plant room and a Chapelkeeper's flat.

There will be provision for disabled access (including lift and toilet accommodation), a loop hearing system in the Chapel, audio visual and information technology equipment.

The Elizabeth Gaskell memorial tablet, salvaged from the 1694 building after the World War II bombing, will be located in the concourse, and the red circular plaque from the exterior of the 1959 building will be reinstated. Chapel archives will be housed in bookcases in the Gaskell Room. It is hoped that the Gaskell Society will feel able to make use of the premises from time to time for committee or general meetings: it will have a warm welcome.

Book Notes  
by Christine Lingard

*The Victorian social-problem novel; the market, the individual and the communal*, by Josephine Guy, 1996. £45 (paperback available)

A comprehensive study of a sub-genre consisting of *Hard Times*, *Mary Barton*, *North and South*, *Felix Holt*, *Alton Locke*, and *Sybil* which is designed to redress the large body of literary criticism produced over the last forty years deemed by the author to be 'negative'. It aims to provide new insights into literary history and gives a survey of literary critics as well as an understanding of the novels. It challenges Gaskell's assertion that 'I knowing nothing of Political Economy' and argues to the contrary that her knowledge becomes almost an obsession.

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*The Letters of Matthew Arnold*, edited by Cecil Y Lang; vol 1 1829-1859. Charlottesville and London: The University of Virginia Press, 1996. £53.50

- contains one letter of Elizabeth Gaskell complimenting him on his '*Haworth Churchyard*' and two of his in reply. Arnold was not an intimate acquaintance but Mrs Gaskell knew him in Oxford and was friendly with his mother and her circle of friends in Ambleside and Grasmere which included Mrs Eliza Fletcher, her daughter Mrs Davy and Harriet Martineau.

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*The English Novel in History 1840-1895*, by Elizabeth Deedes Ermarth. Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1997. £40

One of three books discussing in detail the role of the novel in the treatment of history and its use in highlighting social problems. (There are companion volumes for the twentieth century.) Gaskell is treated in passing in the discussion of the economic and social order.

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*Elizabeth Gaskell: the early years*, by John Chapple, Manchester University Press 1997, pp. xviii+492, £25.00  
Alan Shelston writes: Like many members of the Gaskell

Society I am currently enjoying our chairman's masterly account of Elizabeth Gaskell's early life, *Elizabeth Gaskell: the early years*. As Professor Chapple will willingly concede, this is as much a study in detail of the contexts, social, cultural and intellectual, that shaped the novelist's formative experience as it is of the life itself: indeed, four chapters pass before the infant Elizabeth appears upon the scene. But what riches are here revealed to us by such dedicated and affectionate research. Every conceivable source that might have a bearing upon Elizabeth Gaskell's upbringing is investigated: her father's origins and wayward career, the Unitarian and family networks of north-west England, the cultural and intellectual resources of Knutsford, the ever-flourishing Holland connections, education at Stratford, the loss of a brother and the winning of a husband. George Eliot, in a famous passage in *Middlemarch*, refers to 'the subtle movement ... and also those less marked vicissitudes which are constantly shifting the boundaries of social intercourse' that took place 'in old provincial society' at exactly this point in time. Rarely can these have been so expertly exemplified as in this remarkable book.

*Editor's note: there will be a full review of this book in the next Journal. We can supply copies to UK members, also the paperback reprint of the Collected Letters, at £1 off the retail price by post, or £4 off if collected at meetings.*

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The Halbe Mond or Half Moon Inn c.1900

## ONE DAY IN HEPPENHEIM

by Joan Leach

It was an early start for members travelling to Germany on 6th May for, by 11.30 am, from Manchester, Birmingham, London Heathrow and Gatwick, we met at Frankfurt airport where we were joined by members from Japan and USA to make a total of forty-three ready to travel in Gaskell footsteps.

Moswin Tours had arranged for us to stay at Mannheim, only a short distance from Heidelberg and provided us with the services of our tour manager, Carolyn Jack, who efficiently smoothed our way.

Our programme had been checked by Peter Skrine and Celia, who will give a more detailed report in our next Journal, and John and Kate Chapple had also checked some of our venues.

After spending a fascinating day and a half exploring Heidelberg on the third day we headed for Heppenheim, still a wine town as it had been in Elizabeth Gaskell's day. The vineyards along our route covered areas of all sizes; the rows of vines showing various states of cultivation, some well pruned and weeded, others less so. Vines and other crops, such as asparagus, seemed to belong to small family groups or small-holdings. We thought of the wine trade as Elizabeth Gaskell had observed it and later we learnt more when we visited a winery where the vintage is pressed and matured for the growers.



Town Hall and Market Place at Heppenheim

We assembled in the attractive market square of Heppenheim, with its decorative timber-framed buildings and fountain (we became connoisseurs of fountains as we saw them in almost every village, though Mannheim's at night with a display of water patterns and changing colours was the most splendid spectacle). Peter in his preliminary tour

a few weeks earlier had called at the town hall where it had been arranged that the Burgermeister would receive us. As we waited for this honour, it began to drizzle but the busy scene around us kept us amused for it was Friday, the day for civil weddings to be registered in the town hall, and groups of flower-carrying guests jumped out of cars and disappeared inside while we waited.

We became a little anxious as this was not our only appointment - we were due at Halbe Monde or Half Moon Inn, the setting for the story *Six Weeks at Heppenheim* and, though our places had been booked, we were told that the self-service lunch was so popular that the best food would be gone if we were late! Peter hurried into the Town Hall to check what the delay was and returned somewhat crestfallen; our appointment was not registered in the Burgermeister's diary and he was not there at all! The ladies in the TIC knew we were coming but not the town hall.

A little further delay before a young man presented himself to us as the town's archivist, apologising profusely for the mix-up, and escorted us to the museum and up two or three flights of stairs, a few members opting for early lunch rather than the climb. We found ourselves in an unusual painted hall but no-one seemed ready, willing or able to tell us about it or anything else.

We decided we must make our exit and find our lunch at the Half Moon, then with most of our group departed, two young ladies entered bearing trays of wine in glasses. We who were left drank gratefully and willingly but made little impression on the trays before we thanked our hostesses and followed the rest of our group to lunch.

The Half Moon was indeed popular, with a wide choice of dishes and one's own appetite set the only limit. Soon we noticed the eager young archivist had rejoined our group and was talking to Peter. In his hands he bore several copies of an attractively produced German edition of *Six Weeks in Heppenheim* which he presented to us. In return we gave him the mounted print of Elizabeth Gaskell which had been intended for the Mayor. The book also tells the history of The Half Moon Inn, the innkeeper and family of Mrs Gaskell's time and her contribution to the history of the wine trade by her careful observation woven into the

story.

The present innkeeper of The Half Moon was also pleased to welcome us, to have our signatures in his visitors' book and to accept our print of Elizabeth Gaskell.

John Chapple later exchanged further information with the archivist, Harald E Jost, and Peter received 'sincerest apologies' from Herr Obermayr, the Mayor, who had been making a long-planned visit to their twin town in the South Tyrol area of Italy 'but would certainly have appointed a deputy to represent me had I known about your visit ... Please accept my thanks for your portrait of Elizabeth Gaskell which has found a place worthy of it in my office'. And so Elizabeth Gaskell returns to Heppenheim.

\*\*\*\*\*

### SUMMER OUTINGS

by Joan Leach

#### Trip to Pendle and Wycoller

On Sunday 29th June we arrived at Pendle Heritage Centre in time for an excellent value lunch. Gaskell must have known Pendle as *The Heart of John Middleton* is set there, and I am sure the story of the Pendle Witches must have intrigued her. When she started writing her pseudonym was 'Cotton Mather Mills'; the New England theologian Cotton Mather had been involved in the Salem witch trails and may have turned Gaskell thoughts to the theme of *Lois the Witch*.

The Pendle Heritage Centre had exhibitions including one about the witches of c.1612. It also had a pleasant garden and a tithe barn which, among other things, housed two enormous, somnolent, pot-bellied pigs!

We spent the afternoon in Wycoller where the wardens of the country park met us and gave us an illustrated talk, then a walk around the village - a haven of rural peace with a tinkling stream crossed by packhorse and clapper bridges. The rose-covered, stone-built houses had mellow charm but the hollow shell of a large house had an air of mystery and one wondered who had sat around the wide,



open fireplace. Charlotte Brontë portrayed it as Ferndean Manor in *Jane Eyre*. We regretted not having more time to explore the Brontë way.

Trip to Rivington 16th July 1997

"Oh. Rivington is such a very, pretty place, & so thoroughly country", wrote Elizabeth Gaskell in 1838 (GL9)

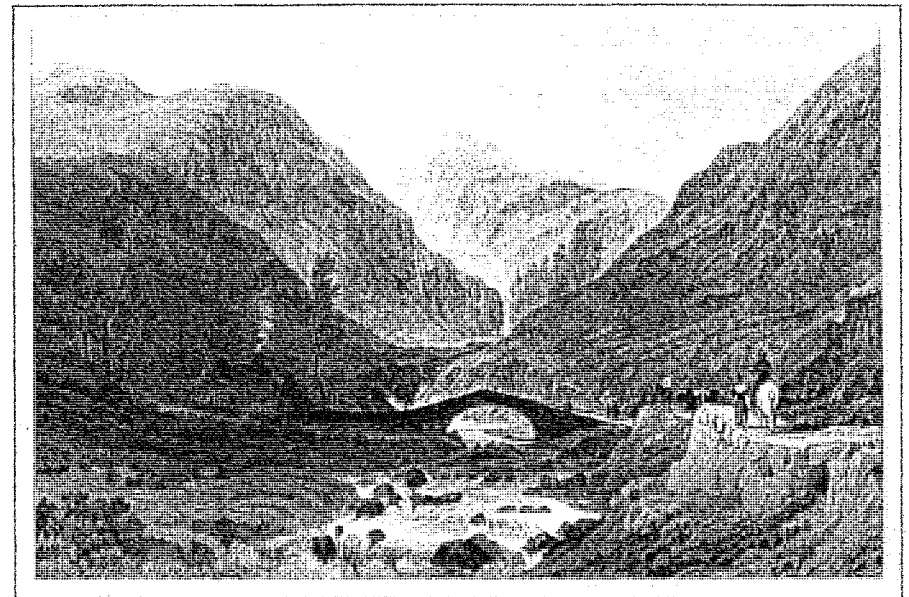
On that occasion she and Marianne had travelled by train to Bolton, then were met by a gig to take them on to Rivington. 'The next morning a most charming drive, in the evening up the Pike ... Sunday to chapel in the morning, two walks in the afternoon ... Yesterday morning I sketched and Wm came; in the afternoon we both rode on horseback up and down the country - then a walk after tea'. They were visiting the Darbishire family.

On the centenary of Elizabeth's death a Bolton (?) Evening News article claimed that she wrote *Cranford* while staying at Rivington, as a guest of Charles James Darbishire of Vale Bank, who was first mayor of Bolton and brother of Samuel Dukinfield Darbishire, whose uneven relationship with the Gaskells, perhaps partly due to his wife's character, may be deciphered from Gaskell letters.

We were welcomed by the lay leader, Judith Crompton, and members of the chapel congregation to the delightfully situated chapel, built in 1703; the old box pews, the canopied Willoughby family pew and the memorials on the walls all evoked times and people long gone, but are eloquent reminders to the inheritors of the dissenting tradition. We were grateful to Martin Brownlow for preparing an exhibition for us; Judith related the chapel's history and, with her husband Dennis, who is the chapel secretary, entertained us with Gaskell readings.

We enjoyed walking in the garden of remembrance and studying the plants in the physic garden, then exploring the village and tithe barn. It was not difficult to image the Gaskell family enjoying their visits to Rivington.

# The Gaskell Society



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: 01565 634668)

Hon Treasurer: Brian Williams, 15 Cawley Avenue, Culcheth, Warrington WA3 4DF

ISSN 0954 - 1209

**NEWSLETTER**

**MARCH 1998**

**NO. 25**

### Editor's Letter

When I look back to 1985 when our Society was launched I am amazed at the progress that has been made in Gaskell studies, and I like to think that our Society and Journal has played a major part in this. If I thought about it at all in 1985, my horizons for linking up Gaskell enthusiasts certainly did not stretch around the world and I expected to find members mainly in the North West of England. Our monthly *Lunch and Literature* meetings here in Knutsford are well attended and the London/South East group grows steadily, but members continue to join us from around the world and most exciting is the work being done in the translation of Gaskell works, to reach a wider audience.

The publication of Sylvia's Lovers in Japanese is a major event in Gaskell history and we congratulate Professor Tatsuhiro Ohno; you can read in this newsletter how he has achieved this.

Swiftly following this news, we learn that Professor Li Fang in South Korea is translating North and South into Chinese. He has to cope with chapter headings such as 'Haste to the Wedding: wooed and married and a' (Chapter One) and puzzles such as what was a 'chip' bonnet? With computer contacts he is now able to use the Gaskell correspondence link to seek help with such queries. 'Haste to the wedding' was a country dance fiddle tune, by the way.

Børge Skråmestø in Oslo regrets the lack of Norwegian translations and would like to work on Cranford but notes that only one Austen title has been translated. A Spanish translation of Wives and Daughters is likely; perhaps in time for the BBC production!?

We are looking forward to our Spring meeting on 4th April at the new Cross Street Chapel and hope many of you will be able to join us. Professor Arthur Pollard, who was our first President, will speak on Gaskell Letters, and Margaret Smith on Brontë Letters. This will be a full day's meeting with lunch.

"Sylvia's Lovers":  
The First Japanese Translation  
 by Tatsuhiro Ohno



The first Japanese translation of Sylvia's Lovers became available on 25 December 1997. This novel is the one I discussed in my BA thesis. The book was so moving (probably, Philip Hepburn was what I was then) as to make me feel like translating it into Japanese. I started the work in 1989, completed the first draft in 1994 and the second in 1996, and began to search for a publisher in January 1997. I received an agreement from Sairyu-sha in April, and published it on the date above.

I shall never forget the warm encouragement given by two people during my struggle: Mrs Joan Leach, Honorary Secretary of the Gaskell Society, and Professor Andrew Sanders of Durham University.

One of the difficulties I encountered was how to deal with the Yorkshire dialect. I consulted some experts ;and guidebooks for advice. The most persuasive suggestion was that I should choose the dialect of a Japanese region whose climate was similar to Yorkshire's, in short, Tohoku or Hokkaido, the northern part of Japan. But I have little knowledge about those dialects spoken in these areas, because I was born and grew up in Kumamoto, one of Japan's south-west provinces. After long deliberation, I resolved to use my native dialect which I had no difficulty in handling.

Another problem cropped up here: conversations in the genuine Kumamoto dialect would be incomprehensible even to the Japanese. I was forced to modify many dialogues into those similar in style to the standard Japanese although the speakers were talking in the genuine Yorkshire dialect (I could guess they were mostly by

spellings). As a result, my Sylvia has come to speak a standardized version of the Kumamoto dialect. Some have already criticized my device by saying it will cause great damage to Sylvia because it is quite disappointing for a beautiful heroine to speak a local dialect. But, let me remind you that, however beautiful she may be, Sylvia is an uneducated country girl.

The book is 737 pages long, including the text (594 pp), a Gaskell chronology (88 pp) and the translator's commentary. The following remarks I wrote in the afterword might be helpful for understanding what this novel is about.

"What is true love?" Various answers would be offered to this question, because we are living in the age of various values. What the novel aims at is, in a word, to suggest an answer to this question. The story develops mainly in the 1790s in Monkshaven, a fictional whaling town of the north-east coast of England. The protagonists are four: Sylvia Robson, the 16-year-old daughter of a dairy farmer; Philip Hepburn, the 21-year-old shop assistant and her devoted lover; Charley Kinraid, the brave harpooner who wins her heart; and Hester Rose, Philip's co-worker whose selfless devotion to him is never rewarded.

In those days, Britain was at war with France, and the press-gangs were active to press robust men into the British military forces. When Charley is caught by them a few days after pledging himself to marry Sylvia, he entreats Philip, the only witness to the scene, to tell her what he saw and that Charley would surely come back. However, Philip thinks that Charley is fickle: he has loved many girls and finally forsaken them. Sylvia would no doubt meet the same fate as such pitiful girls. So thinking, Philip determines to ignore Charley's message. His decision becomes the pivot on which her fortune begins to decline.

Has Philip made the right choice? Will Sylvia understand the depth of his love lying behind his

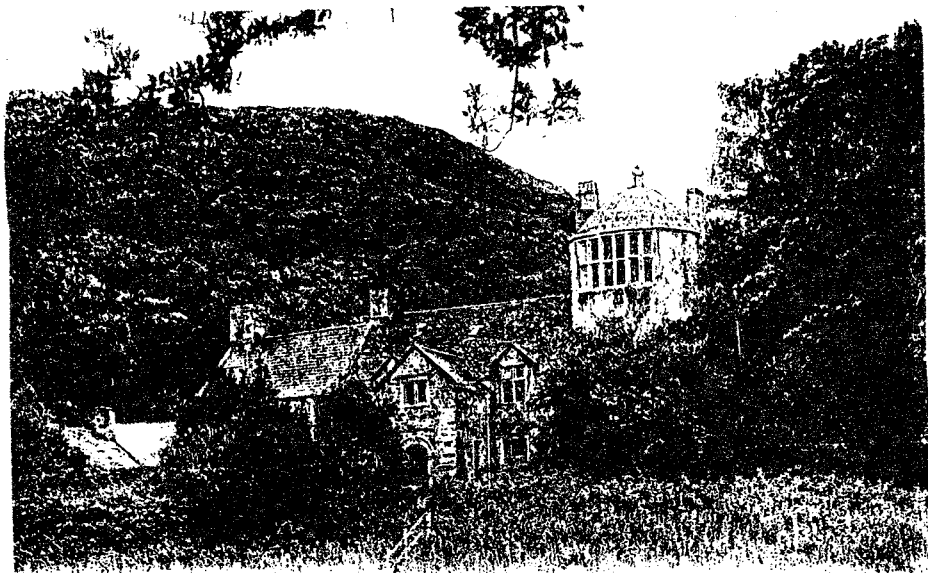
falsehood? What fate is waiting for Hester, who endures the pain of unrewarded love?

I would like this book to be read by those who are groping for the reliable answer to the question of what is true love, especially by those who are being tormented by the pangs of unrequited affection.

I sincerely hope my translation will be of some use in creating Gaskell fans in Japan. Further information is available on my web page:

"[http://www.let.kumamoto-u.ac.jp/eng/ohno\\_e.htm/](http://www.let.kumamoto-u.ac.jp/eng/ohno_e.htm/)."

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*Pen y Bryn*

Elizabeth and William Gaskell's  
Honeymoon in Aber, September 1832  
 by Jean Lindsay

The Gaskells spent two weeks of their honeymoon in Aber in September 1832. Elizabeth had visited the village at an earlier date and had fond memories of the area. The pretty wooded village, which is five miles east of Bangor, is near the Menai Straits and has a river, waterfalls and mountains. The Aber Falls can be reached after a two-mile walk through a wooded valley and the two falls, a quarter of a mile apart, are a spectacular sight as the water descends from the precipice. There is also a walk through the Anafon Valley and it is small wonder that Elizabeth preferred the wildness of Aber to Beaumauris.<sup>1</sup>

It is, however, impossible to say where the Gaskells stayed in Aber.<sup>2</sup> It could have been at any of the numerous inns of the village. The Census of 1851 includes the Bull, the Prince Llywelyn and Crosskeys. The Tithe Map of 1848 names the Bulkeley Arms Inn, and on the Ordnance Survey Map of 1888, this has become the Bulkeley Arms Hotel. In 1919, this hotel has been renamed the Aber Hotel, a name it still retains. The Aber Hotel is near the railway station, which is now closed, and in the Gaskells' day there was no railway, as the line from Chester to Bangor was opened in 1848. One hotel in Aber can be ruled out, as this, the Aber Falls Hotel, only appears on the map in 1912. One house of note is Pen y Bryn, built in 1580 by Sir William Thomas, although his family no longer owned the house in 1832. He was one of the benefactors of the village, and Lord Bulkeley of Baron Hill, Beaumaris, at one time Lord of the Manor of Aber, was another.<sup>3</sup> It is possible that Pen y Bryn, with its small tower, could have been the Gaskells' lodging-place.

A picture of the village from 1820 to 1827, just before the Gaskells' visit, is found in the Aber Vestry records.<sup>4</sup> They give an account of the management of the needs of the poor by the Overseer and the Churchwardens under the Old Poor Law. Even after the setting up of the Union Workhouses by the Poor Law Amendment Act of 1834, Aber

still had its almshouses, built by Lord Bulkeley in 1811, and its charities included a Rabbit Club, which in the 1880s and 1890s distributed one rabbit a week to some of the 'deserving poor'.<sup>5</sup>

It seems likely that the Gaskells were aware of Aber's distinguished medieval history. It was one of the main courts of the princes of Gwynedd in the thirteenth century and Llywelyn Faw (Llywelyn the Great) was said to prefer the court at Aber to the others. He married Joan, daughter of King John, and she died at Aber in 1237. Her body was taken across the sands to be buried at Llanfaes and her stone coffin is in the porch of St Mary's Church, Beaumaris. Dafydd, the son of Llywelyn Fawr and Joan, died at Aber in 1246, six years after his father's death. The Court was also a royal manor and was within a fortified enclosure, containing halls, stables, kitchens, chapels, bakery and a brewery. Its exact location is a matter of controversy. It is said to be either in the area near the Mound (Mwd), an almost circular shape, built either by the Normans or by the Welsh princes in the style



*Aber, Caernarvonshire*

of the Norman castles, or in the region of Pen y Bryn, which is situated on a nearby hill.<sup>6</sup>

The village has a church which was rebuilt in 1876, so the Gaskells would see the 'ancient edifice with a square tower'. The rectory, now called the Old Rectory, is near the church. A ferry across the Lavan Sands to Beaumaris would be in operation, the distance at low tide being four miles, although the sands frequently shift. In foggy weather, a bell in Aber church, presented by Lord Bulkeley in 1817, was rung to direct travellers.<sup>7</sup> The village, at the entrance to a romantic glen, with its sparkling river, nearby sea and mountains, provides an idyllic setting for a honeymoon, even though the Gaskells have managed to keep their exact abode a secret.

#### NOTES

- <sup>1</sup> The Letters of Mrs Gaskell, ed J A V Chapple and Arthur Pollard (1966), letters 2 and 9
- <sup>2</sup> After the Conference at Chester, Professor Chapple asked me if I knew where the Gaskells stayed in Aber. This short article is an unsuccessful attempt to answer his question.
- <sup>3</sup> A Short History of Aber Manor, Parish and Village, T J Owen (1966)
- <sup>4</sup> Gwynedd Archives Service, Pa 134
- <sup>5</sup> Gwynedd Archives Service, XPE/56/116
- <sup>6</sup> Llywelyn Ap Gruffydd, A D Carr (1982)
- <sup>7</sup> Black's Picturesque Guide to North Wales (1866)

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#### Stop Press on 84 Plymouth Grove

Manchester Civic Trust is forming a Building Preservation Trust for action on buildings at risk; their first project is the Gaskell home at 84 Plymouth Grove.

Manchester University has offered the Trust an option on the house and assistance with a feasibility study.

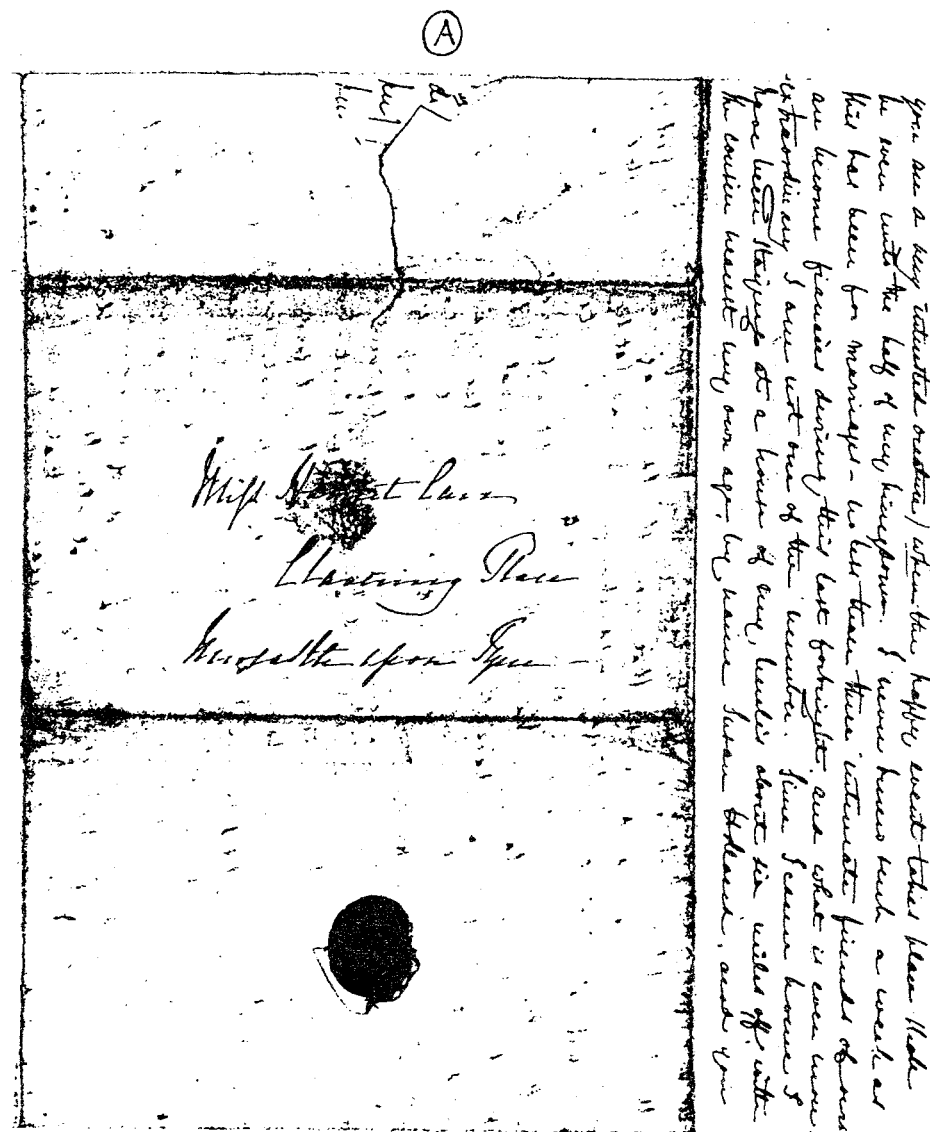
Elizabeth Gaskell's First Music Book\*  
by J A V Chapple

When she was young, Elizabeth Gaskells' penmanship was varied. Two very different hands appear in the letters she sent to Harriet Carr during 1831-32. The first three were written in a small, upright scribble, the last two in a bold cursive sloping to the right (illustrated on the cover of *Gaskell Society Journal* 4). We cannot infer a simple chronological sequence, however, because the addresses of all five letters were written in the larger sloping hand (example A).

Her earliest music book of 1825, too, begins with the sloping cursive, but is followed on later pages by a smaller upright hand. Also, the names of her schoolfellows are pencilled on a number of pages of the music book. Were it not for the Carr letters, we might even have assumed that many of these pages were written by somebody other than Elizabeth. Though I believe that she actually wrote down most of the words and music, there is evidence that at least two other people were involved.

On page 1, there is a comment correcting one of the bars of music, presumably written by one of her teachers (example B). If we turn to page 19, we discover both words and music in a similar hand (example C). Could this have been written by Katharine Thomson, née Byerley? Though she married Anthony Todd Thomson in 1820, before Elizabeth first went to the Byerleys' school, there is good evidence that Katharine maintained her artistic connection with Avonbank. And this hand is more like hers than those of her sisters, as we can see from their many letters in the Wedgwood collection kept in Keele University Library.

Then, on page 32, there are words and music almost certainly written by William Gaskell, presumably several years later on a page that had been left blank (example D). Its handwriting can be compared with that of an early, signed letter of 1841 at Harvard, a poem in the

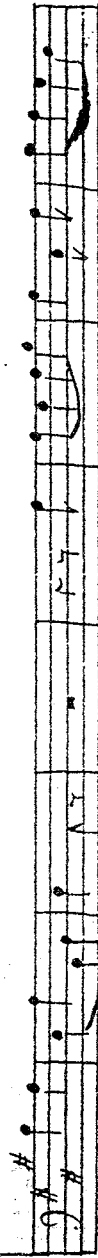


C

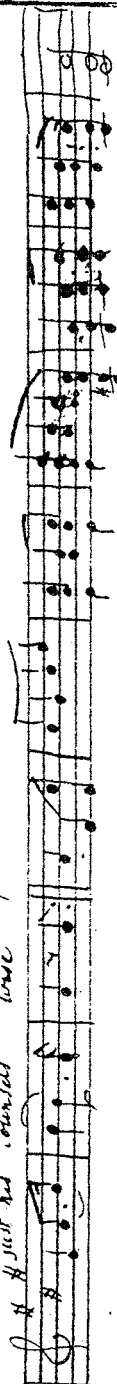
Had oh my Lord. Thy Mother with the mother's soft arms all be. All's Not a



My many thought a view, His ways are just, his ways are just, his ways are



Just his words were repeat 8 bars



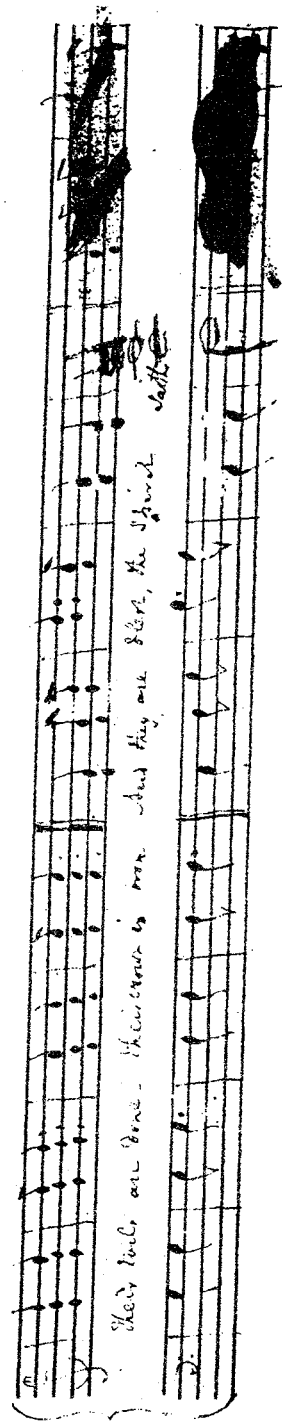
D.C.



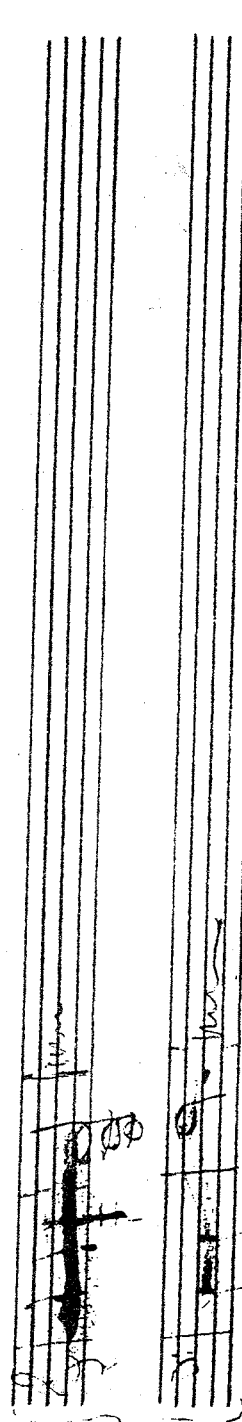
D



Where are the dead? the ground is green! Who walks this world in Christ's garment



Their lives are done. Their end is near. And they are dead, the spirit with





For tho' a garden is a pretty thing,  
 especially when ready made to hand,  
 And blest as theirs was with sternal spring,  
 without too any rent to pay for land  
 Or taxes either to a church or king -  
 yet still I say I can't quite understand  
 How they could live for ever unrepenting,  
 Two married folks & caught to be but digging.

(E)

545

L. M. W. GASKELL.\*

Where are the dead?

(F)

- 1 WHERE are the dead, the pious dead,  
 Who walked this world in christian faith?  
 Their toils are done, their crown is won,  
 And they are blessed, the Spirit saith.
- 2 They feel no more temptation's power,  
 They've found the land where trials cease;  
 Where every tear is wiped away,  
 And all is sweet and holy peace.
- 3 They're gone beyond the reach of pain,  
 And all that speaks of dark decay;  
 There beams in glory on their souls  
 The light of an immortal day.
- 4 Why sadly mourn we, then, for those  
 Whose lives had made them meet for death?  
 Their toils are done, their crown is won,  
 And they are blessed, the Spirit saith.

Sharps Collection (example E) and some pages found behind the bookshelves in his study (illustrated in my *Elizabeth Gaskell: A Portrait in Letters*).

Moreover, the text of this particular hymn is printed as his in his colleague John Rely Beard's Unitarian hymns, *A Collection of Hymns for Private and Public Worship*, 1837 (example F), something I had not realised when Julian Savory gave his splendid performance of music associated with Elizabeth Gaskell at the 1997 AGM.

\*I owe thanks to Helen Burton, Christine Lingard and Geoffrey Sharps for their help with this note.

## Charades and Amateur Theatricals by Barbara Brill

As a devotee of Robert Louis Stevenson as well as of Elizabeth Gaskell, I am always delighted when I come across some link between them. I have already written in a previous Newsletter about Stevenson's connections with Fleeming Jenkin, the young student engineer whom she befriended and his wife, the former Annie Austin, friend of Meta. I was pleased to read more details of the Jenkins in a book I have recently acquired "I Remember Robert Louis Stevenson" edited by Rosaline Masson, published in 1922. On reading it, I was struck by the many complimentary and affectionate references to the Jenkins.

When Fleeming was made Professor of Engineering at Edinburgh University, where Robert Louis Stevenson was his student, he and his wife moved to Stuart Street, Edinburgh, a house that became the pivot of the city's literary life and bore many resemblances to the Gaskells' home at Plymouth Grove. It was John Chapple's reference in his recent book, "Early Years", to Elizabeth as a contriver of a charade (see page 413) that sent me back to her letter No.92 (in the Collected Letters) in which she described in some detail the charade "got up" by Anne Austin and enacted "in the outer lobby, under the gas; and we stood on the staircase in the inner hall and the folding doors were thrown open."

In the contribution to Rosaline Masson's book, by Sir William Hardman, he writes at length about the excellent amateur theatricals "got up" at the Jenkins' home. These were on a more ambitious scale than the Plymouth Grove charades, as a fully rehearsed play was performed annually and three performances given, one for friends and two for servants and dependants, the dramas ranging from Greek to Shakespearean plays. There was a boys' playroom (they had three sons) leading off the dining room that formed the stage and the dining room the auditorium.

"The central figure" wrote Hardman, "of the plays was

Mrs Fleeming, whose genius was their motive and justification ... Had she sought fame on the professional stage she would have found it given without stint. She was delightful in comedy but in the single cumulative tragedy of the Greeks she was at her greatest." Fleeming's contribution to the success of the plays was as stage manager and costume designer. He studied sculptures in the British Museum to perfect the tailoring and folding, experimenting with sheets and shawls.

Stevenson sometimes took part but he had no skills as an actor, though he sparkled in the after-dinner speeches at the meal held at the end of the show. Annie's mother, Mrs Alfred Austin, also took part and "her refined dignity showed to advantage in elderly parts". Another performer was the poet, W E Henley, at whose wedding in 1878 Annie Jenkin was one of the witnesses.

Fleeming was interested in the development of the phonograph and had an instrument made, using it to record his lecturettes. Mrs Jenkin spoke into it when the machine was used to raise money at bazaars. If only those recordings had been kept Mrs Jenkin's voice could have been heard long after her death in 1921 at the age of 83. "She maintained her love of truth, beauty and goodness", qualities that perhaps were instilled into her by her friendship with the Gaskells. Fleeming was spoken of as "the best talker in London but he was content to suppress himself and be a foil to his wife". How proud Mrs Gaskell would have been to have heard these tributes paid to her protégées by Robert Louis Stevenson.

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Trip to Hay-on-Wye (book town), Ludlow and Hereford  
15th-16th June  
 and  
 Paris Trip  
17th-22nd September

These are almost fully booked.  
 Please send SAE if you need information.

Book Notes  
 by Christine Lingard

○ "Some appointed work to do": women and vocation in the fiction of Elizabeth Gaskell, by Robin B Colby. Contribution to Women's studies. Number 150, Greenwood Press, £30.95.

Defends Elizabeth Gaskell against a century of under estimation. It claims that her works are extremely radical because they challenge the widely held assumptions about the nature of women. The work consists of chapters on her contemporaries, *Mary Barton*, *North and South*, *Cranford*, *Wives and Daughters* and more unusually *The Life of Charlotte Brontë*. The book provides a detailed analysis of previous critics and has a copious bibliography.

*Writing and Victorianism*, edited by J B Bullen. Longman, £17.99.

A general collection of essays on Victorian literature which touches briefly on an unusual aspect of Gaskell's *Mary Barton* in the essay *The opium eater as criminal in Victorian writing* by Julia North.

*The Brontës: a life in letters*, edited by Juliet Barker. Viking, £20.

Dr Barker follows up her acclaimed but provocative biography of the Brontës with this book which allows the story to be told by participants themselves by means of their letters and other contemporary writings, though the editor's hand is still in evidence as this is only a selection and far from comprehensive. Most of the letters but by no means all were written by Charlotte. There are only a few by Elizabeth Gaskell plus some extracts from the *Life*. What is most useful is the number of letters addressed to her, which are collected for the first time, including letters from Charlotte's friend Mary Taylor.

### Membership Renewals

This is the first year we have collected Membership Renewals in January. In the past the due date was the day of the AGM, but with the growth of membership a much smaller proportion of members are now able to attend Knutsford events. We hope that members are finding the new arrangements convenient.

If you have not already paid your subscription for 1998, you may send a cheque, payable to GASKELL SOCIETY to our Membership Secretary, Mrs I Wiltshire, 21 Crescent Road, Hale, Altrincham, Cheshire WA15 9NB (e-mail: wiltshires@aol.com). Current rates for the UK are as follows: Individual £8.00; Joint £12.00; Institution £12.00. You will in due course receive a revised membership card and receipt. Overseas Members who do not have their own Membership Secretary may follow the above procedure. The rates are £12.00 for all overseas members.

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The London and South East Group meeting dates for 1998 are 25th April and 12th September, with the Annual Meeting on 7th November. Further information from Hon Secretary - Mr Dudley Barlow, 44 Seymour Road, London SW18 5JA (Tel: 0181 874 7727).

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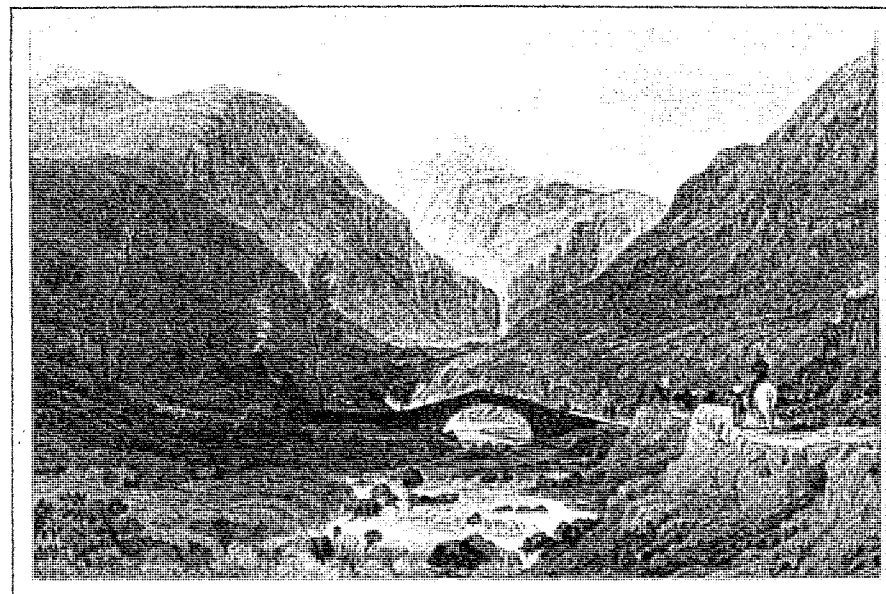
US Hon Secretary - Mrs Lucy Magruder, Box 5424, Fullerton CA 92838 (e-mail: lmagruder@aol.com). Annual subscription \$20.

Gaskell Home Page on Internet -

<http://lang.nagoya-ac.jp/~matsuoka/Gaskell.html>

Joan Leach's e-mail - [JoanLeach@aol.com](mailto:JoanLeach@aol.com)

# The Gaskell Society



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: 01565 634668)

Hon Treasurer: Brian Williams, 15 Cawley Avenue, Culcheth, Warrington WA3 4DF

ISSN 0954 - 1209

**NEWSLETTER**

**AUGUST 1998**

**NO. 26**

## **EDITOR'S LETTER**

Firstly we must congratulate our Joint Vice-President, Jenny Uglow on being made a Fellow of the Royal Society of Literature and our other Vice-President, Professor Francesco Marroni on being made Dean of the Faculty of Literature and Languages of Pescara University. We hope that our Journal and Newsletters make you feel in touch with our various activities, even if you cannot attend them in person.

Most recently we enjoyed a visit to the Brontë birthplace at Thornton, and Haworth, of which our member Bernard Mayston tells you more in this issue.

Some of us went book-hunting at Hay-on-Wye, enjoying the lovely scenery in Shropshire and being entertained to lunch by member Veronica Thackeray in her charming thatched cottage at Hopton Castle. After an overnight stop in historic Hereford we paused at Clyro to pay tribute to Rev. Francis Kilvert, the lyric diarist.

Members in the North West gather for regular meetings, and there is a report of our monthly meetings in this issue; our London and South East group enjoys four or five meetings a year. We would be pleased to see you at any of these meetings and, of course, our AGM on 10<sup>th</sup> October, when we will celebrate the 150<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the publication of *Mary Barton*.

Please make a note in your diary of the dates for our LONDON CONFERENCE, 24<sup>th</sup>-27<sup>th</sup> July 1999. The theme will be *Victorian Publishers and Publishing*. See the enclosed form for more details.

Wish us well as some fifty of us make our way to Paris in September to follow Gaskell footsteps, so you may look forward to hearing about this. Au revoir!

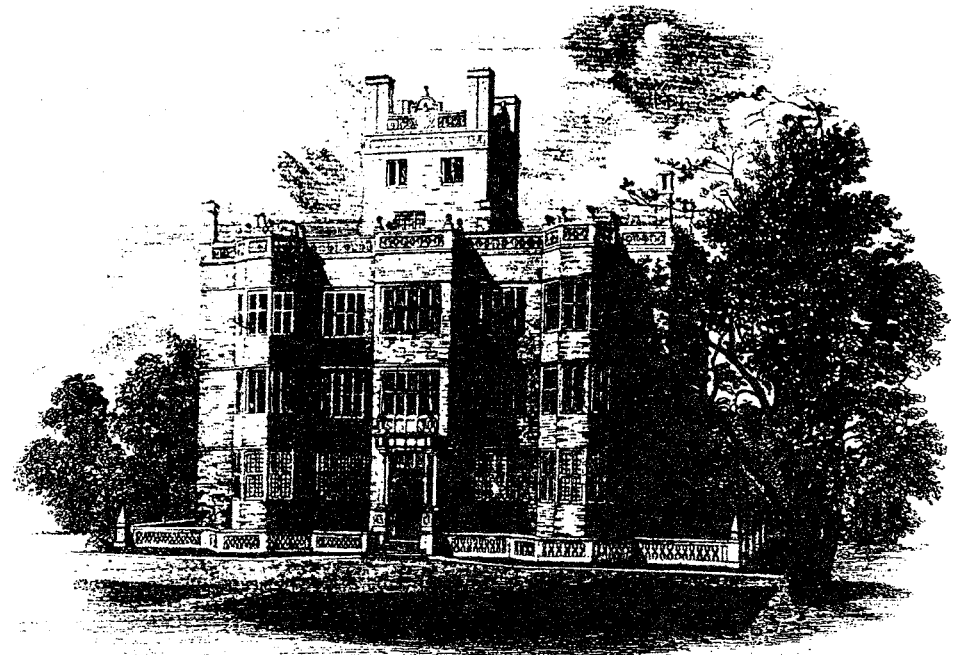
## **GAWTHORPE HALL AND THE GASKELL CONNECTION**

by Heather Sharps

Gaskell Society members may have visited Gawthorpe Hall between April and October 1997 for its Exhibition – ‘A Novel Acquaintance’ – and/or for the associated lectures which linked Sir James and Lady Kay-Shuttleworth and Charlotte Brontë and Elizabeth Gaskell, it being through the Kay-Shuttleworths that Miss Brontë met her future biographer. Prominent members of the Brontë and the Gaskell Societies gave well-received talks on aspects of these relationships: in ‘batting order’ came Mr Dudley Green, Professor John Chapple, Mrs Heather Sharps, Dr Robert Barnard and Mrs Joan Leach. During the Exhibition guided tours occurred every Sunday, supplemented by improvisations in which ‘Charlotte Brontë’, ‘Mrs Gaskell’, and the Kay-Shuttleworths’ took part. Those who enjoyed it will also recall the Society’s successful September 1996 excursion to Gawthorpe.

For putting together the Exhibition at the Hall, thanks are due to Mr David Chadwick (Curator), to Mr Martin Dowland-Robinson (who assisted him), to Mr Mike Hill (Director, Brontë Parsonage Museum), and to his staff, Ms Kathryn White (Librarian) and Mrs Ann Dinsdale (Assistant Librarian). General advice came from representatives of the Brontë and the Gaskell Societies, especially from Mrs Audrey Hall and also from myself. On display were a picture (owned by Lord Shuttleworth) of – as she became – Lady Janet Kay-Shuttleworth and the (National Portrait Gallery) drawings by George Richmond of Charlotte Brontë and of Elizabeth Gaskell; other items included (from the Brontë Parsonage) Charlotte’s hats, shoes, gloves and dresses; and (from the Manchester Museum) Elizabeth Gaskell’s escritoire; and (from my own collection) books by Sir James, notably his novels, Scarsdale and Ribblesdale.

Gawthorpe Hall, with its pleasant grounds and walks, was in 1970 given by the fourth Lord Shuttleworth – whose son, the present Baron, opened the Exhibition – to the National Trust, with a



GAWTHORPE HALL.

long-term maintenance lease to Lancashire County Council. This recently-renovated fine Elizabethan building, which had undergone a major restoration by Sir James Barry in the mid-nineteenth century, has attracted many visitors from home and abroad; it is a powerful reminder of the wealthy and aristocratic environment into which Dr James Kay entered on his marriage to the heiress, Janet Shuttleworth (whose surname was then added to his), and from which he sought to influence the educational, social and political issues of his age. Gaskell and Brontë enthusiasts can see the drawing room where the Kay-Shuttleworths and Charlotte could engage in literary discussion and view other parts (like the newly-renovated kitchen) of a stately home still strongly evocative of

Victorian times and of the lifestyles depicted in Jane Eyre and in various Gaskell fiction.

An impressive exhibition room contains the needlework of, and that collected by, the Hon Rachel Kay-Shuttleworth (a grand-daughter of Sir James), a distinguished and altruistic lady who realised the therapeutic benefits for all classes to be gained from such an art. Displayed, too, are examples of handicrafts from all parts of the world. Surely Elizabeth Gaskell would have admired her independence of mind and spirit as well as her altruism. In addition, one finds a welcome restaurant and shop, situated in the old stable-block. Here may be purchased such publications as the current National Trust Guide (1996), Michael Conroy's updated Backcloth to Gawthorpe (1996) and booklets on Rachel and on her cousin, Angela – women of whom their grandfather would have been proud and of whom Charlotte Brontë and Elizabeth Gaskell would have approved.

For those unfamiliar with the locality, a visit to the Hall will be an event to remember: the house and grounds are open every afternoon (except Mondays and Fridays) 1 pm to 5 pm, from April until the end of September. Gawthorpe, moreover, provides a cultural centre for the area, with its exhibitions of paintings, its musical concerts and its performances of plays (especially Shakespeare's).

\* \* \* \* \*

### **MEMBERSHIP RENEWAL**

Please do not forget that the renewal date for subscriptions is now the first working day of the New Year and NOT 1<sup>st</sup> SEPTEMBER. At £8.00 per annum or £12.00 (\$20) for overseas and corporate members, this is excellent value.

Reminders will be sent out in early December by our membership secretary.

### **THOUGHTS ABOUT THE BRONTES**

by Bernard C Mayston

I should be interested to know whether Mrs Gaskell ever visited Thornton. It is certainly mentioned in her Life of Charlotte Brontë, where she writes: "altogether not so pleasant a place as Hartshead" ... (and adds) ... "In 1815 he (Patrick Brontë removed to Thornton near Bradford, where his younger children, Charlotte, Patrick, Branwell, Emily, Jane and Anne were born."

In 1817, Patrick wrote in a terrier<sup>1</sup> a description of their birthplace "... this chapel is endowed with a parsonage, consisting of six rooms, three on the ground floor, and three bedchambers, having a stand for a cow and a horse at one end, and a cottage at the other ..."

By 1820 he was the perpetual curate of Howarth.

Barbara Whitehead and I went together to see the Brontë birthplace at Thornton for the first time on Tuesday 29 April 1997 and by Thursday 1 May I was making all sorts of notes about it which I have kept in a file opened on Friday 9 May 1997. I hope the file grows and grows to tell a happy story.

Thornton is a West Yorkshire village perched on a hillside amidst attractive countryside yet but four miles from the centre of Bradford. I had never been to Bradford, so we drove in a huge complicated circle from York to get to our destination. I did not get my first sight of Bradford until we departed Thornton in possession of a detailed route mapped out for us by an obliging butcher from whom we had purchased some sausages. I had thought to ask him what was wrong with Thornton. I wondered whether there was something awful about the house, but fearing we might be warned off, I did not say much.

<sup>1</sup> 'terrier' is a document enumerating boundaries, acreage and the conditions of tenure

Anyway, I wrote after seeing the Brontë birthplace from outside that I could not live there myself but I would love to visit the area for a while. I did add that seeing the inside of the house might make a difference. I even wrote that I had some capital to invest so why not in this? National Savings Bonds are all very cosy and safe but where's the adventure?

Later, I was reading a book containing the poems of the Brontë sisters, one by Charlotte (Stanzas) I quite adored. However, it was a remark about Howarth that really got to me – the dreariness of it etc, the drabness that people sometimes feel in the countryside of North and West Yorkshire, but the utter joy that can be found in heather-clad moors when August arrives and the wondrous colours of late summer are beheld!

Could this be the key to the mystery? It is the contrast between joy and sorrow, the dread mix of it all that alarms and attracts us so! The Brontë story grabs at our heartstrings because of the sheer desperation of it: the flat gravestones, the persistent illnesses, the constant lack of money, the ultimate fear for Patrick that he may die and leave his poor weak children destitute. How does the spark of genius ignite? Ability often lies dormant. It can be argued that we all have it, if only something or someone would set us on fire! Yet it is in truth a golden commodity like the double rainbow that rarely adorns the sky and never in threes. Yet it did happen and it started in Market Street in Thornton.

My dear wife, Kate, had a spark of genius which was ignited by Elizabeth Gaskell about whom she knew so much. Kate had that rare quality of serious scholarship blended with humour. It is revealed in an entertaining talk that she gave to the Gaskell Society in 1991. They did not know that it was the only lecture that she ever gave to anyone, barring the several that she gave to me; and I deserved them all!

When I was asked to write an article for the Newsletter I felt quite flattered since I have never been asked to contribute to a literary magazine. Although determined to produce something, I have to confess to the egoistic sense it produced - I suppose a short of selfishness.

When we get on in years we start to analyse what we have done in life and it sometimes seems not to add up to much. Then, if we count our blessings, it turns out to be a great deal. I suppose I had two achievements in the work sense. One was remarkably easy and the other almost painfully hard. It took me less than a year to become a Sergeant RE (1945/46) and a quarter of a century to become one of HM Inspectors of Taxes (1943/68). If the dates are puzzling I would explain that on leaving school, at sixteen, I started work in the Inland Revenue as a Temporary Clerk Grade III, was called up whilst the war was still on (3 April 1945), whereupon Hitler committed suicide. I was then trained to fight the Japanese who surrendered as I prepared to embark for the Pacific!

Instead I was sent to Egypt, where the most significant thing to happen, undoubtedly the most magical thing in my life, was that I met Kate, later to be my wife, at the Pyramids at Giza just outside Cairo. Believe it or not there was, that night, an eclipse of the moon. Some forty years later we became members of the Gaskell Society, following Kate's 'on location' research of Sylvia's Lovers and some correspondence and meetings with Joan Leach. Since, in the interim, I had, to Kate's delight, been transferred from Bromley in Kent to Middlesbrough in Cleveland, we were by then living in Danby on the North Yorkshire Moors not far from Whitby, the location of the Gaskell novel. We had visited Howarth several times staying once, on a wedding anniversary, at the Black Bull.

Kate was a very methodical person. She was a Sergeant in ATS Signals when 21 and later worked as a Secretary/PA to several successful professional men over the years. If the boss had died she could have done the work herself in half the time.



On our visits to Howarth Kate, as many people do, purchased books and postcards, using the latter as bookmarks in appropriate volumes. She often wrote C Mayston in a book and the date, and sometimes the place of purchase on a postcard. So it is hardly remarkable that I have five postcards purchased at Howarth and dated June 1978. Three are portraits of the Brontë sisters – Charlotte (by J M Thompson), Emily (by Branwell Brontë) and Anne (by Charlotte Brontë) – also two depicting the Brontë Country, perhaps best described as illustrated maps of the Brontë world. At the very centre is Thornton with a sketch of the house where all four of the famous Brontë children were born. I am pretty sure that we both thought of the map as an easy guide since I have recollections of going round some of the places and passing the house at Thornton, with its butcher's shop-front. It struck me that it would be fun to stay at the house for a week and visit all the Brontë sites depicted on the postcard. Well, wouldn't you like to?

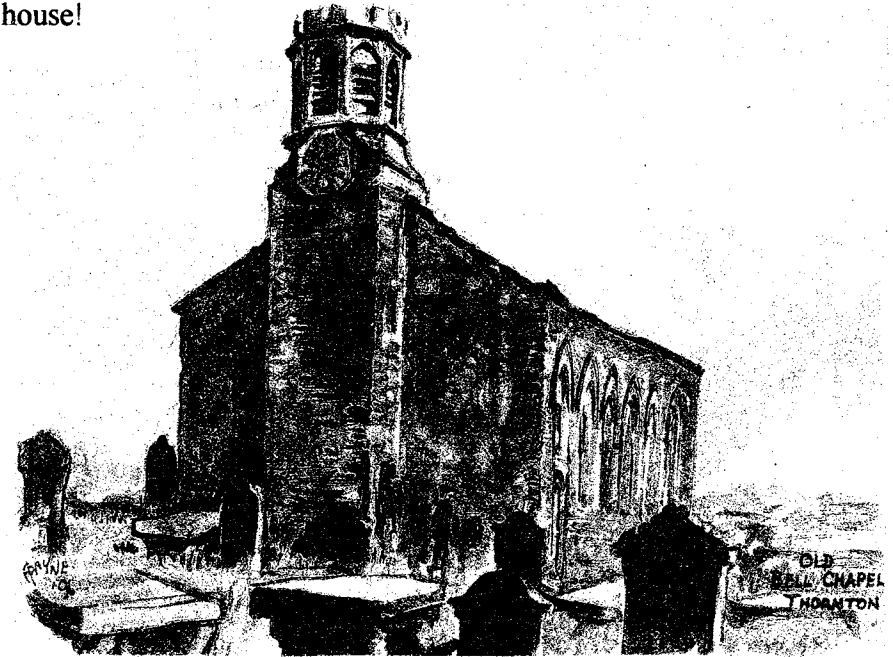
Kate died in April 1995 and I could hear her saying "Go for it!" when the opportunity of buying the Brontë birthplace was drawn to my attention by novelist Barbara Whitehead in 1997.

According to Elizabeth Gaskell, self-development is "unholy" if it is only selfish, but if we can "find out what we are sent into the world to do, and define it and make it clear to ourselves (that's the difficult part)", then it becomes a duty to "forget ourselves in our work".

Whatever am I getting at? Well, at a recent meeting of the Brontë Birthplace Trust with some invited guests Barbara Whitehead gave a little talk about our purchase of the Brontë birthplace. The Trust had tried hard (albeit in vain) to acquire this property after enlisting the aid of MPs (both National and European), Councillors, museums, libraries, foundations and even the National Lottery! Suddenly, because Barbara mentioned that without my help and encouragement her involvement would not have been possible, all eyes were turned toward me. All I could think to say was "'Tis a far better thing I do now than I have ever done!"

Perhaps it is true because by buying these properties we are preserving part of the national heritage. The danger of its being sold in two parts was that it might never be put together again as one house. It is our intention to get back much of the flavour of the Regency days when it was the birthplace of genius, and we are taking the necessary steps in Codicils to our Wills to ensure, as best we can, that our wishes are respected and it always remains as one house.

I started by posing the question as to whether Elizabeth Gaskell visited the parsonage at Thornton. I hope someone will tell me. Perhaps another question can be answered. When was Charlotte Brontë born? Gaskell says 21 April 1816, but this is not always the date given. In a copy of the diary kept by Elizabeth Firth (one of the ladies Patrick Brontë proposed to after the death of his wife) the date is given as Sunday 12 April 1816. I now think this is a misprint. But we do know WHERE she was born – here in Thornton at our house!



(All that remains now is the ornamental top of the tower standing in the old graveyard opposite the present church)

**'CURIOUS, IF TRUE': LE PETIT POUCKET  
AND TOM THUMB. A case of mistaken identity?**

by Irene Wiltshire

*The Gaskell Society Journal*, volume 12, 1998, contains two articles on *Curious, If True* in *Cousin Phillis and Other Tales*, ed A Easson, World's Classics, Oxford, 1981. By chance, I have recently studied this text in preparation for a lecture which I gave in Knutsford as part of the Society's 1997 to 1998 series of Literature and Lunch events. The explanatory notes on page 361 of *Cousin Phillis and Other Tales* include a reference to Iona and Peter Opie, *The Classic Fairy Tales*, 1974.

This book gives interesting and detailed background to the tales and characters represented in *Curious, If True*. One of the most interesting facts to emerge is the clear distinction between *Le petit Poucet* and *Tom Thumb*. *Le petit Poucet* was translated from Perrault's text into English by Robert Samber appearing as *Little Poucet* in 1729. The tale became known as *Little Thumb* in 1764. It was not until the 19<sup>th</sup> century that it was known as *Hop o' My Thumb*, a title provided by William Godwin. There is no evidence in *The Classic Fairy Tales* to suggest that *Le petit Poucet* ever acquired the title of *Tom Thumb*. In fact Opie states that Little Poucet's story "is not really analogous to that of the British Tom Thumb".

The tale of *Tom Thumb* has quite different origins. Opie states that *Tom Thumb* was first recorded in print in 1621; by a Londoner of the name Richard Johnson. Although *Tom Thumb* has European counterparts, such as *Hop o' My Thumb*, the cultural background and adventures of the two characters are quite different. Tom Thumb lived in the age of King Arthur and was conceived after his mother, at that time barren, had visited Merlin. His very small size led him into a series of adventures that included being swallowed by a red cow, a raven, an ogre and a fish. When the fish was presented to King Arthur's table Tom Thumb was rescued and became a courtier.

The Little Poucet is the youngest of seven children in a poor woodcutter's family. His greater wisdom compensates for his smallness of size. After the children are abandoned by their parents, he finds a variety of means to save his life and the lives of his brothers. After being threatened and pursued by an ogre, Poucet steals the magic "boots of seven leagues" from the sleeping giant.

In his article in *The Gaskell Society Journal*, Dr Stiles says, "Cinderella, Sleeping Beauty, Puss in Boots, Tom Thumb and Beauty and the Beast are there, to name but a few". On page 18 he goes on to say, "So many of the characters in this story are troubled by and unable to escape from the events of their former lives as depicted in the respective fairytales from which they have been taken". Poucet is undoubtedly haunted by events in his former life; he continually touches his throat that was threatened by the ogre and retraces his footsteps as he did when trying to return to the family home in the original tale. But these are the experiences of Poucet and not Tom Thumb.

Dr Kirkland, in her article on page 21 in *The Gaskell Society Journal*, quotes Coral Lansbury who wrote in 1981, referring to *Curious, If True*, that 'a figure of fairy tale himself, dreams of, or perhaps actually attends, a ball where Blue Beard matches wit with Tom Thumb'. But quoting directly from *Curious, If True*, Dr Kirkland writes, on page 22 of *The Gaskell Society Journal*, "Near her is a tiny fellow, 'the least little man I had ever seen' with an elfin look and much-mended boots whom others call Monsieur Poucet". In her following paragraph, top of page 23 in *The Gaskell Society Journal*, Dr Kirkland states that Cinderella, Tom Thumb, and Puss in Boots are the English translations of *Cendrillon*, *Petit Poucet* and *Le Chat Botte*. In *The Classic Fairy Tales*, however, Poucet is not Tom Thumb and in Gaskell's *Curious, If True* the little man, or dwarf, is referred to as Poucet.

In the third paragraph of Dr Kirkland's article, on page 21 of *The Gaskell Society Journal*, quoting from Patsy Stoneman (1987) she

reminds us that Elizabeth Gaskell was familiar with all the standard fairy tale collections. Would "Mistress Gaskell" herself have been aware of the distinction between Tom Thumb and Monsieur Poucet? Given her knowledge of fairy tales, and her customary attention to detail, it is almost certain that she would have been acquainted with the personal history of each of these two characters. Furthermore, it is clear that she chose Poucet and not Tom Thumb for *Curious, If True*.

## NOTES

1. *Calvin's Encounter with Cinderella: vital antinomies in Elizabeth Gaskell's 'Curious, If True' (1860)* PETER STILES, in The Gaskell Society Journal, Volume 12, 1998.
2. *'Curious, If True': suggesting more* JANICE KIRKLAND, in The Gaskell Society Journal, Volume 12, 1998.
3. *Curious, If True in Cousin Phillis and Other Tales*, ed A Easson, World's Classics, Oxford 1981.
4. *The Classic Fairy Tales*, Iona and Peter Opie, O.U.P., 1974 and 1992.

\* \* \* \* \*

## THE GASKELL SOCIETY OF JAPAN

The AGM of the Gaskell Society of Japan is on 10<sup>th</sup> October, the same date as ours in the UK. They are celebrating their 10<sup>th</sup> anniversary.

Professor Tatsuhiro Ohno will read a paper on Mary Barton, with Mitsuhiro Matsuoka being moderator.

Mitsu is our technical expert, now busy putting Gaskell on to CD-ROM.

## BOOK NOTES

by Christine Lingard

Victorian Renovations of the Novel: narrative annexes and the boundaries of representation, by Suzanne Keen, Department of English, Washington and Lee University, Lexington, Virginia. Cambridge University Press. £35  
In this extensive study of the social problem novel dealing principally with among others Brontë, Disraeli and Kingsley, there is surprisingly only occasional references to Gaskell, but it does offer a detailed study of the contemporary literary scene and its treatment of various social issues which concerned Gaskell. It deals in particular with contemporary reaction to these works.

The Life of Charlotte Brontë in the Penguin edition continues this publisher's programme of updating its list of Gaskell editions as noted by Shirley Foster in the 1997 volume of *The Gaskell Society Journal*. It is now edited by Elisabeth Jay and replaces the Alan Shelston edition of 1975. In her substantial introduction she makes references to recent biographies by Jenny Uglow, Rebecca Fraser and Lyndall Gordon, and challenges Juliet Barker's understanding of the nature of myth in her controversial biography of Charlotte Brontë.  
The text is that of the first edition with a few typographical corrections. Changes made for the third edition are included in an appendix.

Some other books to look out for:

Dissembling fictions: Elizabeth Gaskell and the Victorian Social Text by Deirdre D'Alberty. Macmillan, £30.

Metaphors of Change in the Language of Nineteenth Century Fiction by Megan Perigoe Stitt. Scott, £35.

And of historical interest, two biographies of Gaskell friends and contemporaries:

Reverend William Turner: Dissent and Reform in Georgian Newcastle-upon-Tyne by Stephen Harbottle. Northern Universities Press, £20.

(Biography of the Unitarian minister of Newcastle, the close family friend who is described in Ruth)

Barbara Bodichon: a Life by Pamela Hirsch. Chatto, £20. (The nineteenth century feminist and friend of George Eliot whom Gaskell admired but didn't like)

# FRENCH TRANSLATIONS OF GASKELL

by Christine Lingard

Two small volumes in the Manchester Central Library show her interest in things French and help put us in the mood for our trip to Paris.

First a tiny volume entitled *Pierre et Pierrette* by Louise Swanton Belloc. The volume is inscribed "homble homage a Madame Gaskell, ou plutot a ses enfants, Louise Sw Belloc".

Louise was an Irish woman married to a French man, and a friend of Maria Edgeworth who had read *Mary Barton* but was unaware that the author was the cousin of her friend Mary Holland, and encouraged Louise to translate it into French. They evidently struck up a friendship and she presented one of her own books to Mrs Gaskell.

It also includes a French translation of the poem *Casa Bianca*! Much later Louise's son was to marry another friend of Mrs Gaskell, the feminist Bessie Rayner Parkes. Her son was Hilaire Belloc. A second item is Meta's Christmas present to her mother for 1849 a copy in translation of George Sand's *Little Fadette*.<sup>1</sup>

Editor's Note: In November 1855 Mme Mohl wrote to Elizabeth Gaskell:

'I saw Mme Belloc two days ago. She has finished 'Cranford' and is correcting proofs. I wonder whether you will be able to judge which of your works will suit the French. I should think well. They are a queer people and as unlike the English as if they lived at the Antipodes.'<sup>1</sup>

Louise Swanton Belloc also translated Maria Edgeworth's works, many of Dickens' novels and *Uncle Tom's Cabin*.

<sup>1</sup> *Letters and Recollections of Julius and Mary Mohl* edited by M C M Simpson 1887

humble hommage à Madame  
Gaskell, ou plutôt à ses  
enfants.  
Louise Sw Belloc.



## PIERRE ET PIERRETTE,

PAR

LOUISE SW-BELLOC,

Ouvrage auquel l'Académie a décerné un prix Montyon.

QUATRIÈME ÉDITION.

Paris,

JULES RENOUARD ET COMP.

Éditeurs de l'Éducation familiale, des Jeunes Industriels, etc.

RUE DE TOURNON, 6.

1849

## CROSS STREET CHAPEL

by Joan Leach

Grim and grey Manchester certainly was on the night of Friday 6<sup>th</sup> March, though not smoky, for a steady rain fell as I made my way to Cross Street Chapel to attend the re-dedication ceremony. However all was bright inside.

Janet Allan and myself, representing the Society, were honoured to be among the invited guests and representatives of other denominations: including the Bishop and Dean of Manchester; the Rev Clifford Reed, President of the General Assembly of Unitarian and Free Christian Churches; Dr David Wykes, tutor at Harris Manchester College, Oxford and the Rev Leonard Smith, principal of the Unitarian College. The Lord Mayor and Lady Mayoress of Manchester were resplendent in their regalia, and the representative ministers in their various clerical robes added dignity and a fine sense of occasion. I recalled Elizabeth Gaskell's meeting and opinion on the Bishop of her day and felt I was representing her, too, at this occasion, though I would not be admitted to the present Bishop's study to judge him by his pictures! (GL.70)

The Chapel's minister, the Rev John Midgley, welcomed the congregation. Dr Geoffrey Head, Chairman of the Trustees, accepting a symbolic presentation key, spoke of the historic traditions of this city centre chapel, damaged by a Jacobite attack in 1745 and by the 1940 blitz, rebuilt in 1959, and now this latest rebuilding linked the past with the future.

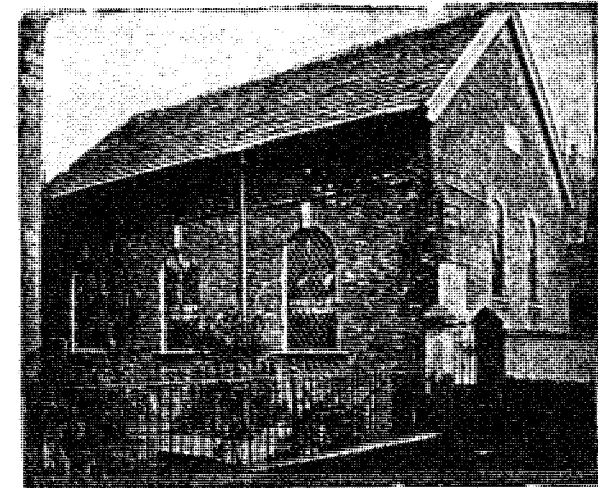
The Rev. Arthur Long in his address reminded the congregation of the celebrated institutions which owed their origin to Cross Street Chapel: Manchester College, Oxford, Unitarian College, the Manchester Literary and Philosophical Society and The Manchester Guardian. He spoke of the progress of the congregation through five homes, quoting from Oliver Wendell Holmes' *The Chambered Nautilus*:

*Build thee more stately mansions, O my soul,  
As the swift seasons roll  
Leave thy low vaulted past!  
Let each new Temple, nobler than the last  
Shut thee from heaven with a dome more vast,  
Till thou at length art free,  
Leaving thy outgrown shell by life's unresting sea.*

The Chapel treasures its links with the Gaskells and has included a Gaskell Room in its design, incorporated an earlier memorial in the walls of the vestibule and a plaque on the outside wall.

The whole building is light and airy, with rooms for various uses on two floors. Rents from the offices on floors above will provide an income for the Chapel.

The circular Chapel, with its light woodwork, has excellent acoustics and an air of peace. By ringing the bell outside, visitors will be welcomed during usual office hours to be shown the building or just to enjoy the oasis of calm. There is a half-hour service on Wednesdays at 1 pm.



I thought I had discovered an unknown photograph of a previous Cross Street Chapel, but Geoffrey Head tells me it is almost certainly that of Chapel Road, Sale, which was previously known as Cross Street. He adds: 'The old chapel was built in 1739 and was the place of worship for the Presbyterian/Unitarian congregation until 1876, when a splendid new church was built by Rev J Relly Beard, the friend and contemporary of William Gaskell'; when the former died in the late 1870's his funeral address was given by William Gaskell.

Geoffrey Head adds that he saw the Chapel in the 1960's just before demolition. The site is occupied by three town houses, with the young saplings in this photograph now grown to massive, mature trees.

**CIRCULAR NOTES**

by Muriel Smith

I came upon the phrase "circular notes" in the new 1997 Mandolin edition by J A V Chapple and Arthur Pollard of The Letters of Mrs Gaskell. The definition in the OED reads: "a letter of credit addressed by a banker (eg in London) to several bankers in other countries in favour of a certain person named therein, usually a person on a tour". The supporting quotation, dated 1850, is from Thackeray's Kicklebury's: "My lady K. walked over to the money changers, where she changed a couple of circular notes".

In her letter to her publisher George Smith of 4 February 1857 (No.338) Mrs Gaskell says that she is going to Rome and asks him for an advance payment on The Life of Charlotte Brontë: "It would be a very great convenience if you would kindly let me have 250£. It would also be an additional favour if you would obtain 150£ of this for me in Coutts Circular Notes ... The notes I believe can be had of 5£ each, and if so, I should be glad to have them all of that amount." Then on 8 February (No.341) she tells him that Mr Gaskell thinks he can get Circular Notes through his own bank, and next day (No.343) that he is not to worry about the Circular Notes, which can definitely be had locally through Mr Gaskell's bankers, Sir Benjamin Heywood & Co of Manchester.

The OED definition gives the impression of a letter carefully written out by the originating bankers for an individual, but this is clearly misleading. Both Thackeray and Mrs Gaskell made it plain that you obtained a bunch of printed forms in the general style of modern travellers' cheques, and, in proportion to the number of travellers, they would seem to have been in equally general use.

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**ALLIANCE OF LITERARY SOCIETIES AGM**

by Kenn Oultram

Your committee members, Doreen Pleydell and Christine Lingard, represented the Society at the AGM of the Alliance of Literary Societies in Birmingham on 25<sup>th</sup> April. Representatives of twenty-three of the seventy-seven affiliated literary societies attended.

There was much discussion on the subject of Public Liability Insurance and the ALS legal adviser, David Leigh-Hunt, said Norwich Union had been approached and their block policy scheme for an overall premium of £2,600 could be managed by Medical Money Management (Manchester), thus releasing the ALS from administrative responsibilities. Working on the assumption that every society participated, the resultant premium would be approximately £35 per annum. The feeling of the meeting was that the scheme should be accepted in principle and that an Extraordinary General Meeting could confirm the arrangement in the near future.

The retiring secretary, Bill Adams (George Eliot Fellowship), became one of five new members to serve on the committee, the others being Linda Hart (Friends of the Dymock Poets), Margaret McCarthy (Edith Nesbit Society), Stephen Loftus (Brontë Society) and Ms M Ayres (Francis Brett Young Society). The new secretary of the ALS is Rosemary Culley, 22 Belmont Grove, Havant, Hampshire PO9 3PU (Tel: 01705 475855) who is membership secretary of the Jane Austen Society.

It is likely that the 1999 AGM will present speakers from the Thomas Lovell Beddoes and the H G Wells Societies, and the fixed date is Saturday 24<sup>th</sup> April.

Kenn Oultram, who introduced speakers from the Daresbury and London-based Lewis Carroll Societies in this centenary year of Carroll's death, again produced and edited the ALS fanzine 'Chapter One' and this was circulated at the above meeting. In it he carries news of a new literary society to Adrian Bell (1901-1980), the father of the Tatton Member of Parliament Mr Martin Bell, who commented: "After the last war my father received letters from soldiers who had read his books while waiting for battle to say they had been comforted by his word-pictures of a world at peace. I have addressed the Suffolk Book League about his work and was

astonished to see an audience of more than two hundred!". The MP did, of course, address members of our own Society in Knutsford on 17<sup>th</sup> January. Finally: Congratulations to our member, Olive Ambrose, whose dedicated work for the Romany Society has resulted in her becoming the Society's first Member of the Year. She received a sculpture of the head of Comma, the horse which faithfully drew the caravan of the celebrated nature writer and broadcaster ... and so called because it rarely came to a full stop!

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### **THE GASKELL SOCIETY'S MONTHLY MEETINGS**

For those members living within a travelling distance of Knutsford (we have people travelling from as far as Clitheroe and Liverpool) we recommend our monthly Monday meetings held between October and May inclusive. Attendances are regularly between thirty and forty people, all of whom have a desire to extend their knowledge of Gaskell writings. At these meetings friendships are strengthened and newcomers are warmly welcomed.

After a very pleasant lunch we are treated by Irene Wiltshire MA to a detailed and well-researched paper which raises points for discussion. This season we have studied the World's Classics edition of Cousin Phillis and Other Tales. We have enjoyed being led by Irene in the discussion of themes, characters, narrative style and the use of language and setting in such a diverse selection of short stories.

Next season we will be looking at The Letters of Mrs Gaskell edited by J A V Chapple and Arthur Pollard. Join us if you can for what should be quite a challenging and wide ranging theme.

Irene Hassall (Bolton)  
Hilda Holmes (Hazel Grove)

### **LONDON AND SOUTH EAST GROUP**

Members living within reach of London continue to meet four times each year in central London. So far during 1998, two meetings have been held at the Francis Holland School, near Sloane Square, where Jane Wilson was previously deputy head. At the first Howard F Gregg spoke about 'Lois the Witch' and at the second Siv Jansson spoke on 'Elizabeth Gaskell and George Eliot: Re-evaluating the Victorian Mother'.

Professor Andrew Sanders will address the next meeting which is to be held on Saturday, 12<sup>th</sup> September, in room 10 at Friends House, Euston Road, London NW1 2BJ commencing at 2 pm. His subject is "Gaskell's Serials – Working with Dickens". Friends House is immediately opposite Euston Station. Please enter through the garden at the side of the building.

The final meeting for 1998 will be held at 2 pm on Saturday, 7<sup>th</sup> November, at the Francis Holland School with Muriel Easter and Alice Reddihough as speakers on the subject "Writing the Life of a Friend: Mrs Gaskell's Life of Charlotte Brontë.

All are welcome and further details may be obtained from Dudley J Barlow, 44 Seymour Road, London SW18 5JA (tel: 0181 874 7727).

# The Gaskell Society



If you have any material or suggestions for future Newsletters,  
please contact Mrs Joan Leach, Far Yew Tree House, Over Tabley,  
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**NEWSLETTER**

**FEBRUARY 1999**

**NO. 27**



### Editor's Letter

We send you all best wishes for 1999. We hope you will enjoy our meetings and publications. In this Newsletter we share with you our French experiences and member, Dr Andrew Sanders, writes of his visit to Japan where he enjoyed meeting our Japanese members; our AGM in Knutsford took place on the same day, 10<sup>th</sup> October.

We look forward to our London Conference in July and send you further details on a separate sheet. A weekend in the Lake District will soon be on offer.

Our trips to Heidelberg and Paris have been much enjoyed, so we are thinking about the possibility of Rome in 2000. The Gaskells were there in Easter week, but that would be too hectic for us, nor could we emulate them in a tour including Siena, Pisa, Florence and Venice! Our members are very good company travelling together and at meetings. Here in Knutsford our monthly meetings go from strength to strength and the South East/London group have an interesting programme planned, and now we plan to form a South West Branch which Rosemary Marshall reports on in this issue.

Professor John Chapple, our Chairman, has been appointed Honorary Professor of English Literature at Manchester University; meanwhile, with Alan Shelston, the work continues on the unpublished Gaskell letters. I understand that the Millennium Dome will not devote any space to Literature, so Knutsford Literary Festival will have to fill that gap! Thank you to those who have enrolled as Friends.

Joan Leach

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### Gawthorpe Hall Exhibition (Brontë-Gaskell-Kay-Shuttleworth)

Appreciative comments continue concerning the 1997 Exhibition and related events, which I reported in Newsletter No.26. However, apologies are due to Mr Martin Dowland-Robinson for my not having sufficiently stressed his major contribution to the success of the undertaking. He tells me that it is hoped the drawing room will stay looking as it was when Charlotte Brontë visited the Kay-Shuttleworths, with an indication that she graced it with her presence.

Heather Sharps

**Elizabeth Gaskell à Paris**  
by Peter Skrine

Elizabeth Gaskell went to France nine times, and seven of these trips involved a visit to Paris. The first of her visits was to prove of crucial importance. Accompanied by her husband, William, and her eldest daughter, Meta, she spent the last week of May 1853 in the French capital. On this first visit she stayed with relatives of her Manchester German friends, the Salis-Schwabes, and during it she made the acquaintance of Mme Mohl. It was to prove a lasting friendship and it gave her an entrée into French intellectual and literary society unparalleled amongst her mid-Victorian literary contemporaries. On 17 May 1853 Mary Mohl described her impressions of Elizabeth in a letter to Mrs Reid, who had founded Bedford College in 1849:

I am so fond of her that I invited her to come and stay [...] To my taste she is the most agreeable literary lady I have yet seen. She has a great quantum of good sound common sense and discrimination – a great addition to talent, and by no means a necessary accompaniment – and no vanity. She was staying with Mrs Schwabe, who had the measles and could show her absolutely nothing, which was an absolute piece of good fortune to me, as it made me see so much of her.

Within half a year she was back in Paris. In January 1854 she spent two weeks there with her daughter Marianne, again staying with the Schwabes. Two years later, she was back again for her third visit: she spent the period from 12 February to 3 April 1855 in Paris, staying this time at Mme Mohl's. She made another brief stop there in 1857 on her way to and from Italy, and did so again on her way back from Heidelberg in 1858.

In May 1862 she spent one week in Paris with Meta and her friend, Isabel Thompson, during which they visited St Germain, prior to her fact-finding expedition lasting ten days to Brittany and Normandy via Chartres. This was in effect a pilgrimage to Les Rochers, the country home of Mme de Sévigné, on whom she was gathering material with a view to writing a book, and to her town-house in nearby Vitry, which had been turned into an hotel. She returned to England on 3 June via Le Havre.

A longer stay in Paris took place in 1862, when she spent much of February and March (five weeks in all) in Paris on the way to Italy with her daughters Florence and Meta, and stopped there again on the way back. This time, too, she stayed 'chez Mme Mohl'. It was after this visit that she wrote and published her principal work on France: 'French Life' appeared anonymously in Fraser's Magazine in April-June 1864.

In 1865 she was back in Paris again, and staying again with her friend, Mme Mohl. Lasting from 12 March to 20 April, it was the longest of all her visits. Six months later she was dead. The sad news was broken to Mme Mohl, who wrote to a friend:

I am sure you will feel for me when I tell you that I have lost my dear Mrs Gaskell, the best friend I had in England, perhaps anywhere. I learnt it this morning from her poor daughter. She seemed perfectly well, and was talking, when her head suddenly lowered, and life fled. It must have been heart complaint. To say what I have lost would be impossible. My spirits are so low that, as you are so kind as to speak of my nieces' visit to Versailles, I will profit by your kind memory to send them on Friday, if the weather is good. I don't say fine; that may not be expected. I am glad to send them somewhere without me; I had promised to take them out to-night; but I could not. I *can* take them to the Flute Enchantée Thursday, as I need not speak there; and I had taken the places, and can't bear to disappoint them. I had rather sit and mope than anything; but it's hard upon them [...] and youth has as good a right to pleasure as childhood has to play. Oh, dear! My heart feels like a lump of lead in me. If you had known what a heart *she* had! But no one did.

Elizabeth was able to enjoy Paris and make the most of her stays there thanks to her French. In this respect her education at Avonbank had served her well. It was very good (and a good deal better than her German), as can be seen from a letter she wrote in March 1854 to a French writer she had met at Mme Mohl's earlier that year. His name was Emil Souvestre, and he was the author of *Le Pasteur*, the play on which Verdi's recently 'rediscovered' opera, *Stiffelio* (1850), is based. Anyone who knows the opera will immediately sense why Elizabeth could relate to Souvestre and write a letter of recommendation to him on behalf of a literary friend:

Dear Sir,

As I know you can not read English, and as I am sorry to say I can not write good and grammatical French I send you a letter [...] to forewarn you of a liberty which I have taken, and to beg you to excuse it. Presuming upon the recollection of my agreeable conversation with you at the house of Madame Mohl, and remembering the kindness with which Madame Souvestre listened to my imperfect French [...] I have given a letter of introduction to a gentleman, an old friend of mine, who is going to Paris in a few days, and is most anxious to make your acquaintance. [...] I pray you to make him a little welcome for my sake. [...] Just now he has been reviewing your 'Philosophe sous les toits', and it is from admiration of this, and other works of yours, that he is led to wish to become acquainted with you. Pardon my vanity in saying that I knew you, and would venture to give him an introduction to you. And now you see I am turned coward, and fear, that on the presentation of my letter, you may turn it over and say 'Madame Gaskell! Madame Gaskell! Mais, Monsieur, je ne connais pas cette dame'. Je vous prie, cher Monsieur Souvestre, de vous souvenir de moi, car je me souviens très bien de vous; et veuillez bien accueillir Monsier William Greg, car je vous assure qu'il est homme d'esprit, et digne de votre connaissance. Assurez vous Monsieur de mes sentimens de despect; et croyez que je suis

Yours truly  
Elizabeth Gaskell

The Paris Elizabeth Gaskell knew was the Paris of the Second Empire. All nine of her visits to France took place during the reign of Napoleon III, during which the French capital underwent far-reaching changes. She was well aware of these, as she shows in *French Life*, her major literary work about Paris as she experienced it. Here we find the chronicler of Manchester's urban development in the mid-nineteenth century applying her powers of observation to a city which for her generation was synonymous with modern economic, social and political change:

It is becoming intolerably hot in Paris. I almost wish the builders would strike [...] for the carriages scarcely cease rumbling past my open windows before two; and at five the men are clapping and hammering at the buildings of the new boulevard opposite. I

have had to go into the narrow streets of the older parts of Paris lately; and the smells there are insufferable – a mixture of drains and cookery, which makes one loathe one's food. Yet how interesting these old streets are! And the people inhabiting them are quite different to those of the more fashionable quarters: they have so much more originality of character about them; and yet one sees that they are the descendants of the Dames de la Halle, who went out to Versailles on the memorable fifth of October.  
(*French Life*, 1864)

The boulevard in question here is the Boulevard de Sébastopol, linking the Gares du Nord and de l'Est with the Boulevard St Michel, and named after the recent Franco-British victory in the Crimean War. This was the period when the city's vast network of boulevards was being laid out by Baron Haussmann in an unprecedented display of large-scale modernisation. The preceding paragraph recounted a discussion about Victor Hugo's recently-published novel *Les Misérables* (1862), and a prosperous merchant's object to its socialist tendency. This had led to talk of an imminent strike in Paris. No wonder the author of *North and South* pricked up her ears! The socio-political subtext of the passage is reinforced by her allusion to the events of 5 October 1789, when the common people of Paris marched out to Versailles and demanded that the King, Louis XVI, should return to his palace in Paris. Little did she know that that palace, the Tuileries (situated between the Louvre and the Place de la Concorde) would be burnt down during the Commune in 1871. What she did see, however, was the construction of Les Halles, the vast new covered market being built between 1854 and 1866; this was removed in 1969.

The interplay of past and present in Paris, and of beauty and ugliness, fascinated Elizabeth Gaskell. This comes out in a letter she is thought to have addressed to Catherine Winkworth after her return from Paris in 1862:

Paris altogether was abominable; noisy, hot close, smelling of drains – and – perpetual cooking &c; and we were none of us well there. I however laid a good foundation for future work at Mme de Sévigné, saw M. Hachette [the publisher] about it, got all manner of introductions to the private part of public collections of MSS, books, portraits &c; went to every old house in Paris that she lived in, & got a list of books 'pour servir', & a splendid

collection of all the portraits of herself, family and contemporaries. I could have done much more if I had not found that Meta was becoming absolutely *ill* with unappetizing food, noisy nights, close air. (Letter 509b)

Marianne was put in the picture by her sister, Meta, and her mother in a joint letter sent from Paris in 1855:

My darling Marianne –

Mamma says you are to write by return of post a long & full account of how Papa is. You are to give every particular, and above all to send your letter off by return of post. We are just going out to see about your gown. We shall *possibly* send you patterns of some, for you to choose from. There is going to be a dance here tonight – everything is in confusion – the great red cushions of the salon being beaten & shaken till the room is clouded with dust. They have been polishing the dining-room-floor, till I anticipate a fall in every waltz. It is so funny the way in wh. Mme Mohl has asked people to come in my name – Mrs Holld (whom I have never seen) was invited ‘because it wd give Miss Gaskell so much pleasure’ – and Mlle Gaskell has a prominent part in most of the invitation-notes. [...] Tomorrow we dine at the Scheffers’, to meet Mme Viardot, & Mrs Hollond - & afterward go on to the Geoffroi St. Hilaires’ – where I am afraid we shall have to talk zoologically - & be kissed. (Letter 229)

The most vivid of Elizabeth Gaskell’s letters from Paris is dated 27 March 1863, and written from 120 Rue du Bac, the home of Mary Mohl, née Clarke, to Emily Shaen, née Winkworth:

I think you will like to hear how I am going on in Paris. It is a very amusing life; and I’ll try and describe a day to you. Mme. Mohl lives on the fourth and fifth stories of a great large hotel built about 150 years ago, *entre cour et jardin*. “*cour*” opening into the narrow busy rue du Bac, “*jardin*” has a very large (10 acres) plot of ground given by Cardinal Richelieu to the Missions Etrangères – and so not built upon, but surrounded by great houses like this. It is as stiffly laid out in kitchen garden, square walks, etc., as possible; but there are great trees in it, and altogether it is really very pretty. That’s at the back of the house and some of the rooms

look on to it. On the fourth story are four lowish sitting rooms and Mme. Mohl’s bedroom. On the fifth slopes in the roof, kitchen, *grenier*, servant’s bedrooms, my bedroom, work-room, etc.; all brick floors, which is cold to the feet. My bedroom is very pretty and picturesque. I like sloping roofs and plenty of windows stuffed into their roof anyhow; and in every corner of this room (and it’s the same all over the house) French and English books are crammed. I have no watch, there is no clock in the house, and so I have to guess the time by the monks’ singing and bells ringing (all night long but) especially in the morning. So I get up and come down into the smallest and shabbiest of the sitting-rooms, in which we live and eat all day long, and find that M. Mohl has had his breakfast of chocolate in his room (library) at half past 6, and Mme Mohl hers of tea at 7, and I am late having not come down (to coffee) till a little past 8. However I take it coolly and M. and Mme. Come in a talk to me; she in dressing gown and curlpapers, very, very amusing, he very sensible and agreeable, and full of humour too.

Then, after my breakfast, which lingers long because of all this talk, I get my writing “Wives and Daughters” and write, as well as I can for Mme. Mohl’s talking, till “second breakfast” around 11. Cold meat, bread, wine and water and sometimes an omelette – what we should call lunch, in fact, only it comes too soon after my breakfast, and too long before dinner for my English habits. After breakfast no. 2 I try to write again; and very often callers come; always on Wednesdays on which day Mme. Mohl receives. I go out a walk by myself in the afternoons; and when we dine at home it is at six sharp. No dressing required. Soup, meat, one dish of vegetables and roasted apples are what we have in general. After dinner M. and Mme. Mohl go to sleep; and I have fallen into this habit; and at eight exactly M. Mohl wakes up and makes a cup of very weak tea for Mme. Mohl and me, nothing to eat after dinner; not even if we have been to the play. Then Mme. Mohl rouses herself up and is very amusing and brilliant; stops up till one, and would stop up later if encouraged by listeners. She has not been well, but for all that she has seen a good number of people since I came; she has generally a dinner-party of 10 to 12 every Friday, when we spread out into all the rooms (and I am so glad, for continual living and eating in this room and no open windows makes it very stuffy) and “receive” in the evening. (Letter 564)

Mme Mohl had learnt how to 'receive' from Mme Récamier, whose salon had been a centre of fashion and intellectual life since 1815, and where in her younger years as Mary Clarke she had been a guest. Amongst the people Elizabeth Gaskell met at Mme Mohl's parties in her home at 112 (later 120) Rue du Bac, were:

Ary Scheffer, the painter, and his wife  
Mme Pauline Viardot, the great singer  
The politician and historian François Guizot  
Montalembert, the leading liberal Catholic thinker  
The philosopher Victor Cousin  
Prosper Mérimée, the author of *Carmen*  
Ernest Renan, author of *The Life of Jesus*  
The historian Jean-Jacques Ampère  
Alexis de Tocqueville, the political writer

Such stimulating company enabled her to get more out of her visits to Paris than most English or American tourists, as she herself realised:

Staying here in a French family, I get glimpses of life for which I am not prepared by any previous reading of French romances, or even by former visits to Paris, when I remained in an hotel frequented by English, and close to the street which seems to belong almost exclusively to them. The prevalent English idea of French society is that it is very brilliant, thoughtless, and dissipated; that family life and domestic affections are almost unknown, and that the sense of religion is confined to mere formalities. Now I will give you two glimpses which I have had: one into the more serious side of Protestant, the other into the under-current of Roman Catholic life. (*French Life*)

Elizabeth Gaskell visited some of the sights around Paris, too, for instance St Germain, where the exiled James II and his Catholic son, the Old Pretender, held their court. St Germain, where Debussy was born in August 1862, inspired her to one of her finest word-paintings in that same year:

Nothing could be more desolate-looking than the château; the dull-red bricks of which it is built are painted dark lead colour round the many tiers of windows, the glass in which is broken in

numerous places, its place being here and there supplied by iron bars. Somehow, the epithet that rose to our lips on first seeing the colouring of the whole place, was 'livid'. Nor is the present occupation of the grim old château one to suggest cheerful thoughts. After being a palace, it was degraded to a caserne, or barracks, and from that it has come down to be a penitentiary. All round the building there is a deep dry area, railed round; and now I have said all I can against St Germain and recorded a faithful impression at first sight. But, two minutes afterwards, there came a lovely slant of sun-light; the sun had been behind a fine thunderous cloud, and emerged just at the right moment, causing all the projections of the château to throw deep shadows, brightening the tints in all the other parts, calling out the vivid colours in the flower-beds that surround the railing on the park side of the château, and half-compelling us with its hot brilliancy, half luring us by the full fresh green it gave to the foliage, to seek the shelter of the woods not two hundred yards beyond the entrance to the park.

We did not know where we were going to. We only knew that it was shadowed ground; while the 'English garden' we passed over was all one blaze of sunlight and scarlet geraniums, and intensely blue lobelias, yellow calceolarias, and other hot-looking flowers. The space below the ancient mighty oaks and chestnut-trees was gravelled over, and given up to nursery-maids and children, with here and there an invalid sitting on the benches. [...] We wandered on to find the impossible point of view which is to combine all the excellencies. So we loitered over another hundred yards in the cool shade of the trees. And suddenly we were on the terrace, looking down over a place steeped in sunlight, and extending for twenty miles and more. We all exclaimed with delight at its unexpectedness; and yet we had heard of the terrace of St Germain and associated it with James II and Maria d'Este all our lives. The terrace is a walk as broad as a street, on the edge of the bluff overhanging the silver tortuous Seine. It is bounded by a wall just the right height for one to lean upon and gaze and muse over the landscape below. The mellow mist of a lovely day enveloped the more distant objects then; but we came again in the evening, when all the gay world of St Germain was out and abroad on the terrace listening to the music of the band. (*French Life*)

Elizabeth Gaskell's verdict on Chartres, which she also visited during this last visit to France, says it all:

This morning we went to see the cathedral. It is so wonderfully beautiful that no words can describe it. I am thoroughly glad we came by Chartres.

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### Elizabeth Gaskell's 'French' works

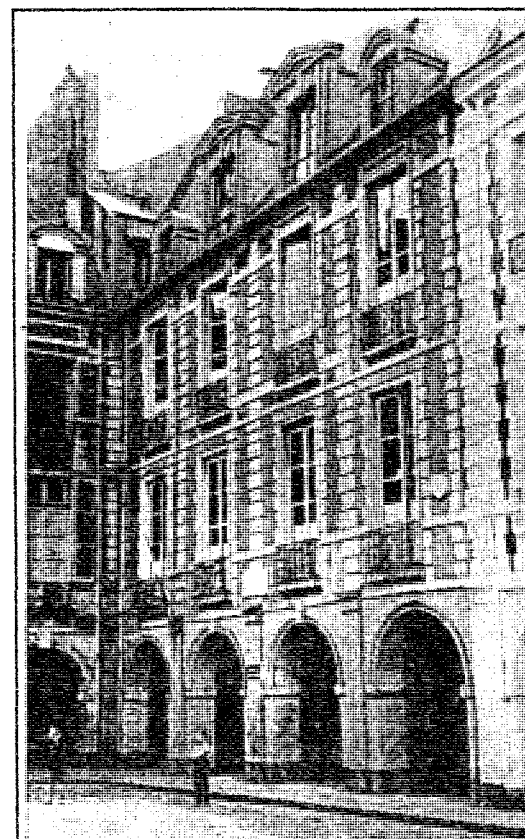
Elizabeth Gaskell wrote several works set in or partly in France, or concerned with French manners and history. Like her visits to France, these are also nine in number:

1. *Traits and Stories of the Huguenots* (December 1853, in *Household Words*)
2. *My French Master* (December 1853 in *Household Words*)
3. *Company Manners* (May 1854 in *Household Words*)
4. *An Accursed Race* (1855 in *Household Words*, 1859 in *Round the Sofa*): on the 'Cagots', a gypsy-like race treated as outcasts by French country-folk
5. *My Lady Ludlow* (1855 in *Household Words*). Set partly in revolutionary France
6. *Curious if True* (1860), her first contribution to *The Cornhill Magazine*
7. *The Grey Woman* (January 1861 in *All the Year Round*). Set partly in France
8. *Crowley Castle* (Version 1, in *All the Year Round*, , Christmas 1863; version 2 in Ward's edition, 1904). Set partly in France
9. *French Life* (April-June 1864, in *Fraser's Magazine*)
10. A tenth 'French' work, on which she is known to have been working towards the end of her life, has never come to light. This was to have been a study of the great seventeenth-century letter-writer, Mme de Sévigné, who makes her appearance in *Company Manners* and in *French Life*.

### In The Footsteps of Elizabeth Gaskell

PARIS: 17-22 September 1998

by Dudley Green



Place des Vosges. This house, built in 1605 was the home of Victor Hugo from 1833-48, now a museum. Mme de Sévigné also lived in this square and the Gaskells looked at an apartment.

We left a cloudy Manchester on Thursday 17 September aboard the 9.15 am Air France flight and were greeted by warm sunshine as we arrived in Paris at Charles de Gaulle airport. We were then whisked away by coach for our first taste of French cuisine before visiting the remarkable Père Lachaise Cemetery. Our object was to mark the opening stage of our pilgrimage by visiting the grave of Madame Mohl. Before reaching our objective we walked what felt like miles through this low-rise city of the dead. Here in an area covering 106 acres are buried many of the famous figures from France's artistic life: Balzac, Molière, Proust, La Fontaine, Colette, Daudet, Bizet. Here too one may find the tombs of famous foreigners who died in

Paris, including Chopin, Oscar Wilde and most recently Jim Morrison, lead singer of The Doors. After paying due homage to Madame Mohl with a short reading beside the grave, Brian Heckle and I wandered off to find the Epstein memorial to Oscar Wilde with its strange Egyptian motif, and then came upon the small, almost insignificant tomb of Edith Piaf. Chopin's grave was decked with flowers and a Polish national banner – we

were told that, as on most days, a party of Poles had just been there to pay homage. But for me the most moving memorial was that of A Nicoud, a nine year old boy who died in 1912, who is depicted seated on a chair with his dog nuzzling up to him. (*Ed. Some of us also saw the grave of Emil Souvestre, mentioned on p.3*)

After rejoining our coach we were taken to the Orleans Palace Hotel on the Boulevard Brune, our home for the next five days. That night, after a communal dinner at a nearby brasserie, there was much discussion over how to travel on the Metro. I decided to take the bull by the horns and slipped out to the nearby Porte d'Orleans station and bought my carnet de dix tickets and observed the method of passing through the automatic barriers. Here I met a fellow member of our party and together we returned to the hotel with a feeling of modest pride at having made appropriate preparations for the morrow.

The next day we carefully obeyed our instructions, travelling to Chatelet and then changing to Line 1 to get off at St Paul. Here we were given a guided tour of the Marais and the Place des Vosges area. In the church of St Paul-St Louis, a Jesuit church built in 1641 for Cardinal Richelieu, we admired the magnificent furnishings and Delacroix's masterpiece, *Christ in the Garden of Olives*. We saw the impressive courtyard in the Place des Vosges where Elizabeth Gaskell thought of renting an apartment, and we went into the Hotel Carnavalet, home of Madame de Sévigné. Nearby we were regaled with the story of the famous lady poisoner who managed to rid herself of her husband and of most of the rest of her family before succumbing to her inevitable downfall. A group of us then found a delectable spot for an outdoor lunch in the corner of a quiet square. In the afternoon we were taken by coach through the Bois de Boulogne to St Germain-en-Laye. After visiting Le Musée des Antiquités Nationales in the château, the birthplace of many French kings including Louis XIV, we followed in Elizabeth Gaskell's steps through the park to the peaceful English garden. On the terrace above the Seine we shared her delight at the magnificent view back to Paris 'extending for twenty miles and more'. That night we enjoyed a second communal dinner in a restaurant near our hotel.

After breakfast on Saturday, feeling old hands on the Metro by now, we travelled to the Odeon and made our way to La Sorbonne. Here we had the privilege of a stimulating intellectual morning with a lecture on *French Literary Ladies* by Professor Alain Jumeau. This was followed by contributions on Madame de Sévigné, Elizabeth Gaskell and Madame Mohl by Peter Skrine and Alan Shelston. It was a pleasure to meet up

again with Professor Pierre and Madame Caroline Arnaud. We were also delighted that Véronique Baudouin, a former student of Professor Arnaud at La Sorbonne, temporarily freed from her primary school teaching duties, was able to join us together with her cousin Isabelle. Some of us went to the Musée Cluny where Elizabeth Gaskell with Marianne had 'staid as long as [they] could' in 1855 (*G.L.230*). She didn't mention the wonderful medieval tapestries of the Lady and the Unicorn which we saw. Several of us then adjourned to the Luxembourg Gardens for a pleasant lunch in the sun. This provided an opportunity to visit the nearby church of St Sulpice, with its magnificent Delacroix murals. The party then regrouped at the Jardin de Missions Etrangères to see the outside of Madame Mohl's home at 120 rue de Bac where she extended hospitality to Mrs Gaskell. After dinner we were given the wonderful treat of a night boat trip down the Seine. All the famous buildings of Paris were floodlit, including the Eiffel Tower, with its illuminated reminder of 469 days 'avant l'an 2000'. This was sheer magic and by happy coincidence we were also treated to a fabulous firework display.

On Sunday morning we met at the Place de la Concorde and, under the expert guidance of Mary Debrabant and Véronique Baudouin and Madeleine Lê Van, we visited the Louvre area and walked down the Avenue des Champs Elysees. We were fortunate that this was a European Heritage day on which many buildings not normally accessible to the public were open. The party I was with, guided by Véronique and her cousin Isabelle, visited le Ministère de la Marine, the French equivalent of the Admiralty, with its many naval treasures. We also went to the Palais de Justice, the lawcourts which occupy the entire width of the Ile de la Cité. We were fortunate to gain admittance to the Première Chambre de la Court d'Appel with its magnificently gilded ceiling and wonderfully coloured murals. We then visited the upper and lower chapels of the adjoining Sainte Chapelle, surely rightly hailed as one of the greatest architectural masterpieces of the Western world. The sun was streaming in through the 15 magnificent stained glass windows creating a wonderful blaze of light. And then to Notre Dame. There were large crowds waiting to go in, but by the ingenuity of our French guides we swiftly gained entry by the simple means of using the exit! There were large crowds inside and a service was imminent, but we had time to admire the magnificent rose windows before leaving to enjoy a sunlight stroll beside the Seine. Then, after saying farewell to Véronique and Isabelle, we made our way back to the Metro. On our return journey we noticed that each Metro station had its own colour scheme for chairs and advertisement surrounds – green,



white, blue, red and so on. These were in no apparent order, and to the amazement of our fellow travellers the air was rent with cries of 'blue', 'purple', 'white', as we attempted to predict the colour scheme of the next station! That evening some of us enjoyed a second meal at the Italian restaurant just round the corner from the hotel, where the waiter showed his appreciation of our continued custom by his extravagantly amorous advances to Joan and the other lady members of our party.

Immediately after breakfast on Monday we set out by coach for Chartres. The weather, as on every day of our stay, was gloriously sunny. On arrival several of us went for a ride in Le Petit Train de Chartre, otherwise known as the Dotto train. This took us past the cathedral and through the narrow streets down to the historic lower town bordering the picturesque River Eure. We later strolled through these streets admiring the wonderfully preserved old buildings, many half-timbered dating back to the 15<sup>th</sup> and 16<sup>th</sup> centuries. Brian Hechle and I then enjoyed a delightful outdoor lunch with fine views of the cathedral at a riverside restaurant. The highlight of the afternoon was a tour of the cathedral with special emphasis on its unique 12<sup>th</sup> and 13<sup>th</sup> century stained glass. Our tour was conducted by Mr Malcolm Miller, an Englishman domiciled in Chartres and the author of the cathedral guide. Then after a coffee in the sun at one of the many outdoor cafés in the cathedral square, we made our way back to Paris. That night after dinner there was a gathering at the hotel where a presentation was made to Joan in gratitude for her outstanding efforts in making our visit such a success. Celia Skrine entertained us with lively readings from the inimitable Mme de Sévigné's letters; Joan added letters from Mme Mohl. This was followed by an impressive cabaret duo as John and Kate Chapple read from a recently discovered and highly amusing Gaskell fragment mocking the pretensions of an opinionated lady critic. On Tuesday morning some of us accompanied Joan back to the Place des Vosges where we visited the Maison de Victor Hugo at No.6. This was full of mementoes of the writer and his family. We were greatly struck by the similarity between one of our party and the dignified portrait of Madame Hugo. On returning to the hotel we sat on benches outside enjoying a sandwich in the sun. Then, having said goodbye to our Eurostar companions, it was off to Charles de Gaulle airport once again. True to form Manchester was veiled in cloud as we landed, but nothing could dim the memory of the wonderful time we had had together. Our pilgrimage in the steps of Elizabeth Gaskell had been highly interesting and great fun, and I had enjoyed every minute of it. Here's to Rome in 2000!

### The Tenth Annual Gaskell Society Meeting in Tokyo: From a Speaker's Viewpoint

by Professor Andrew Sanders

I was extremely privileged this autumn to be invited to lecture in Japan. Over a period of two weeks I lectured ten times, both to academic institutions and to societies. My visit had in fact been framed around two especially pleasant invitations. The first was to speak to the September meeting of the Japan Dickens Fellowship; the second, the climax of my trip in every sense, was to address the Gaskell Society in Tokyo at their tenth anniversary meeting on Saturday 10 October.

I arrived back in Tokyo from Kobe (where I had been speaking in the university) on one of the famous Japanese *shinkansen* trains. These trains are the envy of the world – clean, swift and meticulously timed. A traveller even knows exactly where the door of his or her carriage will end up on the platform, for these are marked out for the convenience of both the traveller and those awaiting the traveller. I was duly met, and warmly welcomed, at Tokyo Station by members of the Gaskell Society, who, despite the considerable weight of my luggage (I was leaving for London on the next day) gamely assisted me onto two other local trains in order to get to the out-of-town campus where the day conference was being held. Only those who have visited Japan can conceive of the physical sprawl of Tokyo, and travelling across the city, as with London, can take a good hour and a half (which it did on this occasion). Nevertheless, once we arrived at the conference my second welcome was heartfelt.

It was wonderful to meet so many old friends, some of whom had merely been correspondents before. Professor Tatsuhiko Ohno of Kumamoto University (the translator into Japanese of *Sylvia's Lovers*) was perhaps the most notable of these friendly correspondents made flesh.

My lecture went well, I think, despite the fact that I was the last feature of the day and a certain exhaustion always creeps over audiences in the mid-afternoon (I speak from experience as a lecturer and as an enforced listener to lectures). I was wafted with delightful scents as I spoke, thanks to a wonderful bouquet of flowers sent by the Gaskell Society UK to the Japan branch, and much appreciated by them. Equally pleasant was a warm message of congratulations to the branch from the British Council representative in Tokyo, himself a graduate of the University of Durham where I now teach.



The lecture was followed by a fine reception and the opportunity to talk to many of the members who had travelled to Tokyo from all over Japan. This was, in turn, followed by a truly memorable dinner, taken in traditional Japanese style, high up in a Tokyo hotel with spectacular views over the city. It was a perfect Japanese mixture of the traditional and the innovative, enlivened both by good company and excellent *sake*. It was, as I said earlier, the climax to my visit, and a particularly happy one. My thanks to my hosts in the Gaskell Society of Japan and especially to their efficient, generous and tireless secretary, Mrs Tanaka. I am most grateful.

### South West of England Branch Report

by Rosemary Marshall

An informal meeting was held at 138 Fairfield Park Road, Bath BA1 6JT, on Monday 16<sup>th</sup> November 1998. Nine people came in response to a notice in the library and a mention in the Bath Chronicle.

It was agreed that a South West group of the Gaskell Society should be formed and that meetings should take place two or three times a year. Professor Peter Skrine, Professor of German at Bristol University, agreed to be the Chairman, and is to give a lecture entitled "Mrs Gaskell Re-discovered" under the combined auspices of the Bath Royal Institution of Science and Literature and the Gaskell Society, and this will be held on 6<sup>th</sup> May, 7 for 7.30 pm at 18 Queen's Square, Bath. All are welcome. If anyone would like to be informed about events, please get in touch with Mrs Rosemary Marshall at 138 Fairfield Park Road.

The Autumn meeting will include a talk by Mrs Kay Millard on Unitarianism as a social force in the nineteenth century. Those present included: Professor Skrine, Mrs Rosemary Marshall (agreed to act as secretary), Mrs Ruth Gwynn and Mrs Joy Waterman (both members of the Society who had never made contact with other members), Ms Beverley Grey (very interested in Josephine Butler), Miss Sindell Wright (a retired academic), Mrs Kay Millard (President of the Bath and District Unitarians), Miss Kathy Kelly (an OU student). Apologies were sent by Celia Skrine and Jean Jamison.

Everyone spoke with great enthusiasm of their own interest in Mrs Gaskell and her writing – it was a lovely evening

### A (not) Imaginary Conversation Between a 'Lady of Quality' & Mrs Gaskell

by John Chapple

Lady J.H. I have so often heard of you from my friend Lady A.B. I am *so delighted* to make your acquaintance. You knew Lady E. too, did you not? A clever woman, but not religious, I fear?

Mrs Gaskell She was very clever certainly, but I never knew enough of her to speak of her as either religious or not religious.

Lady J.H. Ah! You enjoyed her talent, very natural, – you sought her for her cleverness. – She did collect very clever people. I dare say you often went to her soirées – Monday, I think?

Mrs Gaskell Yes! I liked going very much. One was sure to meet some one distinguished or remarkable. – Rio, La Martine &c &c.

Lady J.H. So you got your *change out of her*. (Mrs Gaskell is struck with this new bit of slang, & determined to appropriate it on the first occasion.) That is always satisfactory – But Lady E. was not religious, I assure you. By the way may I ask if you have written anything since your charming book *Mary Powell*?

Mrs Gaskell (slightly miffed) I did not write *Mary Powell*, – the name of my work is *Mary Barton*.

Lady J.H. *Mary Barton* – I thought it was *Mary Powell*. *Mary Powell* is a very nice book, – all old English & mediaeval, you know. What is *Mary Barton* about?

Mrs Gaskell Oh – a – a – It's a story about Manchester and – a – a – there is something about a strike.

Lady J.H. A strike! How very interesting! Just what people are talking about now. It is so silly of the working people to throw themselves out of work and starve – don't you think so?

Mrs Gaskell There is more to be said on both sides of the question than comes before the public in general, - but of course a strike is generally so conducted as to be a blunder.

Lady J.H. How charming to hear you talk about it so & how could not you say a few words to these poor misguided people telling them - a - a, - giving them good advice, I mean, - and that would put a stop to it all, and save an immensity of distress.

Mrs Gaskell (rather dismayed) Oh no, I cannot speak to people, and besides they would not listen - I don't know half enough about the matter.

Lady J.H. Well now I am sure I should have thought you did, your book is so sensible. Miss Marsh does - the lady who wrote that book you know - I can't remember the exact name, and the other book you know - about the man who was killed in the Crimea - I know Miss Marsh - & I once went with her when she went to speak to the men, - navigators, you know, - and she made quite a sensation, - quite impressed them, - she was very handsomely dressed, & that tells on that sort of people, - and tall - and a high forehead - you have a high forehead Mrs Gaskell, - but she makes hers a little higher by shaving her hair off - Now don't you think you could do something of the sort, - collect a body of working men, and tell them how foolishly they are acting? - I assure you Miss Marsh made quite an impression.

Mrs Gaskell I am afraid not. Our Lancashire people are a very stubborn set, not to be talked over in that way.

Lady J.H. Ah yes, the North Country people are peculiar. What a remarkable book Jane Eyre is? And that was written by a North Country person, you know. Did you ever meet her, - the authoress of Jane Eyre, I mean?

Mrs Gaskell Yes, I have met her -

Lady J.H. Oh! Do tell me something about her. I have always had such an interest in her - (very unhappy, I am sure she must have been!) I have asked so many people if they can tell me anything about her, - some one said she was a clergyman's daughter - How charming (coming a little nearer to Mrs Gaskell) to meet someone who really knows her - knew her

I suppose I should say, for she is dead, is not she? Papa, (loud) Papa (across a great circle of people) do come here! Mrs Gaskell is going to tell me something about the person who wrote Jane Eyre - so interesting - She knew her, and she was a clergyman's daughter and she is dead. - (Papa comes, and Lady J.H. says in a very audible whisper) Mrs Gaskell, you know, papa - the authoress - wrote Mary Powell and a great deal about strikes - Mrs Gaskell, will you allow me to introduce my father to you?

Marquess of ... I am sure I have great pleasure in making the acquaintance of a lady whose writings are so well known and so highly valued by every one.

Mrs Gaskell (doing her best to blush) Oh! My lord ...  
Bona fide

This lightly edited text is taken from the original manuscript, in the Pierpont Morgan Library, New York. Written on very thin, dark blue paper, it is undoubtedly in Elizabeth Gaskell's hand, and was bequeathed to the library with a number of Gaskell letters by the late Professor Gordon Ray, the distinguished American scholar-collector. Once again I am happy to acknowledge typically courteous assistance from American curators, in this instance Robert E Parks and Christine Nelson.

The reference to the death of Charlotte Brontë means that this little skit cannot have been written before 1855, which is consistent with the fact that Elizabeth Gaskell was occasionally using blue paper from about August 1856. It might even have been written before February 1857, when *The Life of Charlotte Brontë* was published. But can Lady J.H., daughter of a Marquess, be identified? Though one could trawl through mid-century Marquesses and their daughters, I suspect that the initials are false, designed to put us off the scent.

It seems likely, too, that the very clever but irreligious Lady E. was not a noblewoman at all but Elizabeth Gaskell's great friend Madame Mohl. In Margaret Lesser's fascinating *Clarkey: A Portrait in Letters of Mary Clarke Mohl 1793-1883*, it is made clear that Mary Clarke had been brought up unconventionally, without the powerful faith that sustained and afflicted so many of her contemporaries. Victorian poetry of faith and doubt, for instance, is only matched by the Metaphysical poets of the seventeenth century. The religious poetry of Tennyson, Browning and

Hopkins is often as thrilling as that by Donne, Herbert, Crashaw, Vaughan and Traherne.

Like John Stuart Mill, Mary Clarke was an oddity in a religious age. She was original in other ways, too. The liveliest of beings, she abounded in racy comments and startling opinions. Alexis François Rio and Alphonse de Lamartine could well have been amongst the men of wit and accomplishment who frequented her Paris salon, which Elizabeth Gaskell knew from 1853. A translation of Rio's work had appeared in Britain as *The Poetry of Christian Art* (1854); by the 1860s he must have been working on his *Shakespeare* (Paris, 1864). The famous Romantic poet Lamartine had not been in favour with Madame Mohl when he became a member of the revolutionary provisional government of 1848: 'Lamartine is a puppy', she wrote sourly at the time, '... a vain fool who thought of nothing but showing off his miserable self'. However, the poet turned politician must eventually have been forgiven by the volatile hostess, a parallel to her relations with Louise Swanton Belloc.

To mistake *Mary Powell* for *Mary Barton* is a nice satiric touch. Anne Manning's long popular pastiche 'diary' of John Milton's first wife, entitled *The Maiden and Married Life of Anne Powell, afterwards Mistress Milton*, first appeared in 1849. Written in an antique style ('methinks Mr. Milton presumeth somewhat too much on his marital Authority, writing in this Strayn'), reprinted in old-fashioned layout and type, it could hardly have been more unlike Mrs Gaskell's up-to-date industrial novel. And if 'Miss Marsh' was Anne Marsh Caldwell, Dr Henry Holland's sister-in-law, not only had she been widowed in 1849, she had seven children to support by her prolific novel-writing. Had she the time to address public meetings of working men like Lady Astor in the Plymouth of my youth?

Some of this dialogue, especially towards the end, betrays Elizabeth Gaskell's deep annoyance with the kind of insensitivity she must often have encountered as an author in society. Nevertheless, the side of her mind that made her fasten on a new piece of slang and determine to use it herself at the first opportunity is just as characteristic. Mary Clarke Mohl discovered the same delight in vivid turns of phrase. Margaret Lesser quotes her claiming the 'valuable historical recollection' that her Scottish grandmother had once called her 'as impudent as a highwayman's horse'. This would do for Lady J.H., ultimately as ignorantly innocent as the friendly horse poking 'his head into the carriage, not knowing, poor fellow! How ill he was looked upon'.

## Book Notes

by Christine Lingard

War, the Army and Victorian Literature by John Pack. Macmillan, £42.50.

A general discussion of the changing attitudes to the army in the Victorian era. Though there are chapters on the Crimean War and the Indian Mutiny, it is the use of the military at home and in particular in confrontation with strikers in *North and South* that concerns the author. There is also a chapter on the novel *Oakfield* by Matthew Arnold's brother William whose early death is described in GL242a.

Mistress of the House: Women of Property in the Victorian Novel by Tim Dolin. Ashgate, £37.25.

Argues that the married women's property laws are fundamental to our understanding of the mid-Victorian novel, in particular *Shirley*, *Villette*, *Cranford*, *The Moonstone*, *The Woodlanders* and *Diana of the Crossways*. Appendices include Barbara Bodichon's pamphlet *A Brief Summary of the Laws Concerning Women* (1854) and an account of the Caroline Norton divorce case.

Women of Faith in Victorian Culture: Reassessing the Angel in the House edited by Anne Hogan and Andrew Bradstock. Macmillan, £42.50.

Aims to approach an overworked theme from a differing angle – the effect on religious women of this stereotyping. The choice of authors discussed is unusual and Gaskell does not warrant a chapter of her own but is mentioned by Siv Jansson in *The Tenant of Wildfell Hall: rejecting the angel's influence*, and by Peter Marchant in *Double Blessedness: Anna Kingsford and 'Beatrice'*.

Nineteenth-century Short Stories by Women: A Routledge Anthology edited by Harriet Devine Jump. Routledge, £14.99.

A bumper anthology of 19<sup>th</sup> century short stories, chronologically arranged – from Maria Edgeworth's *The Limerick Gloves* (1804) to Margaret Oliphant's *A Story of a Wedding Tour* (1898), and including *The Manchester Marriage*. None of those who might be considered part of Gaskell's literary circle are represented indicating how unique she was in

the development of the shorter literary form. There is a general introduction with some interesting comments on the fees paid to women authors, bibliographical and biographical notes.

Women's Voices: Their Lives and Loves Through Two Thousand Years of Letters edited by Olga Kenyon. Constable, £18.95.

A narrative text quoting from over 2000 years of women's letters from Ancient Egypt to the present, from queens and saints to wives and governesses, reflecting on childhood, courtship, motherhood, divorce and widowhood. Gaskell, George Eliot and Florence Nightingale are well represented as is her 17<sup>th</sup> century heroine Mme de Sévigné.

Pilgrim Edition of the Letters of Charles Dickens Vol. 10, 1862-1864 edited by Graham Storey. Clarendon Press, £65.

Covers the publication of *A Dark Night's Work* and *Crowley Castle*. His relationship with Gaskell had cooled by this time and there is no actual correspondence between them, though there is a letter of 1862 to William Gaskell.

Metaphors of Change in the Language of Nineteenth-century Fiction: Scott, Gaskell and Kingsley by Megan Perigoe Stitt. Clarendon Press, £35. (Oxford English monographs)

A discussion of novelists' use of language in particular dialect with ample reference to William Gaskell.

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### Preliminary Notice

At MANCHESTER CATHEDRAL on 6 May

A Gaskell evening of two lectures and readings by the Rev Frank Wright, Trevor Johnson and Delia Corrie

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### South of England Branch 1999 Programme

SATURDAY 30 JANUARY – 2 pm – Francis Holland School  
'The Comic Art of 'Wives and Daughters' – Graham Handley

SATURDAY 15 MAY – 2 pm – Francis Holland School  
'Mrs Gaskell and Gardens' – Jane Wilson

SATURDAY 28 AUGUST – 2 pm – venue to be decided  
'Mrs Gaskell and her Christian Socialists' – Brenda Colloms

SATURDAY 13 NOVEMBER – 2 pm – Francis Holland School  
'Crime and Mrs Gaskell' – Hill Slavid

Please put these dates in your diary NOW. Please note that the second meeting of the year will be held on 15 May, not on 24 April as originally planned.

Francis Holland School, 39 Graham Terrace, London SW1W 8JF is a few minutes' walk from Sloane Square Underground Station (Circle and District lines).

When meetings are held at the Francis Holland School those of us who wish to do so meet at 12 noon at the entrance to Sloane Square Underground Station for a light lunch together. In the past we have had lunch at the Royal Court Tavern. However, recently the Tavern has become crowded and noisy. I suggest that in future we might have lunch in the cafeteria on the fifth floor of Peter Jones, which is on the side of Sloane Square opposite the Underground Station. If anyone is not able to be at the station by 12 noon, please will they make their own way to the cafeteria in Peter Jones. Prices at Peter Jones are very similar to those at the Royal Court Tavern.

If further information is required, please contact Dudley J Barlow, 44 Seymour Road, London SW18 5JA (0181 874 7727)

# MARIE BARTON

PAR

M<sup>lle</sup> GASKELL

ROMAN ANGLAIS

TRADUIT AVEC L'AUTORISATION DE L'AUTEUR

PAR M<sup>lle</sup> MOREL

EDITION DE CH. LAHURE

Imprimeur à Paris

SE VEND A PARIS

CHEZ L. HACHETTE ET C<sup>ie</sup>

RUE PIERRE-SARRAZIN, N° 14

'I am pledged by a French law-deed (*such* a long one!) to put on my works that I reserve the right of translation; and to send a copy of each of them as it is published to M.Hachette, 14 Rue Pierre-Sarragin. He sees if he cares to translate them within a certain time; if he does he pays me a franc and a half a page; if not done within a twelve month, they become my own property again [...] neither Mary Barton nor Ruth were protected\*, but he has translated them, paid me ½ a franc per page; and stopped one or two other translations.'

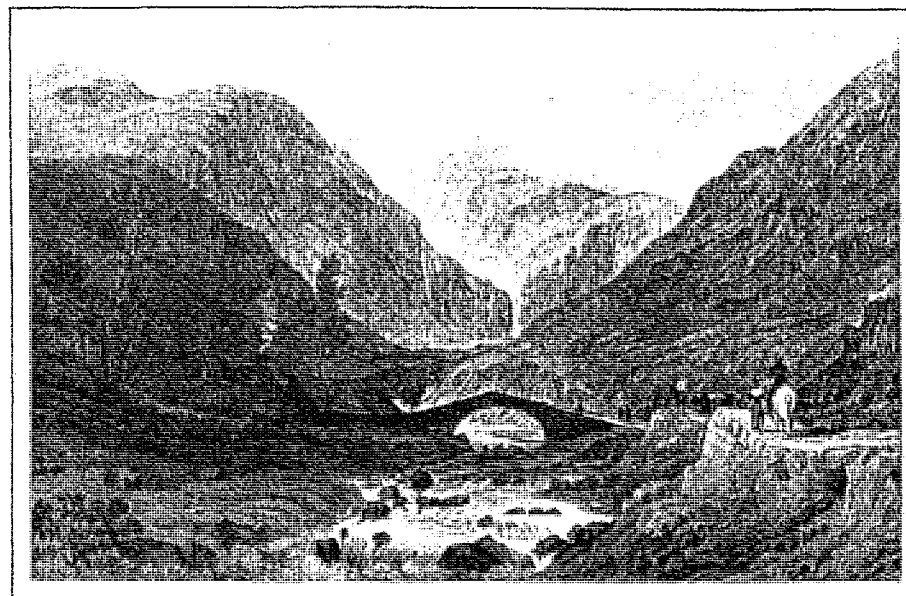
\*International law on copyright was just being established



M. Hachette

*This title page from Marie Barton  
has been reduced to ¾ of its original size*

# The Gaskell Society



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: 01565 634668)

Hon Treasurer: Brian Williams, 15 Cawley Avenue, Culcheth, Warrington WA3 4DF

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**NEWSLETTER**

**AUGUST 1999**

**NO. 28**

### Editor's Letter

Much has been happening in the Gaskell world recently. Firstly we have just held our sixth conference, in London, with over a hundred members attending: the programme was much enjoyed and we hope members will share this by reading the report written by Maureen Horner and Barbara Miller in this Newsletter, and in the next Journal there will be more details and some of the conference papers. We are grateful to all our excellent speakers, also to Janet and Robin Allan who manned the book table and Jean Alston who sat at the receipt of custom, our London members, especially Jane Wilson who planned the London coach tour, and to all who participated.

In the week before the conference a group of about ten members were enlisted by the BBC to assist in making an Omnibus film about Elizabeth Gaskell's work. I think most of you know that BBC are filming *Wives and Daughters*: this is to be shown in four seventy-five minute episodes towards the end of the year. The production team also worked on *Pride and Prejudice*: they have enjoyed making the Gaskell film and are impressed with her writing, but many questions have arisen and it is clear that there is a need to tell people about Elizabeth Gaskell's life and writing. Tim Dunn who works on the *One Foot in the Past* series is directing the Omnibus programme to do just this; he is a Gaskell enthusiast, a recent convert.

We have filmed in Knutsford, Manchester, North Wales and the Lake District and still have a session to look forward to in Rome. We now view TV programmes differently and wonder how many 'takes' there have been to each scene and we are somewhat nervous about our screen personas! We jump to the 'Action!' command and then stand by patiently ready to repeat for camera angles. We hope you will enjoy both film experiences later in the year.

Robert Craig of Sandafayre, a stamp dealing firm in Knutsford who sell mainly via the internet, was surprised to see the signature E C Gaskell in a batch of letters he had bought in Scotland. He invited me to read them. There are six addressed to Miss Fergusson between 1845 and 48: she was governess to the Gaskell children. The last in the series is written from Plas yn Penryn just as *Mary Barton* was published. It is fortunate that Robert Craig recognised their importance and has agreed to sell them to

our Society for £2,000, though they would probably have brought much more by selling them on the internet. We intend to deposit them in John Rylands Library, Manchester. Their discovery is particularly timely for inclusion in the new edition of Gaskell letters being prepared by John Chapple and Alan Shelston, soon to go to press. We are happy to be in a position to make this purchase mainly because of the legacy left to us by Daphne Carrick of Norwich. We plan to show the letters at the AGM meeting on 25<sup>th</sup> September.

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### **The Gaskell Society Conference: The London Experience**

**23 July – 26 July 1999**

by Maureen Horner and Barbara Miller

The Gaskell Conference began unexpectedly, and pleasantly, early on the Manchester/Euston train with the serendipitous meeting of other 'Gaskellians'. We had opted for adding a day on at the beginning of the weekend and thoroughly enjoyed the pre-conference chat with Joan and her set of 'groupies' (concessionary ticket holders travelling together).

The conference activities started immediately with amusing anecdotes of the filming process by the BBC who had been filming the society's activities all over the country during the previous week. It was here that the group members had learned the finer techniques of an actor's life such as: how to wear the same clothes for three weeks and walk in single file, although our actors had to make up their own scripts). We imagine this must have caused undue problems for society members!) Joan regaled us with the details in her own inimitable way and we knew our trip was to be filled with the usual mix of Gaskellian revelry and knowledge.

On arrival at the LSE at Bankside the view from our room was impressive, the river running through the city, separating yet linking the areas, an insistent life-force spanning so many centuries with its own part to play in personal histories. Shakespeare's Globe Theatre, Wordsworth on Westminster Bridge, so much of Dickens' writing tied up in the river, and here we are ready to cross and re-cross the river during our stay.

Having firmly attached ourselves to the 'Virgin groupie party' the unexpected result was a visit to the Savoy Theatre (organised by Jean

Alston) to see Noel Coward's 'Hay Fever' – a hysterical, madcap contrast to Elizabeth Gaskell's world. A thoroughly enjoyable treat in a beautiful little theatre. Despite the unfortunate accident in the back of the taxi on the way back to our temporary residence at Bankside, when Joyce almost knocked herself unconscious, precipitating a night at Guy's Hospital, (the lengths some people will go to get an insider's view of a London hospital) the evening was a great success. We were all very relieved when Joyce was returned to the fold to enjoy the rest of the activities and was found enjoying the grandeur of St Paul's the following day.

Friday was spent in an orientation exercise, this being our first stay this side of the Thames, in Southwark. The day was spent by us in an exploration of St Paul's Cathedral in anticipation of the planned guided walk in the area the next day. It seems certainly the most splendid of Wren's creations, a lifetime in the building, and the repository (in memoriam) of so many eminent people, for instance Sir Philip Sydney. During her research of Charlotte Brontë, Elizabeth Gaskell visited the Deanery and almost certainly the Cathedral. If so, we are sure she would have felt a similar sense of the grandeur, and possibly made comparisons with the more simple, plainer churches she would be accustomed to worship in.

Southwark itself is interesting, this being where Chaucer's pilgrims began their pilgrimage to Canterbury, starting from the Tabard Inn. It is difficult to separate fact from fiction with so many writers, Dickens famously, referring to actual areas. Dickens, of course, would have been very familiar with the streets and alleys travelling to and from his lodgings in Lant Street.

The Conference started in earnest at 4.30 prompt on Friday. The beginning was formal and stiff as it often is at these affairs, but very quickly over tea and biscuits the stiff and formal exchanges, the discussions about the journeys, turned to topics of a more congenial nature. The warmth and camaraderie of the delegates soon shone through as friendships were renewed and new ones forged. An air of expectation and excitement reigned when the first speaker began.

Linda Hughes (*see Book Notes*) began the academic part of the programme unexpectedly alone because Michael Lund was prevented from attending by a family crisis. Her lecture was a lively, energetic, stimulating leap into



the conference. She covered her topic with true verve, style and professionalism. A seamless lecture and impossible to tell she had expected to share her spot with her absent colleague.

The evening meal was excellent and the two following talks, although less formal, were nonetheless as stimulating. Firstly, Chiyuki Kanamaru sated our curiosity with the relevance of Gaskell for Japanese readers. She stressed the importance of Elizabeth Gaskell's portrayal of character and exploration of emotions for her students, particularly its contrast to Japanese literature. Her gentle personality and genuine love for Gaskell melted our hearts.

Last but not least, Sylvia Burch gave us a tour de force of Southwark, taking us through a very useful local map of the area suggesting places to visit and things to do. She certainly whetted the appetite for the joys which would greet us on 'the morrow'.

Saturday morning lectures began at 9.15 am with contributions from Larry K Uffelman, Dr Dorothy Collin and Dr Andrew Sanders. A full morning of work.

Professor of English at Mansfield University, Pennsylvania, Larry Uffelman talked to us about the difficulties of the editor/writer relationship between Dickens and Elizabeth Gaskell. He showed how the demands of the serialization process produced difficulties for both the editor Dickens, who wanted to focus on the economic division between the North and the South, which was the mission statement of his magazine, and the author Elizabeth Gaskell who was far more concerned with the development of her main character, Margaret Hale. As Pope-Hennessy commented, Dickens had his own rules – movement and action was essential in a first instalment, and early introduction of plot was important. She also commented, "Mrs Gaskell never learnt to accept his rulings and was infuriated when *North and South* was cut". The lecture revealed, with the aid of graphs, how Mrs Gaskell reworked her plot moving it from a pastoral/romance to a novel of development and growth in the female character Margaret Hale, and he also showed how she accommodated Dickens' demands with her reworking of the text. It was a stimulating session and for those of us who have yet to experience the pleasure of reading of the novel, it gave us an appetizer. For those who have read the work, the lecture, I am sure, would encourage a re-read.

In contrast, Dr Dorothy Collin, Honorary Research Fellow at the University of Western Australia who has published papers on *North and South* and *Cranford* in the British Journal Literary Magazine, gave us some insight into the lives and financial difficulties of the Publishers' Readers. She demonstrated how hard it was to survive without the professional status which other professionals such as those in Medicine and the Law enjoyed. She raised some interesting issues about the possibility, or even the probability, of being an objective reader of other people's work when they were writers seeking publication of their own work.

Dr Andrew Sanders took 'the graveyard' slot (his words!). However, nobody slept through his exceptional lecture, where he stimulated and educated his audience about the difficulties writers of the 19<sup>th</sup> Century had in writing about 'life in earnest'. He enthralled us with snippets of information concerning the 'mission' statement in 'Household Words' which was first published in January 1850. He told us that Dickens was delighted with the story of *Lizzie Leigh* and paid £20 to Elizabeth Gaskell for the work. *Lizzie Leigh* addressed the issue of 'fallen women', a topic of some concern to him and the story conformed to the mission statement of 'Household Words'. Although Elizabeth Gaskell 'enjoyed' a somewhat tempestuous relationship with her publisher, they emerged from their difficulties to advertise *Hard Times* and *North and South* together. Dr Sanders' ideas kept us buzzing throughout lunch.

We opted for the walk on Saturday afternoon around the St Paul's area, and had the most beautiful day for the sightseeing. Our Blue Badge guide, Alison, had noted our particular literary interest and had much to show us. Being Saturday afternoon, and moving within the City 'square mile', the area was actually deserted and perfect for our stop/go movement. There was no fear of bumping into or being bumped by others with more urgent business than ours. We wandered up and down narrow, hidden alleyways to light upon 'Chop Houses', or gems of churches. Wren's architectural style evident time over time, still strong, yet elegant in line. The Cornhill, of course, connects directly with Mrs Gaskell, the Regency houses also reminders of her visits to this metropolis. We found coffee houses – each developing its own specialist coterie – gossip houses – political cliques and so on. The numerous blue plaques are an insistent reminder of the City's literary significance.

Saturday evening was a joy. Jenny Uglow was so interesting, sharing her experience of being an adviser to the BBC on its adaptation of *Wives and Daughters*, this production to reach our television screens around November. Especially interesting was the video Jenny had acquired for us showing extracts from the programme, allowing us a preview of characters, dress, and presentation of plot. Meeting Jenny was a real highlight for us and for many other people. A member from New Zealand, Eileen Turner, said that it had been particularly wonderful meeting Jenny as it had been the reading of the biography of Mrs Gaskell which had motivated her to join the society and added an enjoyable dimension to her life.

Sunday began with Dr Joanne Shattock who highlighted the difficulties some female writers experienced in plying their craft. Mrs Oliphant, for instance, was prolific in output (101 novels) but needed to 'read' other writers to make a living. Clearly, some were not as 'fortunate' as say, Eliot (who lived, Mrs Oliphant remarked, in a 'mental greenhouse') or, indeed, Elizabeth Gaskell. The relationship between those wishing to be published and those in control of publishing was obviously problematical.

Margaret Beetham, in contrast, talked about the reader as opposed to the writer. Her topic was 19<sup>th</sup> Century women's interest magazines, her analysis of their content, and perhaps their placing of women in particular roles. So women are treated as shoppers, followers of fashion, consumers of print, 'learning' how to control the household and manage the servants. Women then seemed to be caught up in and entrapped within an unstable femininity. Certainly food for thought here.

Howard Gregg gave us, to complete the morning's work, an interesting paper on the serialization of Trollope's *Orley Farm* which firmly established his reputation as a major writer. In this long novel he skilfully interwove several themes such as the position of women in society and the practice of law. His flawed heroine elicited mixed reactions among his readers. Howard's talk gave a useful comparison between contemporary writers and their serial writing and was a stimulus to read more Trollope.

After lunch a quiet hour was spent in dawdling down to the river, finding a seat, and watching its flow, a very pleasant interlude between the morning's lectures and the highlight of the afternoon – seats at the Globe to see *Antony and Cleopatra* performed in true Shakespearean mode, with

an all-male cast. We thoroughly enjoyed the performance and the experience of an authentic re-creation of the play and theatre. Chiyuki Kanamaru summed up the whole experience as embodying "the energy of England".

Sunday evening's dramatic presentation lived up to every expectation. Written by our own matchless Joan and enthusiastically delivered by an all-star cast, the professionalism of the players both educated and amused us with their excellent rendition. They gave life to the professional relationship which existed between George Smith, publisher, and his clients. Well done everyone. A standard has now been set for a Gaskell finale.

Officially the London conference ended on Sunday evening. However, some of us had opted for the Hampshire tour on the Monday. For us the day was pure pleasure, although for some there was work ahead. A group of Gaskellians have been involved, as we know, in the Omnibus programme on Elizabeth Gaskell and were to be filmed at The Lawn, Holybourne, in the house which Elizabeth Gaskell had negotiated to buy as a gift for William. There was a poignancy attached to being at the house which she did not have the opportunity to enjoy. The peace and tranquility was overwhelming. The attraction of the house and area was all too evident.

We moved on to Chawton for lunch and our last visit of the weekend, Jane Austen's home. This was the perfect end to a perfect weekend.

There was so much to do and experience at the London conference that it is impossible to single out particular events and say 'this was special'. For us, and others we know, simple meeting people, sharing the same interest in Elizabeth Gaskell, putting names to faces, and the whole atmosphere, including the choice of location were all important. We parted already looking forward to the next series of meetings beginning in October.

## William Gaskell and the Pressures of Work

by Alan Shelston

We hear a lot about the pressures of stress in the contemporary world, and in particular about the problems caused by the often conflicting demands of work and family. An entry in the Minute Book of the Trustees of Cross Street Chapel suggests that this is not an entirely new phenomenon. The minutes of the meeting of the Trustees on 1 May 1854 record the fact that the trustees had received a communication as to 'the desirability of the Revd Wm Gaskell having a respite from his ministerial duties to enable him to recruit his health'. As a consequence it was resolved 'that Messrs Sidney Potter, Vincent Potter and Thomas Bankes be requested to wait upon Mr Gaskell to inform him of the readiness of the Trustees to enter into an arrangement to enable him to absent himself for a time from his ministerial duties, during two Sundays on which they can have the Chapel closed for being beautified – also to inform Mr Gaskell that it is the intention of the Trustees to call the Pewholders together, in a short time, to confer with them.'<sup>1</sup>

As minister, William Gaskell would not have been present at this meeting, and the minute is an interesting indication of where power truly lay at Cross Street. However respected the minister might be, ultimate authority for the Chapel's affairs lay with the Trustees. We do not know what William was suffering from, but there are regular references to her anxieties about her husband's well-being in Mrs Gaskell's letters. 'I wish that Mr Gaskell *looked* stronger, - he never complains or allows that anything is the matter with him' she writes on one occasion, and on another she tells us that he suffered intermittently from 'spasmodic asthma, for which curiously enough, no air does so well as Manchester smoke' (GL 439a).<sup>2</sup> It seems likely however that William's need for respite from his duties on this occasion was as much as anything the result of a number of pressures which came together at the same time and affected his general well-being.

In 1854 William was technically still the junior minister at Cross Street where, since his appointment in 1828, he had worked in partnership with John Gooch Robberds.<sup>3</sup> Robberds died on 21 April 1854 and was buried five days later: one of the last acts which William performed before taking his leave was to preach his funeral sermon. The fact that the trustees were prepared to grant him leave at this time, effectively leaving the Chapel

without a minister, suggests that the need must have been a serious one. Cross Street was a very demanding post in all sorts of ways, and at the next meeting of the trustees, on 28 June, they set about seeking for a replacement for Robberds, a process completed by the appointment of the Reverend James Panton Ham in September. This is a clear recognition of the urgency of the situation. Robberds' death would seem to have been sudden (the Minute Book pays tribute to 'the efficiency of his ministerial services which he discharged even to the Sunday preceding his decease'), but according to the Minute Book he too had been given 'two or three months' sick leave in 1852: by this time Robberds was over sixty and it seems probable that his partner increasingly took the greater burden of the work.

There was another issue relating to the Chapel which will have intensified the pressure on all concerned. In a letter to Mary Green, wife of the Knutsford minister Henry Green, written in the same May of 1854 Elizabeth writes "We don't know what the 'Chapel' means to do. We hear this is likely to be sold to the Town-Hall and Mr Gaskell says I must not be impatient & ask questions about anything for 'it is considered impertinent in a minister's wife'."<sup>4</sup> There is no record of what this statement refers to but it would seem that the status of Cross Street Chapel itself was not entirely secure during the rapid development of Manchester in the nineteenth century. Geoffrey Head, the current Chairman of Trustees, tells me that the possible sale of the Chapel to the Corporation was a 'recurrent theme' for much of the nineteenth and early twentieth century. The Chapel occupied a very desirable site in the centre of the city, abutting onto the old Town Hall at a time when the corporation were looking to extend it. Eventually the decision was taken to build a new Town Hall altogether and thus we have Waterhouse's magnificent neo-Gothic building on Albert Square. But this was more than ten years later and it should be remembered that some of the city fathers were also members of the Cross Street congregation. Not only would William have been anxious about who Robberds' successor might be, it is quite conceivable that he could have taken his leave in the knowledge that the very future of the Chapel of which he was minister was in doubt.

The letter to Mary Green indicates a more immediate cause for anxiety on the domestic front. The Greens were great family friends of the Gaskells, and Mrs Gaskell opens with a matter of concern about her children: "I have been in a great fright this last fortnight about the scarlet fever. It

broke out about 3 weeks ago ... all around us; within 50 yards in one case; and two nurseries were swept bare by the terrible scourge within 300 yards." She cancels a visit by her friend Mrs Shaen, and her infant child, and after much activity "packed Hearn and the children off, clothesless, for all their clothes were at the wash" to Poulton-le-Fylde ("there was no known case of S.F. there"). Scarlet fever, of course, held terror for Victorian parents, and Mrs Gaskell had been susceptible to fears for her children ever since the death of her son Willie, in infancy: William's health problems whatever they were, would have been insignificant compared with this.

William recuperated at the home of a fellow clergyman in Hampstead, returning to Manchester in June. He resumed his duties, only to go down again "with this tiresome influenza" at the end of the year (GL 202, 204, 222). But the appointment of Mr Ham failed to provide a long-term solution. Ham was a controversialist who would seem never to have settled in at Cross Street and early in 1859 he resigned at short notice to take up a post at Essex Street in London. A letter from Mrs Gaskell to Charles Eliot Norton records that Ham's new post had first been offered to William, - 'Mr Gaskell has been asked to go to Essex St London' - but that he has turned it down, for 'there must be some much stronger reason other than a mere increase of income before it can be right to pull up the roots of a man of his age.'<sup>5</sup> She goes on to suggest that again her husband's health is threatened, and that history may be about to repeat itself. Once again William is to find himself in sole charge at the Chapel:

So his colleague Mr Ham goes (... and we women Gaskells are none of us sorry, - oh! For some really spiritual devotional preaching instead of controversy about doctrines, - about whh I am more and more certain *we can never be certain in this world.*) And as he goes off directly Mr Gaskell will have all the work to do for some time, whh I am sorry for as this is the time of year when his digestion always gets wrong. I have been trying to put in the fine edge of a wedge to get him a longer yearly holiday, - if only for once - after thirty-one years of pretty hard work he should have it. The worst is he dislikes change and travel so very much; and if he gets a holiday I am afraid he will spend it in his study, out of which room by his own free will he will never stir. (March 9, 1859; GL 417).

Again the trustees set procedures in motion to select another minister. This time they came up with James Drummond, a young man for whom it was his first appointment, but who was unable to take up the post until June 1860. For the moment then William was once again doing 'all the work', a fact recognised by the trustees when they voted him the sum of £50 'for his additional services during the absence of a colleague and for enabling him to obtain assistance in the discharge of his ministerial duties.' (Minutes, 7 March 1860) Drummond was to prove much more to Mrs Gaskell's liking than his predecessor: in another of the unpublished letters she describes him as, 'a small slight young man with a lovely complexion, beautiful steady looking eyes, and an expression of goodness such as I have seldom seen equalled'. She goes on: 'I think him very sweet and good in private life, but rather feel as if I were his mother, & might advise and order him about; but in the pulpit I feel like a child learning from a disciple' (to Edward Everett Hale, 14 December 1860). This last was high praise from someone who was known not to like sermons, and sadly but appropriately it was Drummond who was to preach her funeral sermon at Knutsford some five years later. For all Mrs Gaskell's concern about William's health, it was hers that was to give out so suddenly. Drummond himself went on to a long and distinguished career of service to the Unitarian ministry, ultimately becoming principal of Manchester College, then established in London.

In Mrs Gaskell's comments we sense, not for the first time, her irritation at the demands made upon her husband by his work at Cross Street, and not for the first time we suspect that he has been caught in the crossfire. If he withdrew into his study it may well have been as a place of sanctuary. But clearly the asthma and the indigestion were, as we would say, stress-related. William, whose unstinting service to Cross Street was only the first amongst his many activities and responsibilities, undoubtedly thrived on a busy and demanding life: his ministry at Cross Street continued until the year of his death in 1884. His physical discomforts were perhaps the price that had to be paid.

<sup>1</sup> I am indebted to the Trustees of Cross Street Chapel for permission to quote from the Minute Book for the Meetings of Trustees, and to Geoffrey Head, Chairman of Trustees, for information about the Chapel's situation in the nineteenth century.

<sup>2</sup> References, by letter number, to *The Letters of Mrs Gaskell*, ed. Arthur Pollard and J A V Chapple, Manchester (1966) are identified as GL and included in the text.

<sup>3</sup> The terms 'senior minister' and 'junior minister' were current at the time and have been adopted by Gaskell biographers. But the minutes invariably refer to the Cross Street ministers as 'co-pastors', and it is not clear that any distinction of status, as distinct from chronological seniority, was at issue.

<sup>4</sup> This letter, dated 17 May 1854, and the letter to Edward Everett Hale cited below, are amongst those currently being prepared for publication by Professor John Chapple and myself in a supplementary volume to *The Letters of Mrs Gaskell*, ed. Arthur Pollard and J A V Chapple, Manchester (1966).

<sup>5</sup> Ham's appointment to Essex Street is recorded in the Trustees' Minute Book, but there is no mention there of the approach to William Gaskell. The post was a prestigious one, but its appeal to Ham, who would not seem to have been short of ambition, would have been much greater than it was to the older man.

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**Gaskell Society South-West Group**  
**Report of Meeting on 6 May 1999**

Seventy people came to hear Professor Peter Skrine speak on 'Rediscovering Mrs Gaskell' and found his clear enthusiastic scholarly exposition much to their taste. He began with his own discovery of her novels, illustrated her mastery of the art of story-telling by quoting from the opening of four novels and moved on to demonstrate the depth and subtlety of much of her writing. In this way he made it impossible for us to accuse her of being 'sentimental and dated'.

At this point we were led away from a possible view of Mrs Gaskell as a provincial writer only concerned with the industrial miseries of the North-West to be made aware of her large cosmopolitan circle of friends ranging from wealthy German-Jewish industrialists in Manchester to literary salons

in Paris and Rome and the farmers and landed gentry of the Cheshire countryside.

Professor Skrine ended with a summary of her work, quoting from a letter to Marianne in which she stresses the need to 'think eagerly of your story until you see it in action' when 'words, good simple strong words will come'.

The number and variety of the questions from the audience showed their genuine response. Coffee afterwards made it possible for people to stay and chat. They were very interested in the Journals, and the most common response was, 'We had no idea of the academic level of the Society'.

Mrs Irene Wiltshire, the Membership Secretary, gave a short introduction to the Society, and we were very grateful to her and her husband for making the journey.

The meeting was held as a joint lecture with the Bath Royal Literary and Scientific Institution who very kindly hosted it in their lovely building in Queen Square. Mr Victor Suchar, the Convenor of the Literary and Humanities Section of the Institution very kindly chaired the meeting and we owe a great deal to him for his interest. We also enjoyed the visit by Debbie Lee, a BBC researcher beginning to put together ideas for a documentary on Elizabeth Gaskell to coincide with the showing of *Wives and Daughters*. She obviously enjoyed herself as she missed her train back to London and had to stay the night.

**Programme for 1999**

**SATURDAY 20 NOVEMBER** 2.30 pm Kay Millard, Secretary of the Bath Unitarian Fellowship, will speak on 'Mrs Gaskell and Religion' at 16-17 Queen Square.

**21 NOVEMBER** The Bath Unitarian Fellowship is making the theme of its worship 'A Celebration of Elizabeth Gaskell', and we are all welcome to join them.

Hospitality could be offered, or Bath has a wonderful selection of hotels, if you wanted to make a weekend of it and do some Christmas shopping.

For information contact Mrs Rosemary Marshall, 138 Fairfield Park Road, Bath BA1 6JT (01225 426732)

### Book Notes

by Christine Lingard

**Brantlinger, Patrick. *The Reading Lesson: the threat of mass literacy in nineteenth century British fiction*.** Bloomington and Indianapolis:

Indiana University Press, £15.99 (paperback)

- analyses the fear held by many novelists about the negative causes of reading, the growth of the mass pulp fiction from Horace Walpole to H G Wells, and the Frankenstein theme in fiction (cf Chris Baldick's *In Frankenstein's Shadow*, 1987). Gaskell though only briefly mentioned is considered contradictory in her treatment of the educated working classes in Mary Barton.

**Gross, John (editor). *The New Oxford Book of English Prose*.** Oxford University Press, £25.00.

This extensive anthology of English, American and Commonwealth writing ranges from Malory to Kazuo Ishiguru and has six pages devoted to Elizabeth Gaskell (including the Dr Johnson v Boz passage from *Cranford* and Charlotte Brontë's admission to her father that the sisters had a book published). Contemporary selections include Darwin, Dickens, Newman, the Carlyles, Emerson, Trollope, Kingsley, Charlotte and Emily Brontë, George Eliot and Henry James. The extracts are all from works intended for publication, not letters, but including fiction as well as traditional literary prose and biography.

**Mitchell, Charlotte. *Caroline Clive. Victorian fiction research guide 28*.** University of Queensland, 1999.

Anyone interested in the minor characters mentioned in the Gaskell Letters might be interested in the 28 page introduction to this bibliography of Caroline Clive, the author of the sensational best seller *Paul Ferroll* (1857), whom Elizabeth knew from her visits to Ellen Tollet of Betley Hall, Staffordshire, her sister-in-law. She died when her clothing caught fire from a candle in 1873. There is a letter from Mrs Clive to Elizabeth Gaskell in the John Rylands University Library of Manchester.

#### ***For Autumn Release:***

By University Press of Virginia: ***Victorian Publishing and Mrs Gaskell's Work*. Linda K Hughes and Michael Lund**

### Links in a Chain that Connect Elizabeth Gaskell with Marianne North

by Barbara Brill

I have recently been reading the journal of Marianne North, *A Vision of Eden*, published by HMSO London in 1950. She is the celebrated painter of flowers who travelled the world between 1847 and 1870 in search of plants, painting them flowering in their natural habitats. These paintings are now displayed in the Marianne North Gallery in a building she had specially designed for this purpose in the grounds of Kew Gardens.

On the first page of the book the name of Gawthorp Hall, home of the Kay-Shuttleworths, caught my eye and I was interested to read that Marianne in her youth spent many summers there. I went on to learn that her father was a descendant of the third Lord North of Kirtling and was MP for Hastings in the 1850s, and her mother was the widow of Robert Shuttleworth of Gawthorp Hall who had been tragically killed in a carriage accident, leaving her with a delicate daughter, Janet, who later became heiress to the Gawthorp estate. Marianne was one of the three children of this marriage, her brother Charley being two years older and her sister Catherine eight years younger. Their step-sister Janet became a dearly-loved member of a united family. Janet spent a lot of time at Capesthorpe Hall, home of her cousin Mrs Davenport, Elizabeth Gaskell's friend. It was at Capesthorpe that Janet, when she was 24, met Dr Kay, the industrialist, who, after their marriage, added his wife's maiden name to his title when he was made baronet in 1849. He was twelve years Janet's senior, and these were the Kay-Shuttleworths who became friends of Elizabeth Gaskell and introduced her to Charlotte Brontë.

Mrs North died in 1875 and Marianne became the mainstay of the household, much relied upon by her father to whom she was devoted. She encouraged him to travel abroad with the family, firstly on the Continent; it was on these travels that Marianne began painting flowers in water-colours. While they were in Switzerland in 1863 Marianne and her sister, Catherine, met 'two young Oxford lads', and it was this meeting that provides the next link in the chain. One of 'the lads' was John Addington Symonds, who fell in love with and married Catherine. It was shortly after their wedding that Elizabeth Gaskell met them as she tells in her letter to her publisher George Smith (GL 556) of Dec. 6<sup>th</sup>, 1864:

'Do you know two very clever people just made one ? ... John Addington Symonds ... who took no end of honours at Oxford, & is witty clever, really brilliant – and Catherine North, daughter of the M.P. for Hastings, even more full of genius – well, on their wedding journey they have been writing a paper on Christmas – which looks to me very clever and Mr Symonds wants to know if it can go into The Cornhill for January (her is a writer in The Saturday – a regular writer). I have only got it by this morning's post and will send it on by this evening's; only I knew it was time for 'making-up' the next month's Cornhill – and that not one hour was to be lost, so I write anyhow to catch this morning's post; and will write again on my own business in a day or two.

Yours most truly  
E. C. Gaskell

Thoughts on Xmas in Florence 1863  
By John Addington Symonds  
110 words in a page  
32 pages  
3,520 words in the whole paper.

Mr Symonds took the Newdegate and a double first. But he might be very dull for all that; only he is not.'

This letter is also contained in J A V Chapple's *A Portrait in Letters* to which Mr Chapple has added the comment:

'We may again suspect that she did not guess what lay behind this particular marriage; If by any chance she did know, the theme of a man struggling to suppress his own homosexuality would undoubtedly have been 'an unfit subject for fiction'.' (p 150)

Knowing that the Symonds were also friends of Robert Louis Stevenson and his wife Fanny, whom they met at Davos, where both men were seeking a cure for tuberculosis, I was pleased to find this interesting passage in *The Violent Friend*, a biography of Fanny Stevenson by Margaret Mackay, published in 1968, in which the biographer writes that Fanny made these comments to Stevenson's friend, Sir Sidney Colvin:

'Louis and Mr Symonds are, so to speak Siamese twins'.

Margaret Mackay continues:

'Symonds was one of the few homosexuals among Stevenson's friends and consorted with Swiss peasants. In time Louis observed to Colvin that to be with him was 'to adventure into a thornbush', but his mind is interesting.'

Fanny might have been expected to hobnob with Mrs Symonds while their husbands were fraternising but the two women disliked each other. Stevenson described the lady thus:

'For Mrs S I have much pity but little sympathy. A stupid woman, married above her, moving daily with people whose talk she doesn't understand.'

What a different opinion from Mrs Gaskell's!

I found a further link in the chain of connections with Marianne North when I read of her meeting with Mr & Mrs Agassiz in America. Louis Agassiz was a Swiss-born American and Professor of Natural History at Harvard and known to Mrs Gaskell's friend, George Allman, Professor of Natural History at Edinburgh and the husband of Elizabeth's old friend, Louisa Shaen, a man who could have been the inspiration for Roger Hamley in *Wives and Daughters*. In February 1864 Elizabeth took an ailing Meta for 'bracing air' in Edinburgh, staying with the Allmans. She appealed to Charles Eliot Norton to assist in a book search:

'Can you get for me VOL 1 of Elliott's Proceedings, - a Charleston book of Science Dr Allman wants *very* much to refer to in finishing some work of his own, - and Trubner cannot get it. Dr Allman is known to Agassiz who would perhaps help in the search.' (GL 546)

Marianne North met Mr and Mrs Agassiz at a picnic in West Manchester, Boston, where they -

'sat and talked for a long while under the shade of a cedar tree. Mrs Agassiz and I agreed that the greatest pleasure we knew was

to see new and wonderful countries' ... 'Mrs A. was a most agreeable woman married to the clever old Swiss Professor who was a great pet of the Americans who were then just fitting up a new exploring ship for him to go on a ten-month voyage to Cape Horn and the Straits of Magellan to hunt for pre-historic fish in comfort.

Marianne's comments on the Professor were:

'He spoke funny broken English and looked entirely content with himself and everyone else.'

This is certainly a meeting that Elizabeth Gaskell would have appreciated as her interest in botany and natural history was keen and she was a great admirer of Charles Darwin.

Darwin is the final link in the chain of connections with Marianne North, who wrote in her journal:

'He (Darwin) was in my eyes the greatest man living, the most truthful as well as the most unselfish and modest, always trying to give others the credit of his own great thoughts and work. He seemed to have the power of bringing out other people's best points by mere contact with his own superiority. I was much flattered at his wishing to see me and when he said I ought not to attempt any representation of the vegetation until I had seen the Australian which was so unlike that of any other country, I determined to take it as a royal command.'

Marianne North's journey to Australia was her last. After 1883 she remained at her home in London and faced failing health. In her last years, her niece Janet, daughter of her step-sister, Lady Kay-Shuttleworth, was with Marianne until her death in 1890. Mrs Gaskell mentions Janet in a letter to Lady Shuttleworth (GL 231) and sends her love to her.

It is within the bounds of possibility that Marianne and Elizabeth may have met at Gawthorp or Capesthorpe when Janet was small.

### South of England Branch

Meetings during the remainder of 1999 are as follows:

**SATURDAY 11 SEPTEMBER** 2 pm Francis Holland School  
'Mrs Gaskell and her Christian Socialists' – Brenda Colloms

**SATURDAY 20 NOVEMBER** 2 pm Francis Holland School  
'Crime and Mrs Gaskell' – Hill Slavid

Please note that both these dates have been altered from those originally arranged.

Francis Holland School, 39 Graham Terrace, London SW1W 8JF, is a few minutes walk from Sloane Square Underground Station (District Line).

Those who wish to do so meet for lunch together before meetings held at Francis Holland School. Neither the Royal Court Tavern nor Peter Jones cafeteria where we have met in the past have been entirely satisfactory. Brenda Colloms and Howard Gregg have investigated 'The 12 Restaurant', part of the Sloane Square Moathouse (Royal Court Hotel) next to the Royal Court Tavern on Sloane Square and recommend that we try it for lunch before the remaining two meetings this year.

They will need to know in advance the number who will require lunch. It is a very pleasant restaurant. We would have a section reserved for our use and could stay from 12 noon until we leave for the meeting. There are good cloakroom facilities.

If you wish to have lunch there prior to the meeting it is necessary that you should write or telephone to me as follows:

By Saturday 4 September for the meeting on 11 September  
By Saturday 13 November for the meeting on 20 November.

Dudley J Barlow



### **Paper Proposals are Invited**

Paper proposals are invited for the 2000 meeting of the Research Society of Victorian Periodicals, "Victorian Encounters: Editors and Readers", to be held in London on 20-22 July 2000. All students, teachers, and scholars interested in publishing history and the Victorian press are invited to participate. Proposals or abstracts (maximum two double-spaced pages) on any topic relating to the Victorian periodical press and a two-page (maximum) C.V. should be sent to:

**Julie F Codell, Director, School of Art, Arizona State University, Tempe, AZ 85287-1505, USA**  
**Fax: 480 965 8338. E-mail: Julie.Codell@asu.edu**

The abstract and C.V. may be mailed, faxed, or e-mailed. The deadline for proposals is 15 December 1999 (postmarked or transmitted).

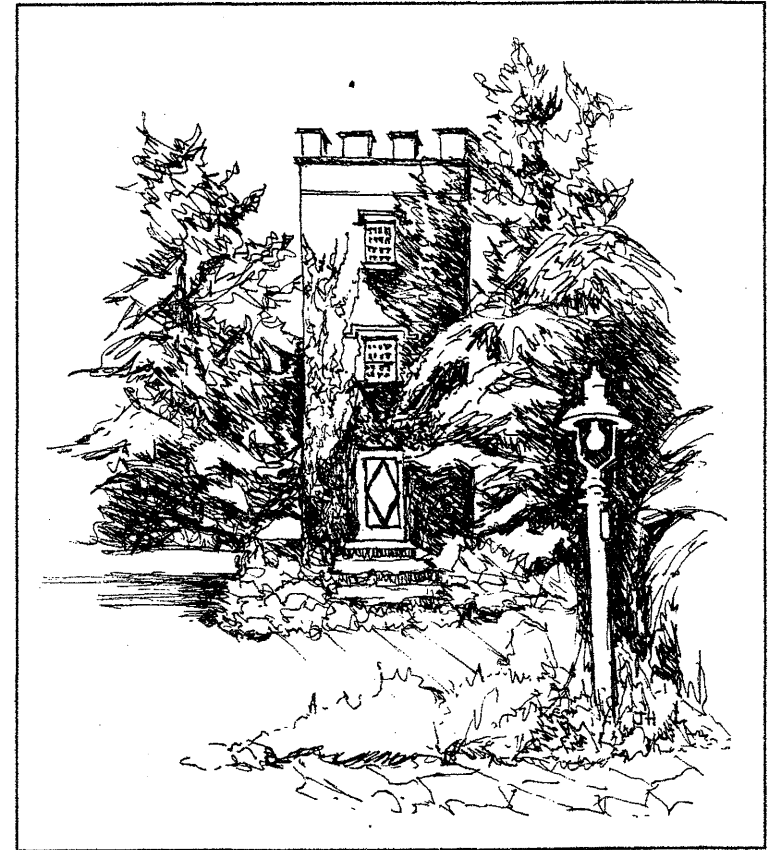
The RSVP London conference fee is £80, which includes teas, coffees, and a business lunch. Cheques should be made out to Birkbeck College. Inquiries and conference fees should be directed to:

**Diana Hodgson, Birkbeck College, 26 Russell Square, London WC1B 5DQ.**  
**Tel: 0171 631 6674. Fax: 0171 631 6688.**

The scheduling of the London RSVP conference has been co-ordinated with a conference of related interest, "Feminist Forerunners: The New Woman in the National and International Periodical Press, 1880 to the 1920s", to be held in Manchester from 24-26 July 2000. Inquiries should be forwarded to:

**Ann Heilmann, Department of Humanities and Applied Social Studies, Crewe & Alsager Faculty, Manchester Metropolitan University, Alsager Campus, Hassall Road, Alsager, Cheshire ST7 2HL.**  
**Fax: 0161 247 6374. E-mail: A.Heilmann@mmu.ac.uk**

# The Gaskell Society



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: 01565 634668)

Hon Treasurer: Brian Williams, 15 Cawley Avenue, Culcheth, Warrington, Cheshire WA3 4DF

Membership Secretary: Mrs Irene Wiltshire, 21 Crescent Road, Hale, Altrincham, Cheshire WA15 9NB (Tel: 0161 928 1404)

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## NEWSLETTER

## FEBRUARY 2000

## NO.29

### Editor's Letter

I do hope you have enjoyed basking in the reflected glory of being a Gaskell aficionado when so many, according to the media, had not discovered or appreciated Elizabeth Gaskell until BBC introduced them. Those of us who were enlisted to take part in the Omnibus programme shown on 29<sup>th</sup> November 1999 felt very conscious of our responsibilities in representing the Society. You can read about our adventures in the diary written by Jean Hockenhull, whose drawings captured the scenes, and Sheila Stephenson.

The BBC four-part adaptation of *Wives and Daughters* was well received and inspired people to read the book as Penguin/BBC books sold more than 35,000 copies during the showing. In this Newsletter you can read how Andrew Davies set about his work as an adapter from page to screen. All this media attention kept us busy in many ways: taking part in local radio and TV programmes, supplying journalists with information - which can be a thankless task as seven or eight of us gave up most of one day to a Daily Mail writer but no apology or explanation was made for the article not appearing. We have been requested to supply speakers and have enrolled new members, who we hope will enjoy sharing our various activities.

Regular meetings are held in Knutsford, Manchester (Cross Street Chapel), London (Francis Holland School, Chelsea) and Bath (Royal Literary and Scientific Institute, Queen Square). Details of meetings can be found elsewhere in this issue, with contact addresses. If you are unable to attend at these venues you might think of forming a branch in your area; we could assist in various ways.

The Gaskell/ Fergusson Letters have now been deposited in John Rylands Library, Deansgate, Manchester. You can read how member Dr. Jean Lindsay has discovered some details about Barbara Fergusson's later life. On 2<sup>nd</sup> February the Brunel University at Uxbridge will have an official opening of their new Arts Faculty which they have named The Gaskell Building. As part of the ceremony there will be the unveiling of a new portrait of Elizabeth Gaskell by Alan Bennett. The Society will be represented by our Chairwoman, Janet Allan. We hope to have postcards of the portrait.

## Adapting Wives and Daughters

by Andrew Davies

It was a few years ago, after the successful BBC adaptations of *Middlemarch* and *Pride and Prejudice*, that Joan Leach wrote to me from the Gaskell Society, gently suggesting that there were other authors besides Jane Austen that might well deserve a television outing, and she asked if I had ever read *Wives and Daughters*. I hadn't; and I didn't rush to read it, not immediately, that is.

I had read bits of *Cranford* at School, and heard bits of it on the radio (in the sixties, I think) and while I liked the gentle humour and the sharp little insights, it didn't seem quite meaty enough for prime-time viewing, and it didn't seem quite me, either, somehow. I had also read and indeed taught *North and South*, and while I admired it for its vigour and originality, I had never cared for it all that much. A bit too meaty in some way, unsubtle, "on the nose", plot-driven rather than character-driven, that's what I felt, wrongly no doubt, there it was.

So *Wives and Daughters* came as a complete revelation – it reminded me of George Eliot at her very best, and least tendentious. And like most other readers of the book, I fell in love with Molly pretty well straight away. Very difficult to stand back and see Molly as a literary artefact – I felt about her as a real person, cared about her, wanted to protect her, longed for her happiness in a thoroughly soppy way. And this kind of passionate identification with a leading character is a reliable indicator that the book will work as a television serial – the audience will feel passionately involved and engaged as well (so long as you get the right actress in the part!)

Various BBC executives were becoming aware of *Wives and Daughters* (though I'm pretty sure none of them went to the length of actually reading it). One, who shall be nameless, asked Sue Birtwistle if she thought it could be "done" in two hours. She passed this enquiry on to me; and we agreed that the shortest screen version we could imagine would be four hours long, and even that might not be enough to do anything like justice to Gaskell. (And so it turned out.)

People often ask me how I start one of these big adaptations. The first thing I do is find out if Cover to Cover have taped the complete work – it

has to be unabridged, of course. I much prefer being read to than reading the book myself, especially when Prunella Scales is doing the reading. I loaded up the cassettes, and went for some really long drives in the car, playing the book over and over until I had learnt not only the story but Gaskell's rhythms and speech habits. Then, back home, I went through the book clinically and made a rough decision on where to end each episode. Then I wrote a first draft of Episode One. My first attempt tried to get to the revelation of Osborne's secret marriage in fifty minutes, using it as the denouement of Episode One. It didn't work. The story was all there and it fairly zipped along – but it didn't feel like *Wives and Daughters*, somehow. Together we decided (Sue Birtwistle, Susie Conklin the script editor, and I) that we needed more time to let the characters develop gradually. At one stage Episode One looked like being 90 minutes, but we finally settled on 75, and the BBC agreed. And after three or four drafts, we had something we all felt pretty happy about (it was to go through four or five more drafts in fact) and I went on to write the other three episodes.

We all felt enormously engaged and gripped by the project all the time, and all of us felt that the book spoke directly to us and informed our own experience. We had endless conversations about Mrs Hamley, for example. Sue Birtwistle saw her a moving example of a woman who has sacrificed herself through her love for her husband, subduing her own interests, "killing herself" as Molly so memorably refuses to do. I found myself reacting very strongly against this, seeing a lot of my own mother in her: a woman who has not enough to do, and who puts too heavy an emotional load on to her sons. "Osborne is Mrs Hamley's piece of work" as my own wife grimly remarked.

Osborne, too, engaged a lot of our attention, largely because we all felt he didn't quite work as a character in the book. On first encountering him, I thought "My God, this is the first honest portrait of a gay character in C19 fiction!" – and I was most disappointed (and never wholly convinced) to discover that he was not only "straight", but a husband and father. Was his marriage an act of conscious or unconscious rebellion against his mother, or had she so weakened his sense of his own manhood that he could only contemplate sexual relations with a social inferior (as in *She Stoops to Conquer*)? It could hardly be an expression of the Romantic spirit pure and simple, or he would have taken pleasure in confronting his father with it, I felt. His quarrels with his father are upsetting, vivid, moving, but frustrating at the same time because he never comes out with the truth. We

soon realised that our arguments about the characters were as often as not arguments about ourselves as sons and daughters, as fathers and mothers, as family members who at different times have sought or evaded confrontation. The thing about Gaskell is that again and again she makes you feel, or remember, what it really means to be alive in the world, to be part of the family, to struggle to live the life that is in us.

Whatever our private thoughts about Osborne, we determined to go for the Romantic interpretation. Whether his poetry was good or bad, our Osborne followed his heart in life. He loved his father and couldn't bear to upset him – and to make this easier to understand, I strengthened the Squire's abhorrence of the French: "French maid? I'd sooner keep snakes in the house!" and so on. But the best thing we did was to include some scenes not in the book, showing Osborne with his young wife – there were hardly any lines in them, but there was no doubt about the passion, tenderness and maturity of their love for each other, and any lingering doubts about Osborne's sexual preferences were banished. Tom Hollander's intense, deeply felt performance was one of the best things in the production for me.

Another area that provoked a lot of discussion and difference was (for me) the most important relationship in the book, Molly's relationship with her father. I tended to take a pretty simple view of this: Molly had been deeply and properly loved by both parents as an infant, thus making her a healthy character who feels worthy of love, even when she doesn't seem to be getting much of it. Her father is strict, can be crusty, and sometimes makes bad decisions, but there's never any doubt in her mind about how much he loves her and values her – fundamentally it's a relationship without problems. (Obviously there's an element of rose-coloured specs in this interpretation, possibly related to my view of my relationship with my own daughter.) All the women involved in the production, including Justine Waddell, I believe, saw the relationship as much more problematic, the age-old struggle of the girl/woman to break free of the father who loves but constricts, and who uses the weapon of withholding his love in order to secure desired behaviours. (I never felt myself that Mr Gibson does that.) Here again, we were bringing all of ourselves to the book, and learning not only from Gaskell but from our arguments. And as draft followed draft, with input from Nick Renton the director, Jenny Uglow the literary and historical adviser, and Jane Tranter the executive producer, we came to something like an agreed view of Molly and her Dad.

But we did very little tinkering with the book – there was no need to. Gaskell's dialogue plays beautifully, sounding in period and modern at the same time – the Observer reviewer picked out some examples of "too-modern" dialogue that made her "blanch" – they happened to be taken directly from the book.

Cynthia is an extraordinarily modern character, with her wry insouciance, and self-knowledge. And what I think is so remarkable is that Gaskell treats her with such insight and sympathy – one can readily imagine how George Eliot would deal with such a character – poor Cynthia would get a fearful drubbing. Yet Gaskell makes us feel her charm, and more than that, feel her inner desperation, her vulnerability and neediness ... this was the part that most actresses wanted to play, rather than Molly. Goodness is far more difficult, of course, in performance as in life.

Preston, too, could have been a jolly good stage villain, but again Gaskell chose to do something far more interesting create a fully rounded character. He has great ability, and a keen sense of how social inferiority makes him a servant to genial but stupid Lord Cumnor, and makes him suffer the contempt of his intellectual equal Lady Harriet. She makes us feel his sexual power – like Cynthia, he can have almost anyone he wants. But his love for Cynthia turns into sexual obsession, and he becomes a stalker – how modern that seems! But he is a stalker with a conscience, in the end, and whether through Molly's goodness, or through her threat to tell Lady Harriet, or through his own better nature, he is unable to follow through his unworthy intentions towards Cynthia. What will become of him, as he rides away, straight-backed but desperately wounded in his heart? I imagine that he will have other women, will in the end marry another woman, and make her life hell because she isn't Cynthia.

I hope that Gaskell Society members found the ending acceptable. The proposal scene – two lovers six feet apart in the pouring rain – was one of the few bits that was all mine. And before you ask – the African trousers weren't my idea.

## Who was Miss Fergusson?

by Jean Lindsay

The editor's letter in *Newsletter No 28*, August 1999, gave the important information that the Gaskell Society had bought a collection of letters written by Elizabeth Gaskell, found in Scotland, by chance, by Robert Craig of Knutsford, and that six of them were written to Miss Fergusson, nurse and later governess to the Gaskell family, between 1845 and 1848. The letters are to be deposited in John Rylands Library, Manchester, but meanwhile questions, such as the one in my title, have arisen.

Joan Leach, the editor of *Newsletter*, wrote to me asking, as I live near Edinburgh, whether I could find out any more details about Miss Fergusson. Joan provided me with the fact that Miss Fergusson had married the Rev Walter Ross Macleod, a minister of the Free Church of Scotland, and that they had lived at 4 Eyre Place, Edinburgh, from about 1855 to 1862, when he might have died. Later, his widow lived at 3 Dundonald Street, Edinburgh, probably about 1891.

Members of the Gaskell Society know, of course, that in July 1845 Miss Fergusson went with Elizabeth and William Gaskell to Ffestiniog in Merioneth as nurse to the two children, Marianne, 10 years old and Willie, 9 months old. After Marianne had recovered from scarlet fever, the household moved to Portmadoc with its sea breezes, but baby Willie caught scarlet fever and died there on 10 August.<sup>1</sup> This tragedy propelled Elizabeth Gaskell to write *Mary Barton* (1848), but despite immersing herself in her writing, she always cared intensely about the welfare of her children. By 1847, two of the four daughters, Marianne, 13 years old and Meta, 10 years old, were receiving lessons from Miss Fergusson, promoted from nurse to governess, but Elizabeth Gaskell concluded that the governess, her 'dear household friend', could not teach and discipline them properly. Miss Fergusson and Elizabeth Gaskell therefore parted amicably and more specialist teachers were brought in for the young girls.<sup>2</sup>

Elizabeth Gaskell was still in touch with Miss Fergusson in 1848 by letter, but what then? The Edinburgh Room in Central Library, Edinburgh, provided access to the annual *Edinburgh and Leith Post Office Directory* for the years 1854 to 1863. The Rev Walter Ross Macleod was listed only in the year 1861 to 1862, in the street directory, with the address 4 Eyre Place. He was described as a minister of the Free Church but was not

included in any of the lists of ministers and their churches for the years mentioned.

*The Annals of the Free Church of Scotland 1843-1900* Vol 1, edited by the Rev William Ewing (1914) gives brief biographies of ministers and missionaries, but there was no record of the Rev Walter Ross Macleod. In the Census of 1861, the Macleods were living at 4 Eyre Place. Walter was head of the household, married, aged 35, and a minister of the Free Church of Scotland. He was born in Coupar, Angus. Barbara, his wife, aged 38, was born in Edinburgh. The household included 10 boarders, of which there were 3 pairs of brothers, all with Scottish surnames, all young scholars and unmarried. They were from a wide geographical area, namely:

Gampbell Mackinnon, 18, born in Clarendon, Jamaica  
Dugald Gilchrist, 17, born in Sutherland  
John R Gilchrist, 15, born in Sutherland  
James W Brodie, 16, born in East Lothian  
Philip Fraser, 15, born in Culcutta, India  
James Rossack, 16, born in St Georges, Jamaica  
David Rossack, 15, born in St Georges, Jamaica  
James Kennedy, 10, born in Manchester, England  
Thomas Mackintosh, 13, born in Dutch Guyana  
Louis Mackintosh, 12, born in Dutch Guyana

The 3 Scottish domestic servants were unmarried and were:

Eliza Donaldson, 23, cook, born in Wick, Caithness  
Ann Galloway, 21, housemaid, born in Fordell, Fife  
Julia Fraser, 17, tablemaid, born in Edinburgh

There were no children of the Macleods.

The boarders were perhaps the sons of ministers or missionaries who wished their sons to be educated in one of the numerous private day schools in Edinburgh.

The Macleods were not at 4 Eyre Place in the 1871 Census, but New Register House, Edinburgh, provided information about the death of Walter Ross Macleod which occurred on 20 October 1865, when he was 38 years old. He was described as a minister of the Free Church and was married to Barbara Macleod whose maiden surname was Fergusson. His father was Alexander Macleod, deceased, and his mother was Catherine Macleod, maiden surname Rose. The cause of death was phthisis

pulmalis, or pulmonary tuberculosis, of 'several years, certainly 6'. Helen Macleod, his sister-in-law, gave this information.

There was no notice or record of his death in the two daily newspapers, the *Scotsman* and the *Edinburgh Evening Courant*. The fact that Walter had been ill for so long from a wasting disease, probably explains why he was not attached to any church. The boarders might have provided their main income and Barbara must have had a difficult task to organise the large boarding establishment.

The Census of 1891 revealed that Barbara Macleod was then living at 3 Dundonald Street. She was head of the household and was a widow, aged 68. She was described as an annuitant, ie in receipt of an annuity. Her twin brother, Charles Fergusson, aged 68, was unmarried and was living with her. He was described as an agent for a slate quarry. They had one unmarried servant, aged 17, Margaret Harker, who was born in Glen Shee, Perthshire.

Miss Fergusson must have been 22 years old when she was the children's nurse in 1845. We don't know how the death of Willie affected her; but her life seems to have been one of gentility and respectability, living as she did in tenements in Eyre Place and in Dundonald Street, in the Northern New Town of Edinburgh, the 'largest single scheme in the development of Georgian Edinburgh'.<sup>3</sup> However, there are large gaps in this account, so her life might well have been always one of struggle against adversity.

#### Notes

1 Jenny Uglow, *Elizabeth Gaskell*, (1994), p 152

2 *Ibid*, p 157

3 John Gifford, Colin McWilliam and David Walker (editors), *The Buildings of Scotland. Edinburgh* (1984), p. 45

The newly discovered letters are to be included in a supplementary volume to *The Letters of Mrs Gaskell* (1966), edited by Arthur Pollard and J A V Chapple, which is to be edited by J A V Chapple and Alan Shelston

Editor's Note: Other letters found with the Gaskell/Fergusson collection show that Mrs Macleod lived at 2 Osborne Terrace, Oxton (on the Wirral) probably from c1875-1885. Unfortunately she does not seem to have been at home on the night of the 1881 census so we cannot add more details. Her brother, Charles seems to have had quarrying interests at Red Wharf Bay, Pentreath, on Anglesey.

#### Omnibus – A Diary of our Days on Location

by Jean Hockenhull and Sheila Stephenson

Our adventures began at 7.30 am on a Wednesday morning in July. We boarded our coach wondering what was in store for us. We were soon to find out. We arrived outside John Rylands Library in Manchester to be greeted by Tim Dunn our producer, his assistant Debbie Lee, a camera crew, sound engineer and a battery of equipment and cables. We were to be filmed arriving at the library and were requested to proceed through the doors and up the stairs in single file, a request that was to become an all too familiar call "Can you do that again please, remember your places in the line".

The interior of the library with its high Victorian architecture and furnishings provided an appropriate and very impressive setting in which to begin the film. We were joined here by Alan Shelston who shared with us the special privilege of being able to examine Mrs Gaskell's notebooks and letters, and of course we were particularly interested in the *Wives and Daughters* notebooks. After filming some of our discussions we left the library and made our way to Cross Street Chapel and lunch from the nearby Pret-a-Manger. And here a word of praise for Debbie, whose job it was to make sure that we were all in the right place at the right time and that things were running smoothly, a difficult job that she did with unfailing cheerfulness. Added to this she was always on hand to revive flagging spirits by seeming to conjure trays of coffee and cakes out of thin air while we waited for the crew to plan and discuss the filming.

At Chapel Street we were filmed admiring the splendid portrait of William Gaskell and listening to Rev John Midgeley the present minister talking about Mr Gaskell's long involvement with the Chapel. This was one of the scenes that, sadly, had to be left out of the final film.

Next it was on to Plymouth Grove, an important place in the Gaskell Story, as the family lived here from 1849 until it was sold in 1913 after Meta's death. Here, Janet Allen and those members who are interested in promoting and protecting the interests of the Gaskell Society in the property were filmed guiding us round the house and grounds. Hopefully, the screening of *Wives and Daughters* will generate the interest and funding to secure its future.



The last location of the day was a far cry from the elegance of the John Rylands Library and the drawing room of Plymouth Grove. We arrived in the centre of Manchester to be joined by Terry Wyke who was to guide us on our *Mary Barton* location. Terry is an old friend of the Gaskell Society and an expert in both the industrial archaeology of Victorian Manchester and Mrs Gaskell's Manchester novels. We were led along the towpath of the Rochdale Canal, which at one point disappears beneath the main roads around Piccadilly Station. This was an experience not to be forgotten as these very seedy underground towpaths and crofts are the haunt for all sorts of unsavoury characters and goings on that the "prim and provincial ladies of the Gaskell Society" (Reviewer, Times) would not wish to know about. But, unheeding of one or two amusing but unprintable remarks from onlookers we made our way, still in our lines, through the tunnel. Not many photo opportunities here, but we eventually emerged into the late evening sunshine and carefully filed across the lock gates to a landing stage where Terry pointed out some of the remaining features of Manchester's industrial past and we were able to appreciate the cost in human terms of the city's economic growth with the expansion of the cotton industry in the time of *Mary Barton* and *North and South*, and to understand the effect of the depression on the unemployed Davenport family as they turned to radicalism in their plight.

We had much to reflect upon as we made our way back to Knutsford, feeling in Mrs Gaskell's words "Quite knocked up by it all" after our first day's filming.

Not quite such an early start next day as we began filming at the 300 year-old Brook Street Chapel. Tim, Debbie and the crew had been hard at work for several hours, and the peace and quiet of the lovely old chapel was temporarily disrupted by the cameras, cables and lighting equipment that invariably accompanied us all. Alan Shelston joined us again as we climbed up to the gallery to survey the church, hardly altered since Mrs Gaskell described it in *Ruth* and talked about the importance of the Unitarian faith to her and its influence on her writing. We finished the session with a visit to the family grave where Joan read a moving letter from Charles Eliot Norton that the family had received after Elizabeth's death. Here again, most of the scene had to be left out except for the shot of the grave which ends the film.

It was 3 o'clock by this time and after lunch we gathered at the Royal George in Knutsford, another building that would have been very familiar to Elizabeth and one that was depicted in several of her novels. The *Cranford* ladies met here and Roger Hamley set off on his travels by the stagecoach which stopped here. Mary Higginson, who is one of our founder members, and whom many of you will know, joined us in the assembly room, largely unchanged since Gaskell days, and reminisced about the dinner and ball that was held here in 1960 to commemorate the 150<sup>th</sup> anniversary of Elizabeth Gaskell's birth. Sadly, this was not included in the programme except for a small shot showing us walking past the Gaskell Memorial heading for the George. Walking in single file was the only option here, which made us aware of the problems of filming along a very busy thoroughfare as the cameraman tried to film from the other side of the road.

The filming in Knutsford finished with a walk down Gaskell Avenue past the house where Elizabeth was brought up by Aunt Hannah Lumb and of which she had such fond memories.

Unbelievably, it was 9 pm by now and we were all more than ready to call it a day and enjoy a short rest before our next assignment.

On Friday 16<sup>th</sup> July, we travelled by coach to North Wales. It was a lovely summer morning and the Welsh countryside looked at its best. We



From the terrace at Plas  
Pannhyn towards Portmeau



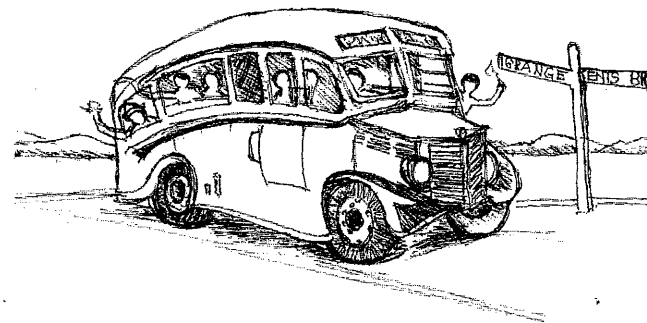
stopped for coffee in Caernarvon alongside the magnificent castle and from there proceeded to Port Madoc and Plas Penrhyn, the former home of Samuel Holland, Elizabeth's cousin, which stands on a hillside not far from the town. The view from the terrace across the estuary to the distant mountains was breathtaking and one could understand why Elizabeth had loved this area so deeply. As a young woman she had spent many happy holidays with the Holland family at Plas Penrhyn and it was no surprise when she chose to go there for part of her honeymoon.

After a good deal of walking in 'Indian file' along the terrace and being filmed by the crew from the garden below the house, we returned to the coach which took us to the railway station in Port Madoc where we boarded the train which would take us to Blaenau Ffestiniog. A carriage had been reserved for us and as we settled in our Victorian style surroundings Debbie, the team member who looked after all our needs, distributed the carriers containing our packed lunch. Silence reigned as we munched our way through sandwiches, crisps and cake, washed down with a carton of cordial. Then a shrill whistle pierced the air, doors were slammed and we were off, chugging along at a civilised pace towards the wooded hillside. The producer and the film crew joined us at the first stop and after that some of us were quite busy being interviewed. As the train climbed higher we looked down on the area where Samuel Holland had some of his works which dealt with the slate blasted from the nearby quarries. Eventually we alighted from the train at the terminus in Blaenau Ffestiniog, but did not stay long in this grim, blue-grey town before boarding our coach, which had travelled by road to meet us, for the journey back to Port Madoc.

After refreshments in the station, more acceptable than a walk around the town in the persistent drizzle which had set in, cars took us up to Garth Terrace where we were met by Dewi Williams, a local historian, and taken to the house where Willy Gaskell, Elizabeth and William's beloved infant son died on 10<sup>th</sup> August 1845, succumbing to an attack of scarlet fever. The present occupant, Mr Jones, had only learnt a week prior to our visit of the connection with Mrs Gaskell and the likelihood of his being interviewed for the BBC, but he received us with equanimity and chatted pleasantly about the past event, seemingly not at all put out by the scene having to be repeated and filmed four times. Our little group was well used to the procedure by that time!

Back in the town centre we boarded our coach, thankful to be able to rest for an hour or two. Driving along with the countryside on our right and the sea on our left, some of us thought about the strong emotional ties Mrs Gaskell had had with this part of Wales, how its wild beauty, its folklore, had aroused strong passions within her which gained expression in her short stories.

During the afternoon of 18<sup>th</sup> July, our group assembled in Knutsford, refreshed after a day and a half's break from filming. We were taken by coach to Grange-over-Sands where rooms had been reserved for us at the Cumbria Grand Hotel. We were re-united with Tim our producer, Debbie and the film crew during the evening. The following morning a cream and maroon charabanc rolled up to the main door of the hotel, causing much excitement among ourselves and the other guests. We learnt that Tim had hired this from a firm in Shropshire to transport us during the day and take us back to Knutsford at the end of the evening.



After many photographs had been taken, we set off in grand style to Kents Bank Station where we were met by Cedric Robinson, the Queen's Guide

across the Sands of Morecambe Bay. A "conveyance" drawn by tractor took most of us out into the middle of the bay whilst the hardier and more active members of the group made the journey on foot. Under magnificent skies and surrounded by a vast expanse of sand we listened to Geoffrey Sharps reading from *The Sexton's Hero*. Standing there with your feet gradually sinking in the sand and pools of water welling up around your ankles, the wind tearing at your clothes and blowing through your hair, watching the clouds scudding across the sky to mass in great banks pregnant with rain, wondering if that silver line in the distance was the first sign of the incoming tide, it was easy to imagine the scene in the story being related to us. It was good to clamber up on our vehicle and, as we neared the store, watch Cedric gathering a bunch of samphire which he

would later cook for his lunch. He explained how to prepare it and it sounded delicious.

We returned to the bus and our sandwiches and crisps. During the afternoon we drove to Silverdale, a place much loved by the Gaskell family. As we arrived at Tower House it started to rain and turn much colder. The tea and biscuits offered by Mrs Sharp who owned the house were very welcome. We were interested in Lindeth Tower (our cover picture), situated in the garden. This three-storey building was erected for Hesketh Fleetwood early in the 19<sup>th</sup> century. Mrs Gaskell was a regular visitor and wrote much of her work in the rooms there whilst the rest of her family were enjoying holiday pursuits. The group climbed up to the castellated roof from which there is a magnificent view. They spent an hour or so filming and discussing the Tower and its place in Elizabeth Gaskell's life. There was more filming in the beautiful garden, and finally a group photograph was taken.

Our programme had overrun its time, the rain had started again, we were cold and hungry as we boarded the bus. When we got on the M6 we discovered a corner of the roof at the rear of the bus was leaking, steady drips going down one's neck! What bliss it was to stop for a meal (albeit a hurried one) before completing our journey. The bus caused quite a stir on the motorway, people waved and honked their horns. It quite cheered us all up.

We didn't meet up with our producer and his team again until 26<sup>th</sup> July, when we completed our filming in England. This final spell of work was done in the village of Holybourne in Hampshire to which we travelled by coach. A year or two before her death, Elizabeth Gaskell had purchased a property in the village with the hope that she would be able to persuade her husband to retire from what she considered his very hard and demanding work in Manchester in order to enjoy a more leisurely lifestyle in his later years. Her daughters were aware of the scheme and had helped their mother prepare the house.

We had coffee in an old inn in the village before walking to the house, which is known as "The Lawn" and is now a very well appointed home for the elderly. One of the residents, 91 years old Miss Lewis, had interested herself in Mrs Gaskell with relation to her time as owner of the property and had indeed written an account of this. She was pleased to join in the

filming and told us how Mrs Gaskell, having attended afternoon service at the local church, came home and died suddenly whilst drinking a cup of tea. Miss Lewis was very concerned about the consequences of collapsing whilst drinking a cup of tea and the ensuing damage to persons and property. Before leaving Holybourne the group visited the church, a pleasant grey stone structure in the Victorian style.



The highlight of our journeys was the visit to Rome in September. We descended from the plane at Rome airport into the warm September sunshine (wearing the same clothes we had worn to explore the underground canal in Manchester, for reasons of continuity, we were told!). We were met by James Walker, the BBC's 'fixer' in Rome, who was to escort us in his minibus around the city. Our hotel was on the outskirts of Rome and overlooked the River Tiber. After settling in, we had a short walk to a nearby trattoria and, judging by the crowded tables, obviously a very popular place. However, a table had been booked for us and we were joined by Professor Marroni and Maria Concetta Constantini from Pescara University who were to accompany us the next day.

Next morning, refreshed and keen to make the most of our brief visit, we had an early breakfast in the rooftop café with its panoramic views of Rome in the early morning light, and we all felt something of the pleasure and excitement that Elizabeth felt when she spoke so feelingly of "Those charming Roman days". She was far away from cold and grimy Manchester and the stress of finishing the biography of her friend

Charlotte Brontë, and as yet unaware of the gathering storm that was to follow the publication of the book.

As this was our only full day in Rome, we had a busy schedule and were quickly on our way to the area where the Gaskells stayed with their friends the Wetmore Storys who had rented a balcony on the Via Corso to watch the Mardi Gras procession. The Goethe Museum was such a house, and we all in turn went out onto the small balcony to try to visualise the moment when Elizabeth caught sight of Charles Eliot Norton and dangled a stick of confetti over the balcony to attract his attention – a scene that she was to recall so vividly and talk about in such emotional terms. Joan was filmed (several times) coming in from the balcony and joining the rest of us as we speculated about Elizabeth and Eliot Norton's friendship, and how important their days in Rome were to them both.

Later, we were treated to an excellent lunch at a pavement café in the shadow of the Pantheon, no less, and were to be filmed sitting at our tables chatting about Rome, Elizabeth Gaskell and romance whilst eating delicious Italian ice creams. There was much curiosity from the other diners (you're making a film about Mrs who?) and amusement as they watched our ice creams slowly melting in the sunshine as we waited for the camera crew to get round to our table.

Lunch over and a brief pause for postcard buying and photography, and we were on our way through the crowded Sunday afternoon streets, pausing briefly for a quick look at Trajan's Column, but moving swiftly on as it played no part in our story. And then, rounding a corner, we were suddenly in the small square dominated by the famous Trevi fountain. It isn't recorded that Elizabeth ever visited the fountain, but we thought that maybe she did and threw her coin in, in the hope that she would return one day. However, we were taking no chances and, as you can see from the film, we were all eager to toss in our coins (sorry! The BBC's coins, supplied by Debbie) and make our wish that perhaps, maybe ... But no time to linger as we had to be on our way to the last location.

Charles Eliot Norton had lodgings in the district around the Piazza del Spagna which was a favourite haunt of poets, sculptors and painters, who gathered on the Spanish steps to socialise. The Story's house was also in this area, and it was the view from their window that was to become such a treasured memory to Elizabeth for the rest of her life. It seemed

appropriate that we should end our visit by resting on the steps surrounded by such beautiful architecture and reflecting on how much the experience of Rome meant to Elizabeth and Eliot Norton.

As a final unscheduled and unfilmed treat, we were driven to the Coliseum and had the opportunity to wander round this incredible monument just as the moon was rising.

But it was not quite the end. We gathered in the evening to enjoy a final meal at the Trattoria with lots of Italian dishes, bottles of wine and photograph taking, before taking our leave of the omnibus team and falling into bed around midnight ready for an early start back to cold rainy Manchester on Monday morning.

The final film shows only a small amount of the actual footage. It would be lovely if we were able to share more of it with you all, but we hope you enjoyed the brief glimpses that you had of a most enjoyable and memorable experience.

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**Marianne North**

by Barbara Brill

A footnote to my article (NL 28 pages 15-18) on the connections of Elizabeth Gaskell with Marianne North in which I speculated on the possibility of their meeting at Gawthorp or Capesthorpe. I have now found confirmation that they did meet, but in Pontresina in 1864.

In Marianne North's book *Recollections of a Happy Life* (published by the University Press of Virginia in 1993) she writes of travelling to Pontresina in the summer of 1864 with her father and sister where they stayed in "that paradise for Alpine climbers 'the Old Crown Inn'".

She continues "Mrs Gaskell was also at Pontresina at that time, and had taken a quiet room outside the village to work peacefully. There she finished a great part of her last story *Wives and Daughters*. "She was very beautiful and gentle with a sweet-toned voice and a particularly well-formed hand."

## Book Notes

by Christine Lingard

**Elizabeth Gaskell's use of color in her industrial novels and short stories** by Katherine Ann Wildt (Saint Louis University). University Press of America

Ostensibly a very specialised subject, this book provides us with a detailed and useful analysis of Elizabeth Gaskell's descriptive technique and a fresh approach to the study of her early industrial writings. It also brings out her debt to John Ruskin and, in particular, his book *Modern painters* providing ample evidence that she made a thorough study of the book. Most gratifying is an analysis of several of the short stories showing the development of her technique – *Libbie Marsh's three eras*, *Lizzie Leigh*, *Heart of John Middleton*, *Sexton's hero*, *Christmas storms and sunshine*, *Hand and heart*, *The Moorland cottage and Cumberland sheep shearers*. The novels dealt with are *Mary Barton*, *North and south* and *Ruth*. There are extensive notes possibly hindering the flow of the narrative and bibliographical references.

**Elizabeth Gaskell: *Mary Barton; North and south***, edited by Alison Chapman. Icon Critical Guides. Icon books, £7.99

This book fills the gap in Gaskell studies between the academic monograph of which there are now several able and the exam crib. Useful for the student, it deals with the topic in more depth than most books at this level – 192 pages with a detailed bibliography and a summary of the critical response of the novel over the years.

## Lancashire Dialect and the Greyt Eggshibishun

by John Chapple

In 1855 Elizabeth Gaskell told Parthenope Nightingale that she was looking for the *Ratchda' Men's Visit to th' Great Exhibition*, which had been mentioned by William in his lectures on the Lancashire Dialect the year before. (Reprinted in *Mary Barton*, ed. Angus Easson, Ryburn Publishing, Halifax, 1993.) It is also known that she gave William Whewell a copy at Glasgow in 1855 (Mrs Stairs Douglas, *William Whewell*, 1881, pp. 442-3). We are able to reproduce the title page of this rare work, courtesy of Pam Godman of Rochdale Local Studies Library.



### A Dark Night's Work at Inverary Jail

One of our members, Valerie Robertson, visited Inverary Jail in 1999 and noticed that the list of library books in 1875 included *A Dark Night's Work* as its only fiction reading (unless *Now or Never* was also fiction? Does anyone know?) Perhaps it was considered as an object lesson. 'Even if the truth about your crime dies not come out in your lifetime, it will surely blight your life, and that of those closest to you'.

Does any member know more about Frederick and Mrs Hill's connection with Mrs Gaskell?

Chief guide to the prison, J G Parkes, sent this information to Valerie in answer to her query, and also a photocopy of the book list which is too dark to be reproduced but we will transcribe it for our home page.

"The new prison regime that was introduced by an Act of Parliament in 1839 placed a lot of emphasis on reform; change the prisoner's attitude and habits and wean him or her away from crime. Apart from discipline and industrious work, religion and the Bible were made an integral part of the system. A chaplain was appointed for every prison, one of his duties being 'the general management of the prison library'.

In 1883 the Chaplain at Barlinnie reported that books were appreciated by the prisoners, 'but some of them, I am sorry to say, prefer books that treat on secular subjects, rather than those works which discuss religious topics'.

"Books stood alone like bright redeeming angels, between the prisoner and his dreary thoughts and insane impulses. (Unknown prisoner)

The Victorian journalist, Henry Mayhew, visited Pentonville Prison in 1856 as part of a general investigation into the Criminal Prisons of London. The book that was subsequently published gives an enormous amount of detail about life in prison at that time. In Pentonville he recorded:

[From 7 o'clock in the evening] till 9 o'clock, the prisoners are allowed to read such books as they may have obtained from the library. To show us that the men were generally so occupied, the officer who had attended us throughout the day led us now from cell to cell, and drew aside the small metal screen that hung down before the little peep-hole in each door; on looking through it we

found almost every prisoner ... seated close to the gas-light, busily engaged in perusing either some book or periodical that was spread out before him.

The Chaplain at Perth General Prison reported that all the books in the library were in constant use, with Biographies, Anecdotes and Travels etc. being the most popular and best remembered. There had been some abuse of the books – writing messages in the flyleaf or end pages was a frequent occurrence in all prisons, including Inveraray – but he had made arrangements to prevent it happening without detection.

Frederic Hill, the first Inspector of Scottish Prisons and the man mainly responsible for setting up the system, was later involved in petitioning for the Married Women's Property Bill with the Law Amendment Society. His wife, Martha, enlisted many women for the cause, amongst them Mrs Gaskell.

Early in 1875 the committee responsible for running Argyll's prisons requested a list of all the books held in Campbeltown, Tobermory and Inveraray. On 3<sup>rd</sup> February of that year, John McLeod, Governor at Inveraray, listed all of the books 'under my charge ... the greater part of them are not complete through being long in use'. *A Dark Night's Work* was reported as 'in good order'.

What are four bare walls to the man who has access to the princely minds of all ages? ... If anything reconciled me to prison life it was access to standard works on every conceivable subject and the leisure to study them.

(Stuart Wood: *Shades of the Prison House*, 1932)

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### Membership Update

The recent media attention, provided by the BBC and some newspapers, has promoted a level of enquiry into the Gaskell Society that is well above normal. Many, but not all, of these enquiries have developed into enrolments, with thirty-two new members being welcomed into our Society throughout November and December. On the final day of 1999 my database consisted of three hundred and sixty members in the United Kingdom and one hundred and twenty two overseas members.

Irene Wiltshire  
Membership Secretary

### South-West Group Meetings

by Rosemary Marshall

On Saturday 20<sup>th</sup> November the group found Kay Millard's talk on *Mrs Gaskell and Religion* informative and very interesting. The Question and Answer session afterwards showed how carefully people had listened and how keen they were to learn even more. Kay felt that the Unitarian principles of the value of every human being and toleration of other points of view were most apparent in *Ruth*. On the following day members went to a service at the Unitarian chapel which celebrated the life of Elizabeth Gaskell in prayers, hymns and readings. We were made very welcome by the congregation and felt it a privilege to be there.

On January 18<sup>th</sup> at an informal supper the adaptation of *Wives and Daughters* was discussed.

The next meeting, on 15<sup>th</sup> April will be on the Gaskells' friends, William Ewart and George Eliot. Held at The Bath Royal Literary and Scientific Institute, 17 Queen Square.

On 7<sup>th</sup> May there will be an outing to the home of William Ewart: Broadleas near Devizes. A beautiful garden is open to the public. Some members of this group hope to attend the next AGM and Knutsford Literature Festival on 30<sup>th</sup> September.

For information contact: Mrs Rosemary Marshall, 138 Fairfield Park Road, Bath BA1 6JT. Tel: 01225 426732

### Meetings at Cross Street Chapel

These begin with coffee at 10.30 am and are usually held on the second Monday of each month but because February is so short it will be earlier:

7<sup>th</sup> Feb - Elizabeth Williams: The first three issues of Household Words

13<sup>th</sup> March - Irene Wiltshire: Elizabeth Gaskell and Witchcraft: A

Reconsideration

8<sup>th</sup> April - Spring Meeting

8<sup>th</sup> May - Joan Leach: Mrs Gaskell and Spring Customs and

Dr Eddie Cass on: Lancashire Peace-Egg Chapbooks (illustrated)

### Manchester Spring Meeting at Cross Street Chapel

Saturday 8<sup>th</sup> April

We hope you will be able to join us for this popular meeting at Cross Street Chapel. We will meet for coffee at 10.30.

At 11.00 am Dr Margaret Lesser will speak about Mme Mohl: Mary Clarke. Dr Lesser is the author of *Clarkey: A portrait in letters of Mary Clarke Mohl*. OUP 1984

Buffet lunch will be served between 12.15 and 2.00pm

At 2.15 Patsy Stoneman from Hull University Department of English will speak on: Taking liberties with the Classics: Adaptation as Opportunity and Responsibility

Booking forms will be sent at the beginning of March together with summer outing details.

We plan to visit the Trough of Bowland area, Stoneyhurst College and Salmsbury Hall in search of the Lancashire setting for Gaskell's short story *The Poor Clare*. Part of this story is set in Antwerp which some of us will see on our Belgium trip in May.

On 30<sup>th</sup> July we hope to visit an exhibition on the Potter family and attend a commemorative service at Stalybridge Unitarian Chapel.

### Knutsford Meetings

Our meetings are on the last Wednesday of the month in St John's Church Hall. A buffet lunch will be served between 12.15 and 12.30 followed by the talk and meetings should finish at about 3 pm. The cost will be £5 per meeting.

23<sup>rd</sup> February, 29<sup>th</sup> March, 26<sup>th</sup> April – Discussion on the television adaptation of *Wives and Daughters* and the Omnibus programme about Elizabeth Gaskell

31<sup>st</sup> May – Members' miscellany

Further information from Elizabeth Williams Tel: 01925 764271

### Internet News

Our Society has been well served by Mitsuharu Matsuoka who has organised our internet pages so that students can download Journal articles and Gaskell texts and find all sorts of information –



The Gaskell Society:

<http://lang.nagoya-u.ac.jp/~matsuoka/EG-Society.html>

The Gaskell Society Journal:

<http://lang.nagoya-u.ac.jp/~matsuoka/EG-Journal-Contents.html>

Gaskell works in E-text:

<http://lang.nagoya-u.ac.jp/~matsuoka/EG-etexts.html>

Now we also have a UK homepage managed for us by member Jane Thomson at -

<http://www.gaskellsociety.cwc.net/>

Most libraries now have internet facilities so you will be able to consult our homepage for dates of meetings and latest information; it will also be useful for anyone who seeks information about The Society. We can also show you pictures in colour, which cannot usually be done in the Journal or Newsletters.

### **Knutsford Literature Festival 2000**

23<sup>rd</sup> September-1<sup>st</sup> October

This is not a Society event but will interest members with its varied programme.

Saturday 30<sup>th</sup> September will be our AGM. In the morning Andrew Davies will speak about his adaptation of *Wives and Daughters*, showing video clips, followed by a buffet lunch; both of these will be at The Civic Centre.

In the afternoon we will transfer to the Royal George when Jenny Uglow and Margaret M Smith (editor of *Brontë Letters*) will discuss *The Life of Charlotte Brontë*. Tea will be served before we hold the AGM. We will be voting on taking charity status, which will involve some changes to our constitution.

In the evening there will be an entertainment: Men and Women of Letters, probably preceded by dinner. Members of the public may also attend most of these events, and we realise that Gaskell members may not be able to support such a full programme.

Friday 29<sup>th</sup> September will be a biography day, and there will be events and a finale on Sunday 1<sup>st</sup> October. Visiting writers include Nina Bawden, Margaret Drabble, Alan Garner, Michael Holroyd, Angela Huth, Joanna Trollope and Jenny Uglow.

We hope to involve local inns etc in accommodation offers, so watch out for more news. Many of you have become Friends of The Festival (£10 cheque to Joan Leach made out to Knutsford Literature Festival) and will have news and an early copy of the programme, booking concessions etc.

### **London and South East Group**

The group usually meets at The Francis Holland School, Chelsea, a few minutes walk from Sloane Square underground station. Some of the group meet there at 12 noon to have lunch at The Royal Court Tavern. Meetings begin at 2.0 pm

6<sup>th</sup> May – Wives and Daughters: From Book to Film by Jenny Uglow.  
Jenny is Vice-President of the Society and advised BBC on the adaptation

16<sup>th</sup> September – to be arranged

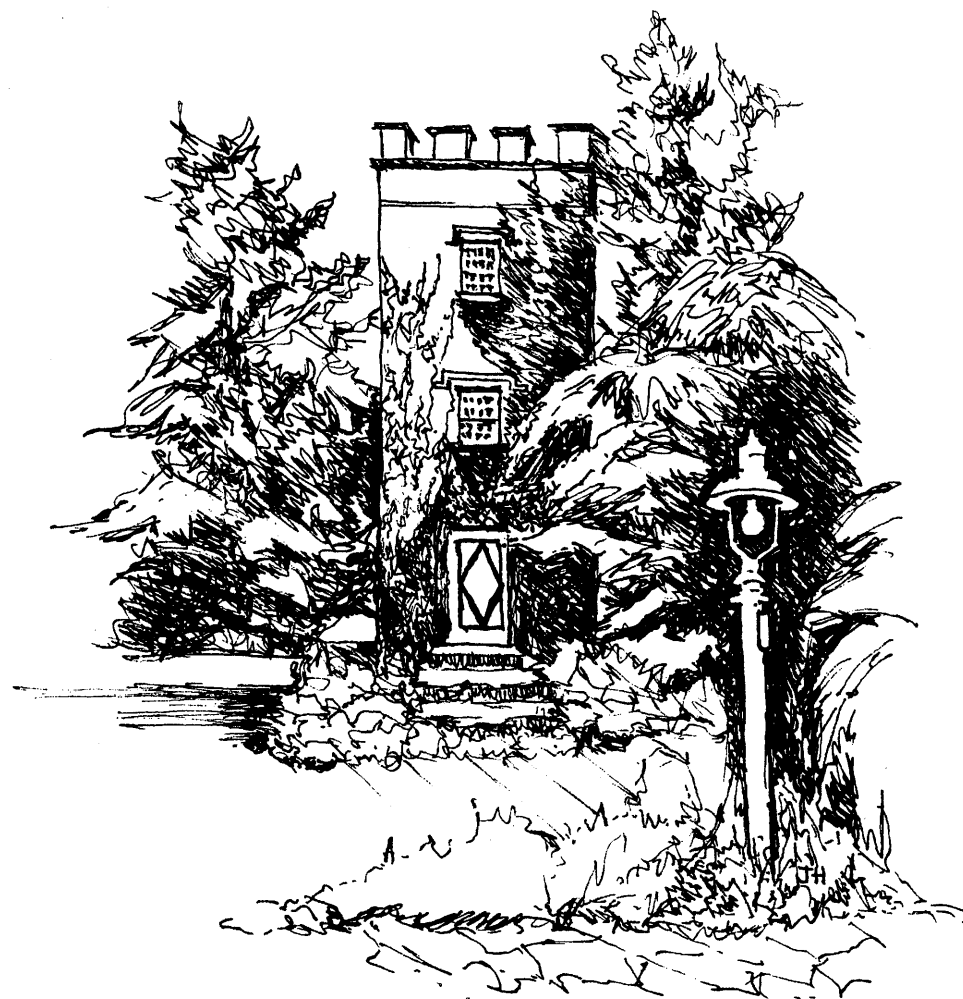
16<sup>th</sup> November – Annual Meeting – The Thomson Family and the Young Elizabeth Stevenson by Dr Ian Glenn

If any further details are required, please send SAE to Hon Secretary:  
Dudley Barlow, 44 Seymour Road, London SW18 5JA (Tel: 0181 874 7727 – after April: 020 8874 7727)

THE GASKELL SOCIETY HOME PAGE has all the latest information on meetings:

<http://www.gaskellsociety.cwc.net/indepth.html>

# The Gaskell Society



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<http://www.gaskellsociety.cwc.net>

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. Telephone - 01565 634668

**Hon Treasurer:** Brian Williams, 15 Cawley Avenue, Culcheth, Warrington, Cheshire WA3 4DF

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## NEWSLETTER

August 2000 - Number 30



## Editor's Letter

This edition of the Newsletter may look a little different as we have changed our printer. As I write this we are preparing for Knutsford Literature Festival which will be held from 23rd September to 1st October. The Gaskell Society AGM will be on 30th September at 4.00pm after a programme of talks in the morning and afternoon: these will be oversubscribed even though we have space for a hundred and seventy people. The Festival was timed so that Gaskell members could participate but even if it does become an annual event this pressure for space will not happen again because we are proposing to hold future AGMs in Manchester, at Cross Street Chapel, in the Spring; this is partly because members from further afield will find it easier to reach but it will also be more appropriate now that our financial year follows the calendar year. At this year's AGM we will also take measures to become registered as a charity.

In this edition you will be able to read about our visit to Belgium from 11th - 15th May with articles by Jackie Horsfield and Dudley Green. We followed Elizabeth Gaskell to Brussels, where she went to research for *The Life of Charlotte Brontë*, and to the cathedral towns for she advised, "If you ever go don't miss these towns on any account". We went to Antwerp, Bruges and Ghent as she did, ".... no human being who has not seen them can conceive of the sublime beauty of the cathedrals in the grand old cities in Flanders...while every bit was picturesque the whole was so solemn and sublime...as if the world had stood still with them since the 14th century". (Letters 15)

Part of her story, *The Poor Clare* is set in Antwerp and we were able to see the Beguinage (though there may have been more than one) a community for religious women who served the poor and sick. The story can be found in OUP World's Classics *My Lady Ludlow and other stories*. Some of us will visit Browsholme Hall and Stonyhurst College in Lancashire looking for Catholic traditions which also feature in the story.

We are now planning for our next conference which will be at Bath Spa University, 17th - 20th August 2001. Rome beckons us for 2002. Marie Moss, in this newsletter, has traced for us some of the literary associations of Rome.

We hope to see many of you at our various forthcoming meetings, details of which can be found in the latter pages of this newsletter. You may not be able to join members of the London and South East Group on a guided walk of Southwark by Sylvia Burch so we have printed her itinerary so that you may be able to follow it when you visit London.

## *Visit to Belgium, 11th - 15th May 2000.*

How fortunate we are that Mrs. Gaskell, as well as providing us with some wonderful literature, was also a well travelled lady. Following in her footsteps is proving to be a pleasure indeed. On Thursday 11th May, some forty of us converged on Brussels from various starting points, ranging from Cheshire (of course), Yorkshire, London, Scotland and the Midlands. On our arrival it rained very briefly, but thereafter the sun shone gloriously. How much more pleasant is any place when the weather is lovely.

We began with a conducted coach tour to give us an overview of the city, and this was followed by a sightseeing walk which took us to the Grand Place, only minutes from our hotel. This was an extremely handsome square, with its 17th century Flemish Renaissance style trading and mercantile guild-houses, glittering with gold filigree. Loitering in the bustling, narrow streets it was hard to believe that we were only one hour away from Manchester by plane and it was clear already that Brussels is not like any other city in the world, having a charm that is all its own.

The evening saw us enjoying the first of our very tasty dinners in a nearby restaurant, this trip was already proving to have been very well organised.

On Friday the coach took us to Antwerp, where we were met by an excellent guide, Sheila Cosforth. We began in the Grote Market (Main Square). On three sides are 16th century Guild Houses, topped with gilded figures, whilst on the fourth is the Town Hall. After this we enjoyed the beautiful stained glass windows in the Cathedral of Our Lady. This is a very light and airy cathedral, Belgium's biggest. Works by Rubens and his school embellish the interior. We then visited St. James Church, where Rubens is buried, followed by the Beguinage, a 16th century institution for Beguines, religious women whose vows were somewhat less strict than those of nuns. Today it is a restful neighbourhood of little houses and cobbled streets.

Saturday was a free day in Brussels, where we followed our own inclinations. Many of us returned to the Grand Place, which was home to a brightly coloured flower market. The little restaurants in the neighbourhood gave plenty of choice or somewhere to have lunch. It was altogether very pleasant to take life at a slower pace and, over a glass or two of wine, to appreciate the tang of flavour of life in Brussels.

On Sunday we went by coach to Bruges. Nowhere on our trip seemed very far from anywhere else, and soon we were in this charming city, with its canals and beautiful squares. Like so many medieval places, it throws your sense of time out of joint, transforming you back across the centuries.

Here, some of us treated ourselves to a tour of the city by horse and trap. Bruges is a gem of a place and very manageable on foot. It really does not need the title 'The Venice of the North' as it can stand most charmingly in its own right, without any reference to other cities. Again, there were plenty of picturesque, good value cafés to choose from. We enjoyed wandering around a flea-market, situated in a lovely, leafy setting at the side of a canal. On a more cultured level, the Beguinage and the Basilica of the Holy Blood were well worth a visit. The trip ended with a 35 minute cruise through the canals where we saw the buildings from yet a different angle.

On our final day, Monday 15th May, we boarded our coach for the last time to visit Ghent. With its canals, this shares some characteristics with Bruges. Both are relatively confined, but Ghent feels more like a real city, a lived-in place. There are many reminders of the medieval mercantile and weaving traditions that brought the city its wealth. Another canal trip was a fitting end to our visit, and as before, the sun shone. In fact, by now it was hot! We enjoyed a final al fresco meal before setting off for the airport and for home.

Altogether, this was a splendid visit. Even the weather had been specially ordered, and Jupiter Pluvius had kept well away. The fine spell broke two days after our return and the temperature plummeted. We all owe our thanks to Janet Allan and Jean Alston for visiting Brussels in advance and for generally sussing out the place, it was particularly bad luck that ill health kept Janet away after all her hard work. And of course our thanks, as always, to Joan Leach for her superb organising abilities (anyone else?).

We look forward with pleasure to our projected trip to Rome. Thank you, Mrs. Gaskell, for visiting so many fine places. I am currently undertaking research to see if she visited the Canadian Rockies, or perhaps China. At the very least, she must have gone to Athens! If anyone has any evidence of this, I would be delighted to receive it.

**Jackie Horsfield.**

## Following The Brontës in Brussels - May 2000

One of the objects of our visit to Brussels was to follow in the footsteps of Charlotte and Emily Brontë who came to the city in February 1842, escorted by their father, the Revd Patrick Brontë. Their aim was ultimately to establish a school of their own in the Parsonage at Haworth and in order to fulfil this ambition they needed to acquire a better knowledge of French and German. Arrangements were made for them to study at the Pensionnat Heger run by Madame Heger in the Rue d'Isabelle. The two sisters remained at the Pensionnat for nine months, returning home in November 1842 on the death of their aunt, Elizabeth Branwell. Charlotte returned to Brussels alone in January 1843 to teach English at the Pensionnat and also to continue her language studies. She stayed in Brussels for a further twelve months before returning to Haworth in January 1844.

It is no easy matter to identify the site of the Pensionnat Heger since there have been so many changes to the area where the school was sited. The Rue d'Isabelle was situated below the fashionable eighteenth century quarter of the city, with its colonnaded Place Royale, Parc de Bruxelles and Palais Royale, and above the lower, medieval level with its crowded shops and huddle of narrow streets. No trace remains of the Pensionnat Heger but it is possible to descend from the Rue Royale to the street levels which Charlotte and Emily would have known. On our first night we were guided by Jean Alston down to the Rue Terakin where we were able to gain some impression of the area where the school was sited. The Rue Terakin is now a scruffy little street but the road still contains the old setts of cobbles. As Ernest Raymond wrote in his *In the Steps of the Brontës*:

"Down there in the silence you are as near to the Rue d'Isabelle as you will ever get, and your feet are on the cobbles which Charlotte and Emily trod when it was Sunday in Brussels, and the bells were ringing, and they were coming out of the low-lying Rue d'Isabelle into the Rue Teraerken on their way to the Protestant Chapel in the Rue du Musee."

On Saturday morning a group of us decided to explore the area further. We started at the impressive statue of General Belliard beside the Rue Royal and descended the steps to the street below. In *The Professor* Charlotte Brontë describes Mr. Crimsworth's first visit to the Pensionnat:

"I remember, before entering the park, I stood awhile to contemplate the statue of General Belliard, and then I advanced to the top of the great staircase just beyond, and I looked down into a narrow back street, which I afterwards learnt was called the Rue d'Isabelle. I well recollect that my

eye rested on a green door of a rather large house opposite, where on a brass plate, was inscribed, Pensionnat de Demoiselles."

We descended to the street level and after a careful search Brian Hechle pointed out the plaque high on the wall of the adjoining Palais des Beaux Arts, which records that:

'Near this site formerly stood the Pensionnat Heger where the writers Charlotte and Emily Brontë studied in 1842-43'.

We then walked the short distance to the Place de la Musee where we found the Chapel Royale where Charlotte and Emily worshipped most Sundays. It was their normal custom to come to the Anglican service held there at 2pm. In *The Professor* we may read Charlotte's trenchant description of her fellow countrymen who attended the chapel. Mr. Crimsworth has just attended a service at the Chapel Royale:

"I turned from the door of the chapel-royal which the door keeper had just closed and locked, and followed in the wake of the last congregation, now dispersed and dispersing all over the square. I had soon outwalked the couples of English gentlemen and ladies. (Goodness gracious! Why don't they dress better?)



Gaskell Society members at the statue of General Belliard in Brussels.  
The Pensionnat Heger was in this area.

My eye is yet filled with visions of the high-flounced, slovenly, and tumbled dresses in costly silk and satin, of the large unbecoming collars in expensive lace; of the ill-cut coats and strangely fashioned pantaloons which every Sunday, at the English service, filled the choirs of the chapel-royal, and after it, issuing forth into the square, came into disadvantageous contrast with freshly and trimly attired foreign figures, hastening to attend salute at the church of Coburg)."

It was in this chapel that Mr. Crimsworth was married to Frances Henri. It was here too that Charlotte attended the funeral service of her vibrant young friend, Martha Taylor, who died of cholera in Brussels in October 1842. The chaplain of the Chapel Royal at that time was the Revd Evan Jenkins, known to Mr. Brontë through his brother, David Jenkins, who 30 years earlier had succeeded him as curate of Dewsbury. It was through Mr. Jenkins' recommendation that Charlotte and Emily had come to the Pensionnat Heger. After escorting his daughters to the school, Mr. Brontë stayed several days with the Jenkins family and paid a memorable visit to the battlefield of Waterloo, a journey also undertaken by one enterprising member of our party.

Not far away is the Cathedral of St. Michael and Ste Gudule. The toll of its bell dominated the surrounding area as Charlotte knew well, and it was here in September 1843 that Charlotte had one of the strangest experiences of her life. When the school broke up for the summer vacation in the middle of August, Charlotte, feeling an acute sense of loneliness in the deserted building, fell into a mood of deep depression. On 1st September she went for a long walk in the country. She visited the grave of Martha Taylor in the Protestant Cemetery and on her return, not feeling able to go back to the lonely Pensionnat, she wandered through the adjoining streets. On the following day she wrote to Emily describing what happened:

"Yesterday I went on a pilgrimage to the cemetery. When I came back it was evening; but I had such a repugnance to return to the house, I still kept threading the streets in the neighbourhood of the Rue d'Isabelle and avoiding it. I found myself opposite to Ste Gudule, and the bell, whose voice you know, began to toll for evening salute. I went in, wandered about the aisles where a few old women were saying their prayers, till vespers begun. I stayed till they were over. Still I could not leave the church or force myself to go home, - to school I mean. An odd whim came into my head. In a solitary part of the cathedral six or seven people still remained kneeling by the confessionals. In two confessionals I saw a priest. I felt as if I did not care what I did, provided it was not absolutely wrong.



The Pensionnat Heger in the later nineteenth century. (Le Soir, Brussels)

I took a fancy to change myself into a Catholic and go and make a real confession to see what it was like. A penitent was occupied in confessing. They do not go into the sort of pew or cloister which the priest occupies, but kneel down on the steps and confess through a grating. Both the confessor and the penitent whisper very low, you can hardly hear their voices. After I had watched two or three penitents go and return I approached at last and knelt down in a niche which was just vacated. I had to kneel there ten minutes waiting, for on the other side was a penitent invisible to me. At last that went away and a little wooden door inside the grating opened, and I saw the priest leaning his ear towards me. I was obliged to begin, and yet I did not know a word of the formula with which they always commence their confessions. It was a funny position. I commenced with saying I was a foreigner and had been brought up a Protestant. The priest asked if I was a Protestant then. I somehow could not tell a lie and said 'yes'. He replied in that case I could not 'jouir du bonheur de la confesse'; but I was determined to confess, and at last he said he would allow me because it might be the first step towards returning to the true church. I actually did confess - a real confession. When I had done he told me his address, and said that every morning I was to go to the Rue du Parc - to his house - and he would reason with me and try to convince me of the error and enormity of being a Protestant!!! I promised faithfully to go. Of

course, however, the adventure stops there, and I hope I shall never see the priest again. I think you had better not tell papa of this. He will not understand that it was only a freak, and will perhaps think I am going to turn Catholic."

Vith this account on our minds we climbed the impressive steps leading to the nain door of the cathedral. Wandering around we saw several imposing confessionals with ornate wooden carving and dark green curtains. We tried to magine the scene which Charlotte had described and reflected on her feeling of loneliness and on the depression which had driven her to such an incharacteristic action.

As we returned along the Rue Royale we were reminded of a happier occasion which took place a few days later when Charlotte caught a glimpse of the 24 year old Queen Victoria on her first visit to Brussels on September 1843. As she wrote to Emily:

"You ask about Queen Victoria's visit to Brussels. I saw her for an instant flashing through the Rue Royale in a carriage and six, surrounded by soldiers. She was laughing and talking, very gaily. She looked a little, stout, vivacious Lady, very plainly dressed, not much dignity or pretension about her. The Belgians liked her very well on the whole - they said she enlivened the sombre court of King Leopold, which is usually as gloomy as a conventicle."

Entering the Parc de Bruxelles we recalled the concert given in the park on the occasion of the Feast of the Assumption of the Blessed Virgin Mary on the evening of 15th August 1843, it seems likely that Charlotte attended this concert, since in chapter 38 of Villette she included an item from the actual programme given on that occasion in her description of the celebrations which Lucy Snowe encountered when she wandered through the park at night.

Charlotte Brontë's experiences in Brussels, and especially her relationship with Monsieur Heger, provided a vital element in the shaping of her creative genius. For us it was a significant and moving experience to follow in her footsteps.

**Judley Green**

## Travelling the Literary Trail

by Marie Moss

Working with a BBC television production team, as some members of the Gaskell Society were last summer made aware, requires much standing in line and even more standing about. The long gaps in filming were used most profitably by Jean Hockenhull, who drafted evocative pencil sketches of our locations, and sometimes of her more dilatory companions, who filled the waiting hours with talk of little, or but moderate, consequence. On one such occasion, it was Rome, I remember, at the Goethe Museum, the balconies of which building look usefully over the Corso, Geoffrey Sharps amused the group by relating his close encounters with some of the media darlings whom the press have chosen to lionise. In the absence of a passing carnival parade, or the charming face of Charles Eliot Norton looking up to seek our acquaintance, we were happy to be entertained by Geoffrey's recollections of his meeting with Mandy Rice Davies at the Floral Hall in Scarborough, and allow his claim to even more glamorous intimacy having once shaken the hand of Sacha Distel, which had lately embraced Brigitte Bardot.

Returning to the Mediterranean on holiday with my husband a short time later, I paid a brief visit to Taormina, to seek but not find Fontana Vecchia, 'the pink stucco farmhouse' where David Herbert Lawrence and Freida sat out under the Sicilian sun, the bad press which greeted the publication of *'Women in Love'*. Our cruise ship stayed only a day at Messina, before turning north, passed Stromboli, to plough a wake through the Tyrrhenian Sea, along the route the restless Lawrences followed to Sardinia and to Rome. Some days later we moored in the old port of Civita Vecchia, where Elizabeth Gaskell came ashore after her eventful voyage south from Marseilles in the spring of 1857. Like Lawrence, she was seeking sanctuary from the critics. As the paths of these two literary favourites converged, we followed them to Rome, and where else but to the Piazza di Spagna. Rain cascaded down the deserted Spanish Steps, so we took shelter in Casina Rossa, the Keats - Shelley Memorial House. Here are to be found relics of all who, like Norton and Gaskell, lodged in this district of artists, writers and poets, and of many known in some way to Elizabeth. The letters of Goethe, Coleridge, Wordsworth and Leigh Hunt; the lock of hair which Elizabeth Barrett gave to Robert Browning, and the sculpture of William Wetmore Storey, Elizabeth's generous host at Casa Cabrera during her stay in Rome.

As the rain continued to fall beyond the opened windows, my husband turned to the small print of our museum guide and drew my attention to a compelling

carnival mask which had been worn by Lord Byron in Venice. I had seen its like before - yes, it was at the Goethe Museum where a display of etchings of the Roman carnival was filmed by our cameraman for the Omnibus production.

smiled, remembering Geoffrey's entertaining exposition of Sharps' Connecting Theory, and my mind began to wander the web of associations, of family and of friendship, which connect E C Gaskell with D H Lawrence. The writer of *'Wives and Daughters'* with the author of *'Sons and Lovers'*. Gaskell readers will be familiar with the two published letters which Elizabeth wrote from the home of her dear friend Mary Greg, The Mount, in Bollington, Cheshire. (Letters 21 and 114). On the first of her visits, made when Florence was quite young, Elizabeth found "such famous nurseries," and a cot by her bedside for baby Julia. The Greg children regretted that Julia had not been brought, but made up for it by making much of Florence, who rushed to be dressed next morning in the nursery to join in their play. She was taken with Alice, Herbert, Katie ('2 years old today') and baby Isobel to the Greg's Home Farm to collect cream for them to "churn themselves" for a little birthday tea, 'with their own butter.' "Flossy is in high glee and thoroughly at home", Gaskell reports to Marianne and Meta.



In 1852 Elizabeth was again staying at The Mount, and went with Mrs. Greg and all the children and a pony "to meet Meta and Florence," (presumably at the station). Meta mounted and rode the pony home, while Florence "disappeared among the group of children as happy as happy can be with Alice." The next day, Elizabeth and her girls walked with the "4 eldest Gregs" to the Unitarian Chapel in Macclesfield. "3 miles up hills and down hills, wind and dust too and the little chapel itself was so very hot that it made me very sleepy ever since we are all pretty well tired," but Meta "seems to be enjoying herself."

Mary Greg was a warm-hearted woman and good friend to Elizabeth throughout the years of Manchester and motherhood before her increasing fame. Like Caroline Davenport of Capesthorpe Hall, a mutual friend, she provided the country air and country pursuits which Elizabeth always wanted for herself and her children. Mrs. Greg was born Mary Needham (1809) into a large Unitarian family living at Lenton, a village at that time, just outside Nottingham. The sons of Hannah and Samuel Greg Senior attended Mr. Taylor's Unitarian school in Nottingham, and all the boys were made welcome at the Needham's home, Lenton House. Mary's lifelong friend was Anna Enfield, the daughter of another Unitarian family. Mary's sister married Anna's brother and remained in Nottingham, but the two friends were separated by what, before the railway age, was a vast distance when Anna married Septimus Dowson and went to live in Norfolk, and Mary came with Samuel Greg Junior to Bollington.

The Gregs had eight children; six girls and two boys, and created for them a happy family life in their large and comfortable house with its big gardens and ample grounds. On August 12th 1860 Ben, the son of Mary's old friend, paid a call with his uncle, William Enfield. Years later this is how Ben Dowson described the occasion:

"It was a date that has always remained fixed in my mind...in the afternoon we called at Mr. Samuel Greg's house. It was only a visit of a few minutes, but it sufficed to give me a picture of that sweet home as it then was. The girls, scarcely more than children, rushed me down the terrace to get a peep at the lovely view over the hills to Buxton. Amy and Bertha I already knew and loved, but this was my first sight of Alice, then nearly 16, but looking so slight and young."

For Alice and Ben it was love at first sight. Ben Enfield Dowson was a recently qualified lawyer with a position in his uncle's law practice in Nottingham. As William Enfield was also uncle to Alice there was opportunity for her aunt to further the young people's relationship, and in September 1863, when Ben was 26 and Alice 19, the two were married.

Their first baby arrived in 1864 and thereafter others followed at all but yearly intervals until there were ten, eight of them exhaustingly boisterous boys. Alice was an educated, serious minded girl, but young as she was, she found it difficult to manage her children, or her growing household. Her mother came to her rescue. Mary Greg rushed down to Nottingham to care for her at each confinement, and as the family grew, gathered up the older children to bring back to Bollington. Alice too returned to Bollington for weeks and months at a time throughout her mother's life. William Enfield Dowson, Alice and Ben's first born, was what today would be termed as a hyperactive child, and it soon became apparent that separation from Will gave Alice the greatest relief. Although loved by his mother, Will had less than his share of her attention, and spent his early days with his grandparents with whom he was a favourite, and with his unmarried aunts, Amy, Katie and Isobel at The Mount. Will's exploits, breaking and stirring up preserved eggs in the cellar, pouring ink onto blankets and sofa covers, and raiding the kitchens in the middle of the night, nearly setting fire to the kitchen door with a candle, began to be judged dangerous. With his naughtiness seemingly beyond curbing, he was boarded at a small school, at first in Nottingham, and later in Southport. From here he continued to come to Bollington for holidays, and was nursed there when he was sick.

In 1852 Elizabeth Gaskell wrote in a letter to Marianne, "Little cousins are pouring in upon the world" (Gaskell letters 134). One of these, the daughter of William Gaskell's brother Robert, christened Susan Elizabeth (Lily) Gaskell, became Mrs. Walter Greg when she married Alice's younger brother and came to live in Prestbury, some two or three miles from The Mount. Lily Greg and her children spent much time with Alice's boys at the tolerant home of her mother-in-law, and later her daughter, Hilda, was to marry one of the Dowson brood, Will's younger brother, Gerald. The Gaskell, Greg, Dowson ties were close at this time, and the adventure and drama that always seemed to surround young Will Dowson must have been relayed to the Gaskell daughters at Plymouth Grove by their cousin, Lily, or their friends, Alice and her sisters.

Despite the difficulties of his rearing, Will grew into an attractive and capable young man. After two years at Owen's College, Manchester, and some time spent in Dusseldorf, learning German, he became a successful Nottingham lace manufacturer, and a real estate entrepreneur, with boats and weekend cottages for hire along the Trent. Fun-loving and gregarious, his taste for adventure never diminished. He was a pioneer of winter sports in the Alps, and the first in Nottingham to own a car, number AV 1. He drove his mother, Alice, "....so fast that it was rather frightening," she felt. In 1894, Will married Helena Brownsword (Nellie) and took a house on the Mapperley Road.

A near neighbour, Frieda Weekley (née von Richtofen), the lively wife of a rather dull academic, Ernest Weekley, became a frequent visitor, and Alice and Ben Dowson also invited the Weekleys to their home. When Frieda's second daughter, Barbara, was born in October 1904, Will Dowson agreed to be her Godfather.

Will shared with Frieda and her children his enthusiasm for the countryside. He took them for drives, and to swim from his boat and little bungalow on the river. Frieda, bored and ill at ease in English provincial society, proved deft at starting a love affair. They made love on a sea of bluebells under ancient oaks in the grounds of Byron's estate at Newstead Abbey, and in Will's car in Sherwood Forest. Frieda described Will euphemistically as "the one great friend" with whom she "felt alive," and he made Nottingham almost bearable for her. They liked to talk about contemporary novels and Will recommended a satire by John Galsworthy on the theme of a woman trapped in a loveless marriage, probably *'The Patrician'*. "I've met somebody," Frieda told Dowson, "who's going to be much more than Galsworthy." Frieda was ready to turn from a man who had known too little of his mother's love, to one who had known too much.

The story of Frieda's dramatic flight with her husband's former pupil, David Herbert Lawrence, is well known. Will Dowson later wrote to Frieda, "If you had to elope, why not with me?" His letter was carelessly slipped between the pages of *Anna Karenina*, a tale Frieda had read in Nottingham but which now had acquired new meaning for her. Shortly afterwards she sent the book to Ernest, no doubt with an analysis on the moral to be drawn from Anna's dilemma. Dowson's letter was still inside the book when it arrived. Ernest Weekley examined it and mailed it to Lawrence without comment. Lawrence, of course, was not unknowing. Frieda talked freely to him of her relationship with Will, and shared the details of their lovemaking. These were transposed, with authentic locations (Bluebells, Sherwood Forest et al) into the affair between Ursula and Rupert, in *'Women in Love'*.

As the rain stopped, my husband closed his guide book, and we left Byron's sinister mask, peering from its dark corner, to go out into the Piazza in search of lunch. "I think Newstead Abbey would be worth a visit," he observed, "interesting life - Byron's." "Yes," I agreed, "perhaps next year when the bluebells are in bloom." You know Geoffrey, with a little help from your theory, literary trails become surprisingly crowded. One never knows whom one might meet!



Sources:

Chapple J.A.V. and Pollard A.

- 'The Letters of Mrs Gaskell' (Manchester 1966)

Byrne Janet

- 'A Genius for Living - A Biography of Frieda Lawrence' (London 1995)

Meynell Alix

- 'What Grandmother Said - The Life of Alice Dowson 1844 - 1927' (Cambridge 1998)

Book Notes

O'Farrell, M.A. **Telling complexions: the nineteenth-century English novel and the blush.** Duke University press £11.95.

This book explores the use of not only the "blush" in Victorian novels to indicate a character's inner emotions and desires but also the use of body traits for similar purposes. It has particular reference to *Pride and Prejudice*, *Persuasion*, *North and South*, and *David Copperfield*. The author is particularly concerned with the character of Fanny Thornton (who blushes) and Margaret Hale (who blunders). She draws parallels with Gaskell's editorial difficulties with Dickens.

BRONTË CHARLOTTE and EMILY. **The Belgian essays a critical edition.** Edited and translated by Sue Lonoff. Yale University Press, 1996.

People who went on the recent Gaskell Society visit to Brussels in search of the Pensionnat Heger may be interested to learn that this book has been reissued. It comprises twenty-eight *devoirs* or essays written by the two sisters in response to exercises set by M. Heger. Each piece in french is accompanied by a parallel translation and all the corrections and notes made by their teacher. The editor's extensive notes and introduction make ample references to Gaskell's *Life of Charlotte Brontë* and tries to assess the importance of these years on their subsequent careers.

MEYNELL, Dame ALIX. **What grandmother said: the life of Alice Dowson, 1844-1927 based on her diaries by her grandmother.** Colt books, £25.

For those interested in the people of Gaskell's circle this book has some interesting anecdotal and background information. The author (a distinguished civil servant) has written a biography of her grandmother drawing extensively on her diaries. She was Alice Greg (1844-1926) one of the large family of Samuel Greg the younger of the Mount, Bollington Cross, near Macclesfield who as a child of eight met Mrs Gaskell in 1852 and got on well with her daughter Flossy. She married a lawyer and went to live in Nottingham where she raised a large and diverse family and became a campaigner for reform of women's health and other issues. The book includes information on the Greg family and is in its own right an interesting account of the role of women in the nineteenth century and what was achieved by some of them without the benefit of a university education. I was particularly intrigued by the appendix listing the signatories to the petition against female emancipation of 1889, which includes several people well-known to Gaskell. Mrs Leslie Stephen (mother of Virginia Woolf) whose first husband was a member of the Duckworth family whom she visited several times, the sisters Mrs Walter Bagehot and Mrs William Rathbone Greg, wife of one the most severe of Gaskell critics and also Alice's uncle (their other sister Matilda was once also engaged as was Meta Gaskell to Capt. Hill), Mrs Matthew Arnold and her sister-in-law Mrs W.E. Forster, known from visits to Ambleside, and Mrs Charles Buxton, Sir Henry Holland's daughter.

Mary Barton, edited by Jennifer Foster (doctoral candidate at the University of Ottawa) Broadview literary press, Ontario. (Distributed by Turpin distribution services Ltd, Blackhorse Road, Letchworth SG6 1HN)

**Wives and Daughters**, edited by Graham Handley, Everyman Gaskell series. Dent, £4.99.

Two new scholarly paperback editions are now available with critical introductions and notes. The new edition of *Mary Barton* is published in Canada. The text is that of the 5th edition of 1854 omitting William Gaskell's lectures on dialect. Textual notes and references are printed as footnotes to the text. Gaskell's own footnotes are distinguished from the editor's by the letters EG. The editor's notes are mostly bibliographic identifying quotes and references. The bibliography includes several books of social background and a general nature.



*Wives and Daughters* uses the text of the Knutsford edition with misprints silently corrected. Textual notes are brief usually confined to linguistic definitions. What distinguishes both these edition are the appendices of literacy criticism. The former has 103 pages of reviews many quoted in full and extracts from longer works. William Rathbone Greg's influential but very critical article in the *Edinburgh Review* is printed in full for example. They consist of letters describing the composition of the novel, contemporary reviews, contemporary fiction and social documents. There are extracts from such authors as Carlyle, Engels, Charlotte Brontë, George Eliot and Charles Dickens.

*Wives and Daughters* has only sixteen pages but they include contemporary reviews such as that which the 22 year old Henry James wrote for the *Nation* and unlike the former has extracts from modern critics such as Sharps, Uglow and Stoneman.

**Christine Lingard**

## Literary Walk of Southwark - 19th August, 2000

*Mrs Gaskell to her daughters - Marianne & Meta - late 1855?*  
“...in the bus I sat next to somebody, whose face I thought I knew,...he read ‘*Little Dorrit*’ And I read it over his shoulder. Oh Polly! He was such a slow reader, You’ll sympathise, Meta won’t, my impatience at his *never* getting to the bottom of the page...We only read the first two chapters, so I never found out who ‘*Little Dorrit*’ is...”

Perhaps we can do better, as we start our walk close by the site of the Marshalsea prison - where Little Dorrit was born - and almost next to the church of St. George the Martyr - where she was baptised and at the end of Dicken’s story, married. This whole area is rich in Dickens associations and we shall visit the Southwark Local Studies Centre (located close by the last surviving wall of the Marshalsea) to examine old photographs and pamphlets/maps etc. After our lunch break at the George Inn in Borough High Street, we shall continue our walk to Southwark Cathedral, and along the riverside to the Globe Theatre.

### Detailed Itinerary

*Start from BOROUGH Underground Station (Northern Line) Booking Hall* - look at nearby Lant St. (Dickens had lodgings there as a young boy) and possibly other Dickens associations. See Church of St. George the Martyr and remaining Marshalsea Wall.

*Visit Southwark Local Studies Centre* - to see maps of the area, pamphlets etc.

*Walk along Borough High St. to the George Inn* - noting White Hart Inn plaque on way. Also, site of *Tabard* - starting point for Chaucer’s pilgrims.

*Lunch at the George Inn* - sandwiches/meals available. Prices £5 - £6. £3 for club sandwiches. If fine you may wish to sit in the courtyard.

*Short walk to Southwark Cathedral* - noting especially tomb of John Gower (first English poet(?) and friend of Chaucer), Shakespeare memorial and window - Harvard Chapel, etc.

*Walk along riverside via Golden Hinde!*

*Palace of Bishops of Winchester (Rose window), Clink St. to Anchor Inn* - frequented by Doctor Johnson. Enjoy view from terrace and look into ‘Dictionary room’ with Johnson Quotes on the wall.

*Walk under Southwark Bridge (Dorrit’s ‘Iron Bridge’) towards Globe Theatre* - negotiating possible cones, drills and building works!

*Near the Globe* - explore Bear Gardens area and possibly visit *Light & Sound* Presentation on sit of Rose Theatre (cost at group rate is £2 per person). This is a 23 minute film, shown 1/2 hourly and is well worth seeing for background to the Elizabethan theatre. It needs to be booked in advance.

*At the Globe Theatre* - tea/coffee is available, also Globe Theatre exhibition, for those who wish to see this. It may also be possible to join a tour of the theatre (cost about £7.50, £6 concession).

*At Cardinal’s Wharf (just past the Exhibition entrance)* - notice the house from which Christopher Wren watched building works at St. Pauls, opposite! And to conclude, for any one who has the energy, the ‘delights’ of Tate Modern are only a few steps away!

## Knutsford Meetings

The latest season of Knutsford meetings was well attended, in spite of the fact that we had to change from Monday to Wednesday. We wondered how we should manage without Irene Wiltshire, who had built up the group so successfully, but this year we have enjoyed a ‘Members Miscellany’, with a variety of topics and speakers. Dudley Green talked about Patrick Bronte and his relationship with Elizabeth Gaskell; Marie Moss discussed the short story

'Christmas Storms and Sunshine'; Emily White told us about the Gaskell's niece, Mrs Walter Greg, and Margaret Smyth talked about literary Manchester in the Gaskell's time. All speakers were both well-informed and entertaining. Our thanks go to Irene, for four years of carefully-researched talks and stimulating discussion, and to this Year's speakers who have managed to maintain that same high standard.

We also discussed the BBC dramatisation of *Wives and Daughters*, which was pronounced a resounding success, several members giving it ten out of ten. Opinion was more divided on the Omnibus programme about Gaskell. We watched some of the out-takes and were impressed by the stamina of our members in repeatedly climbing stairs, knocking on doors, coming in and going out, and still managing to talk intelligently.

For the next series of meetings we shall be discussing *Cranford*. Meetings will be on October 25th, November 29th, January 31st, February 28th, March 28th and April 25th, with possibly an outing on May 30th. As last year, we shall be meeting at St. John's Parish Hall at twelve o'clock, and each session will involve a buffet lunch, followed by a talk or discussion. All are welcome.

**Elizabeth Williams.**

**For queries about group meeeting address to:**

**Knutsford and Manchester**

Joan Leach  
Far Yew Tree House, Over Tabley, Knutsford, Cheshire WA16 0HN

**London and South East**

Dudley Barlow  
44 Seymour Road, London SW18 5JA

**South West**

Rosemary Marshall  
138 Fairfield Park Road, Bath BA1 6JT

# Gaskell Society Southwest

## Group Report on Spring Activities 2000

On Saturday April 15th the group held a meeting at 2.00pm at the Bath Royal Literary and Scientific Institution in Queen Square. This was in preparation for our 'Literary Jaunt' to Devizes and Elizabeth Gaskell. Peter Skrine began by describing George Eliot's stay in Devizes at the home of Dr. Brabant, his attempts to dominate her intellectually and physically and her expulsion when this all became to much for Dr. Brabant's blind wife and her sister. The resemblance to Casaubon and Dorothea in 'Middlemarch' is very clear.

Rosemary Marshall then spoke about William Ewart M.P. His family and his political achievements, which included The Public Libraries Act (1850) to enable everyone to improve themselves with free access to books. The bill was pushed through in the Lords by Lord Stanley of Alderley (who thought free libraries were such a good idea that schools could be abolished!). He bought the house at Broadleas because of the new railway line which made it possible to get to London in 3 hours. For such a radical reformer who achieved so much, he seems to have very little recognition today, but his friendship with William and Elizabeth Gaskell must recommend him to us.



Outside the front entrance to Broadleas with its present owner, Lady Anne Cowdray and her dogs.

On Sunday May 7th 16 members and friends met at Avebury on a perfect late spring morning and drove to Devizes. The scenery was just as described by Mrs Gaskell in her letter to Emily Shaen in September 1856, in which she describes "blue misty plains, and villages in nests of trees, and church spires which did not reach nearly where we were in our beautiful free air and primitive world". We assembled in the market square where Peter pointed out the fine 18th century buildings which indicated the prosperity of the town, before taking us to the house from which poor young Mary Anne Evans was so ignominiously ejected. We enjoyed a very good lunch before going out to Broadleas, since 1947 the home of Lady Anne Cowdray, who opens the beautiful garden to the public. She kindly allowed us to see the ground floor of the house before we went round the garden. No wonder Mrs Gaskell once wrote that she "enjoyed Broadleas far the most of my visit."

We plan a picnic in August and then Dudley Green is coming to speak to us on 'A Question of Trust: The Relationship between Patrick Brontë and Elizabeth Gaskell' on Saturday, November 18th at 2.00pm.

Rosemary Marshall

## Manchester Meetings at Cross Street Chapel.

The next season's meetings will be held on the second Monday in each month at 10.30 for coffee and biscuits.

- |                 |  |
|-----------------|--|
| 9th October -   | Christine Lingard, librarian at Central Library, Manchester will give a talk on The Gaskells and Popular Education.                                      |
| 13th November - | Dr. P. O'Brien on Warrington and the Gaskells. Dr. O'Brien MD is the author of <i>Warrington Academy 1757-86 Its predecessors and successors</i> (1989). |
| 11th December - | A Christmas Carol Service for The Gaskell Society conducted by the Rev. John Midgley   |

## London & South-East Branch

### Future Meetings

- |  |  |
|--|--|
| Saturday 16th September 2000:                          | 'Meteorological Accuracy in Gaskell's Provincial Novels'<br><b>Frances Twinn</b> |
| Saturday 11th November 2000:<br>(Date to be confirmed) | 'The Thomson Family and the young Elizabeth Stevenson'<br><b>Ian Gregg</b>       |

Both meetings to be held at Francis Holland School, 39 Graham Terrace, London SW1W 8JF commencing at 2pm. Lunch beforehand at Royal Court Tavern, Sloane Square, 12 noon, if you wish.

## At Home with Elizabeth Gaskell

Many Gaskell Society members have enjoyed a performance of Barbara Brill's *At Home with the Gaskells* at Plymouth Grove, Brook Street Chapel, the National Gallery and many other venues. Now this has been produced as a booklet by:  
Teamband Ltd, Wanwood, Park Corner, Nettlebed, Henley-on-Thames, Oxon RG9 6DR

One or two copies £5.50 plus 50p postage each, 6-9 copies £4.15 plus 35p a copy postage etc. cheque or postal order to Teamband Ltd.

## Tennyson and Gaskell

Our president, Professor John Chapple, having completed the editorial work on *Further letters of Mrs Gaskell*, soon to be published by MUP, finds time to address The Tennyson Society at its memorial service in Bag Enderby church, Lincolnshire, 3.00pm on Sunday 6th August. Members will remember the admiration for the poet which Elizabeth Gaskell shared with Samuel Bamford (Letters 50, 56, 59) and Mr. Holbrook in *Cranford*.

On his visit John will look out for the signpost, 'To Old Bolingbroke and Bag Enderby' to which someone added 'God's gift of a daughter'.

## Two Events at The British Library

**Tuesday 12th September, 6.15pm - 7.15pm**

**Andrew Davies & Jenny Uglow discuss:**

### *'Adapting the Classics'*

For many people today, the classics of English literature are most readily accessible through film versions, and especially televised 'costume drama'. Andrew Davies is the doyen of TV scriptwriters, having adapted *Pride and Prejudice*, *Middlemarch*, *Wives and Daughters* and many others. Here he talks to Jenny Uglow, author and editor of many books, including *Elizabeth Gaskell: A Habit of Stories* (1993). Video extracts from Andrew Davies' work will be shown.

**Prices are £7.50 & £6.00 concessions.**

**Sunday 1st October, 3.00pm-4.20pm**

**Tuesday 3rd October, 7.00pm-8.20pm**

**Pascal Theatre Company present the world premiere of:**

### *'Charlotte Brontë Goes to Europe'*

An adaptation of Charlotte Brontë's *Villette*.

Written and directed by Julia Pascal; music composed and played by Mark Bousie.

*Villette*, unlike *Jane Eyre*, does not end with 'Reader I married him', and its autobiographical aspects are unmistakable, with more than a hint of Charlotte's own unrequited love for Monsieur Heger. *Charlotte Brontë goes to Europe* is set in the mid-19th century and the present day, and uses video, hymns, live contemporary music, original text, dramatisation from the novel and Charlotte Brontë's little-known Belgian notebooks, in a work specially created for the British Library.

**Prices are £7.50 & £6.00 concessions.**

Apply to:

**The British Library**

**Events Box Office**

**96 Euston Road**

**London**

**NW1 2DB**

**Tel: 020 7412 7332**

**Email: [boxoffice@bl.uk](mailto:boxoffice@bl.uk)**

## Progress on The Gaskell House Plymouth Grove

The Gaskell Society has been very concerned about the house for years, but we are a literary society, not capable or willing to take on the responsibility of bricks and mortar. However we instigated the setting up of the Manchester Historic Buildings Trust, an independent Building Preservation Trust, which has as its first project the restoration and conversion of the house. The trustees include two members of the Gaskell Society Committee, the Chairman of the trustees of Cross Street Chapel (the Unitarian Chapel in Manchester where William Gaskell was Minister), a property owner, a surveyor and a conservation officer, and there is a professional project manager. A detailed survey of condition, history and possible self-supporting future uses is now almost complete. The house is in a very poor state of repair and also suffers from subsidence. The approximate cost of restoration and conversion will be £1,200,000. The Heritage Lottery Fund in principle support the project, and would supply about half the money needed. The trust hopes to find the remainder from a combination of grants, income from the property and low-interest loans. This process will take about 2 years, during which time we hope the present tenants will remain to guard the house against vandals.

The beautiful drawing room, dining room, music room and William Gaskell's study, although in very poor condition, retain many original features and we hope will be available for public use. Photographs taken in the 1890s show these interiors in some detail, and some of the original furniture is known to exist. The rest of the premises have very few original features, except the doors and windows. The catalogue of the auction sale in 1914 lists most of the contents, and we are anxious to trace the articles which were sold then.

So you see that although 84 Plymouth Grove does look neglected and shuttered, much work has already been done and we hope that in two or three years time it will open its doors to the world.

### Historical Background

84 Plymouth Grove was the home of the Gaskells from 1850 until the death of Meta Gaskell in 1913. Its importance was recognised in the 1950s when it was given a grade II\* listing which saved it from demolition when most of the rest of the street was cleared to make way for the present housing estate. It is

recognised as a building of national importance. At present it belongs to Manchester University and is let to a Tamil Housing Association, the long-term tenants, the International Society, having recently moved to other premises.

**Janet Allan**

## Stop Press

### **Further Letters of Mrs Gaskell**

edited by John Chapple and Alan Shelston.

Published by Manchester University Press £45: distributed in the USA by St. Martin's Press, Inc. 175 Fifth Avenue, New York Ny 10010 USA.

### **The Liberal Education of Charles Eliot Norton by James Turner**

Published by Johns Hopkins University Press: distributed in U.K. by Plymbridge £35.00. This book, reviewed in the Times Literary Supplement (14th July, 2000) may be of interest to members and will probably be reviewed in our next journal.

We have a few copies of:

### **The letters of Mrs Gaskell and Charles Eliot Norton 1855-1865**

edited, with an introduction, by Jane Whitehill (1932)

This is a 1973 reprint by George Olms, in their *Anglistica and Americana* series. Our copies cost £10 with 70 pence p&p to U.K. addresses and pro rata.

### **Apply to:**

Mrs. Joan Leach,  
Far Yew Tree House, Over Tabley, Knutsford, Cheshire WA16 0HN.

Illustrations on cover and p.10 by **Jean Hockenhull**.

## LONDON AND SOUTH EAST GROUP

Meetings during 2001 are as follows:

**Saturday 12 May** "The right of translation is reserved ": Mrs Gaskell and her overseas' publishers' - Alan Shelston.

**Saturday 15 September** 'Maids of Honour' – Hill Slavid.

**Saturday 10 November** Speaker: Edward Preston.

All meetings will be held at Francis Holland School, 39 Graham Terrace, London SW1W 8JF and will commence at 2pm. The dates in September and November have still to be confirmed by the school, Francis Holland School is a few minutes walk from Sloane Square underground station (Circle and District lines). Anyone who wishes may meet at 12 noon at Sloane Square underground station for a light lunch at the Royal Court Tavern, also on Sloane Square, prior to the meetings. Those arriving later than 12 noon should proceed directly to the Royal Court Tavern.

At some date during the year Edward Preston has kindly agreed to lead a literary walk through London. Details will follow later in the year  
Dudley J Barlow.

**South West Group will meet in Bath on Saturday 7 April**

The speaker will be Professor John Chapple on : *The Pains and Pleasures of a Literary Editor*.

**Arnold Bennett Country Trip**

**On Wednesday 20<sup>th</sup> June there will be an outing to Burslem: the Bursley of Arnold Bennett in *The Card*, *The Old Wives Tale* etc**

Members of The Arnold Bennett Society will be our guides and there will be time to see the visitors' centre of Doulton Pottery. The coach will pick up in Knutsford and Macclesfield .

**WEEKEND CONFERENCE AT BATH SPA UNIVERSITY**

17-20 August.

LITERARY WOMEN: Friends and contemporaries of Elizabeth Gaskell.

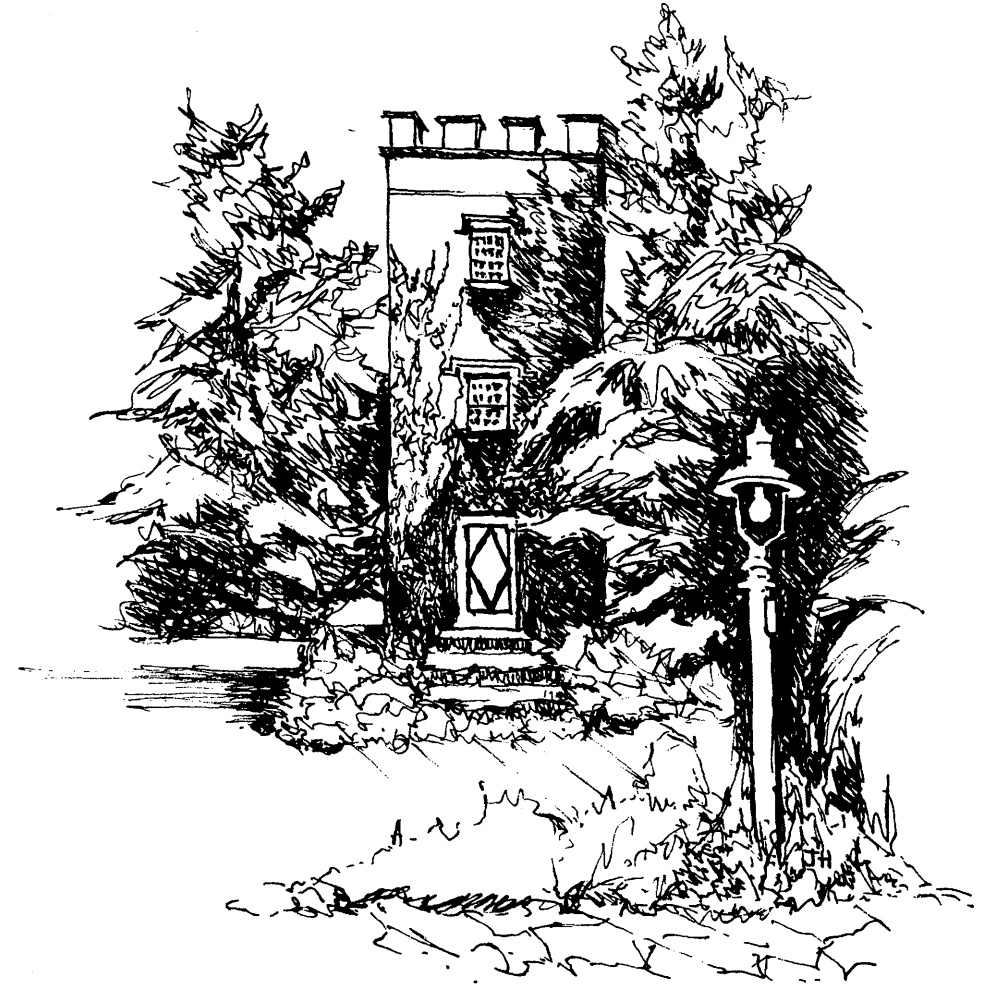
Full programme of lectures, visits etc

**AUTUMN MEETING AT KNUTSFORD 29<sup>TH</sup> SEPTEMBER**

**THE READING ROOM HONOURS ELIZABETH GASKELL**

The new public display in the great Round Reading Room within the British Museum features famous writers who have sat at the leather-covered desks under the great echoing dome. Among them was Elizabeth Gaskell, who obtained her Reader's ticket in 1860. All her books are on display with a brief introduction to her writing.

## The Gaskell Society



## NEWSLETTER

March 2001 - Number 31

## *Editor's Letter*

The rhythm of our Gaskell year has been changed by the decision to hold our AGM meeting in the Spring at Cross Street Chapel; this date relates more closely to our financial year and we hope members may find Manchester easier than Knutsford to reach from a distance. Our first general meeting was held at Cross Street in April 1986 and I am almost certain that Barbara Brill was there. We are saddened by her recent death and pay tribute to her in this Newsletter.

We are looking forward to the Conference at Bath , 17-20 August ,when we will be assisted by members of our South West branch. We already have over eighty members booked so if you wish to join us please do not delay in booking.

You will find future events listed towards the back of this newsletter. In Knutsford our monthly meetings from October to May are well supported and give much pleasure. There are also group meetings in Manchester, London/S.E and Bath/S/W . If you cannot get to these meetings you might think about planning meetings in your area with help from the Society. Our home page also lists dates of meetings and other information : [www.gaskellsociety@cw.c.net](mailto:www.gaskellsociety@cw.c.net)

In this Newsletter *The Gaskells* , *Popular Education* and *The Free Library Movement* is part of a paper read by Christine Lingard at a meeting in Manchester; a second part will follow in our next Newsletter. Professor Chapple traces for us some history of fairy stories and Professor Peter Skrine follows clues to a Punch pun with links to Catherine Winkworth .We welcome suggestions for talks at our future meetings, especially from prospective speakers; also items for the Newsletter.

Our trip to Rome in Gaskell footsteps will be either in spring or autumn 2002. Suggestions for group accommodation will be welcome.

**SUMMER ACADEMY** has a course at Manchester University

16-23 June on ***Wives , Daughters and Literary Sisters***

This is a wide ranging programme including visits.

Details from Summer Academy , Keynes College, The University, Canterbury, KENT CT2 7NP

Joan Leach

# TRIBUTES TO BARBARA BRILL

## Janet Allan

Barbara Brill was over seventy when I first met her. Characteristically, when most people would be considering taking life easy, she was involved in the considerable task of writing the first (and only) biography of William Gaskell. This was published in 1984 by the Manchester Literary and Philosophical Society to coincide with the centenary of William's death. She was one of the principal guests at the Royal George in 1985 on the 175<sup>th</sup> anniversary of Elizabeth's death, and from then on was closely connected with our activities. Although she did not quite make her 90th birthday, I spoke to her a few days beforehand to discuss the lunch we were to hold in her honour. She had the same open, cheerful, kindly and intelligent approach that she had in 1984. We send our sympathy to all her family. She is much missed.

## Alan Shelston

One of the pleasures of editing the *Gaskell Society Journal* was that every year, a little time after the appearance of each new issue, one would receive a letter from Barbara expressing her appreciation of its contents. I say 'a little time' since she made sure that she had had time to read everything that had been included. In a similar way, I came to look forward to the Manchester and Knutsford meetings, when I could always be sure of renewing our acquaintance. Whenever I saw Barbara she was smiling: it is, in fact, the only image I have of her. That Barbara was a true scholar in her own right I discovered when we worked together on an article on the Gaskells' reading, as reflected in the Portico lending books, which appeared in an early number of the *Gaskell Society Journal* (Volume 5, 1991). Most of the work for that article was Barbara's but typically she insisted that it appear under our joint names. Her affectionate 'Portrait' of William Gaskell remains the best source of information about him. To my lasting regret she did not live to receive the copy of Mrs Gaskell's *Further Letters* which John Chapple and I were to inscribe for her. When we were putting the volume together I remember being moved by a message Mrs Gaskell sent to a bereaved friend: 'May we see the Light in God's Light, when that time comes.' It is a typical example of her optimistic uncertainty. Those words seem to me not inappropriate to the spirit in which Barbara lived her life, and I think we can fairly apply them to her passing.

## Irene Wiltshire

I was acquainted with Barbara Brill principally through the Portico Library where, just a few years ago, I heard her give a paper on Robert Louis Stevenson. I always found her to be a most charming and kindly lady, and so modest about her achievements. It was through a Portico mailing that I learnt the sad news, but I had for some time been aware of the part Barbara Brill played in the early years of the

Gaskell Society. The last time that I saw her was at the Society's AGM in September 2000. Even though she was full of years, few who saw her at that time would have been prepared for her death in November. The passing of Barbara Brill is a loss that is shared by all who knew her and by all who, like myself, were lucky enough to have met her.

## Joan Leach

Barbara Brill was a Gaskell devotee long before the Society was formed, in 1985, when she became an enthusiastic founder member. Her wide literary interests, research skills and ability to communicate her enthusiasm were evident from the very first Newsletter when she contributed an article on *Annie A(ustin) and Fleeming*. Barbara was always interested in personal relationships between writers and other creative people, and how they interacted. A long time enthusiasm for Robert Louis Stevenson brought to her notice Fleeming and Annie Jenkin who were also known to the Gaskells (Newsletters 1 and 25)

In Newsletter 2 she described in *Job Legh and the working men naturalists* how her research into Victorian botanists coincided with her first reading of *Mary Barton*; drawing on her wide reading and research she adds much to our appreciation and understanding of Job Legh and his friends.

To a novice editor such as myself Barbara's thoughtful support was much appreciated; she would modestly tell me she was working on a line of research and offer it for the Newsletter, just at the right time and occasionally, when I had too little for an edition, she was able to supply material at short notice. You will all miss her contributions: who can replace her?

Many of us in the north and in London have enjoyed being *At Home with the Gaskells*. This was a script Barbara devised, mainly from Gaskell letters, for three readers. Barbara herself read a part when I first heard it, at the appropriate venue of Brook Street Chapel, at the inaugural meeting of the Society, 12 October 1985. Plymouth Grove Gaskell house and The National Portrait Gallery, the Portico and many other venues have also hosted readings. Only last year the text was published in book form by Teamband making it available for all to read.

Recently found letters from Kipling have been in the news and my first thought was, 'Barbara would be interested in that'. I know I am not alone in regretting her passing but having fond memories to keep.

**Editor's Note:** Barbara Brill's contributions to Newsletters are in Nos. 1,2, 4, 6,12,13,15, 22, 25, 28 and 29



# THE GASKELLS, POPULAR EDUCATION & THE FREE LIBRARY MOVEMENT

Christine Lingard

Elizabeth Gaskell came to Manchester on her marriage in September 1832, the year of the Great Reform Bill. Hers was a time of change, nowhere more so than in the field of education. The working class was developing a thirst for knowledge and reading ceased to be the preserve of the upper classes. In Manchester she was witness to the birth of one of the most significant but unsung forces in this revolution - the Free Library movement.

A regular supply of books was essential to her, but she was definitely a borrower not a buyer. 'I can't get the last of hers in Manchester anywhere unless by purchase' she moaned when she couldn't get the latest title. Libraries were a solution. For her this meant the Portico where her husband became President in 1849, but a subscription was necessary for the loan of books. Shares in 1836 were £12 and the annual subscription £2 10s. Membership was restricted to men so she was forced to rely on her husband for the latest title. Even so she found British libraries superior to those abroad. 'They got dingy books from the Caen circulating library, and had no other books, I fancy. No wonder they hate living abroad.' She tried to find out if Mudie's circulating library had any intention of opening a branch in Paris so her friends could get English books more easily. Other Manchester libraries were the Athenaeum, Exchange and Foreign Library (St Ann's Sq). The first commercial Circulating Library opened in Ducie Place in 1765. Shares were ten guineas and the annual subscription 20s - beyond the means of most.

Provision of working class libraries up to then was haphazard. There had been several attempts to provide them over the decades. It could be argued that Chetham's Library, Manchester was an early example but the stock was learned and its appeal limited. Enlightened benefactors had founded libraries in individual localities. Rev Thomas Bray of St Botolph's (City of London) founded a network of 80 parish libraries here and in Maryland at the beginning of the 18<sup>th</sup> century. Out of this grew the SPCK. In 1787 Rev. William Turner established a library of 197 books in the vestry of Hanover St church, Newcastle. Though not confined to religious topics books were moral or philosophical e.g. Wollstonecraft's *Thoughts on the Education of Daughters* and Clarkson's *Abolition of Slavery*. James Darbishire endowed a library in Dob Lane chapel, Failsworth where her father was once preacher. From 1803 Sunday School libraries played a leading part in disseminating books.

Mechanics Institutes were the next development. This is a vague umbrella term encompassing a wide range of institutions and it is impossible to generalise. Each was independent of the rest. Ideally they would have a library, museum, laboratory and would have space for public lectures, all under one roof, though it would be difficult to find many that offered everything. They differed in their constitutions, aims and activities, offering tuition in a variety of general subjects, such as phrenology, rather than vocational courses. Some were workers' co-operatives, others relied on patronage and the availability to women also varied from complete exclusion to active encouragement. Some found it useful to admit them for music and dancing. In Manchester in 1839 women constituted a fifth of the total audience at lectures. Not all Institutes were successful and by the 1860s most had been replaced by local authority colleges or eventually merged into more learned institutions. Manchester's became UMIST. Others sank without trace.

Libraries were an important part of the provision of the Mechanics Institutes. Access was sometimes restricted to full members – sometimes a subscription to the library alone was possible. Some had a reduced rate for women. The Brontë sisters walked four miles to borrow from the Keighley Institute where the librarian was a Miss Frances Mary Richardson Currer, suggestive of Charlotte's pseudonym Currer Bell.

The institutes are believed to have developed indirectly from the lectures given by George Birkbeck in Glasgow early in the century. The Glasgow Institute, which is generally regarded as the first, (though this is disputed) opened in 1823 with 1,000 members. William Gaskell was at University there (1820-5) so he would have witnessed events first hand. The Rev. Turner, with whom Elizabeth stayed prior to her marriage, was Vice-President of the Newcastle Institute in 1829. The Manchester Institute was founded at the Bridgewater Arms on 7th April 1824 by William Fairbairn the engineer and two others, and it opened in Cooper Street the following year and moving to Princess St. premises in 1853. Patrons included Joseph Brotherton (1783-1857), recently retired from the cotton trade in Salford and the banker Benjamin Heywood. At least a third of the first committee, including Heywood and Fairbairn, were Unitarians. Other Presidents or Vice-Presidents included Lord Francis Egerton, Richard Cobden, Mark Philips, MP John Dalton, the chemist, Rev John Robberds of Cross St. and various Schuncks and Schwabes. The list reads like a Gaskell dinner party – all were known to the couple personally.

This description is taken from James Wheeler's *History of Manchester* 1836:

A main public object of the Institution has been the delivery of courses of lectures, for which purposes there is an excellent and spacious theatre. There is also a useful and valuable library of 3595 volumes, which is greatly resorted to. All works are now admitted by vote of the Directors, but the great part of the existing library consists of donations. Attached to the library is a reading

room at which all the leading English and Foreign periodicals are taken. The institution is principally active in privately educating its operative members who by attending "evening classes" may be instructed in English grammar, writing, arithmetic, French, Latin, algebra, geometry, figure and flower drawing, gymnasia and vocal music. It has been remarked that though the payment is only 20s a year or about 4s 6d a week the annual subscribers are not composed of those classes for whom such Institutions were originally designed.

He was referring to the fact that only a third of members were mechanics. The rest were merchants, shopkeepers, clerks, schoolteachers, artists, ladies etc. for even these prices were too high. The Institutes were seen as fulfilling a social as well as an educational need. Heywood also provided a branch at Miles Platting in 1836 and said it had 'in an evening a blazing fire, red curtains, easy chairs, a capital cup of coffee, chess, pictures, to see if we can make it a match for the public houses.'

William Gaskell was a keen supporter. He lectured regularly not on religious subjects but on literature and his wife encouraged him greatly in this:

My husband has lately been giving four lectures to the very poorest of the workers in the very poorest district of Manchester, Miles Platting, on 'The Poets and Poetry of Humble Life'. You cannot think how well they have been attended, or how interested people have seemed. And the day before yesterday two deputations of respectable looking men waited on him to ask him to repeat these lectures in two different parts of the town. He is going on with four more in the winter, and meanwhile we are picking up all the 'Poets of Humble Life' we can think of. [GL12 Mary Howitt 1838]

He has 2 deputations today to ask him to repeat his lectures – one from the Teachers of the Sunday School & Senior Scholars – the other from the Salford Mechanics institution. Neither of them pay, which is a pity – but if the Manchester M. institution come – shan't they pay for all. [GL11 to Elizabeth Gaskell]

Unfortunately the text of the lectures has not survived. Perhaps they were similar to one he gave on Crabbe in Eccles in 1872, reported in the press as being very thorough and detailed. He is also known to have spoken on Burns and Hood. He continued his interest with the Frederick Maurice's Working Men's College in the 1850s.

Gaskell mentions the Mechanics in *Mary Barton* in the following speech by Margaret Jennings:

I will tell you all and about it. You see there's a gentleman lecturing on

music at th'Mechanics and he wants folks to sing his songs. Well, last night th'counter got a sore throat and couldn't make a note. So they sent for me. Jacob Butterworth has said a good word for me, and they asked me would I sing? So I'm to sing again o'Thursday: and I got a sovereign last night, and am to have half-a-sovereign every night th'lecturer is at t'Mechanics.

The experiences of Samuel Bamford, the weaver poet, whom Gaskell knew in old age, provide further illustration. Born in Middleton in 1788 he learned to write at the Methodist Sunday School then got a scholarship to the local grammar school. In between his political activities (he was imprisoned for his part in the Peterloo riots) he made his living in the silk industry. In 1813 a subscription library had been opened but as the membership was 20s and 10s for mechanics, it didn't last long and Bamford helped to found a Mechanics' Institution in 1825. They collected what books they could and opened a room once a week gratis. Yet even this was not a success and it failed according to Bamford because of the disruptive activities of Chartists.

Perhaps this is similar to what happened in Failsworth where Ben Brierley (aged 16), the future dialect poet helped found a Mutual Improvement Society in his local Sunday school. Activities included amateur theatricals. It was closed in 1845 when the evangelical vicar objected to both the theatricals and the Chartist activities of members. They resolved to reform and during the night plied the watchman with drink and removed floorboards from a room above to enter the schoolroom. They held classes in secret till arrested. Brierley was charged with libelling a local mill-owner but was let off with an apology.

To be continued

*'PECCAVI'*

Peter Skrine

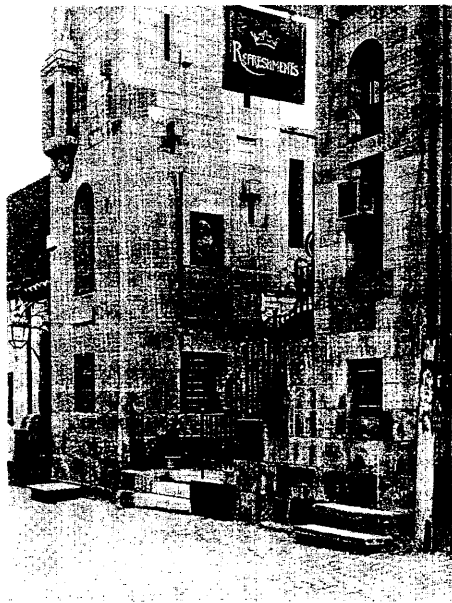
Many of you will have noticed the name of Catherine Winkworth in The Sunday Telegraph recently. It all began with the furore over the statues in Trafalgar Square. Ian Hislop, the journalist, stoutly defended General Napier's right to be there, but did so on rather shaky ground. Sir Charles Napier (1782-1853), a friend of Byron, made a name for himself as an enlightened and humane administrator in the Ionian Islands of Captain Corelli fame, and in the Indian province of Sind (now in Pakistan), his military annexation of which in 1843 he described as a 'very advantageous,

useful, humane piece of rascality'. Wellington admired him, and he was appointed commander-in-chief in India despite the East India Company's objections. As Roger Ellis tell us in his *Who's Who in Victorian Britain* (1997), there was no mourning for him amongst the evangelicals or the men of commerce, which was hardly surprising: among the many causes he championed was the plight of the broadloom weavers in Lancashire. 'Hell,' he said, 'may be paved with good intentions, but it is assuredly hung with Manchester cottons.' Though Mrs Gaskell only mentions his naval cousin, indirectly, in her letters, she must have been well aware of his existence.

But what did the Gaskells' young protégée, Catherine Winkworth, have to do with all this? According to Ian Hislop's follow-up in *The Sunday Telegraph* of 26 November 2000, it was she who made up the ingenious one-word intralingual pun Napier is said to have devised to communicate his victory to the world outside, 'peccavi' being Latin for 'I have sinned'.

This is not the first time this amusing controversy has arisen. Tucked into a file of Winkworth autograph letters in my possession is an old, undated cutting addressed to the Editor of *The Daily Telegraph* by Sir Patrick Cadell of Boar's Hill, Oxford. It supports the view that Sir Charles Napier never sent the message, and states that the original joke, which appeared in *Punch* in August, 1843, immediately after the capture of Sind, 'is believed to have been sent to *Punch* by Catherine Winkworth, then a girl of 14' whereas in Hislop's version 'the *bon mot* was actually coined by a 16-year-old schoolgirl,' Catherine Winkworth, who sent it to *Punch* in 1844, a year after the great victory. It is biographical fact that she was born on 13 September 1827. We also have her own word for it that she started to learn German with Mr Gaskell in August 1843, but she doesn't mention Latin lessons with him. Of 'peccavi' there is not trace in her sister Susanna's *Letters and Memorials of Catherine Winkworth*, privately printed in Clifton in 1883. According to Hislop, the archivists at the *Punch* library led him to an editorial note by a Mrs C. Mackintosh in the October number of a magazine called *East and West* for 1907, in which this lady stated that the pun was made up by Catherine Winkworth, her cousin. But there is no Mackintosh in the Winkworth family tree. The whole *canard*, Mrs Gaskell might say, is 'curious if true'.

**The Gaskell Memorial Tower** is a very visible reminder to all, and especially to visitors, of Elizabeth Gaskell's associations with Knutsford. It is a unique building and the focal point of King Street. The accompanying illustrations are from Ellis Chadwick's *Mrs Gaskell: Haunts, Homes and Stories* (1910 edition) On the side of the tower there is a bronze bas relief of the author ( more of this in our next Newsletter) and above it is a list of her works which , strangely, does not include *Wives and Daughters*; as this list is in chronological order and there is a space at the bottom, we propose that the Society should make arrangements to have it added. It is included in the list noted by Ellis Chadwick which is otherwise



correct and in Watt's list for the mason, though this includes many more works for which there was not space. We are now in consultation with the local conservation officer about this project.

# CHARLES PERRAULT, MADAME D'AULNOY, AND 'CURIOUS, IF TRUE'

John Chapple

Cinderella, The Sleeping Beauty, Little Red Riding Hood, Bluebeard and Puss in Boots are very familiar titles. All five tales were introduced to the literary world by a brilliant French stylist, Charles Perrault, in his *Histoires ou Contes du temps passé* in 1697. Elizabeth Gaskell remodelled them in 'Curious, if True' (1860), together with Perrault's Little Thumb, who is given his French name, *Poucet*. Elsewhere she alludes to the other two prose tales in Perrault's collection - *Les Fées* (The Fairies) and *Riquet à la houppe* (Riquet with the Tuft). Philip Yarrow

picked up brief allusions to the former (words issuing as pearls and diamonds from the mouth of the queen's younger daughter) both in *Mary Barton* (1848) and in *Wives and Daughters* (1864-66). *Riquet* is briefly mentioned in *Ruth* (1853), as we learn from Professor Yarrow's very useful note in the *Gaskell Society Journal* 7 (1993), p. 35.

Apart from the Perrault stories, *Beauty and the Beast* and *The White Cat* occur in 'Curious, if True'. Many literary versions of *Beauty and the Beast* are known. They rate a separate entry in the *Oxford Companion to Fairy Tales* (ed. Jack Zipes, 2000), which asserts that Madame Leprince de Beaumont's sophisticated, didactic version of 1757 for young people 'has become canonical in the modern world.' The *White Cat*, however, by Marie-Catherine Le Jumel de Barneville, baronne d'Aulnoy, printed in her *Les Contes des fées* (1697-8), is barely mentioned in the *Oxford Companion* under d'Aulnoy.

Nor does Gaskell say a great deal in 'Curious, if True' about the 'delicate, fair woman, dressed all in the softest white', Madame de Mioumiou, though she is neatly characterised by her 'little noise of pleasure', reminiscent of both 'the singing of a teakettle' and 'the cooing of a dove', and her likeness to Puss in Boots when rats and mice were heard scuttering behind the tapestry. In chapter 37 of *Wives and Daughters* we find that Mrs Gibson's 'cat-like nature purred and delighted in smooth ways, and pleasant quietness.'

The English translations of these stories (Perrault's often called *Tales of Mother Goose* and d'Aulnoy's *Tales of Mother Bunch*) are probably not very relevant. They were altered, censored and softened by translators like J.R. Planché in 1855, and in any case Gaskell could read the French originals. 'Company Manners' (1854) is especially rich in its allusions, associated with the *salon* figure of Madame de Sablé:

I can fancy her stewing sweetbreads in a silver saucepan, or dressing salad with her delicate, plump, white hands - not that I ever saw a silver saucepan. I was formerly ignorant enough to think that they were only used in the Sleeping Beauty's kitchen, or in the preparations for the marriage of Riquet-with-the-Tuft; but I have been assured that there are such things, and that they impart a most delicate flavour, or no flavour, to the victuals cooked therein; so I assert again, Madame de Sablé cooked sweetbreads for her friends in a silver saucepan; but never to fatigue herself with those previous labours. ... The perfection of waiting is named in the story of the *White Cat*, where, if you remember, the hero prince is waited upon by hands without bodies, as he sits

at table with the *White Cat*, and is served with that delicate fricassee of mice. By hands without bodies I am very far from meaning hands without heads. ... And, now I think of it, Madame de Sablé must have taken the *White Cat* for her model; there must evidently have been the same noiseless ease and grace about the movements of both; the same purring, happy, inarticulate moments of satisfaction, when surrounded by pleasant circumstances, must have been uttered by both. My own mouth has watered before now at the account of that fricassee of mice prepared especially for the *White Cat*; and M. Cousin alludes more than once to Madame de Sablé's love for 'friandises.' Madame de Sablé avoided the society of literary women, and so, I am sure, did the *White Cat*. Both had an instinctive sense of what was comfortable; both loved home with tenacious affection; and yet I am mistaken if each had not their own little private love of adventure - touches of the gypsy.

Though d'Aulnoy's hero prince was offered a choice of two *bisques*, one of young pigeons and the other of very fat mice, rather than a simple, delicate fricassee of mice, it seems possible that Gaskell was inspired to write her story, 'Curious, if True', by her recollection of d'Aulnoy's humorous yet imaginative recreations of folk stories. Perrault's stories are beautifully told and Gaskell has captured his irony and light cynicism. However, d'Aulnoy's longer narrative is quaintly whimsical and realistically knowing, wonderfully rococo in its proliferating details. There is the little orchestra of cats playing guitars with their claws, yowling in different tones and grimacing madly, or the cats and monkeys dressed as Moors and Chinese dancing a ballet. *La Chatte blanche* went hunting baby eagles on a splendid monkey whilst the prince decorously rode a child's wooden horse. She composed passionate verses and songs, all carefully preserved, but which cannot now be read because of the execrable writing of her secretary, an old cat. The flow of invention seems inexhaustible.

In the introduction to the tercentenary edition of d'Aulnoy's *Contes des Fées* (Paris 1997), Jacques Barchilon underlines their fantastic and marvellous nature. Marina Warner, in her comprehensive and learned study, *From the Beast to the Blonde: On Fairy Tales and Their Tellers* (1994), is illuminating on the subject of d'Aulnoy's transformed heroines, empowered by their animal disguises 'to enter a new territory of choice and speech'; their apparent degradation works for rather than against them. But it is what Barchilon tells us of Madame d'Aulnoy that awakens powerful echoes in the mind of a biographer. We are informed that not much is known of her childhood, and that there are 'zones d'ombre sur plusieurs périodes de son existence.' Her life was very problematic (*both femme fatale and salonnière*, it appears), but apart from this, she was the mother of four surviving daughters, travelled widely and achieved literary success in Paris at about the age of forty.

Her nature was lively and playful. She could write her tales in the midst of noise and visitors. She loved telling stories, possessing a fertile imagination and a quite unstudious attitude to writing. She died in 1705, when she was about fifty-five years of age. It all sounds rather familiar.

#### Editor's Note.

Newsletter 26 has an article by Irene Wiltshire: 'CURIOUS IF TRUE': LE PETIT POUCKET AND TOM THUMB. A case of mistaken identity?

## BOOK NOTES

Christine Lingard

Longman have reissued Michael Wheeler's *English fiction of the Victorian period, 1830-1890*, first published in 1985 and extensively revised in 1994, (£20.99). This is a standard work with excellent appendices, proving to be a comprehensive reference tool for information on a large number of authors, alphabetically arranged.

Two other books to look out for: *The Brontë Myth* by Lucasta Miller. Cape (£15.99). Just published and favourably reviewed in the press, this book analyses the treatment of the Brontës from Gaskell to the present day.

There is a new Everyman edition of *Ruth* edited by Nancy Henry and Graham Handley (£5.99). The back cover states: 'The most comprehensive edition available, with introduction, notes, selected criticism, further reading, text summary and a chronology of Elizabeth Gaskell's life and times'.

*Ruth* is also now available on tape from Stirling Audio of Bath (£56.35) read by Eve Matheson.

*North and South* is published in Wordsworth Classics (£1.50) with an introduction

#### Request for research help

I am looking to trace the provenance of a painting which may relate to Mrs Gaskell. I would like a couple of volunteers to do a few hours research in the County Records Departments which relate to Tilford in Surrey and Steepleton in Dorset. It is possible

that I might need someone near Preston, Lancs. to help at a later stage. If you think you may be able help and would like further details, please contact me at: Ruth@scibydes.fsnet.co.uk or phone 0115 921 4411.

Liz Rye

## ALLIANCE OF LITERARY SOCIETIES REPORT

Committee member Kenn Oultram represented The Society at the ALS meeting in Birmingham on 17th February.

The secretary announced a membership now totalling over 100 societies. All are invited to send representatives to the AGM on 28th April.

Nominations have been received from the writer Susan Hill for the position of president and from Nicholas Reed (Edith Nesbit Society) for the position of chairman. Societies that have applied to host future AGMs include Arnold Bennett (2002), Dylan Thomas (2003), Graham Greene (2004) and the Marlow Society (2005).

A sub committee was appointed to formulate the subject and rules for a national essay competition which, it is hoped, will be launched later this year.

## FORTHCOMING EVENTS

### AGM MEETING

At Cross Street Chapel, Manchester on Saturday 7<sup>th</sup> April

10.30 Coffee                      11.00 AGM

followed by The Daphne Carrick lecture by Dr Josie Billington:

*Wives and Daughters*: From Screen to Page (or what only the Novel Can Do)

Lunch

2.15 Lecture by Dr Joanne Shattock:

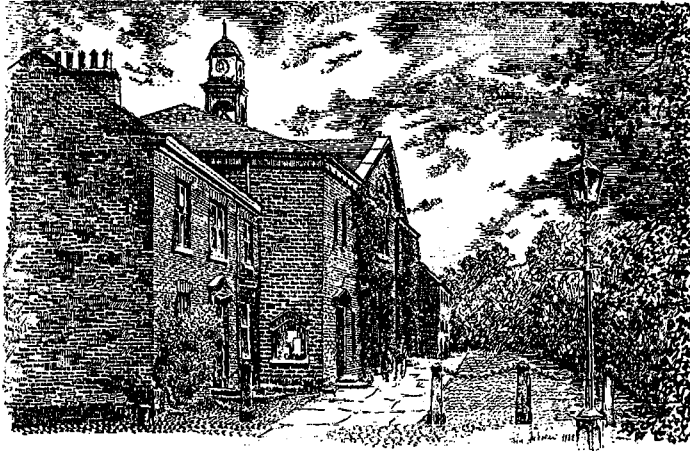
Biographies of Victorian Women Writers and how they influence our reading

Meeting closes about 3.45/4.00pm

## ALLIANCE OF LITERARY SOCIETIES AGM

This is to be held in Ledbury on **Saturday 28th April** and will be hosted by The Friends of The Dymock Poets (Edward Thomas, Robert Frost, Rupert Brooke, John Drinkwater, Wilfred Gibson, and Lascelles Abercrombie). All previous AGMs have been held in Birmingham so it is hoped that members from affiliated societies will support this new venture which has an attractive venue and well planned programme. Tickets are £3 each: please apply to Joan Leach for booking details (SAE) or read more on our home page <http://www.gaskellsociety.cwc.net>

# The Gaskell Society



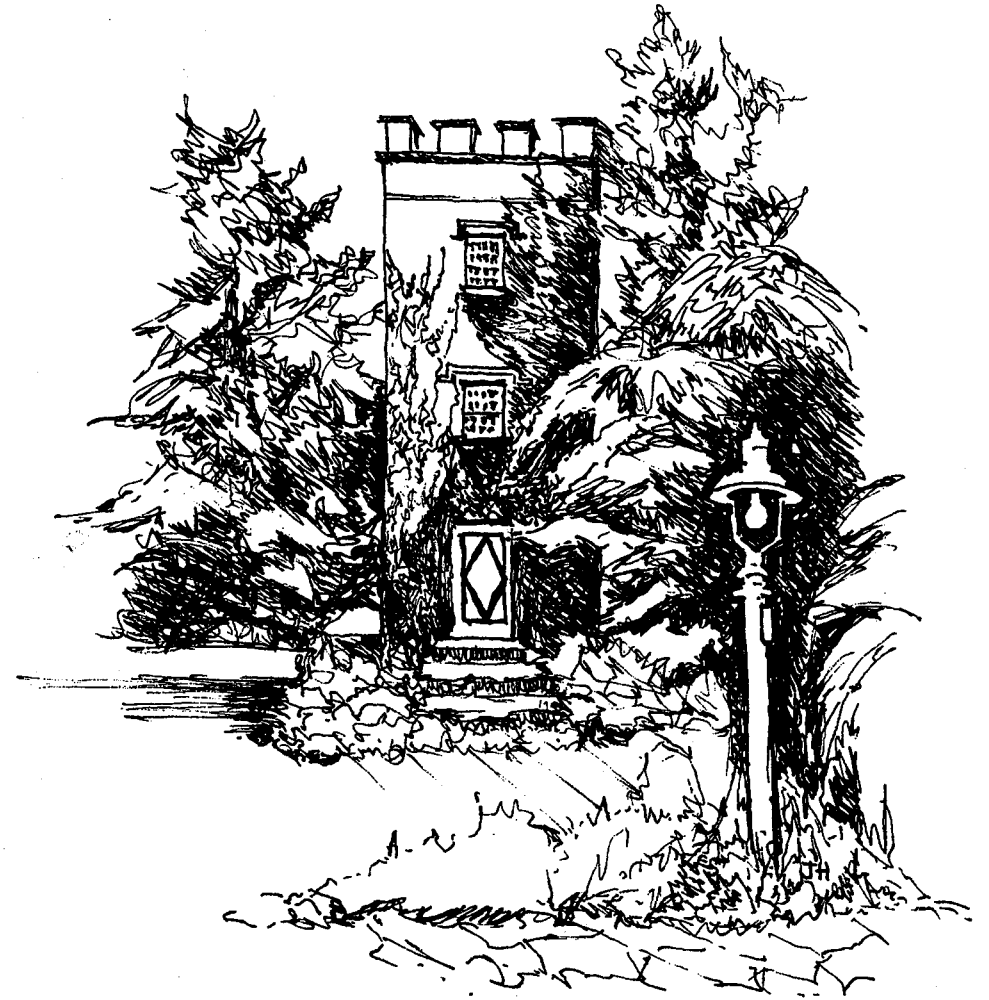
Moravian Church  
Fairfield Settlement, Droylsden, Tameside.

THE GASKELL SOCIETY HOME PAGE has all the latest information on meetings.  
<http://www.gaskellsociety.cwc.net>

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. Telephone - 01565 634668

**Hon Treasurer:** Brian Williams, 15 Cawley Avenue, Culcheth, Warrington, Cheshire WA3 4DF

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## NEWSLETTER

Autumn 2001 - Number 32

## Editor's Letter

It was good to see so many members at our recent weekend conference in Bath, 112 of you, and many who had not attended previous events. With some experience of running weekend conferences for our members we succeeded in getting excellent speakers and a well-balanced programme in a pleasant venue. We are grateful to our members in the South West who helped so much at every stage to make this such an enjoyable event and to all who played their part in the programme. You will all be able to read some of the papers and a report in our next Journal. Several pamphlets were prepared for the event and can be obtained by post : details are given with the South West Group notice.

Our next conference in 2003 is likely to be in the north east, probably at Durham or Newcastle-upon-Tyne.

We are sorry to disappoint some of you with the news that we have had to give up plans for a visit to Rome in 2002. The trip we were planning worked out to be too expensive - £650 plus for four nights but there were other problems and we felt that it would be exhausting sight-seeing with a large group. For those who still hope to visit Rome we propose to collect a list of members who might like to combine in smaller groups. Anyone finding a holiday offer they liked could consult the list and contact others to discuss ideas. Write to me if you would like to have your name on such a list or if you have suggestions on tour offers or hotels. I have some details of tour companies which have been recommended to us, which we can give to members who are thinking of joining a tour or arranging their own trip. There is another way the Society hopes to assist would-be Rome bound travellers: we will compile a booklet of the Gaskells and their contemporaries in Rome and suggest visits for literary pilgrims.

However we DO still hope to offer you an overseas visit and this will be to Normandy and Brittany partly in the steps of Gaskell and Madame de Sévigné. This will be a coach tour, probably for a week near the beginning of September. We need to know how many of you are interested in this plan and especially how many single rooms would be needed so we can start looking for a hotel.

It may not happen for some time but we have just heard that BBC is working on a production of *North and South*.

We hope many of you will be able to join us at group meetings in Knutsford, Manchester, London and Bath or at the New Year Lunch on 15th January at Cottons hotel, Knutsford. Any member who is too far away to get to local meetings might consider starting a group in their area, perhaps by putting a notice in the local library or paper: the Society could give back-up support.

Plans for Plymouth Grove are progressing but funds are much needed.

**Joan Leach**



## 84 Plymouth Grove

Janet Allan

At our conference in Bath I gave a very short slide presentation about 84 Plymouth Grove, the house in which Elizabeth lived from 1850-65, and where her husband William and their two unmarried daughters lived between 1865-1913. At the beginning of July the Manchester Historic Buildings Trust applied for a Heritage Lottery Fund Grant to restore and convert the house, and I appealed for funds towards the development of this application. Members of the Society have now generously contributed over £2,000 towards this development funding and the fund raising which will be necessary. This is a most encouraging response and I would like to thank, again, everybody who has contributed. Anybody who has not already done so will find the donation form in this newsletter, and I hope I can persuade them to add to the total.

The result of the Stage 1 of the Heritage Lottery application will not now be known until about March 2002, nine months after our application was sent in, and if we pass Stage 1 there will be further development work before we can apply for Stage 2. It is unlikely now that we will know if we have been successful until early in 2003.

In the forthcoming months I will be giving a longer and more detailed talk about the project to members of the Society (the date to be announced) and have also been asked to talk to several other local organisations. I will be very pleased to hear of others who would be interested. Please get in touch with me at 10 Dale Road, New Mills, High Peak, SK22 4 MW, phone/fax 01663 744233 email [janet@janetbook.fsnet.co.uk](mailto:janet@janetbook.fsnet.co.uk).

## *The Gaskells' Bequests*

Janet Allan

Some time ago I decided to investigate Elizabeth Gaskell's will. However, careful searches both in Manchester and London, could find no trace of any such will. This was to be expected as married women at that time could not make independent wills. However, there were no Letters of Administration either, so there was no trace of Elizabeth's property. What happened to The Lawn at Holybourne near Alton, I wondered, the house which she was buying without her husband's knowledge? And how much money did she have? Also, when did the Gaskells buy 84 Plymouth Grove, which was rented in 1850 for £150 a year, but by 1913 belonged to Elizabeth and William's daughter Meta (Margaret Emily) when she died, and what happened to The Shelling, the house in Silverdale which Meta and her sister Julia had built?

Some of these questions are answered in the much later wills of William, Julia and Meta Gaskell, and in a copy of the deeds of 84 Plymouth Grove which I obtained recently.

William Gaskell's will dated 23 March 1876 left all his household effects to Julia and Meta, and divided the rest of his property equally between his four daughters. Florence pre-deceased him, dying in 1881, and thus after William died on 11 June 1884 his net estate of £46,103. 0s. 11d was shared by the other three sisters, Julia, Meta and Marianne (Mrs Holland). There is no mention of freehold property, and 'no leaseholds' is noted on the probate document.

Julia and Meta, having inherited £15,367 each from their father, lived on at 84 Plymouth Grove, the doyennes of Manchester society and very much involved in local charitable enterprises. As unmarried women they were able to control their own affairs, and both their wills make interesting reading.

Julia's will is dated 28 July 1905. In the event of her dying before Meta she left nineteen legacies, twelve of which were to local friends including Miss Anna Halle, Miss Taylor of St Jukes School Manchester, Miss Viola Joy and Miss Vera Hochstein, both at the Manchester Royal College of Music, and Miss Vernon at the Manchester Art Museum and University Settlement at Ancoats. Other bequests included Miss Alice Winkworth at Bristol, Mrs William T. Arnold of 4 Carlyle Square Chelsea, Mrs Frances Sleight, wife of the Vicar of Silverdale and Michel Devonassond, Guide aux Livets, Chamonix, Haute Savoie. Should she outlive Meta the list extends and includes £10,000 to Katherine Agnes Gregg to run a home of rest at the Shelling, the 'cottage' that she and Meta had built in Silverdale, for teachers from the Manchester High School for Girls, Governesses, Nurses from Ardwick or a convalescent home for children. Other legacies included £1,000 for the Benevolent Fund for Sick and Aged Governesses, £2,000 to Ardwick District Nurses Home, £1,000 to Ancoats Hospital, £500 each for the Unitarian Home Missionary College, the Domestic Mission, Manchester College Oxford, Christie Cancer Hospital, the Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Children, and Manchester Art Museum. Mrs Jane Sanderson formerly Matron of the Kitchen for the Sick at Ancoats was to receive £50. Julia died before Meta, on 24 October 1908, so after the nineteen individual legacies the balance of her estate of £28,300.11s.11d went to her sister with whom she had lived all her life.

Meta died on 26 October 1913. The gross value of her personal estate was £50,223. 0s. 9d. Interestingly in her will, dated 13 March 1913, Katherine Agnes Gregg is only to receive £50 and there is no reference to the Shelling, but we find that on 19 December 1909, a little over a year after her sister's death, Meta had presented land and buildings in Swinton Avenue 'for the purposes of a home to be called The Memorial Nursing Home' to Louisa Potter, Thomas Arther Helme and others. The Trustees of this Home received £4,500 from Meta in her will. Presumably this replaced the Silverdale project. It is in Meta's will also that we find the question of



The Lawn at Holybourne is answered. The house had been kept in the family and after William's death the freehold was owned jointly by Marianne, Julia, Meta and Charles Crompton (their deceased sister Florence's husband). Meta left her share to Marianne.

Marianne also received £17,000 in trust for herself and her children. Other bequests underline the involvement of the Gaskells in the charitable and cultural life of Manchester. They include £1,500 to the Ardwick District Nurses Home, £1,000 to Ancoats Hospital, £1,000 to the University of Manchester, £1,000 to the Fox Coat Charity, £100 each to the Royal Manchester College of Music, Manchester High School for Girls, Manchester Royal Eye Hospital, the Unitarian Home Missionary College Manchester, the Ministers' Pension and Insurance Fund and the Benevolent Fund for Sick and Aged Governesses. £200 went to the Domestic Mission, the Manchester Art Museum, Manchester Grammar School (£100 for the Musical Society and £100 to the Sports Committee), and £300 to Brook Street Chapel Knutsford for the upkeep of the family grave.

Bequests to individuals included £1,500 each to Henry Llewellyn Davies and Crompton Llewellyn Davies, £500 to Elizabeth Gaskell Norton of Shady Hill Massachusetts (in a later codicil this was revoked and replaced by an annuity of £200) and £500 to Miss Lena Moxon of Morrah, Falmouth. Lady Anne Isabella Ritchie (daughter of William Makepeace Thackeray) received £300. There were numerous other small bequests. In addition to their wages, three of Meta's five servants received legacies of £100 and the remaining two got £50 each.

The wills of both sisters request that their executors destroy all personal papers, which were to be 'put together in a box or boxes'. How we wish now that this had not been done! Meta also left her mother's portrait by Richmond to the National Portrait Gallery, and to the Corporation of Manchester she gave among other things the portrait of William by Mrs Swynnerton, the bust of Elizabeth, and presentation plate given to William on the twenty-fifth anniversary of his ministry at Cross Street Chapel. The University of Manchester received William's 1878 presentation plate. All other possessions including 84 Plymouth Grove and the motor car were to be disposed of by her executors.

The deeds of 84 Plymouth Grove reveal that Meta and Julia bought the house for £3,500 on 24 January 1900. Included in the deal were 2 and 4 Swinton Grove, which are still standing, and 6 and 8 Swinton Avenue, the houses used for The Memorial Nursing Home which no longer exist.

So we now know more about the Gaskells' houses, and their wealth. The question posed by these discoveries is – how did the family become so wealthy? Did Elizabeth's books provide their very considerable fortune? Was William's income of £300 from Cross Street Chapel substantially augmented by his other duties? Or did inheritances help to increase the Gaskell bank balance? Perhaps other members of the Society can throw some light on this.

## Bellingham

Muriel Smith

In Mrs Gaskell and Newcastle-upon-Tyne in the Gaskell Society Journal Vol.5 (1991), P. J Yarrow suggested that Mrs Gaskell had picked up the name Bellingham, used in *Ruth*, when she lived in Newcastle around 1830: it is the name of a small village in Northumberland. Alternatively, she could have encountered the name when staying with the Kay-Shuttleworths in 1850: there is a Bellingham Chapel in Kendal Parish Church. The Bellinghams of Levens Hall, Cumbria, belong to the same family as the Bellinghams of Northumberland Bellingham.

There is, however, a famous bearer of the name connected with a famous and very rare, indeed unique, incident, the assassination of a British Prime Minister. Spencer Perceval was shot by John Bellingham in the lobby of the House of Commons on 11 May 1812. Perceval was by profession a lawyer who had previously served as Solicitor-General and Attorney-General, that is, had been responsible for some of the wartime political prosecutions: this may connect with the almost universal satisfaction observed among the lower ranks of society over his death. He was also violently anti-Catholic at a time when the Catholic Question, the possible relaxation of the savage penal laws still on the Statute Book was a major issue in Parliament, connected of course with the Irish Question. However, it became clear that fears of revolutionary action were groundless: Perceval's death had nothing to do with politics. Bellingham was acting on personal motives: he had got himself into trouble in Russia and blamed the British Government, He was largely the author of his own misfortunes but that never stops a man from nursing a grievance.

## BANK STREET UNITARIAN CHAPEL, BOLTON

Christine Lingard

On 5th June 2001 a group of Gaskell Society members visited this Chapel. Elizabeth Gaskell may well have been familiar with the Chapel herself as she was friendly with the Darbishire family who were associated with it but the family connection goes further back to her Holland ancestors. Because of what John Chapple calls the 'veritable cat's cradle' of Unitarian relationships Gaskell's connection with two of the Chapel's eighteenth century ministers Philip and John Holland is very complicated. Philip Holland was both her grandfather's cousin and his brother-in-law twice over making him also her great uncle.

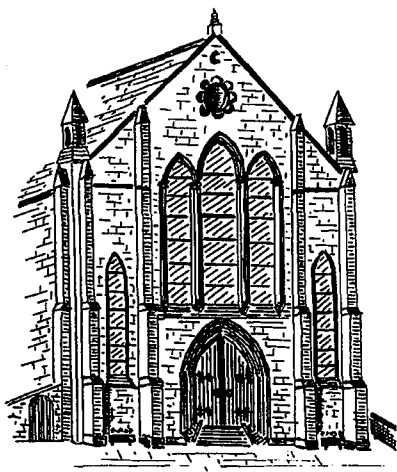
Philip Holland (1721-1789) was active as a trustee in founding the celebrated Warrington Academy and later minister at Bank St., where he was very popular. He established a boarding school offering tuition in Latin, Greek, Chemistry and Natural Philosophy. Short grammars and long exercise books, a few rules and many examples were in his opinion the best way to learn a language.

Pupils were attracted from a wide area. They included his nephew, William Turner (father of the Rev William Turner of Newcastle). This was a time when the Manchester-London coach was advertised as taking "barring accidents four and a half days". Turner sent letters to his son by means of the butchers who travelled from Yorkshire to the market in Bolton. The most famous of Philip's pupils were the sons of Josiah Wedgwood – John, Josiah and the 8-year-old Thomas (the pioneer photographer). Wedgwood took an active interest in his sons' education, and travelled on several occasions to Bolton.

But even this regime was not adequate to satisfy the boys' lust for education so he took them away to a school he founded himself at Etruria. He exchanged letters with Philip Holland showing his enthusiastic support for the American colonists. These were very troubled times. Wedgwood witnessed machine-breaking riots on one visit. The Wedgwoods later became connected by marriage to the Hollands and the Turners so the friendship must have been a close one.

Philip's nephew John (1766-1826) succeeded his uncle at Bank Street but was less successful. At one time during an anti-dissenter riot in the 1790s his effigy was carried through the streets and burned. He is important to us because he received his education at the Daventry academy in Northamptonshire. There he made friends with a fellow student from Berwick. It is probable that it was this friendship that brought William Stevenson to the North West. He took up the ministry at Dob Cross, Failsforth, from where he paid visits to his friend's relations at Sandlebridge, near Knutsford and met his future wife.

John Holland was also a teacher and maintained a notable library. He was described as a broken man whose mental powers were failing when he retired in 1820. With his brother he wrote fourteen textbooks that were widely used in the education of young women in the early part of the nineteenth century. Aspiring students might perhaps take heed of one of their salutary warnings:



"Another cause of sloth, is a vehement love of study and contemplation. Indeed, if we pursue valuable knowledge, in order to impart it to others, or to qualify ourselves for the right conduct of life, this far from deserving the name of sloth, that is one of the best and most notable employments in the world. On the contrary, if the sole end of our study be to fill our heads with useless notions, whatever pains we may take, it is no better than a specious kind of idleness, which if it be somewhat plausible, it is upon that account the more dangerous."

## The GASKELLS, POPULAR EDUCATION & THE FREE LIBRARY MOVEMENT

Christine Lingard

In the last issue of the newsletter I discussed the role of the Mechanics Institutes and their libraries in meeting the demand for popular education but even these had limitations in that they were not free to users. Free libraries were the solution. Credit for their foundation is given to three men - Joseph Brotherton MP for Salford from 1832, a local man very much involved in the community, Swedenborgian, vegetarian and campaigner against the death penalty - William Ewart (1798-1869), also a liberal MP but with a more national reputation - who played a more significant role in the Gaskell story and Edward Edwards (1812-87) a Chartist - just the sort of man for whom libraries were intended - a former bricklayer, self-educated at Mechanics' Institutes. The campaign began in earnest in 1836 when Edwards wrote to the Select Committee on the Arts chaired by Ewart. The cause was taken up in the press. *Eliza Cook's Journal*, for one, published articles advocating them. In 1839 Edwards became assistant in the British Museum reading room under its great librarian Antonio Panizzi. It wasn't a happy relationship. Matters came to a head when he objected to Edwards' absences on behalf of his campaign and dismissed him.

A Select Committee was established under Ewart's chairmanship in 1849 with Brotherton as deputy. Members included Disraeli, still better known as a novelist, Monckton Milnes, famous for his literary breakfasts, and Sir Harry Verney, future husband of Parthenope Nightingale. Francois Guizot, French historian and exiled Prime Minister was a key witness. Gaskell recounts a social event (13th May 1849):

*We cabbed it to Mr. Monckton Milnes... there were the House of Lords there, ...and Guizot, and Whewell, and Archdeacon Hare... We were very merry, and it was a very short two hours which every one had said is the proper number of hours to stay at breakfast. [GL45a]*

This is in the middle of the period when the Select Committee was receiving evidence though it would be unwise to read too much into this.

The main fly in the ointment was Panizzi who questioned the statistics and wrote to the press in disapproval. Ewart won the day and introduced a bill in parliament. The Public Libraries' Act became law in 1850. It enabled towns with a population of over 10,000 to spend the product of a 1/2d rate on Libraries but not on books. These had to be donated or paid for by public subscription. In 1855 the limit was raised to one penny. The cardinal principal was that they should be free to all. The claim to have the first public library is made by several towns. In fact with a bit of linguistic variation they can all prove to be right. Some jumped the gun and used the Museums' Act of 1845 to open them. The first of all was Warrington (1848), second

Salford, Brotherton's constituency (1849) and third Winchester. Brighton passed a local act to enable them to open theirs in 1850. Several voted to adopt the act almost immediately but invariably there were delays before services were ready.

The honour of opening the first library under the act fell to Manchester in 1852. Liverpool followed the same year but Westminster, the first in London, was not opened till 1857. Edwards was appointed librarian. Subscription funds for both middle classes and workingmen were opened to pay for books. The building at Campfield, Deansgate was originally Robert Owen's Hall of Science, one of his public meeting halls for the discussion of his radical ideas. Engels was an enthusiastic member. The building was nearly destroyed by fire during protests in 1840. The Owenites however were the ones charged with sedition. The building was badly managed and regarded as a public nuisance. It was bought at a fraction of the original cost by Sir John Potter. Prince Albert was invited to perform the opening ceremony but declined and donated 18 books instead, including such riveting titles as *The Natural History of Deeside* and *On the Application of Water Glass in the Arts*. Total stock was 21,308 volumes - far bigger than the Mechanics' but quite small by modern standards.

The library opened for public inspection from 2nd to 5th June 1852. There were two ceremonies on 2nd September. The morning audience was limited to those who contributed a minimum of £5 (presumably they were allowed to bring guests) - the evening meeting to workers. At least half of the morning audience were women but only a fifth of the evening's. The list of speakers reads like a *Who's Who* of Victorian letters, so much so it proved to be a case of cultural indigestion. Edwards was there but took little interest as he was suffering from 'summer cholera'. Ewart however was on holiday. The Chairman Sir John Potter, presided. Speakers were the Earl of Shaftesbury, Bulwer Lytton, who in the 1830s was one of Gaskell's favourite authors, Dickens and Thackeray. Ironically next was Sir James Stephen, Professor of Modern History at Cambridge, whose son married Thackeray's daughter (he was the grandfather of Virginia Woolf). Dr Henry Vaughan who held the equivalent post at Oxford, Monckton Milnes, John Bright MP and some mayors made up the number.

Gaskell and the Winkworths were in the audience:

*She (16 year old Meta) and I went down to the Royal Hotel & Joined the Dickens, Mr Charles Knight, and then went to the Free Library where we had capital places, close to the speakers. But oh! My usual complaint! The room despite its immense size & height was so close, & the speeches so long I could not attend & wished myself at home many & many a time, my only comfort being seeing the caricatures Thackeray was drawing which was very funny. He and Mr Monckton Milnes made plenty of fun, till poor Thackeray was called on to speak & broke down utterly after which he drew no more caricatures. We went at 1/2 past 9 & did not get out till 1/4 to 4, which was too much of a good thing. [GL 131]*

Though Thackeray had lectured before (Brontë had heard his *English humorists* in 1851) he had only just decided to pursue this career in earnest to supplement his irregular income from writing and was very anxious about it, using it as a measure of his potential for such an undertaking. He was certainly eager to outshine Dickens, taking along his friend the American publisher Joseph Fields for support. He spoke confidently for about three minutes then completely froze and sat down without explanation. When at ease he was a fluent and entertaining conversationalist but he was prone to attacks of nerves. At the evening meeting he redeemed himself and was most entertaining in his references to French novels which he was *obliged to read*, but he hoped will *never be on the shelf of the library*.

The library opened for business on 6<sup>th</sup> Sept. There were two floors - reference and lending, with books only available from catalogues. The staff consisted of an assistant librarian, two porters, a clerk and a boy. The clerk on the princely salary of £26 p.a. was a W.H. Gaskell! This I trust was not a connection because he found the work so arduous and the hours so long that after reporting for duty in an intoxicated condition he was dismissed. He tried for a post at Salford but found himself in Lancaster gaol in debt to Edwards financially.

Henry Crabb Robinson, the *Times* journalist wrote in his diary in 1857:

*The one thing that has eclipsed all others is the Free Library... in a large hall there were some thirty or forty men, working men perhaps, reading, not light and idle books. There was no impudence or impertinence or anything objectionable. There is a newsroom and this is not the most instructive reading, but it is with this and novels etc., that young men must begin.*

Co-opted to the Committee was one of Manchester's greatest book men, the renowned after-dinner speaker James Crossley (1800-83) who died in his bachelor home by the side of and literally under an enormous mountain of books. He was associated with the Portico, Chetham's and the Athenaeum. Gaskell's letters to him are very formal, exchanging interesting information on Cheshire history, folklore and the like.

*Crossley was the most remarkable and picturesque figure in Manchester. Enveloped in a long dark-coloured cloak, his white hair fell from his shoulders from beneath a broad-rimmed hat and his manners were those of days gone by. He loved old books, old wine, old friends, old times, and attributed his longevity to port, celibacy and never indulging in snuff and tobacco [Ellis]*

He and Edwards compiled a list of books to facilitate the purchase of the initial stock. Regrettably no work by Gaskell was included but then neither was any by Jane Austen or the Brontës, but such recently published books as *Vanity Fair* and *David Copperfield* were. The committee interfered in the selection - among titles banned were *Moll Flanders* and *Roxanna*.

They went on a book-buying spree in Manchester, London, Liverpool and Bristol. They spent £3,200 instead of the allotted £2,600 on 14,000 books. The committee was not amused and Edwards' problems with them began. He was his own worse enemy and seemed to court controversy, regularly falling foul of them in his campaign for better hours, pay and leave and was censored for being absent from the reading room several times. He argued that these were for legitimate reasons - the intolerably long hours and also all manner of business that any librarian will tell you is par for the job. He objected to the extra workload the opening of branches at Ardwick, Ancoats and Hulme had brought. He was again called to answer charges in 1858. Potter had suffered the first of a series of strokes so the chair was taken by Cllr Harry Rawson, a man probably known to the Gaskells, though it isn't recorded, a Unitarian, publisher of several of William's sermons and the author of his obituary in a local paper. Once he accompanied Edwards to pass approval on his selection of books. Edwards was dismissed by the narrowest of margins.

Annual reports make interesting reading because they list the most issued titles. In 1857 in the literature category: *Dombey and son* (Dickens); *Tales of the landlord* (Scott); Burns' works (note centenary year); *Self control* (Mrs Brunton, 1814); *The Virginians* (Thackeray); *Sketches by Boz*; *Ivanhoe*; *Lalla Rookh* (Thomas Moore, 1813); *Pendennis*; *Mary Barton*; *Roland Cashel* (Charles Lever); *Last of the barons* (Lytton); Shakespeare's plays. 1860: *Jane Eyre*; *Smuggler* (GPR James); *Pilot* (Fennimore Cooper); *Tales of Ireland* (William Carleton, 1817); *Dombey and son*; *Daltons* (Lever); *Rookwood*; *Windsor Castle* (Harrison Ainsworth); *Mary Barton*; *Kenilworth* (Scott); *Vanity Fair*.

In 1855 the most issued journal was *Howitts'*, beating *Household Words* into second place. *Ruth* is in a list for the branches but I found no mention of *North and South*, possibly because it was issued in instalments. *Lizzie Leigh* is in the list for the Rochdale Rd branch in 1862 (a novel by Charles Reade was top) and at Hulme where *Shirley* headed the list. It is just as interesting to see what isn't there - nowhere could I find any mention of *David Copperfield*.

The radical movement in Manchester is invariably associated with the Potters. These are not the Lancashire Potters to whom Beatrix Potter belonged, but other Unitarian friends of the Gaskells from Tadcaster, Yorkshire, who had made money growing turnips. The first John Potter, a Cannon St. draper whose home was a meeting place of radicals e.g. his sons Thomas and Richard, John Shuttleworth, newspaper proprietor, (another regular caller at Plymouth Grove) and Mark Philips MP, all of whom campaigned for moderate parliamentary reform. 'Radical' Dick Potter (died 1844) became MP for Wigan and appears to have known William Gaskell's brother-in-law, William Robson. Sir Thomas Potter (1774-1845) remained in local politics and was first mayor of Manchester.

His son, Sir John of Buile Hill, Pendlebury was first chairman of the Libraries' committee.

Edwards was not initially impressed, considering that his father's prestige covered up many shortcomings. Engels was less polite:

*Potter is a frightfully big and enormously fat creature, about forty-six years of age, with red hair and whiskers, three times mayor of Manchester, very jolly, has no brains, but a good deal of belly and backside.*

Gaskell also referred to him as *Fat Sir John*. He seemed to have had difficulty in making decisions and came into conflict with Edwards several times, but it had been his recommendation to appoint him so he usually acquiesced to his demands, unlike Rawson whose dislike was more personal. Potter was a very sick man by the time of the final dispute and only appeared at the last meeting. He made the casting vote to dismiss him but was dead two weeks later. He was only 43. In *Further letters* Gaskell gives a detailed description of his illness to Monckton Milnes, suggesting she knew him better than I had been led to believe.

His sister-in-law Mary fainted on reading the account of the murder in *Mary Barton* because it reminded her of the murder of her brother Thomas Ashton of Pole Bank, Werneth near Hyde, in a dispute with the trade unions. He was found dead by the roadside on 3rd January 1831. The murderers were not found for three years when one turned King's evidence. Aged 12 at the time she was the last to see him before the attack. Gaskell denied knowledge to Potter:

*I wish to give 'Mary Barton' and another little book to the Free Library. But before I do so I should like to make a private enquiry of you ... as to how far my giving these books would be distasteful to you. Of course I cannot be unaware of the opinions which you and your brother have so frequently & openly expressed... it appeared to me as if it would be an impertinence on my part to send the obnoxious book to any collection in which you took an interest ... Of course I had heard of young Mr Ashton's murder at the time when it took place; but I knew none of the details, nothing of the family, never read the trial (if trial there were, which I do not to this day know) and that if the circumstance were present to my mind at the time of my writing Mary Barton it was so unconsciously, although its occurrence, and that of one or two similar cases in Glasgow at the time of a strike were, I have no doubt, suggestive of the plot, as having shown to me to what lengths the animosity of irritated workmen would go. [GLI30 Aug. 16 1852].*

Note the murder took place before she came to Manchester. Chapple suggests she was in Edinburgh. It was not reported in *The Times* though there were other papers.

*The nurse followed Mr Carson to the servants' hall. There on the dinner table lay the poor dead body... The policemen looked at each other. Then one began and stated that having heard the report of a gun in Turner Street he had turned down that way (a lonely, unfrequented way Mr Carson knew, but a short cut to his garden door, of which Harry had a key); that as he (the policeman) came nearer, he had heard footsteps of a man running away*

but the evening was so dark (the moon not having risen) that he could see no one twenty yards off. That he had even been startled when close to the body; by seeing it lying across the path at his feet... Mr Carson listened attentively never taking his eyes off the dead body. When they had ended he said, 'Where was he shot?' They lifted up the thick chestnut curls and showed a blue spot (you could hardly call it a hole, the flesh had closed much over it) on the left temple. A deadly aim! And yet it was so dark a night!

Compare this with an account from *The Stockport Advertiser* of 7th January 1831:

*The victim of this cold blooded and diabolical act of assassination, who was in his 24th year, and remarkable for his kind and conciliating disposition and manners, had the management of a new mill at Woodley from whence he had just returned ... to spend an evening with a family near Stockport... the unfortunate gentleman had not proceeded on the public highway after quitting the private road more than 30 yards before he was shot, and it would appear that the assassins had awaited his approach sitting in a hedge bank on the roadside, which situation gave them the best opportunity of seeing or hearing the approach of their victim from his father's house down the private pathway. The breast was perforated at the edge of the bone by two bullets from a blunderbuss which passed out of the left shoulder blade, having taken an oblique direction upward...*

*The body was carried back to Pole-Bank in an armchair and laid out on a kitchen table.*

One explanation is that she was familiar with Elizabeth Stone's *William Langshawe: the Cotton Lord*, a novel which otherwise may have been forgotten. The author was a member of the family who founded the *Manchester Chronicle*. One of her brothers James was the author of the *History of Manchester* quoted in the last issue and edited a volume of Manchester poetry containing two by William Gaskell as well as some by Charles Swain, Maria Jewsbury and Samuel Bamford.

Elizabeth Stone (born 1803) married Thomas Stone (died 1850) vicar of Wandsworth. She wrote two books on fashion and needlework edited by the Countess of Wilton of Heaton Park and at least one other novel *The Young Milliner*. Neither is in the British Library and it is difficult to ascertain whether all other books listed under "Elizabeth Stone" (which date up to the 1870s) are by one and the same person. In 1857, *God's Acre*, a mediocre book about cemeteries was advertised as her 'last book'. There was an appeal in the *Times* in 1856 for the next of kin of a Mrs Stone.

Her novels are important because they were the first by a Manchester resident to belong to that new literary genre 'the condition of England novel', of which Charlotte Tonna and Fanny Trollope were the first exponents. They provide a link with the more

accomplished novels of Gaskell. Joseph Kestner claimed that she probably did not read them but she must have been aware of them. They rely heavily on verbatim quotes from her brother's *History*. The murder comes as the climax of the novel and is accompanied with this footnote:

*Let not my readers imagine that this awful incident has been invented for the notice. A few years ago a young cotton manufacturer of the highest respectability, and most excellent character, was murdered even so, and as we have described by order of the Spinners' Union.*

Michael Wheeler points out several similarities with *Mary Barton*. Judge for yourself:

*A crowd of people appeared and as they partly divided to enter the hall, Mrs Wolstonholme who had nervously pushed foremost, saw her eldest son, Henry, borne in by the men - a corpse.*

*Pass we this.*

*The ruffians, delegates of the secret committee of that union to which we have alluded had done their work well. This excellent young man - good man, a good brother, a kind master for he, and indeed his father also were beloved by every individual in their employ, and their factory was full of hands in full work, - had been shot by some coward, who stood close behind him; the weapon was loaded with slugs, one of which pierced his heart, the other his backbone, and the victim fell dead in a moment. The report of firearms brought people to the spot instantly, but no one was to be seen but the murdered young man; not a clue, not the remotest trace of the villains remained.*

*Mary Barton* was published anonymously. At first Gaskell did all she could to conceal her identity:

*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 to be able to satisfy her Eve-like craving. Marianne Darbishire told me it was ascertained to be the production of a Mrs Wheeler, a clergyman's wife, who once upon a time was a Miss Stone, and wrote a book called the "Cotton-Lord" (GL30)*

Was she deliberating trying to confuse by transposing the lady's married and maiden names? But many people guessed the truth including Mary Ewart and Guizot. Walter Sichel whose mother, a member of Manchester's German community, knew the Gaskells, claimed that the book was a profound secret from her husband which only came to light when a messenger from her publisher arrived at their home. Though, when she realised the subterfuge might prevent her receiving payment, she hastened to reassure her publisher:

*I find everyone here has most convincing proofs that the authorship of Mary Barton should be attributed to a Mrs Wheeler, née Stone, an authoress of some book called the 'Cotton Lord'. 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. (GL 31)*

William Ewart (1798-1869) was a personal friend of the Gaskells at least from April 1849 when he offered to take her round the Houses of Parliament. He was born in Liverpool, the son of a businessman who in 1809 stood godfather to the son of an associate - William Ewart Gladstone. They were not related but part of the same Liberal tradition. Ewart had been an MP since the age of 28 and gained a considerable reputation as a campaigner on causes ranging from Free Trade to the abolition of hanging in chains, reduction of the number of offences carrying the death penalty, and legalising of metric measures. He retained many connections with Lancashire (he succeeded Dick Potter as MP for Wigan) and was a friend of Cobden and on some of the same education committees as another Gaskell friend, Dukinfield Darbishire. His brother Joseph remained in Liverpool and shared yet another friend in James Martineau. In the 1840s he provided some of the cash for Harriet Martineau's trip to the Middle East. His career as an MP was undistinguished.

They were grandsons of a minister in Troguire, Dumfries. Their uncle Peter Ewart was an engineer associated with Matthew Boulton and Samuel Oldknow, the Marple manufacturer, and came to Manchester to install an engine at Quarry Bank. According to Gaskell, the business failed in 1830 and he died c1837. [GL421 a] In fact he was killed by a chain at the Woolwich dockyard in 1842. He was a prominent member of the Portico. Gaskell was distressed to hear that his son Lt Col John Ewart (1802-57), his wife Emma Fooks and baby daughter were killed at the siege of Cawnpore in the Indian Mutiny, leaving a son, Harry, with his aunts in Manchester. Imagine her anxiety when her own daughter had just engaged herself to an officer posted to India. The precise fate of the Ewarts is documented. Letters written by Emma Ewart are preserved in the British Library. One of them, written before they had suffered any physical harm, was among several printed in the *Times* in October 1857:

*To my dear sisters [i.e. sisters-in-law] and ends: I cannot write any more, if we should be spared I hope we may have better news to give you before long. Kiss my darling H(arry) for us, and may God bless him. John sends his best love. I must not forget to thank Mrs G. for The Life of Charlotte Brontë which arrived in the midst of all this distress two or three days ago. If peaceful times should ever return we may hope to find pleasure in reading it as well as in writing to acknowledge it. Give my love to her, and tell her how strangely we are situated.*

They had once been a lively family.

*I wish the Ewarts knew how to rest & be quiet, for it will be rather provoking if all the good at Poulton is done away with by bustling so in Manchester and one of their parties was large, vulgar and overdressed.*

Peter's daughters supported themselves by private means. Agnes (born c1815) and Mary (c1821 – 1901) were well known in Manchester, friends of Hallé and often mentioned in the connection of their social work. Gaskell recommends Agnes: -

*she talks a great deal. She does really know a great deal (of the condition of factory girls) and her facts would be good and accurate; her opinions (I think) crude and uninformed, but expressed without the least shyness or reserve.* [GL630]

It is not certain when they came to know the Gaskells, as she was inaccurate in her details about Peter Ewart. She is very formal in her first surviving letter to Mary (1848) [GL36], admitting the authorship of *Mary Barton*. In 1852 they were house hunting because another brother was about to be married. They rejected one in Hyde Grove in favour of one in Nelson St near Plymouth Grove. By which time they were on first name terms. At the same time William Ewart's young daughters were 'coming out' and he spent most of his spare time taking them to concerts and the theatre. (He was already a widower). Their tastes were very similar to Gaskell's and it was they who recommended that he read her novels. The friendship appears to have involved the whole family. William and his daughters visited him without her.

*Meta had been hearing Papa's praises from Mr Ewart. 'My friend Mr Gaskell' for I hope he will allow me to rank me as a friend'. Meta referred to Papa's walks with Mr Ewart - 'Yes he is the most charming companion I know &c so Papa's ears ought to have been burning.* [GL455]

She visited both his London house and his estate at Broadleas, Devizes, which he bought in 1852. She was there in 1856 writing *The Life of Charlotte Brontë* and in 1857. These working holidays were immensely enjoyable. She went there from Dumbleton where she had worked tirelessly, wearing herself out. At Broadleas she paced herself more:

*So at Broad Leas (the Ewarts) I only wrote till lunch... I enjoyed Broad Leas for the most of my visit, perhaps owing to my not having the sick wearied feeling of being over-worked.. & Mr Gaskell being very jolly: & delicious downs Salisbury Plain, get at able in our afternoon drives great sweeps of green turf, like emerald billows stretching off into the blue sky miles & miles away, - with here & there a 'barrow' of some ancient Briton, & Wansdyke, & Silbury Hill, and the great circle of Avebury all to be seen, while the horses went noisily over the thick soft velvety grass high up above blue misty plains, and villages in nests of trees, & church spires which did not reach nearly up to where we were in our beautiful free air, & primitive world.* [GL308]

Ewart encouraged a friend Ben Smith to take up a career in politics in the 1840s and his young daughter helped him on the hustings. This was the future Barbara Bodichon the artist and feminist best remembered as a benefactor of Girton College whom Gaskell admired but did not like. The two women were both friendly with the elder daughter, the other Mary Ewart (1831-1911), also a prominent feminist - despite being part of the 'opposition' so to speak. Mary campaigned on behalf of the rival



college Newnham - leaving £31,000 to them, in addition to money she gave them during her lifetime. As well as sharing Barbara's commitment to women's education she was an enthusiastic traveller, who enjoyed studying the art, history, flora and fauna of all the places she visited. *The calm, judicious Miss Ewart* as Gaskell described her when they disagreed over the authorship of *Adam Bede*.

By the end of her life she was telling Marianne:

*Do go and see the Ewarts as much as you can. They were so good to me, and I do feel grateful to my children if they will pay attention to those whom I love.*

William Ewart's career is all the more remarkable because he was left a widower early with a young family. His wife was his cousin. They shared two great aunts, the authors Sophia (1750-1824) and Harriet Lee (died 1851) who ran a school at Belvedere House, Bath. They were friends of Mrs Siddons, Sheridan and Mrs Radcliffe. The latter refused an offer of marriage from William Godwin. Their works include the play and the popular retelling of *Canterbury Tales*.

Further reading: Chapple and Pollard. The letters of Mrs Gaskell, new ed. 1997. [GL] Shelston. A. and Chapple, J.A.V. Further letters of Mrs Gaskell, 2000. Ashton, Owen and Stephens, Robert. The Victorian working class writer, 1999 Ellis, S.M William Harrison Ainsworth and his friends, 1911 Kestner, Joseph. Elizabeth Stone's 'William Langshawe: the Cotton Lord' and 'the Young Milliner' as condition of England novels. *Bulletin of the John Rylands Library*, vol. 67 Spring 1985 Munford, William. Edward Edwards, 1812-1888: portrait of a librarian, 1963. Penny rate: aspects of British public librarianship, 1951. William Ewart, M.P.: portrait of a radical, 1960. Tylecote, Mabel. The Mechanics' Institutes of Lancashire and Yorkshire before 1851, 1957. Ward, Andrew. Our bones are scattered: the Cawnpore massacres and the Indian Mutiny of 1857, 1996. Wheeler, Michael. Biography, literary influence and allusion as aspects of source studies. *British journal of aesthetics*, vol. 17, 1977 p. 149-60.

## BOOK NOTES

Christine Lingard

**Elizabeth Gaskell: Gothic tales;** edited with an introduction by Laura Krantzler. Penguin Classics £6.99.

It is very regrettable that most of the recent editions of Gaskell's short stories have been allowed to go out of print. Oxford edition of *The Moorland Cottage* (edited by Suzanne Lewis) is the only other selection currently available in the UK, so this book is particularly welcome. It contains *Disappearances*, *The Old Nurse's story*, *The Squire's story*, *The Poor Clare*, *The Doom of the Griffiths*, *Lois the Witch*, *The Crooked Branch*, and *The Grey Woman*. The first piece, not strictly an original short story but a retelling of a Manchester 'legend' has not been reprinted since the Knutsford

edition. The stories are selected not only to illustrate her fascination with the supernatural but also to demonstrate her interest in the dual nature of women's lives.

The introduction (though the reader is warned to leave it till later not to spoil the plot) illustrates Gaskell's successful marriage of domestic duties and literary creativity. There are notes and a bibliography.

### **Gender, Power and the Unitarians in England 1760-1860.**

Ruth Watts Longman, £19.99.

This is a sociological and historical study rather than a literary one but nevertheless provides interesting and important background to an understanding of how Elizabeth Gaskell's life and work exemplifies the aims and teachings of a sect which placed such importance on education. Many of members of her family including her father, husband, and daughter are mentioned as well as friends such as the Turners, Robberds, Greys, Martineaus and Carpenters.

### **David, Deirdre (editor). The Cambridge Companion to the Victorian novel.**

Cambridge University Press, £13.95.

One of a series of comprehensive surveys intended for students – this book comprises a number of topic or genre based essays by different authors with a general introduction. Gaskell is mentioned in the essay on Industrial Culture and the Victorian Novel by Joseph W. Childers but not in Nancy Armstrong's essay on Gender. There is also a brief mention of *Mary Barton* in the chapter on Detection. (*Mary Barton* was one of the first English novels to include a detective.) There is an extensive bibliography.

## South-West Group

Members who did not attend the Gaskell Society Conference at Bath Spa in August 2001 may like to purchase copies of one or more of the four booklets which were prepared specially for it by the South-West Group of the Society.

**William Ewart: Radical and Philanthropist** by Rosemary Marshall  
This illustrated booklet, written by the Secretary of the South-West Group, is devoted to the career and achievements of the M.P. who was a good friend of William and Elizabeth Gaskell. His home, Broadleas, on the outskirts of Devizes, was the centre-piece of the Conference excursion.

### **George Eliot in Devizes** by Peter Skrine

Could Devizes have been a model for Middlemarch? In 1843 Mary Ann Evans spent some weekends there at 'Sandcliff', a house near the market place. This booklet tells you what happened there and why it is significant.

'I hope to see you again: '

### **The Friendship of Catherine Winkworth and Charlotte Brontë**

This booklet relates directly to Peter Skrine's paper on the Winkworth sisters and their friendship with Mrs Gaskell. It includes the full text of Catherine's letter to her sister Emily about her meeting with Charlotte Brontë, and Charlotte's one surviving letter to Catherine. Together they reveal a relationship that was unexpectedly close.

**Literary Bristol. A mini-anthology** compiled by Peter and Celia Skrine with the help of Maggie Lane

Containing passages from 12 authors associated with Bristol and Clifton from Pope to Pym, this 'walking tour in words' also includes a linking narrative, details of authors and a useful check-list of writers with Bristol and Clifton associations. These four booklets published by the South-West Group, are priced at £1.50 each (post free) and can be obtained from *Mrs Rosemary Marshall, 138, Fairfield Park Road, Bath BA1 6JT*. Cheques should be made out to *Gaskell Society South-West*. Also available are two small books by Maggie Lane: '*A City of Palaces: Bath through the eyes of Fanny Burney*' (including many references to Mrs Thrale) '*A Charming Place: Bath in the Life and Novels of Jane Austen*' £3.95 each post free, as above.

**South West Group meets on November 17** at Bath Royal Scientific and Literary Institution, Queen Square at 2.00pm for 2.30. Lunch in the Francis Lounge for those who wish.

Mrs Marie Moss will be speaking on '*Christmas Storms and Sunshine*', a short story published in *Howitts Magazine*, before *Mary Barton*. Marie is an economist with a deep interest and knowledge in local history in the Manchester area, and a very entertaining speaker. You might like to read the story first. It can be downloaded from the web at <http://lang.nagoya-u.ac.jp/~matsuoka/EG-etexts.html>. The library staff should be able to help you or ask a schoolchild! The story comes to 8 sides of A4 paper.

## **LONDON and SOUTH-EAST GROUP**

Meeting to be held at the Francis Holland School, 39 Graham Terrace, Chelsea SW1W 8JF

Saturday, 10 November : *Mrs Gaskell in the Magazine World* by Edward G. Preston, former secretary to The Dickens Fellowship

## **KNUTSFORD AND MANCHESTER MEETINGS**

**KNUTSFORD MONTHLY MEETINGS** at St John's Parish Rooms will be held on the last Wednesday each month from 31 October, when we will be studying 'Ruth'. Lunch at 12.15 and the meetings finish about 3.15.

### **MEETINGS AT CROSS STREET CHAPEL**

#### **Manchester Writers**

All these writers had connections with Manchester in the nineteenth century. Come and learn more. Talks to be held on 2nd Tuesdays in month, at 1.00pm, Cross Street Chapel, Manchester. The chapel will be open from 12.15 for those who wish to come early and partake of a sandwich lunch using the nearby Pret-a Manger or bringing their own; tea and coffee will be available.

#### **9 October 2001**

**Thomas de Quincey** by Barry Symonds

*Lyrical Ballads, Mummies and Diabolic Factories : Thomas De Quincey leaves Manchester*

Barry is an Open University lecturer and is editorial consultant for the new *Collected Works of De Quincey* (22 vols). Thomas De Quincey was born in Manchester in 1785 and is perhaps best known for : *Confessions of an English Opium Eater*. Come and learn more about him.

#### **13 November 2001**

**Harrison Ainsworth** by Steve Collins

*The Lancashire Witches*, was published the same year as *Mary Barton*, 1848. Ainsworth was a member of Cross Street Chapel so did the two authors meet?

Of his 39 novels, mainly historical, many were set in Lancashire. His vivid scene-setting and lively narrative made him a popular 19th century writer who produced his own magazine and edited others.

#### **12 February 2002**

**Samuel Bamford** by Morris Garratt '*Hymn to the Poor*' and radical writing

#### **12 March 2002**

**Mrs Linnaeus Banks** by Chris Makepeace *The Manchester Man*

All welcome. Admission £1.00 for non-members.

### **NEW YEAR LUNCH JANUARY 15TH**

At Cottons Hotel. Speaker: Richard Booth, Hay-on-Wye bookseller. Details and booking form enclosed with newsletter

### **AGM and SPRING MEETING**

Will be held on Saturday 23rd March at Cross Street Chapel, Manchester



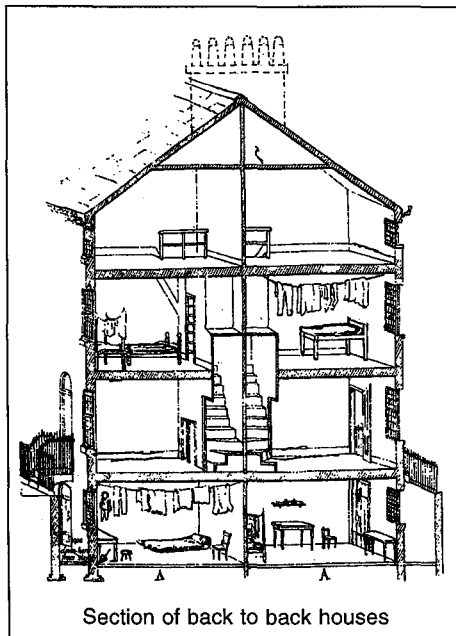
## GROUP VISITS 2001

North West members enjoyed visits to the Moravian Settlement at Whitefield on 8th May and to Bolton's Bank Street Unitarian Chapel on 5th June. At both, chapel members welcomed us and told us of their history. Christine Lingard, in this newsletter traces the Holland connections with Bank Street.

On 20th June members of The Arnold Bennett Society guided us around Burslem - the *Bursley* of Bennett's fiction. The Alliance Of Literary Societies will hold its AGM in Stoke next year on 27th April to coincide with a weekend of events to celebrate the centenary of the publication of *'Anna of the Five Towns'*.

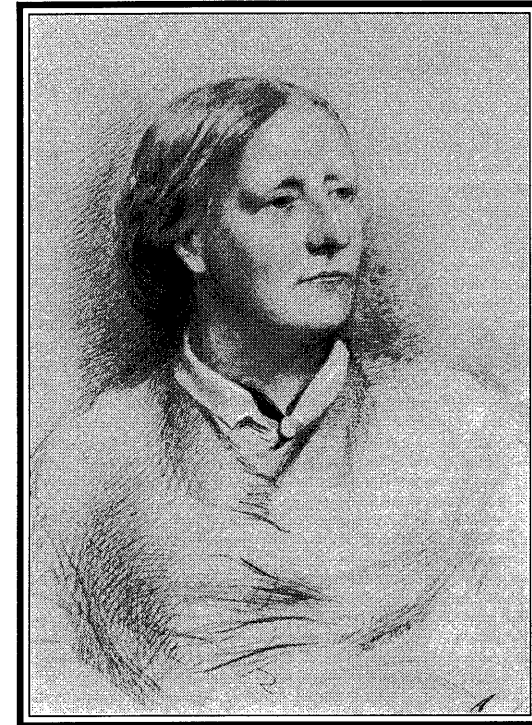
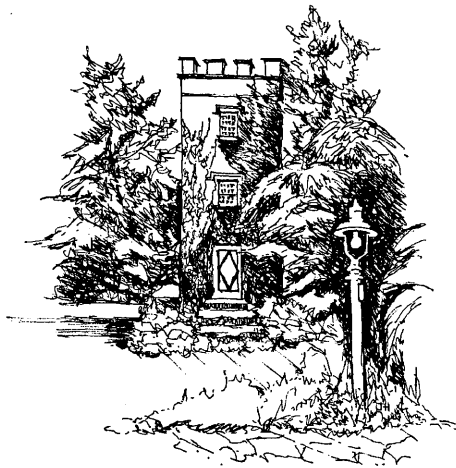
Terry Wyke conducted a 'Summer Perambulation : London Road to Ancoats' on Saturday 14th July. With the assistance of old maps Terry took us back in time to see the remains of back-to-back houses and cellar dwellings clustered around mills like Murrays' which still survives and which Elizabeth Gaskell recommended seeing to an unknown correspondent as one of

*'the things best worth in Manchester . . . just off Ancoats Lane, everybody there knows Murrays'. You would there see the whole process of preparing & spinning Cotton, with the latest improvements in machinery . . . these works are very interesting, if you do not get a stupid, fine young man to show you over - try rather for one of the working men.'* (GL 549).



A sheet of the 1839 report of The Ministry to the Poor will remind members of the sixth chapter of *Mary Barton*: 'I was urgently requested to go into a cellar in which the greatest destitution was said to exist. I accordingly went; it was rather late in the evening, and as soon as I opened the door, I could just discover something rolled up the floor. As soon as I entered, the man began stirring the fire, which brought to light one of the most distressing, and I ought to perhaps to add, revolting scenes I ever witnessed. I saw a woman lying on a few bits of dirty sacking upon the bare flags, and herself almost in a state of nudity, and who had been delivered of a child only three or four hours. . . . The husband said that he had neither candle, food, nor money . . .'

# The Gaskell Society



THE GASKELL SOCIETY HOME PAGE has all the latest information on meetings.  
<http://www.gaskellsociety.users.btopenworld.com>

If you have any material or suggestions for future Newsletters, please contact Mrs. Joan Leach,  
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## NEWSLETTER

Spring 2002 - Number 33

## Editor's Letter

Joan Leach

Our programme for 2002 is quite a full one so please check dates in this issue and remember that you can also consult our home page for details (note change in address) this can be done at most libraries. Our group meetings at various venues have been well supported and most enjoyable; if you are not within reach of these you might think about forming a new branch in your area, with help from the Society. We would like to hear from potential speakers on Gaskell and related topics for any of our groups. We hope to continue our series on Manchester writers at Cross Street Chapel next autumn but need speakers; we have had excellent talks on Thomas de Quincey, Harrison Ainsworth, Samuel Bamford and Mrs Linnaeus Banks, some of which we may print.

Mrs Banks wrote to William Gaskell in September 1878, hoping to add him to her list of subscribers to her book of poems *Ripples and Breakers*. She reminds him that : *'Nigh half a century has flown since I stood first to be questioned in your Bible-class in the small chapel-room off Cross Street - and I am now 57. 'Mary Barton' was then unwritten and of my poems or my 'Manchester Man' there was no foreshadowing unless the books that I selected for reading from the library might be an index. I read all Miss Martineau's 'Illustrations of Political Economy' before I was 14 . . 'She notes that the proprietors of the Portico Library 'are designing to pay honour to you'*

Three unpublished Gaskell letters came up for sale on 9<sup>th</sup> November, 2001 at Phillips Auctioneers London and were bought by John Rylands Library and the Brotherton Library. One of them thanks the sender of tickets for two Hallé' concerts at which 'Mr Hallé 'played superbly'. Another letter (23 October 1854) is from Lea Hurst, the Nightingales' house in Derbyshire, where she was working on *North and South*, has interesting material on Florence Nightingale and the third letter is an invitation to 'Harriette', Marianne's friend, to visit Silverdale. More about these in future publications.

The Alliance of Literary Societies AGM is hosted this year by The Arnold Bennett Society celebrating of the centenary of the publication of *Anna of the Five Towns*. This is a weekend programme: on Saturday 27<sup>th</sup> April commencing at 10.00am with the AGM at 11.00, at The George Hotel, Burslem and continuing on Sunday 28<sup>th</sup>. There is a full programme of walks, talks, films and visits. The final event is a talk by Roy Hattersley, vice-president of the Society, at 2.30pm. It is possible to opt for any single event or part of the programme. The Gaskell Society will be represented. A special B&B rate had been arranged with The George Hotel, Burslem (£50 double £40 single)

If interested send an SAE to Joan Leach for details.

The Folio Society is to publish an illustrated edition of *Wives and Daughters*.

Knutsford is soon to have a long awaited, new library where, we hope, the Gaskell collection will be more accessible. In clearing the cellars a plaque has been found which reads:

*This tree, a scion of the mulberry tree growing in Shakespeare's great garden at New Place, Stratford-upon-Avon, was presented to the Knutsford Urban District Council by the Trustees and Guardians of Shakespeare's birthplace in memory of Mrs Elizabeth Gaskell recalling her associations with Stratford-upon-Avon where she spent two years as a pupil at Avonbank School.*

Unfortunately there is no date given but I am told that the tree was there in the 1950's and may be pre-war.

Consulting the current custodian of New Place I am told that their tree still flourishes AND that we can purchase a three foot scion of it to plant again in Knutsford. I am hoping that the trustees of Brook Street Chapel will agree to let the Gaskell Society plant it there.

## *On the Trail of Madame de Sévigné*

John Chapple

As early as 1855 Elizabeth Gaskell had asked her French publisher Hachette for a copy of a book on the life and writings of Madame de Sévigné (1626-96). In March of 1862 she told George Smith that she had begun to write a memoir herself, and later that year in May she went to Paris to pump Hachette for information and beg for useful introductions. Though the city was 'abominable; noisy, hot, close, smelling of drains – and – perpetual cooking &c', she held her nose and visited 'every old house in Paris that she lived in', made a list of relevant books and gathered a 'splendid collection of all the portraits of herself, family and contemporaries'.

In 1651 Madame de Sévigné had retired to her country house in Brittany, Les Rochers near Vitré, at the age of twenty-five, after her husband had been killed in a duel over a lady known 'la belle Lolo, qui n'était pas une vertu'. Les Rochers became the next item on Gaskell's research agenda. Towards the end of May she went by rail with Meta and her friend Isabel Thompson to explore the ancient town of Vitré, finding it very like Chester, 'with wooden colonnades supporting the first floors of the houses' over the pavement. After exploring the town, the three of them went jolting along to Les Rochers in a little market cart, with their sketch books and drawing materials on a spare seat.

Arriving at the château, she was enchanted: 'No one has ever said half enough of its

beauty', she wrote. On rising ground a few kilometres from the old town stood 'a vast picturesque pile ... with 13, (that I *counted*) towers, of all sizes & shapes' (*Letters*, p. 926). Les Rochers is indeed much larger than, say, Haworth Parsonage. But it's no size at all in comparison with some of the grandiose châteaux of the Loire or the massive pile near Angoulême of Sévigné's friend, the epigrammatist La Rochefoucauld. Later, Gaskell was to liken it to some of the larger castles in Scotland (*French Life*). Dating from earlier centuries, Les Rochers had come into the possession of the Sévigné family in 1410. By about 1600 its ancient tower had been joined by a short range of more domestic buildings, crowned by steep roofs, pointed towers and chimney stacks. Standing a little apart from them, allowing a way through into the buildings of the inner courtyard, is the chapel Madame de Sévigné had built in the early 1670s. If you seek her monument just look around this elegant little classical building, roughly contemporary with Wren's St Paul's.

Nowadays, Les Rochers is in private hands, but there is an excellent visitors' centre at the entrance. One then walks a short distance by a row of dark trees up to a geometrical parterre, its formal design picked out by narrow beds of colourful, highly scented flowers – nicotiana, heliotrope and the like. The old tower contains a small but fascinating museum, dominated by the full-length portrait in a gilded wooden frame of the young Madame de Sévigné, dressed in rich and glowing silks and brocades, embellished with jewels, ribands and flowers, looking far more alert than the languorous *Beauties* painted by Sir Peter Lely for the court of Charles II. Outside, the semi-circular wall enclosing the main gates of the garden might be the cause of a strange phenomenon: at certain points a mere whisper is clearly audible at a distance. What struck Elizabeth Gaskell, however, is the fact that the whole complex is 'high up on a plateau of ground, with 30 miles of sunny champaign country lying below', visible over the low stone wall to one side. She could see for miles, 'till it all melted into the blue haze of distance'.

The museum on the ground floor of the old tower, Madame de Sévigné's chapel, the garden and the park with its long allées are all open to visitors; the rest of the château is kept private. But there is so much else to fascinate in this part of Brittany. In *French Life* Gaskell gives a good deal of attention to Vitré. Its ancient castle, flamboyant Gothic and Renaissance church, curious mediæval houses, inns and bustling street life make it a wonderful place to explore. Even the railway station is interesting, 'smart and new and in apple-pie order', Gaskell reported. Today, its regular, streaky-bacon facade reminds us of Rugby school. Fougères, too, though she skips over it in her accounts of her pilgrimage, is well worth a visit. It was, she wrote in those days, 'very curious & very filthy'. The central site, however, is spectacular, its old castle one of the largest in Europe. There is a 'circuit littéraire' leading one to places associated with Chateaubriand, Hugo and Balzac. As one might expect, tourists abound.

In her early life Elizabeth Gaskell had found reading Sévigné's *Letters* as exhausting as reading Richardson's *Sir Charles Grandison*. (They both wrote at almost inordinate length.) Why did she become so very interested in this aristocratic lady and the intellectual circles she moved in? Both women, it has been noted by Philip Yarrow, 'had been brought up by affectionate aunts and uncles, both were devoted mothers, and both were great letter-writers' (*Gaskell Society Journal* 7, 1993). Gaskell's interest in the influential part women had played in French history and culture had also developed remarkably in the intervening years. Madame de Sévigné had associated with Madame de La Fayette, Mlle de Scudéry and other free spirits of the time. As one might expect, Sévigné's brilliantly extemporised letters both echo her living voice and recreate her present life and times with humour, sense and sensibility. Yarrow argues cogently that Madame de Sévigné was in many ways Gaskell's seventeenth-century equivalent. Alain Jumeau agrees wholeheartedly: 'they were, so to speak, twin souls' (*Gaskell Society Journal* 13, 1999), and quotes Virginia Woolf's speculation that Sévigné might have been a great novelist in the twentieth century. The truly sad thing is that Elizabeth Gaskell never lived to accomplish what might have been a remarkable study of a major French female author, a work to place beside her *Life of Charlotte Brontë* and informed by the kind of historical imagination she was to display in *Sylvia's Lovers*. But her short pieces on French life contain the only record of her research of any substance. No manuscript of the memoir she began seems to have survived.

I owe thanks to our member Véronique Baudouin for information. Also, *Qui êtes-vous, Madame de Sévigné* is an attractive, well illustrated booklet by Jacqueline and Roger Duchêne, obtainable at Les Rochers.

## *The Gaskells' Shawls*

Janet Allan

The photograph of Elizabeth Gaskell in 1864 shows her wearing a beautiful and ornate Paisley shawl. It was only recently that we began to realise how fond she was of shawls, and how hers have been treasured over the last hundred and twenty-seven years. Good shawls were very expensive –there may be no direct references to their value in Gaskell's works, but in *Vanity Fair* Thackeray describes Amelia Sedley being forced to sell her Indian shawl 'It was a very fine and beautiful web: and the merchant made a very good bargain when he gave her twenty guineas. . . ' a great deal of money in 1848 for a second-hand article.

The shawl in the photograph has not been found, but seven others have come to light in various parts of the country which are said to have been hers or her family's.

One has an elegant blue and lavender Paisley design on a cream background, which you could imagine being worn in the cool of the evening over a light summer dress. Another has a predominately red centre with an elaborate border, and a third has an emerald green centre with a rich red edging. There is one with a light all-over pattern of small motifs in red and other colours, and a tufted border. Two more are Italian Mezzari, which are very large shawls of block-printed cotton with patterns similar to the pottery 'Indian Tree' design which we are still familiar with today. These are dated between 1850 and 1860 and manufactured in Genoa. It is possible that they were purchased on the 1863 trip to Italy. They may have belonged to Elizabeth's daughter Meta, as they were presented to the School of Art in 1934 'in memory of Miss M.E. Gaskell'. The last shawl is different again, in cream silk twill with a woven pattern.

Besides these complete shawls there are two garments made out of shawls – an ample jacket of jacquard-patterned wool, made from a Paisley shawl of about 1862, with a black fringe, and 'smallish' dressing-gown made from one half of a Paisley shawl of 1850-60, with pieces from another shawl used for the collar and cuffs. These are in different locations so I have been unable as yet to compare them, but one wonders if they were both cut from the same shawls? As the photograph shows, Elizabeth was not 'smallish' by 1864, so perhaps the dressing gown was for one of her daughters?

William Gaskell's bust in the Portico Library shows him wearing a shawl, as men sometimes did in the nineteenth century. William felt the cold and probably wore one. The actual garment is lost, but we have it permanently reproduced in stone.

## *A Centenary Event and a Bi-Centenary Proposal*

Janet Allan

In the centenary year of Elizabeth Gaskell's birth, on 19 February, 1910, the sixteenth annual meeting of the Bronte Society was held, not at Haworth but in the large hall of the Athenaeum in Manchester, with the Vice-Chancellor of the University in the chair. It was a notable meeting. The address on 'The Brontë Family in relation to Manchester', which dealt mainly with Elizabeth Gaskell's friendship with Charlotte Brontë and the subsequent *Life of Charlotte Brontë*, was given by the Dean of Manchester, the Rt. Rev. J.E.C. Welldon.

In the discussions which followed, Mrs Leo Grindon read a letter from Mr Clement

Shorter 'suggesting that there should be a statue in Manchester in memory of Mrs Gaskell and Charlotte Brontë. "What a fine thing it would be" she remarked, "to have a twin statue linking them both together in the Plymouth Grove direction". It was also suggested at the meeting that the house at 84 Plymouth Grove should be preserved in memory of both writers. Nearly a hundred years later we are looking forward to the bi-centenary of Elizabeth Gaskell's birth. I hope that before then the house will have been restored.

We are now reviving the idea of a statue and consulting with the Brontë Society about the project. More news in the next Newsletter.

(My thanks to Christine Lingard at Manchester Central Library and to Ann Dinsdale at the Brontë Parsonage Museum for press cuttings and information)

## HELP PLEASE!

Elizabeth Rye

I am investigating a painting which I believe is of Mrs Gaskell. The portrait is dated 1851 and is by Herbert L. Smith. (I wrote a brief article about this painting, *GSN* (No5) in 1981. I found an intriguing paragraph on page 237 of *Mrs Gaskell and her Friends*, by Elizabeth Haldane, which may provide a clue about the painting's origin:

*Oddly enough, there was a movement to have a portrait of Mrs Gaskell painted by Watts later on [after Jan 1850] but the scheme did not mature, though he was anxious to undertake the work.*

Does anyone know where Elizabeth Haldane found this information?

I think Mrs Gaskell would have been uncomfortable with the idea of a subscription to honour her philanthropy. 'I am more & more convinced that *be good & doing good* comes naturally, & need not be fussed and spoken about.' (Letter 123, 13th May 1852). I suspect the 'scheme did mature', because a philanthropist stepped in and commissioned the portrait, privately and discreetly.

It would be very helpful to know what group of people was interested in honouring Mrs Gaskell with a portrait. If you can help at all please email me on [ruth@scibydes.fsnet.co.uk](mailto:ruth@scibydes.fsnet.co.uk).

P.S. Oddly enough, the family that originally sold the painting in 1974 has an interesting connection to both Mrs Gaskell and the philanthropist who I believe commissioned the painting. More later!

## Samuel Laurence 1812-1884

Joan Leach

Many of you will know the pastel portrait of Elizabeth Gaskell by Samuel Laurence, reproduced on the cover of this newsletter and available as a postcard\* There had been some confusion about the date of this portrait as shading under the artist's signature makes 1854 & 5 a possible reading but 1864 & 5 is, I believe the correct one. The figure 5 is a faint addition so there must have been two sittings. Perhaps the earliest reproduction of this portrait was in The Knutsford Edition of Cousin Phillis (1906) published by Smith and Elder. Did they own the portrait? It is dated there as 1864-5 when it was almost certainly in the possession of Meta and Julia Gaskell. But it is not the only Laurence portrait of the author.

Gaskell Letter 555 (Chapple and Pollard) is addressed to :

*My dear Mr Lawrence* , (sic)

Sept. 12<sup>th</sup> (1864)

*... I should have not the least objection to Mr Smith's becoming the possessor of your likeness of me; indeed it would be pleasant to feel that I was hanging on the walls of so kind a friend - When I am next in London I hope that I ( and my cap) may be able to give you another sitting . .*

A footnote adds that the portrait was 'now in the possession of Mrs. E. M. Gordon of Biddlesden Hall, Northants'. She was a descendant of George Smith, publisher. The Brotherton Library, Leeds has the MSS of *Sylvia's Lovers* from the same source but knows nothing of the whereabouts of this portrait of Elizabeth Gaskell in a bonnet or cap as she calls it. The picture looks as if further work might have been intended. Annette B. Hopkins (1952) reproduced this in her biography.

It seems likely that the better known Laurence work was done at a second sitting(s) later that year and into 1865, perhaps when she was in London in April. This is the version still owned by her descendant, Mrs Trevor Dabbs.

It was used for the dust jacket and frontispiece for Winifred Gérin's biography of Gaskell (1976) when 1854 is given as the date but the post card reproduction made for The Brontë Society gives 1864/5 on the advice of J. G. Sharps.

Samuel Laurence travelled to America, with the encouragement of Thackeray, in 1854 and was based there until 1861, thus he could not have been working on a Gaskell portrait in 1855, which should convince any who doubt the dating of the Laurence pastel portrait. The confusion is compounded by the shading under the artist's signature which makes the third number look like a 5 instead of 6 and the added 5 is faint.

\*by kind permission of Mrs Trevor Dabbs

## Caroline Holland (1835-1909) John A.V. Chapple

'Took very much to Cousin Coo – as he does to most of his lady cousins...'; we read in *Private Voices: The Diaries of Elizabeth Gaskell and Sophia Holland*, page 95. There is nothing odd about this October 1838 glimpse into the childhood life of the little boy who grew up to become Marianne Gaskell's husband, Thurstan Holland, but the editors of his mother's diary were unable to identify this favourite cousin. We also find that Elizabeth Gaskell once wrote that 'Mr Honest Netherlands', presumably Henry Holland, was at Knutsford in 1847 with 'Coo, & Gertrude'. Chapple and Pollard could then do no more than speculate without evidence that 'Coo' was perhaps a copyist's error for 'Cor'. (See *Letters*, 1966, page 826, from typescript; *Further Letters*, page 33).

However, Mr David Holland, a descendant of Sir Henry Holland, is kind enough to inform me in a private letter that 'Cousin Coo' was the daughter of Sir Henry's second wife, Saba, herself the daughter of the famous wit Sydney Smith. Mr Holland notes that Henry's manuscript journal substantiates Caroline Holland's presence at Dumbleton in 1838, whilst Saba's manuscript, 'Anecdotes of my darling little Coo', shows that Caroline was again there in August of the following year.

On her father's death in 1873 Caroline inherited her father's house in London. It became a pied-à-terre for her many relations. And according to the *Oxford Dictionary of Quotations*, it is to Caroline's *Notebooks of a Spinster Lady* (1919) that we owe the attribution to Queen Victoria of one of the most famous of all put-downs: 'We are not amused'.

### From *The Bookseller*

A directory called *Contemporary Writers* has spotted a promising talent on the Manchester University Press list. She is Elizabeth Cleghorn Gaskell, author of *The Further Letters of Mrs Gaskell*. The directory has sent her a flattering missive. "Congratulations on your publishing success. Members of our staff have requested that your name be added to our selection of prominent and emerging authors for inclusion in *Contemporary Writing*", the letter informs Mrs Gaskell (1810-1865). Inviting further information for 'Sidelights' in which authors are invited to comment informally on their writing career: "Tell us about yourself – what is your primary motivation for writing? Describe your writing process. What inspired you to write on the subjects you have chosen?"



Samuel Laurence exhibited as a portrait painter at The Royal Academy from 1836 until 1882 when he showed a drawing of George Eliot. He had close relations with many eminent literary men of his day particularly G.H. Lewes and Leigh Hunt. He worked in oils as well as chalk and crayon and many of his portraits were engraved. Gaskell noticed one of Tennyson, alongside Richmond's portrait of Charlotte Brontë, at the Haworth Parsonage (GL 167). This was made in 1844 the same year as one of Carlyle writing at his desk. To complete our knowledge we would like to trace the portrait of Elizabeth Gaskell in a bonnet and get a better copy made. Can you help us? *Early Victorian Portraits* R. Ormond (1973) lists this as being in the collection of Frank Miles. We hope in a later publication to follow the history of late photographs of our author.



## BOOK NOTES

Christine Lingard

Some new books due in 2002:

*Chastity and transgression in women's writing: interrupting the Harlot's progress, 1792-1897* by Roxanne Eberle. Palgrave, £45.

A modern interpretation of representations of prostitution and the position of women in nineteenth-century writing; in addition to Elizabeth Gaskell, who dealt with the subject directly in *Ruth* and to some extent in all her novels, this study discusses some less familiar writers such as Amelia Opie, Mary Hays and Sarah Grand.

*The Victorian Novel* by Francis O'Gorman (in the *Blackwell Guides to Criticism* series). Blackwell £14.99

Intended for the general student, this guide discusses the critical response to the major Victorian novelists – the Brontës, Dickens, Eliot, Gaskell, Thackeray, Trollope, Hardy and James – and addresses major themes such as gender, genre, politics and language.

*Understanding Jane Eyre* by Debra Teachman. Greenwood Press, £33.50

A literary analysis of the novel embracing commentary and extracts from primary sources such as *The Life of Charlotte Brontë*, with suggestions for teachers.

*Thomas and Jane Carlyle* by Rosemary Ashton. Chatto and Windus, £25.

The biographer of George Henry Lewes now turns her attention to one of the most influential couples in Victorian London. Thomas Carlyle was one of the first to write in praise of *Mary Barton*, and Elizabeth Gaskell was entertained at their Chelsea home.

## THE LONDON AND SOUTH-EAST GROUP

### 2002 PROGRAMME

Saturday 11 May

'Letters from America: Elizabeth Gaskell, John Ashton Nicholls and Fredrika Bremer'  
– **Alan Shelston**

Saturday 14 September

'Flannel waistcoats and long sleeves': Motherhood and Matrimony in Elizabeth Gaskell' – **Sylvia Burch**

Saturday 9 November

'A Question of Trust: The Relationship between Elizabeth Gaskell and Patrick Brontë' – **Dudley Green**

All the meetings will be held at the Francis Holland School, 39 Graham Terrace, London SW1W 8JF and will commence at 2pm. Francis Holland School is a few minutes walk from Sloane Square underground station (District and Circle lines).

Anyone who wishes may meet at 12 noon at Sloane Square underground station for a light lunch at the Royal Court Tavern, also on Sloane Square. Those arriving later than 12 noon should proceed directly to the Royal Court Tavern. If further information is required please contact Dudley J Barlow. (Tel: 020 8874 7727)

## SOUTH-WEST GROUP

### PROGRAMME

13<sup>th</sup> April:

Ian Gregg has had to postpone his rehabilitation of Elizabeth Gaskell's stepmother but we hope to welcome him to Bath in 2003. Details of the speaker for this date will be circulated soon. 2.00 p.m.: The Bath Royal Literary and Scientific Institution.

17<sup>th</sup>-19<sup>th</sup> May:

Visit to Penzance, the home of Maria Branwell. We are being welcomed by our members in Penzance, led by Mrs Sheila Burlton, and anyone interested should get in touch as soon as possible. This is a very flexible holiday, with members going by train – cost £20 for a super apex return from Bristol or less if you have a railcard – and staying in a small hotel near the sea front in room with ensuite facilities for £20 pp bed and breakfast. The weekend could include a visit to the Eden project. Telephone Rosemary Marshall, 01225 426732.

18<sup>th</sup> August: Sunday tea party with gentle literary entertainment.

23<sup>rd</sup> November:

'Elizabeth Gaskell: Escape from the city': 2.00 p.m. at the Bath Royal Literary and Scientific Institution. Speaker: Gwen Clarke. Come to Bath and do your Christmas shopping.

All queries to Rosemary Marshall, 01225 426732.

## GENERAL MEETINGS IN THE NORTH WEST

**The AGM meeting** will be held at Cross Street Chapel on Saturday 23<sup>rd</sup> March at 11.00am. Afterwards Dr Frances Twinn will speak on: *Meteorological Accuracy in the Provincial Novels of Elizabeth Gaskell*. Our usual caterers will provide a buffet lunch and we will reconvene at 2.15 when Janet Allan will give an illustrated talk: *Oh! What a House! 42, Plymouth Grove*.

Monthly meetings continue in Knutsford on the last Wednesdays in the month until May when on Monday 27<sup>th</sup> we will have a coach trip to Macclesfield to follow links



between Gaskell's friends and Unitarian families. We will leave Knutsford at 11.00am to visit King Edward Street Unitarian Chapel with guide, Mrs Forester. After lunch in the town we will meet again at 1.45 pm to visit N. T. Hare Hill Gardens, formerly belonging to the Brocklehursts, where rhododendrons and azaleas should be at their best, Lea Hall; home of the Gaskells' niece Lily Greg; then on to Bollington for The Mount and other Greg sites.

#### Cross Street Chapel, Manchester, 9<sup>th</sup> April

Chris Makepeace has agreed to lead *a Manchester Man walk*, the subject of his talk on 12<sup>th</sup> March, meeting at Cross Street Chapel at 1.00pm. The walk takes approx. one and a half hours

#### OUTING TO LICHFIELD on Saturday 29<sup>th</sup> June

John Chapple will be our guide to the Town with its Samuel Johnson, Erasmus Darwin and Wedgwood associations.

At our Autumn Meeting in Knutsford on September 28<sup>th</sup> Jenny Uglow, our Vice-President, has agreed to speak on: *Erasmus Darwin, the Lunar Society and Elizabeth Gaskell's upbringing*.

\**The Lunar Men* is the title of Jenny's latest book, to be published by Faber in September.

Knutsford Literature Festival will be held from 28<sup>th</sup> September to 6<sup>th</sup> October

#### Trip to Brittany 12- 19 September

We regretted disappointing those of you who would have joined a trip to Rome but the logistics of that venue defeated us. Instead Brittany is an attractive alternative. Following Gaskell and Mme de \*Sevigne trails and other literary connections, flying from Stansted airport and staying at St. Malo.

#### Local History Week, 4-12 May 2002.

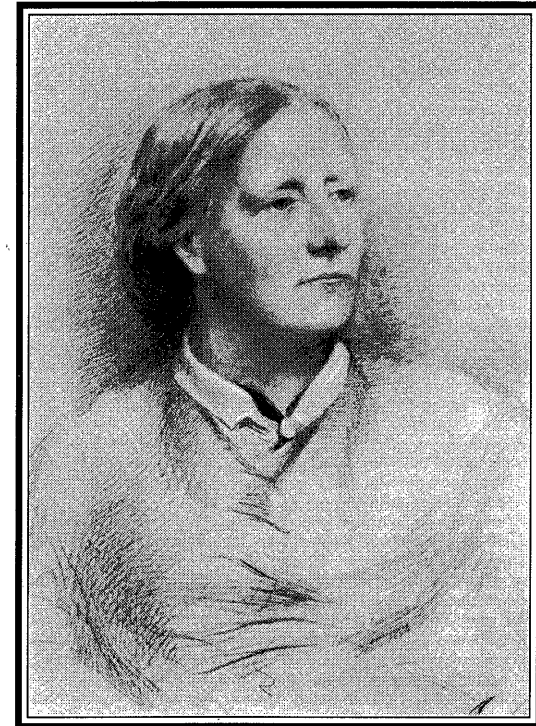
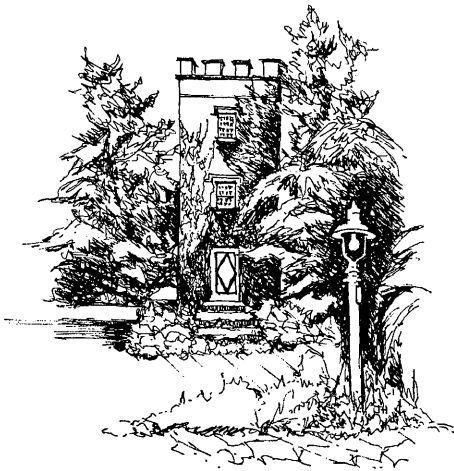
'Local Histories and Communities in North West England'

The Manchester branch of the Historical Association in collaboration with English Heritage North West Region and the Manchester Centre for Regional History at Manchester Metropolitan University is planning a day conference at Manchester Metropolitan University on Saturday 4 May. The cost will be about £10 per person. This will be a prelude to a series of activities – historical walks and visits, schools' events, museum and archive exhibitions – during local history week.

The society will be taking part, with a talk in the morning of 4 May, an exhibition and in the afternoon a Gaskell Walk led by Terry Wyke. There will also be Knutsford activities in the course of the week.

More details, times etc will be available nearer the time.

# The Gaskell Society



THE GASKELL SOCIETY HOME PAGE has all the latest information on meetings.  
<http://gaskellsociety.users.btopenworld.com>

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.  
Telephone - 01565 634668 E-mail: [joanleach@aol.com](mailto:joanleach@aol.com)

**Hon Treasurer:** Brian Williams, 15 Cawley Avenue, Culcheth, Warrington, Cheshire WA3 4DF

**Membership Secretary:** Miss C. Lingard, 5 Moran Crescent, Macclesfield SK11 8JJ

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## NEWSLETTER

Autumn 2002 - Number 34

## Editor's Letter

Joan Leach

As I write this the Commonwealth Games are taking place in Manchester. One of the competitors from the Maldive Islands, who were entertained in Knutsford, told me he had lived at the Plymouth Grove house while a student at Manchester University. My part of the welcome to them was a sanding but it was washed away by heavy rain before they arrived! For a description of sanding see Letters pp 28 - 29. I did not have the temerity to invite the Maldivian to contribute to our restoration fund but I wondered about all the international students who used Plymouth Grove and might respond to our appeal. English Heritage is working closely with The Gaskell Society to restore the house, possibly as a study centre.

Members will have been saddened to learn of the death of Professor Arthur Pollard, President of The Gaskell Society for its first seven years. In his tribute to him John Chapple tells of Arthur's work in so many different fields and we know how much he will be missed by so many who, in common with our members, will be thankful for his life.

Details of our programme of events in Knutsford, Manchester, London and Bath can be found at the back of this Newsletter and, if you should happen to mislay it you can check on our home page: <http://gaskellsociety.users.btopenworld.com>: this can be done easily at most libraries.

Make a note in your diary for the 2003 conference at Durham, 1-4 August and AGM meeting in Manchester on 5 April.

The Alliance of Literary Societies held the AGM at Burslem on 27 April hosted by The Arnold Bennett Society with a varied weekend programme. Next year the Dylan Thomas Society will host the event in Swansea on the 26 April with further events on 27th. The ALS has a home page at [www.sndc.demon.co.uk](http://www.sndc.demon.co.uk). I can supply a copy of The ALS Newsletter if desired. (SAE)

**An exhibition at The Walker, William Brown St, Liverpool:** *The Earl and the Pussycat* continues until 8 September when Kenn Oultram hopes to convene an inaugural meeting for those interested in forming the Lear Society - How pleasant to know Mr Lear!

**Phone 01606 891 303 (day) or 01606 781731 (evenings).**



Gaskell Society members at ALS AGM at Burslem 27 April 2002  
L to R: John Yellowlees, Pat Barnard, Jean Yellowlees, Kenn Oultram,  
Janet Allan, Lynda Stephens and Robin Allan.

## Obituary Arthur Pollard

The Gaskell Society has recently suffered the sad loss of one of its founder members, Arthur Pollard, who died on 2 June 2002. As a former President of the Society, and a valued speaker, he was known to many of us.

Born at Clitheroe, Lancashire, on 22 December 1922, he was educated at its Royal Grammar School. After war service abroad and a First in English at Leeds University, he took a B.Litt. at Lincoln College, Oxford in 1953. In his academic career he progressed to become Director of General Studies in Arts at Manchester University, leaving on appointment as Professor of English at the University of Hull in 1967. He was a consulting professor of the University of Buckingham, which made him an honorary D.Litt. in 1982. He retired from Hull as Professor Emeritus in 1984.

This distinguished career by no means exhausted his energy and talents. Besides his university duties as a Professor and Dean of Arts, 1976-78, he was a Chairman of Examiners for the Manchester Joint Matriculation Board at A-level for 25 years, a Conservative politician particularly active in educational affairs at both local and national level, a Reader in the Church of England for no less than 50 years and a member of Synod from 1990 to 2000. In the 1990s he successfully took two degrees in Theology, a B.D. at London and a B.Th. at Hull, and was made an honorary LL.D. by the University of Lincolnshire and Humberside in 1999. After the death of his first wife in 1970, he married Phyllis Pattinson, who survives him, together with two sons of the first marriage, John and Andrew.

Throughout his life he was a prolific author of books and pamphlets. Politics led him to consider novelists like Anthony Trollope and W. M. Thackeray, religion to contemplate the learned defender of the Anglican tradition, Richard Hooker, and the Evangelical leader, Charles Simeon. In 1960 he gave a lecture on the novels of Mrs. Gaskell to mark the 150th anniversary of her birth and invited me to join him in editing her letters, which he greatly admired. Annette Hopkins had made excellent use of Gaskell's major correspondence with the publisher George Smith, the correspondence with Charles Norton had been published by Jane Whitehill in 1932 and Aina Rubenius had quoted from a number of the letters. Fortunately these were serious scholars; others had been deplorably cavalier in their treatment of the known texts. Also, many important letters had not been discovered, especially the early, intimate family correspondence owned by Marianne Gaskell's grand-daughter, Mrs. Trevor Jones.

Collaboration between the editors was ideal, as was the invaluable assistance freely given by a pertinacious young graduate student, Geoffrey Sharps. Whilst Pollard sought out and transcribed some hundreds of manuscripts in a small, neat hand, my main task was to crouch at the centre of the web and analyse material as it came in. However, when I came to check all the transcriptions against the original manuscripts in this country, I was amazed to find how exceptionally accurate he had been. The edition of Mrs. Gaskell's letters is therefore far more complete and faithful to the originals. No more than a handful of transcriptional errors have ever been found, thanks also to the double-checking of copy-texts by Ursula Pollard and Kate Chapple and the help with preparation for the press provided by those recorded in the acknowledgments.

Arthur Pollard was able to publish his sensitive and balanced *Mrs Gaskell, Novelist and Biographer* in 1965 on the anniversary of Gaskell's death, though *The Letters of Mrs. Gaskell* had to wait another year when material turned up at a late stage. In this context the admirable patience of the staff of Manchester University Press should not pass without notice.

The personal kindness Arthur Pollard displayed both to me and my family was utterly characteristic. Many younger colleagues at Manchester and Hull, too, are grateful for his aid and encouragement, and for the academic and publishing initiatives he devised in such unexpected fields as Commonwealth literatures in English, for example. The Gaskell Society can only be thankful that the works of the author we celebrate should have attracted his intelligent, energetic attention at an early stage of his career.

**John Chapple.**

# WILMOTS

Christine Lingard

This year is the 500<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the King's School in Macclesfield. At the time of Elizabeth Gaskell's visit to the town in 1852 the school was still situated a few yards away from the chapel in King Edward Street where she attended service but it is another link which concerns me here — with one of its longest-serving headmasters, the Rev. Darwin Wilmot (1845-1935). In one of the earliest issues of the *Newsletter* Janice Kirkland enquired about a house Gaskell stayed at in December 1852, which she referred to simply as Hulme Walfield. Her hosts were a Mr. and Mrs. Wilmot whom she had met at Capesthorpe. She appears to have been impressed. 'This house is a large one & full of people; it stands just above Congleton and must be very pretty in fine weather', she wrote [GL 144].

Directories identify it as Daisy Bank, which was on the outskirts of Congleton rather than in the hamlet of Hulme Walfield a mile or so further north. The house unfortunately has been demolished but if you take the A34 northwards out of Congleton towards Capesthorpe you can locate the site. Just before the fork for Macclesfield at the Grove Inn you will see on the left hand side of the road a red brick house somewhat older than its neighbours that was possibly a lodge to the estate. If you walk round the avenues behind you can still indeed get an impression of the view over the town.

Mr. Wilmot was Edward Woollett Wilmot (1808-1864), fifth son of Sir Robert Wilmot, a Derbyshire baronet, and his second wife Emma (born in Lichfield c.1820, died 1898), daughter of Sir Francis Sacheverel Darwin of Breadsall Priory, Derby, who was a first cousin of Charles Darwin. The Wilmots were related by marriage to many of the leading industrial families of Derbyshire and Cheshire including Mrs. Davenport herself, the Arkwrights, the Strutts and the Ryles of Macclesfield. Edward was agent on the Capesthorpe estate and mentioned several times in the estate papers. The 'VD' mentioned in Mrs. Gaskell's letter is probably her Manchester friend Vernon Darbishire who was embarking on a career in agriculture. Wilmot would have been a useful contact as he was a skilled agriculturalist. He had previously worked for the Duke of Newcastle at Clumber Park, Nottinghamshire (1839-1848).

In 1857 the couple moved to Buxton to a similar position with the Duke of Devonshire. Wilmot proved to be one of the most successful agents the Duke employed. During his tenure of office he improved sanitation and oversaw the arrival of the Savings Bank and the Railway. He was a major benefactor of the new church at Burbage (1861) where he is buried. The couple held annual New Year's Balls in the Assembly Rooms for about two hundred of the professional people of the town, regular oyster suppers and other parties for the townsfolk. I wonder if it was he who arranged the Gaskells' trip to Chatsworth in 1857. Her journey there was made via Buxton.

The friendship was particularly strong between their children. In 1859 she wrote to Marianne: 'Julia is *very* unhappy about Cherry coming. She says you never write to her or Flossy, but are always ready to write to Dar & Fanny Wilmott &c &c' [GL 448]. There were five Wilmot children — three boys (the youngest, Reginald, only a six-month baby at the time of her visit to Hulme Walfield), and two girls, Fanny and Emma (married 1866). Fanny was Flossy's guest in Manchester early in 1861. Her mother is worried that she might be bored, as they were considered too young to go sightseeing alone. They would have been about 18 at the time. Fanny did not marry and in 1881 was living with her mother in Friargate, one of Derby's grandest streets. Marianne was a bridesmaid in April 1861 in Buxton, possibly to a son of Edward Wilmot's first marriage, who married in that year the daughter of Dr William Robertson, Buxton's leading specialist in water treatment. Is this the Lily Robertson whose wedding her mother urged Marianne to go to in February 1861? [GL 484] Marianne was again in Buxton later in the year.

Darwin, the eldest son, was born in 1845. He was always referred to as Dar in the letters. He started his education at King's (then known simply as the 'Grammar School') before going to Winchester. In 1859 he was a fellow guest of Mrs. Lyall during the Gaskells' visit to The Close. 'I don't know if I told you that we asked Mrs Lyall to ask Dar to dinner one day & I kept Dr Moberly's [*the headmaster*] note in reply to send to Mrs. Wilmot, as though it says little that little is so nice. Mrs. Lyall says she will try & ask him again pretty often to her usual 2 o'clock dinner as that gives the boys the liberty of going out of bounds which they enjoy' [GL 484b].

After Oxford Darwin was ordained and became a teacher at Rossall School before returning in 1876 to become headmaster of his old school — a post he held for thirty-four years, to 1910. He was a chaplain to the local battalion and wrote a history of the school. His most celebrated pupil, Hewlett Johnson, Dean of Canterbury (nicknamed the 'Red Dean' for his championing of communist states and Marxist policies in the 1930s), wrote in his autobiography: 'I must have been fully twelve or thirteen before I went to school in Macclesfield Grammar School. I remember being much impressed by the austere look of the headmaster's study, part by the bright candlesticks on his desk and the gold watch at his waist. He was the Rev. R [sic] Wilmot the heir it was said to a baronetcy.'

This latter fact is possible. Though he was quite distantly related to the baronet, it is possible that descendants may succeed to the title if the baronet fails to produce an heir. The young couple who married in 1861 did not have any children.

Langham, Michael. *Buxton: a people's history*, Carnegie, 2001, gives more details of Wilmot's career in Buxton.

## *In Pursuit of Madame de Sévigné*

Muriel Smith

John Chapple, in Newsletter No. 33, tells how Mrs. Gaskell collected material for a projected, never executed, memoir of Marie de Rabutin Chantal, Marquise de Sévigné, and, as early as 1855, had asked Hachette for a book on the subject.

She was in Paris in February of that year (Letter 230) and met the Duc de Broglie and his sister-in-law Madame de Staël: they were the son-in-law and daughter-in-law of the Madame de Staël. He was of the Académie Française, as were the distinguished guests that Mrs. Gaskell met in 1865 *chez* Madame Mohl: Guizot, Montalembert and Mignet (Letter 564). This was just after Jules Barbey d'Aurevilly had been publishing *Les 40 Médallions de l'Académie* in instalments in the satirical *Nain Jaune* ("Yellow Dwarf") during September and October 1863, bookforming them in 1864. (In December of that year the government of Napoleon III had the *Nain Jaune* closed down.) The Académie Française, Barbey declared, is an asylum for Ministers whose incurable Orleanism has left them unemployed and unemployable since the fall of King Louis-Philippe in 1848. But of that Mrs. Gaskell is unlikely to have been aware.

In 1862 (Letter 509b) she had headed for Brittany, to Vitré to see the Hôtel de Sévigné, Madame de Sévigné's town house, and on to her country house, Les Rochers. This has a chapel built by Madame de Sévigné in the 1670s and Mr Chapple remarks 'if you seek her monument, just look around this elegant little classical building'. Quite so. The current owners of Les Rochers, whilst keeping most of it private, naturally exploit the Sévigné connection, with a museum in the old tower and visits to the chapel and grounds.

Madame de Sévigné, however, has an actual monument in another part of France altogether: a plain stone slab giving simply her name and dates, in the chapel of the Château de Grignan, the home of her son-in-law the Comte de Grignan, where she died in 1696. There is also a terrible nineteenth-century statue of her in the main square of Grignan. It is in the province of Dauphiné, on the left bank of the Rhône, not very far north of Avignon. Mrs. Gaskell must have passed quite close in 1857 on her way to Rome via Paris and Marseille (Letter 342).

Another place connected with Madame de Sévigné is the château of her cousin and correspondent Roger de Rabutin, Comte de Bussy. Bussy-Rabutin, as he is generally known, had been elected to the Académie Française at the beginning of 1665 and had the election ratified by Louis XIV. A few months later, there was trouble over his scandalous *Histoire Amoureuse des Gaules*, which was circulating in manuscript. It particularly offended the Prince de Condé, the King's cousin, and Bussy-Rabutin was that year awarded thirteen months in the Bastille, followed by twenty-seven

years of exile on his estates. Bussy-le-Grand in Burgundy (population 382) contains Bussy-Rabutin's château, which is of the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries and is open to visitors.

The *Histoire Amoureuse des Gaules* was published as a Garnier-Flammarion paperback in 1967: it includes a very disobliging account of Madame de Sévigné.

## *Good Dog Fanny and Tuft the Canary, with other Stories, all True*

John Chapple

Every now and again somebody notices what appears to be a forgotten book. An occasional catalogue lists Mrs Gaskell's *History of Good Dog Fanny and Tuft, the Canary, With other Stories, all True*, published with a coloured frontispiece in London, Edinburgh and New York by T. Nelson and Sons in 1881. We know that Elizabeth Gaskell wrote stories for children. Could some of them have turned up after her death and been sent to press by a descendant or an admirer? *History of Good Dog Fanny* is a rare book, but copies can be found in the British Library and Cambridge University Library. The style of life depicted in these stories, if not the precise details, certainly seems familiar. The teller is prosperous enough to travel abroad, to France and Italy. On one occasion she takes a Paris holiday lasting no less than two months in the Spring, whilst Dicky the canary is left behind with Cook. There is a French cat called Minet, a large dark grey Persian, which reminds us that in May of 1854 our Mrs Gaskell wrote to her youngest daughter Julia about a similar creature,

*Do you know that we are going to have a little kitten sent us from Paris, with long hair, and a very pretty face, and is called Cranford, can you guess why? It is called an Angola or a Persian cat; and Minnie has seen it's mother!*

But the little flurry of excitement soon dies down when one comes across a reference to the time when the baby Prince Imperial was christened, followed by a mention of his death in the Zulu wars. Eugène Napoleon, Prince Imperial, son of Napoleon III, was born in 1856 and killed fighting with the British Army against the Zulus in 1879. It is just possible that somebody found and updated stories by Elizabeth Cleghorn Gaskell, but Boston Public Library contains a letter written on 12 March [1881] from Ingersley, Macclesfield, which transmits a Mrs. Gaskell's compliments to the Editor of a periodical, *The Queen, The Lady's Newspaper*. This was a large-size and rather splendid journal, full of engravings and lady-like information of many kinds. (Admirers of Amanda Vickery's splendid book, *The Gentleman's Daughter*, Yale U. P., 1998, will know what *that* includes.) In her letter Mrs. Gaskell calls attention to a misprint in a favourable review of the book printed on 'to-day Saturday March 12<sup>th</sup>', p. 263. The review itself was short but very sweet:

*A dozen tales for children, charmingly told, in words that will be thoroughly understood by little folk, while their attention is riveted by the subject-matter. Mrs. Gaskell must be ranked among the very few who know both what and how to write for intelligent children of a very early age.*

Unfortunately, the title as printed in *The Queen* for 12 March 1881 was slightly wrong, so she writes,

*Her son's favourite and intelligent dog was named Fanny, not Nanny. Mrs. Gaskell is much pleased by the Editor's favourable critique, and will be obliged by his inserting it again in next Saturday's Queen, with the title of book corrected, for Fanny had a large circle of acquaintances and friends. The money received for the copyright, was devoted to a Children's Hospital, but this is of course a private affair.*

The editor made a simple correction of the title only in the next issue, squeezing it in the bottom corner of page 287. More generally, one can say that an attractive hypothesis has been ruined by an inconvenient fact.

And who was this Mrs. Gaskell of Macclesfield? Library Catalogues, usually so informative, do not identify her. Fortunately, the 1881 British Census records John Upton Gaskell of Ingersley Hall, Rainow, Cheshire, and his wife Margaret E. Gaskell, aged 67. *Burke's Landed Gentry* (1921) has an entry for 'Gaskell of Ingersley Hall', which informs us that John Upton Gaskell was the son of Thomas Gaskell, who died in 1851. Margaret Emily Gaskell was the daughter of Samuel Grimshawe of Errwood Hall, Derbyshire. She had been christened in Manchester Cathedral on 15 July 1813 (International Genealogical Index) and died on 13 Feb. 1887. A daughter, Anne Theodora Gaskell, aged 36, was at home when the census was taken in 1881. Their son, John Francis Upton Gaskell, born in 1852, had married in 1877. No connection with our Elizabeth Gaskell has yet been found, but the old hall and its summer house of c. 1815, White Nancy, on the top of Kerridge Hill overlooking Bollington, must surely have been known to her.

I am happy to acknowledge the assistance of Ellen M. Oldham of Boston Public Library by courtesy of the Trustees of the Boston Public Library. I am also most grateful to Richard Renold for all the information in the last paragraph above.

#### **Note:**

I recognized the name Grimshawe of Errwood Hall (Margaret Emily Gaskell was born Margaret Emily Grimshawe): Errwood Hall is in Derbyshire (just), in the Goyt Valley, in the hills behind Bollington. The Grimshawes were Roman Catholics, with their own chapel at Errwood (which makes a christening in Manchester Cathedral a slight puzzle). But they had a Spanish governess, so continental travel might have been part of their lifestyle. John Chapple says that, according to the 1881 Census,

Margaret Emily was born at Mill Banl (for Mill Bank), Cheshire. It is likely that Mill Bank was in Bollington, since Samuel Grimshawe came from there and had Errwood built in about 1820 or 1830. Errwood Hall is a ruin now — knocked down in 1930 when the Goyt valley below it was flooded to make a reservoir.

There were Gaskells in Rainow, not far away from the Goyt Valley, since the seventeenth century at least. A friend of a friend is researching the history of Ingersley Hall and may have a family tree for the Gaskells; I hope to see it. Ingersley was sold by Anne Theodora Gaskell; in more recent years it was a Salesian College.

#### **Mary Syner.**

Ed.: The Transactions of the Historic Society of Lancashire and Cheshire Vol 108 (1956) traces the history of the Gaskell family from Lawrence who purchased Clifton Hall, Lancs in 1654. From his second son descended Robert Clive's (of India) family and the Milnes -Gaskells; Richard Monckton-Milnes, Lord Houghton, was of this line; I was asked about provenance of The Gaskell Arms at Much Wenlock and found it linked to this branch. There is no certain proof but it is likely that William Gaskell's family descended from Adam, the third son of Lawrence Gaskell. No links have been found with the Gaskells of Ingersley Hall.



White Nancy, built by John Gaskell in 1817, possibly to commemorate Wellington's victory at Waterloo. Used as a summer house it had a round stone table inside and one theory about the name is that Nancy was the lead horse in the eight-strong team which hauled it to the top. The door has been blocked up. It stands on the boundary between Bollington and Rainow. John Gaskell built Ingersley Hall c 1775.



## MANCHESTER BOTANISTS.

In Gaskell Newsletter No. 2 (August 1985) Barbara Brill wrote about the Manchester botanists and considered their relationship to *Job Legh* in *Mary Barton*. Barbara, as a thorough researcher, had looked for the graves of Edward Hobson (1782-1830) and his friend James Crowther, (1768- 1847) who had made a special request to be buried next to him in the graveyard of St George's Church, Hulme. Barbara had failed to find the graves but recorded the plaque to Hobson inside the church.

Now the church is being transformed into twenty-five luxury flats, including one in the tower. Dr Anne Secord of Cambridge, who is including a chapter about the real-life botanists and *Job Legh* in a book she is writing, had more success than Barbara in finding the graves and has ensured that they are preserved on a grassy bank. The plaque will be kept in the former church.

Crowther's grave-stone reads:

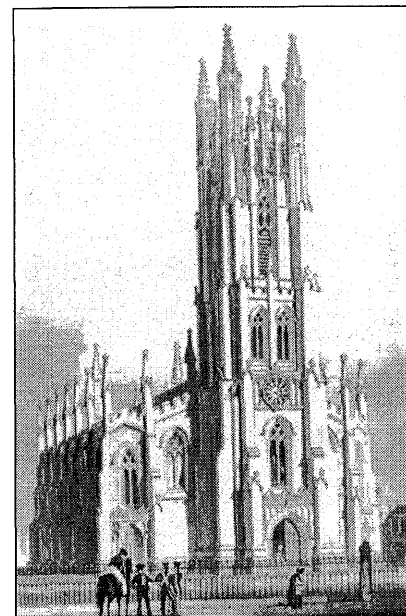
*And oft he roamed the ravine deep  
To gain the plant esteemed as rare,  
And pac'd the plain and scal'd the steep  
Regarding neither toil nor fare.  
For loved he nature in her storms  
And in her soft and sunny hours  
Admir'd her in her countless forms  
But studied most her race of flowers.*

After reading about the gravestones (in a local newspaper) and Dr Anne Secord's work I was able to contact her to ask how she had succeeded in finding them. She replied:

*'From textual sources I knew that Crowther had asked to be buried next to Hobson and that Hobson's grave was at St George's. . . I asked the Local Studies Librarian at Manchester Central Library whether St George's still existed and he told me that the graveyard was still intact but that he had noticed that after years of neglect it had recently been cleared of overgrown shrubs, etc. However, like Barbara Brill, I was not able to find the gravestones because they were laid flat on the ground and, as it turned out, over the years had been 'buried'; by a light cover of earth and grass. Because I was absolutely sure that the graves were there my husband (who had finished research he was doing in Liverpool and was with me) offered to hunt more thoroughly. Using an old slate that had dropped from the church roof to dig around a bit, after several hours he uncovered the first part of Hobson's grave - and then had to dig hard to uncover the rest and Crowther's next to it. ( the graveyard*

*is surrounded by busy roads, so passing motorists began yelling at him thinking he was a vandal!) Anyway, after he had uncovered the graves and photographed them he found that someone had closed off the graveyard and put barbed wire over the entrance thus blocking his way out. Luckily the man who had done this work was still in his van and was very surprised to see a hot and muddy figure emerge from the graveyard. It turned out that this was the last day the place was open before a Manchester architecture firm and English Heritage were going to start work on converting the church.'*

Ed: When Anne was told that the Church was to be redeveloped she petitioned the Bishop of Manchester to have the two gravestones saved at the site. Some of us visited the graveyard on one of Terry Wyke's walks.



## BOOK NOTES

Christine Lingard

After a quiet winter there have been a number of new books expected this summer. Already available:

O'Gorman, Francis: *The Victorian novel*, Blackwell £14.99

A student's guide to the major Victorian novelists including Gaskell, the Brontës, Dickens Eliot, Hardy and Thackeray, analysing the critical response over the last one hundred years within a narrative framework.



Elliott, Dorice Williams: *The angel out of the house: philanthropy and gender in nineteenth-century England*, University of Virginia Press, £29.50.

A discussion of philanthropic discourse in the work of George Eliot, Elizabeth Gaskell, Hannah More and Anna Jameson, and the crucial role it played in defining gender roles.

And expected during the summer:

Clapp-Intyre, Ailsa. *Angelic airs, subversive songs: music as social discourse in the Victorian novel*, Ohio University Press, £41.95.

A detailed analysis of the use and importance of folk-songs, hymns and concert music in the works of Gaskell, Eliot and Hardy.

Archibald, Diana C.: *Domesticity, imperialism and emigration in the Victorian novel*, University of Missouri Press, £29.95.

An intriguing discussion of the dilemma facing women: whether to fulfil their imperial duty and go to the colonies or 'remain an untainted idol beside an English hearthside'. Gaskell, Dickens, Trollope, Thackeray, Charles Reade and Samuel Butler are treated.

Later in the year we hope there will be a new biography of Gaskell from Shirley Foster, promised from Palgrave for November. Do enquire in your bookshop about forthcoming titles. It could influence the number of copies of the book printed. Janet Allan has produced a list of books we have in stock and can supply by post. The list is available with SAE to Hon Sec. or see our home page.

## NORTH WEST GROUP

North West members enjoyed a trip to Lichfield on 29<sup>th</sup> June, especially enjoyable as John and Kate Chapple, now living there, had helped with the planning and met us for our guided walk. The Cathedral with its attractive close, the Erasmus Darwin Centre and Samuel Johnson's birthplace gave us much to admire.

On 27 May Marie Moss arranged a pleasant tour linking Gaskell associations around the Macclesfield area, including King Edward Street Unitarian Chapel (1690); The Mount, home of Samuel Greg the younger and his mill workers' cottages, library and reading room. Marie will write about this in a future Newsletter.

A second tour on 14 August will include Dam Head House, Mobberley, where the Hollands first settled in Cheshire, Dean Row Chapel, Sandlebridge and the Apprentice House at Styal Mill where Peter Holland was attendant doctor.

## FORTHCOMING MEETINGS

### MANCHESTER AT CROSS STREET CHAPEL

**8 October 2002** — Robin Allan on *Beatrix Potter*.

**12 November 2002** — Alan Shelston on *Dickens and North-West England*.

**11 February 2003** — Heather Sharps on *Sir James Kay-Shuttleworth*.

**11 March 2003** — Peter Skrine on *Readers of Goethe in Manchester, with particular reference to the Gaskells*.

All talks start at **1.00.pm** with tea and coffee available at the chapel beforehand; a sandwich lunch may be purchased at nearby Pret-à-Manger.

### KNUTSFORD MEETINGS AT ST JOHN'S CHURCH CENTRE

(A few minutes walk from the Railway station)

We shall be studying *Sylvia's Lovers* in our Knutsford meetings this year, following our usual pattern of a buffet lunch from twelve o'clock onwards, and a talk/discussion starting at about half past one on the last Wednesday in the month: dates are: **30 October, 27 November, 29 January, 26 February, 26 March and 30 April**. Oxford World's Classics edition *Sylvia's Lovers* is recommended but any edition can be used.

All welcome, at either series of meetings, or better still, both!

### LITERATURE COURSES IN THE NORTH WEST

At the Methodist Church, Beach Road, **Hartford, Northwich**.

WEA course of 6 monthly meetings on the first Fridays in the month commencing 6 September

*The Novels of Elizabeth Gaskell*

Tutor: Elizabeth Williams, committee member of The Gaskell Society and leader of monthly Knutsford meetings.

For further information: Tel 01606 882418

At Holy Trinity Parish Centre, Hoghton St, **Southport**

Tutor: Dr Sue Garner-Jones (Society member)

20 meetings from Monday 7 October, 1.00-3.00pm

This course will attempt to examine the complex and intimate relationship between mothers and sons in four diverse novels: Dickens' *David Copperfield*, Elizabeth Gaskell's *Ruth*, George Moore's *Esther Waters* and D H Lawrence's *Sons and Lovers*. For further information phone 0151 794 2538 quoting course no. SP068-679

If members notify us of similar course or events likely to interest our members details can be posted on our home page: [www.gaskellociety.users.btopenworld.com](http://www.gaskellociety.users.btopenworld.com)

**Manchester Literary Club** which has met regularly since 1862 is a club rather than a society. It is open to everybody interested in literature and those engaged in literary or artistic pursuits. Papers on literary subjects are read at meetings and then discussed informally.

Meetings are held at The Friends' Meeting House, Mount Street Manchester; monthly on Mondays from 7- 9pm. Phone 0161 434 5818 for details.

### **GENERAL AUTUMN MEETING 28<sup>th</sup> September, 2002**

This meeting will be held at the Methodist Church, Princess Street, Knutsford beginning at 12 noon.

Our former President, Geoffrey Sharps will speak about two Gaskell scholars of 1920's and 30's: Gerald DeWitt Sanders, and Stanton Whitfield whom Geoffrey met and later he was entrusted with the Whitfield Collection which is now housed in **Knutsford's new Library** which you might choose to visit on the morning before the meeting. There is a fine display of Gaskell illustrators.

**Buffet lunch** will be provided at a cost of £10. Pay on the day

This meeting begins a little later than usual as the Church has a coffee morning until 12 noon which members may choose to join.

**At 3.00pm the Society's Vice-President, Jenny Uglow will speak on:**

*Erasmus Darwin, the Lunar Society and Elizabeth Gaskell's upbringing*

Some of us were fortunate enough to visit Erasmus Darwin's house at Lichfield recently and are looking forward to reading Jenny's Book: *The Lunar Men :Friends who made the Future*, due to be published in September and available at the meeting.

Jenny's talk is also on the programme for **Knutsford Literature Festival**, tickets cost £5 but Gaskell members do not pay for a ticket, instead use the Society's booking form.

Tickets for non-members are available at Jardine's Book Shop, 73 King Street, Knutsford Phone 01565 653622.

The Festival runs from 27 September to 8 October.

**On Sunday morning, 29 September, Elizabeth Gaskell's birthday**, we will lay flowers on the grave at Brook Street Chapel at 10.30, before morning service which will also be Harvest Festival, at 11.00am. We will look at the Holland family graves and check the progress of the mulberry tree planted in March.

You may be interested in the **Festival event** in the afternoon 2.30pm at The Little Theatre:

*Emily Dickinson and I: The Journey of a Portrayal*

This is the true story of an actress's struggle to write a one-woman play about her literary heroine the American poet, Emily Dickinson. A one-woman show written and performed by Edie Campbell. See Festival programme for booking details.

## *Gaskell Society* *South-West: Excursion to Penzance*

### **Friday May 17<sup>th</sup> – Sunday May 19<sup>th</sup> 2002**

We were very struck by the fact that we had members apparently so far away, and thought it would be very worthwhile to pay them a visit. Travel arrangements were made and ten members prepared to travel down on Friday May 17<sup>th</sup>, some of us even venturing to go by train. Nothing could have prepared us for the kindness with which we were received by Sheilagh Burlton and her small group of Gaskell members, most of them also members of the Bronte Society, very suitable as Charlotte Brontë's mother was born and brought up there.

Chapter 3 of Mrs. Gaskell's "The Life of Charlotte Brontë" takes on a whole new meaning when one has visited this pleasant prosperous seaside town where there is evidence of the Branwell family everywhere. She quotes from Dr. Davy who says that "there was only one carpet and there was not a single silver fork" in the whole town. The same source tells of the superstitious beliefs of the uneducated people and Mrs. Gaskell suggests that hearing these stories, perhaps from Aunt Branwell, could have strongly influenced the imagination of Charlotte and her sisters.

We stayed in a comfortable little hotel where Sheilagh came to meet us on Friday evening to tell us about the programme she had arranged. She had also arranged an evening meal for us at a nearby restaurant and came with us.

On Saturday, we were taken on a tour of Penzance including Mrs. Brontë's birthplace, the Assembly rooms in the Union Hotel (very like those in Knutsford) where the news of Nelson's death was first announced and Penlee, the home of John Richards Branwell, which is now a very modern museum. We particularly liked the small exhibition of work by the Newlyn School of painters. Sheilagh also took us to the Morrab Library, a subscription library founded at about the same time as Manchester's Portico Library. The Curator took us round and answered questions and it was extremely difficult to get the South-West Group to move on. The afternoon was free and fine, and many took the opportunity to visit St. Michael's Mount, only 4 miles round the coast. The day ended with a buffet supper given for us and the Penzance group by Sheilagh Burlton where Marie Moss spoke briefly about our

pleasure and gratitude for the welcome we had received. She also spoke about the progress of Plymouth Grove and the Knutsford Literary Festival.

On Sunday we separated; some visited the Eden Project – what an amazing place. Marie and Derek Moss went on with their holiday in St. Ives. Thank you for coming, Marie, it was much appreciated. Others made their way home. We all had a very pleasurable and interesting time and were very touched by our welcome. We hope to welcome some of the Penzance members and friends to our Autumn meeting on November 23<sup>rd</sup>.

**Rosemary Marshall.**

**FORTHCOMING EVENTS:**

August 18 Summer tea party at the home of Kate and Alex Crawford, Norton St. Philip. (Everyone is welcome but do let me know. R.M.)

November 23. Gwen Clarke will speak to us on “Elizabeth Gaskell: Escape from the City” at 2.30 p.m. at the Bath Royal Literary and Scientific Institution, Queen Square, Bath.

## *THE LONDON AND SOUTH -EAST GROUP*

All meetings will be held at the Francis Holland School, 39 Graham Terrace, London SW1 8JF and will commence at 2pm. The school is a few minutes walk away from Sloane Square underground station (District and Circle Lines). Members who wish to meet for lunch should be at the underground station at 12 noon for a light lunch at The Royal court Tavern, on Sloane Square or join the group there. For further information please contact Dudley Barlow 020 8874 7727.

**Saturday 14 September**

‘Flannel waistcoats and long sleeves’:

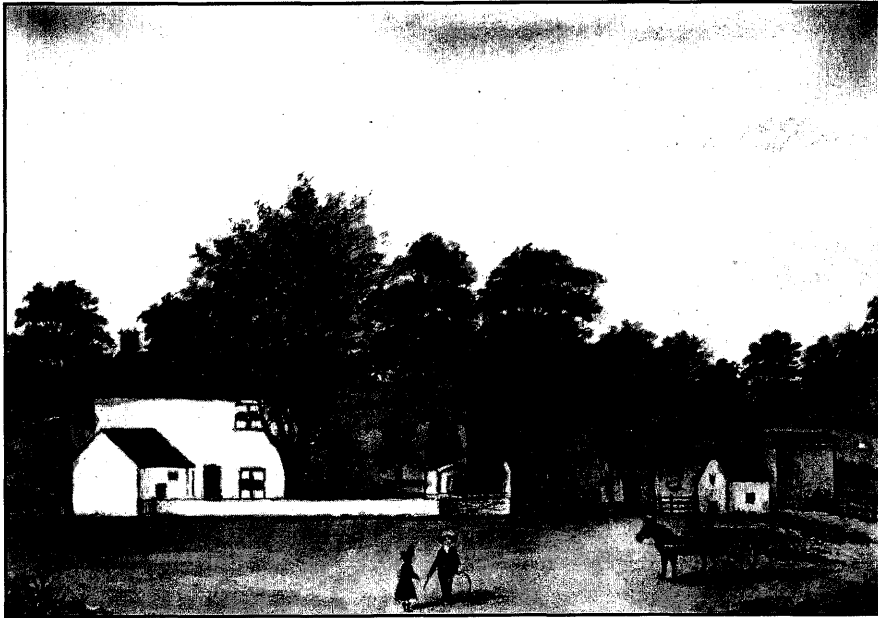
Motherhood and Matrimony in Elizabeth Gaskell

**Saturday 9 November**

‘A Question of Trust’:

The Relationship between Elizabeth Gaskell and Patrick Brontë

# The Gaskell Society



Home Farm at The Mount, Bollington



*THE GASKELL SOCIETY HOME PAGE* has all the latest information on meetings.  
<http://gaskellsociety.users.btopenworld.com>

If you have any material or suggestions for future Newsletters, please contact Mrs. Joan Leach,  
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**Membership Secretary:** Miss C. Lingard, 5 Moran Crescent, Macclesfield SK11 8JJ

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## NEWSLETTER

Spring 2003 - Number 35

## Editor's Letter

Joan Leach

As I gather together the items for this Newsletter it seems that 2003 will be a lively year for our members. Programmes are offered for branch members in Bath, Knutsford, London and Manchester. We hope to arrange a meeting in Edinburgh with a view to forming a Scottish branch.

The AGM meeting will be held at Cross Street Chapel, Manchester on 5th April. Following the AGM Louise Henson will speak about: *New Perspectives on Gaskell and Science*. In the afternoon we will have a compilation of the life and letters of Catherine Winkworth and will sing some of her hymns, translated from the German. A glance at the indexes for Gaskell letters will tell you how close they were to the Winkworth family and what a gap there would be in our knowledge if Catherine had not been such a faithful correspondent and valued Elizabeth's letters enough to preserve them.

She is not forgotten in Alderley Edge, Cheshire, where the family once lived. As part of the programme for its 150th anniversary, St Philip's Church held a service of evensong celebrating Catherine as a hymn writer. She worked in the Sunday School and was district visitor to 40 families.

Our weekend Conference in Durham, 1st – 4th August, promises well, with excellent speakers and various events. A group will visit the Whitby and Scarborough area *Sylvia's Lovers* country from 15th – 18th September.

In this newsletter we have a report of the trip to Brittany in the footsteps of Gaskell and Mme de Sévigné, written for us by members Jean Hockenhull and Sheila Stephenson. Perhaps those who were not fortunate enough to go on this trip, so ably organised by Christine Bhatt, will be able to follow the trail some other time – or at least in imagination.

In the summer North West members enjoyed three afternoon trips around Gaskell's Cheshire; one of these, in the Macclesfield area, was arranged by Marie Moss, who has written an account of the Gregs' farm at Bollington. We hope it may be possible to produce a booklet for other members to follow these routes and associations. You will find reports and meeting details of the various branches towards the back of this Newsletter.

Member Marjorie Cox, who lives in Bowdon where the Gaskells visited for country air, has researched a fascinating piece of social history in *Mrs Gaskell and the 'Climbing Boys'* and in *The Frozen North: some links with Sylvia's Lovers* Christine Lingard gives intriguing insights into the background history. Thank you to all our contributors.

### **Speakers List**

It would be very useful if potential speakers would let me know what subjects they can offer for talks to members at our various branches. If you have been to a talk or course which you enjoyed, please let me have some details.

# Mrs. Gaskell and the 'Climbing Boys'

Marjorie Cox

Some years ago I wrote about the life of William Wood of Manchester and, during twenty years of retirement, of Bowdon. My main interest was his tireless campaign to stop the use of 'climbing boys' to sweep chimneys, a life's work which originated when, in the mid-1820s in Manchester, he witnessed the death of a boy in a chimney fire. In the course of my research I was always puzzled that I could find no evidence that Mrs. Gaskell's tender-heartedness and social conscience had ever involved her in this philanthropic cause, the more so as Manchester, the scene of two well-publicised deaths of boys on industrial premises in 1847 and 1850, was known for the use of this illegal as well as inhumane practice by some of its sweeps.

I combed the large volume of Mrs. Gaskell's letters edited by J.A.V.Chapple and Arthur Pollard but to no avail. However, to my delight, the *Further Letters of Mrs. Gaskell*, edited by John Chapple and Alan Shelston, casts a welcome light on the problem and exonerates Mrs Gaskell. One of her letters (pp.83-5), dated 10 March 1853, is in reply to a letter from her friend Mrs Mary Rich, and the first item is as follows:

*...First of all about the chimney-sweeps. I have spoken about it everywhere, and so has Mr. Gaskell, and we have threatened to turn informants, and receive the sum of £10 on every such conviction [i.e. of a sweep for using boys, contrary to the Act of 1840]. It is one of those cruelties which people's consciences seem dead to, and it is very difficult to attack them in any way save through their pockets.*

As an editorial note observes, informants, then the only way of initiating prosecutions, were to receive half the fine imposed on convicted sweeps; in fact, Mrs Gaskell over-estimated the amount, as the maximum fine was £10. The awkwardness for informants was underlined by William Wood in 1853 to the House of Lords Select Committee, when he pleaded that the police should have a duty of laying information against sweeps, saying 'it is very unpleasant for individuals to have to inform against their neighbours'. This awkwardness was compounded by the existence of an apparent financial reward, although in fact sweeps often chose to go to prison for a short term rather than pay the fine, so that the informant was not compensated for expenses in bringing the case. Like Mrs Gaskell, William Wood recognised the difficulty of reaching the consciences of householders and housewives, and even experienced personally the reluctance of his wife to change

her ingrained belief that the chimney was better cleaned by a boy.

Both the date of Mrs. Gaskell's letter and its recipient are significant. The year 1853 was an important one in Lord Shaftesbury's repeated efforts to make the enforcement of existing laws effective throughout the country. He had already, in 1840, secured an Act tightening up the previous Act of 1834 by making apprenticeship under sixteen years of age and 'climbing' under twenty-one years illegal. This should have been the end of 'climbing boys', since by that age a 'boy' would be far too large, but sadly, though effective in such places as London and Bath, the new Act was not properly observed or enforced in industrial and country districts. After fruitless efforts in 1851 and 1852, Shaftesbury, in May 1853, secured the referral of his proposal to a Select Committee of the House of Lords. There he called fifteen witnesses, including Wood, to give evidence of violations of the law and its lax enforcement by the authorities. Despite cogent evidence, this initiative also failed, and effective legislation, involving the police, did not come until 1875. Mrs. Gaskell's letter is evidence of an effort to rouse public opinion at a crucial time in the 1853 campaign and also offers a glimpse into one aspect of its network.

It was no accident that the Gaskells had been moved to action by Mrs. Mary Rich. She, the widow of Claudius John Rich of the East India Company, was a member of the Wedgwood family circle, and from the 1830s lived with Hensleigh Wedgwood, grandson of the great Josiah Wedgwood I, and Hensleigh's wife, Frances. Both Mary Rich and Frances Wedgwood were daughters of Sir James Mackintosh, lawyer and historian, the former by his first marriage and the latter by his second, so that they were half-sisters. Staffordshire, where the Wedgwoods had their home and their business, resembled Manchester in the defiance of the law on 'climbing boys' and in its lax enforcement by magistrates; the county had the added disadvantage that its press was less independent than Manchester's and rarely reported such cases. In 1855, however, the Hanley and Shelton Chimney Sweeping Association was set up to prosecute sweeps who used boys and to promote sweeps who used 'machines' – the jointed rods, topped with brushes. The moving spirit of this Association was Francis (Frank) Wedgwood, a brother of Hensleigh and thus related to Mary Rich; he was secretary and treasurer and the Minutes bear witness to how active he was. Incidentally, it was he who later paid warm tribute to William Wood for his efforts for the cause in North Staffordshire.

Mrs. Gaskell may possibly have been aware of the plight of 'climbing boys' earlier, through another friend, the Quaker William Howitt, author and publisher. In 1838 she had sent an early essay to him, which he had included in his *Visits to Remarkable Places* published in 1840; in that year, on a visit to Heidelberg, she and her husband had met the Howitts, who were spending three years in Germany.

When they returned to England in 1843, she kept in touch with them and may, perhaps, have seen Howitt's 1842 book, *The Rural and Domestic Life of Germany*, in which he remarked on the fact that 'you never see boys employed as chimney-sweeps, sweeping by climbing is totally unknown'.

It is pleasing to discover evidence that the Gaskells did share in this humanitarian campaign. The Wedgwoods, relations of Mrs Gaskell, were Unitarians too, but members of different denominations were united in the cause of 'climbing boys': Quakers played an important role, Wood had been an active Methodist and became a Congregationalist, while Shaftesbury was a devout Anglican. Denominations could however be divided on the issue, as William Gaskell's own congregation at Cross Street Chapel was. Prominent among its members were John and Thomas Potter, leaders of the Manchester community of industrialists and Free-Traders. A witness, summoned by Shaftesbury to give evidence before the Select Committee in 1853, was W.J. Neale, a London barrister who was secretary of The Climbing Boys Society. Neale quoted a letter of 1850 from Sir John Potter J.P., then Mayor of Manchester, in reply to an invitation to join the Society. In declining the invitation, Sir John claimed to 'deprecate, as much as any one, the cruelties which have been and are still practised in some (I hope few) instances towards climbing boys', but maintained that the flues 'in very many of the best houses in England', 'though not in the least dangerous', were such as to make the use of a sweeping machine impossible. He could 'not think it reasonable that in such cases proprietors should be compelled by Act of Parliament, at a very serious cost, to pull their residences in pieces'. The language in which Sir John couched his letter was urbane and he even professed esteem for the Society's 'humane and charitable motives'; he was himself, in other respects, a noted philanthropist. His language was very different from that of the magistrate who rebuffed William Wood with the reply, 'Lads must be had to sweep chimneys, I can't help what the law is'; none the less, underneath, Potter expressed the same opposition to the total abolition by law of sweeping by climbing. Machines could and did sweep virtually all chimneys as they stood in London and other towns, but in industrial towns with factories as well as dense housing and in country areas, the will to use them was absent. Sir John Potter stood on the letter of the law; the clause in the Act of 1840 which regulated the size and construction of chimneys and flues applied to *new or rebuilt* ones. In contrast to him, the Duke of Wellington, who had not favoured the Bill which became law in 1840, was one among many owners of large houses who accepted the fundamental aim of the Act and had their *existing* chimneys and flues altered where necessary to suit machines. The Gaskells' principled stand on 'climbing boys' in 1853 must have intensified the strained relations with Sir John Potter which had begun after the publication of *Mary Barton*; the Potters believed, though she strongly denied it, that Mrs Gaskell had, in her novel, deliberately revived memories

of the murder in 1831 of Thomas Ashton, brother of Mrs Thomas Potter, the sister-in-law of Sir John. (See *Letters*, pp.195-6, and *Further Letters*, p.173.)

#### Notes:

1. I am grateful to the editors of *Further Letters of Mrs Gaskell*, John Chapple and Alan Shelston, for permission to quote from the letter to Mrs Rich, and to Alan Shelston for information about the Wedgwood family.
2. For William Wood, see Marjorie Cox, 'William Wood of Bowdon: Champion of "Climbing Boys"', *Transactions of the Lancashire and Cheshire Antiquarian Society*, Vol. 91.

## A Note on Elizabeth Gaskell's Visit to The Mount

Marie Moss

In a letter to William and Mary Howitt written in May 1838, Elizabeth Gaskell recalls the happy days of her youth spent with young friends in the park at Tabley, where on a summer's day which turned to rain, two musical sisters, 'Mary and Ellen Needham from Lenton near Nottingham', sang ballads from Shakespeare in the echoing old hall. The Howitts lived in Nottingham during their early married life and in mentioning the sisters by name Elizabeth was probably aware that the socially active Needham family would be well known to William and Mary. Her letter concludes 'How I wish my dear husband and I could afford to ramble about the country this summer, the sun is shining so brightly. But we are not the richest of the rich (my husband is a Unitarian minister) and moreover, I have two little girls to watch over' (1).

The following month, June 1838, Mary Needham married Samuel Greg II and came to live in Bollington, Cheshire, where the Greg dynasty had acquired an early water-powered cotton mill and Samuel was engaged in establishing a model industrial community in the valley of the river Dean. Samuel and Mary started married life at 'Turner Heath', a large house adjacent to the Bollington/Macclesfield road, and it was here that he conducted his Saturday evening tea parties, designed to give the cream of his employees the opportunity to experience and develop the social graces. He also built a day school, library and baths for his workers, before planning a larger and more gracious home for his growing family. Building work on 'The Mount', which stood above but just out of sight of his 'happy valley', started in 1845 and the family moved there in September 1846.

Meanwhile a branch of the Manchester-Birmingham railway had reached Macclesfield in 1845, and a second line which linked Manchester with the Potteries via Macclesfield

was completed in 1849. It therefore became much easier and cheaper for Elizabeth to escape Manchester's grime by paying short visits to her old friend who, as a young mother herself, would welcome and care for the Gaskells' little girls.

It is not known whether Elizabeth ever stayed with the Gregs at 'Turner Heath', but she certainly took advantage of the ease of travel provided by the expanding local railway network to spend time with Mary and Samuel at 'The Mount' in early November 1849 (2). She took Florence, then aged seven, with her, but on arrival found a cot at her bedside made ready for the baby Julia and much disappointment in the household because 'Baby is not here'. Shy at first, Florence soon made friends with the younger Gregs, 'the eldest not five', and next morning was eager to scamper off to the 'famous nurseries' to be dressed by the family nannies. Elizabeth wrote home to Marianne and Meta before setting off with the Gregs for luncheon at Capesthorpe, starting her letter before breakfast, but finding a moment to add a late postscript:

*I have just heard what Florence is to do today; and it is so pleasant I must tell you. She is now putting on her things to go down with Alice, Herbert, Katie (2 years old to-day) & the Baby to the Farm to get some cream; which then they are to come back & churn themselves; then they dine and then have little tea in the nursery, with their own butter. Flossy is in high glee, and thoroughly at home.*

In 1849 the Home Farm for the Gregs' estate was a much older property located below the sloping gardens near to the mill and the valley bottom. It is now a private house with the single-storey dairy, shown at a right angle to the main building, now converted to a kitchen and the outhouses incorporated into a separate dwelling. When the Knutsford group visited the site in May 2002 it was difficult to visualise the farm as it had been when Flossy and the little Gregs trooped down to get their cream.

Since then the owners have kindly removed an amateur nineteenth-century water-colour from its frame and made a colour photocopy for us which is reproduced on the back cover in black and white. The children in the foreground sharing the hoop are too well dressed to be farm or mill children, and could well number amongst the large brood of children and grandchildren who always found fun and loving care in the home of the motherly Mary Greg.

#### Notes:

1. J.A.V.Chapple and Arthur Pollard, *The Letters of Mrs Gaskell*, No.8.
2. *Ibid.*, No.21; date amended in John Chapple and Alan Shelston, *Further Letters*, p.46.

## *The Frozen North: some links with Sylvia's Lovers*

Christine Lingard

There are a number of clues to Gaskell's interest in the search for the Northwest Passage which may have a bearing on the origins of *Sylvia's Lovers*. It is generally accepted that she took her description of the whaling from William Scoresby, whom she met at Auchencairn on Solway Firth in 1855. (*Letters*, No.267a) There were two William Scoresbys – the father (1760-1829), Captain of a whaler which reached a record latitude of 81° north in 1806; and the son (1787-1857), who abandoned the sea to take holy orders and wrote *An Account of the Arctic regions with a description and history of the northern Whale-fishery* (1820). Gaskell's accounts of the dangers of icebergs and of Robson falling into the icy waters closely follow this book, which the Gaskells borrowed from the Portico Library more than once.

Scoresby was very influential. At that time the only sea route westerly to the East Indies was by the perilous Cape Horn – a journey hazardous not only for its length and physical discomforts but rendered even more dangerous by the Napoleonic Wars. Prospects of a northerly route were still attractive. The search had been suspended not just because of the war but also the severe ice. Scoresby's reports that the ice had shrunk prompted a renewal of interest. Several expeditions set out in the 1820s, most notably those of Sir Edward Parry (1790-1855) and Sir John Franklin (1786-1847). Parry went even further north. He is now almost forgotten but in his day was a national hero. He is interesting because of his Cheshire connections. His wife Isabella was the daughter of Lord Stanley of Alderley and he spent a lot of time at Nether Alderley Rectory, the home of her uncle, the Rev Edward Stanley. His eldest son was born there. The Stanleys were well known to the Hollands and Gaskell herself was a good friend of Mrs Stanley. Gaskell's uncle Peter Holland was the Stanley family doctor and there are references to Parry in the writings of his son Sir Henry Holland. Gaskell must surely have been familiar with his achievements.

Franklin's disappearance in 1847 was a sensation. Over forty expeditions were dispatched to find him. When official interest waned Lady Franklin raised the finance for an expedition herself. The fate of the party was rarely out of the news and rumours of cannibalism gripped the nation. Though traces of them were found in 1850, their deaths were not confirmed till 1859. The story was the subject of a play by Wilkie Collins, *The Frozen Deep*, which Dickens and a number of amateur actors presented at the Free Trade Hall in August 1857, but there is no evidence that any of the Gaskells saw it. She was in Manchester at the time working on revisions to *The Life of Charlotte Brontë*. The scenery was the work of the



distinguished marine painter Clarkson Stanfield, a former impressed sailor, whom she met in 1859 at the start of her research (*Letters*, No.429a)

William Gaskell borrowed books about Franklin from the Portico Library. Women were barred from borrowing so we can only speculate on whether they were for her. But in 1859 on a second trip to Auchencairn, when she first mentioned her contract for *Sylvia's Lovers*, she was trying to get hold of William Elder's *Life of Elisha Kent Kane*. Kane (1820-57) was an American explorer who led an expedition to find Franklin in 1854. She was not impressed: 'I don't like American biographies. Dr Kane's life is *murdered*'. Which implies some familiarity with the subject. (*Letters*, No.394)

Further evidence of this interest may be found in the catalogue of books from Plymouth Grove offered for sale on the death of Meta Gaskell. It includes *Franklin's Journey to the Coppermine River* (see bibliographical note). Franklin made two voyages to this area of Northern Canada. The first expedition set out in 1819 to chart the Arctic coast. A second trip in 1825 covered a wider area. The surgeon on both voyages was John Richardson (1787-1865), an Edinburgh doctor who had seen active service in 1807. His third wife was Mary, daughter of Mrs Eliza Fletcher, an elderly friend of Gaskell's father from Edinburgh who had retired to Lancrigg, Grasmere. She is well known to Gaskell scholars as the basis for Margaret Dawson in the linking passages of *My Lady Ludlow and other stories*. Gaskell made several visits to her and another daughter, Mrs Davy, and the visits were reciprocated. They often got in touch with one another in their fundraising activities. On one occasion Mary was dubbed 'Lady (North Pole) Richardson'. (*Letters*, No.56)

On its return in 1821 the party got into difficulties and was gradually depleted as man after man succumbed to the elements. Often their only food was lichen scraped from rocks or boiled shoelaces. They were obliged to divide. Franklin went in search of rescue while Richardson stayed put with the injured. They were suffering from cold, exhaustion and starvation – their legs swollen with oedema. They lost their last canoe and had to build a raft. Richardson attempted to swim across the river in temperatures of 37° Fahrenheit (3° Celsius) with a line attached to his waist to launch it but in his weakened state he nearly died. The group included a number of Iroquois Indians and at least one able seaman – John Hepburn (born 1787).

Meanwhile as their situation worsened one of the Indians was acting strangely. He returned with meat but as one of the party was missing suspicions grew. When another was found dead the rest began to fear for their lives. Richardson personally shot him dead. Hepburn had offered to do it but Richardson took responsibility. The relationship between the two men was strong. Richardson called him 'A man who by his humane actions and devotedness had so endeared himself to me, that I felt more anxiety for his safety than my own'. It was a year before they began the return to England where the deed was declared the justifiable act of a commanding officer.

Though there is little in their circumstances that matches the exploits of the fictional Philip Hepburn, I feel there are certain parallels in the bond which can develop between enlisted man and officer in the face of extreme adversity. In the only mention of Franklin in her letters Gaskell refers to the godless country in which he disappeared – significant, as Richardson had justified his actions by the fact that his victim was pagan. (*Letters*, No.108a)

John Hepburn was a very religious man. He was an experienced seaman who had been held prisoner by the French during the War. A great storyteller, he whiled away many an evening hour with his tales. He belonged to a lowland clan from Haddington. A cousin founded the Smeaton Hill station near Ballarat in Victoria, Australia. In the 1830s Franklin was Governor of Van Dieman's Land (Tasmania) and Hepburn entered his service as a kind of major-domo but proved to be more a friend than a servant. He had experience dealing with convict boys transported to the colony. When Franklin disappeared in 1847, the first expedition to take supplies was led by Richardson. In 1852 Hepburn joined the crew of Lady Franklin's expedition, at her insistence, even though by then he was well into his 60s. An act of Charity maybe, but such was the trust they had in him.

Mrs Fletcher was horrified by the treatment of casualties brought back to Portsmouth from the Crimea in 1855. 'Boiling with indignation' was her phrase about the callous way they were left to fend for themselves – ill, filthy and nowhere to go. This is the essence of Chapter 41 of *Sylvia's Lovers*; Philip Hepburn too landed at Portsmouth and wandered for days before reaching Winchester. This situation was covered in the press at the time, though probably over-sensationalised. Gaskell could have read it there but Mrs Fletcher did include the story in her autobiography. While this was not published till 1875, I wonder whether she showed the manuscript to Gaskell, a professional author, for advice?

There are several small points of detail that suggest a link with *Sylvia's Lovers*. For instance, Gaskell mentions the activities of the press gangs extending as far inland as Tadcaster (*SL*, Chapter 22). Tadcaster was Mrs Fletcher's hometown and she kept up links with the area throughout her life. She also knew York and was interested in the assizes (her husband was a judge), but I think it is stretching the point to suggest she was familiar with the case of William Atkinson who was tried and executed in York in 1793. Her maiden name, Dawson, is also used in *Sylvia's Lovers*.

The Fletchers were famous for their story telling sessions. She was very proud of her son-in-law and always eager to talk about him, as testified to by Tennyson in 1850. Mrs Fletcher spoke of Sir John 'con amore'. Mrs Tennyson (Emily Sellwood) and Richardson's second wife (Mary Booth, died 1845) had been cousins. They were nieces of Franklin, from Lincolnshire. Mrs Tennyson was anxious for any information of her missing uncle. Richardson took up an appointment at the Naval

Hospital, at Haslar near Gosport, but retired to Lancrigg, which he inherited on his mother-in-law's death. He was also a naturalist writing books about the flora and fauna of the Arctic – a sort of northern Roger Hamley. He sent specimens collected on his travels to his friend Charles Darwin and spent a lot of time laying out gardens at Lancrigg. He is best known today for the plants he introduced into this country.

The temptation to ascribe this as a source is hampered by the dates. Most of Gaskell's acquaintance with the Fletchers predates *Sylvia's Lovers* by several years. Mrs Fletcher died in 1858, Sir John in 1865, and I am not certain whether Gaskell actually met him. Lady Richardson and Mrs Davy both outlived her. The last mention is to Mrs Davy in 1859 when Gaskell supplies an introduction for Charles Bosanquet. She had not seen her for two years (*Letters*, No.439a). It may simply be a case of a distant memory kindling an interest and leading to her to find her sources elsewhere. Unless anybody knows any different!

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## Manchester Botanist?

Jane Wilson, a curatorial assistant at The Museum of Garden History\* and a member of the Society, writes:

With reference to the article on Manchester Botanists in the autumn *Newsletter*, we have, in the Museum collection, a jug with an image of a nineteenth-century botanist on it. The jug was made by Doulton at Burslem some time after 1882, at a factory which they took over in that year. The original factory was called Pinder Bourne and a number of their early designs were kept in production by Doulton, of which this was one; it may therefore date back possibly to the 1850s. We have always felt that the portrait must be based on a real person but have been unable to find out whom. (Doulton are unable to help beyond what I have already told you.) Of course he might be based on a botanist local to the Potteries rather than Manchester but he is a wonderful character with his open vasculum, book, lens and flower in his cap, and must have known or corresponded with the Manchester botanists. If anyone can make any suggestions as to his identity we should be so pleased to hear from them. Personally, I always call him Job Legh!

Acknowledgements to The Museum of Garden History, Lambeth Palace Road, London SE1 7LB, tel: 020 7401 8865.



# The Gaskell Trip To Brittany

Sheila Stephenson and Jean Hockenhuil

Elizabeth Gaskell tells in her letters that she set out for Brittany in 1862, accompanied by Meta and Isobel Thompson, with 'a mixture of the ideas of sea, health, rocks, ferns and Madame de Sévigné in our heads' (*French Life*). Our party of thirty-five Gaskell members set out with similar ideas; well, perhaps not so much the ferns, more the wonderful fish restaurants and patisseries. Christine had provided us with a full and informative itinerary before we set off, so we had a lot to look forward to. We were not disappointed. The weather was perfect and we enjoyed warm summer sunshine for the whole visit.

After an effortless journey we arrived outside the walls of St. Malo just as the lovely medieval buildings of the town were switching on their lights. The *Hotel France et Chateaubriand*, the birthplace of Chateaubriand, which was our base, overlooked a main square of the 'Intra Muros' area.

## FRIDAY, 13th SEPTEMBER.

Our first full day began with a guided tour of St. Malo. Our guide, full of infectious enthusiasm, began by telling us that St. Malo was named after a Welsh monk called Maclow, which didn't sound very Welsh but then it was a long time ago, the sixth century in fact; he set up a Bishopric very close to the rock where the walled town now stands. Our guide took us on a tour of the ramparts and towers which safeguard the old town, taking great pains to assure us that the town had had a chequered history over the centuries and that the English were not the only ones to pursue imperialistic designs on the port. We heard about the Corsairs, a title that somehow seemed more romantic than mere pirates, who had plied their trade along this coastline and indeed given the area its soubriquet 'The Corsair city'. It was difficult to imagine that more recently, in 1944, enemy bombing had destroyed 75% of the area, as it had been so painstakingly restored.

We returned to the hotel for a talk by Professor Chapple on Chateaubriand, and after first telling us that he knew very little about him, he proceeded to set him in the literary context of his time and tell us about his popularity with the 'salon society' of the day; and so to Mrs Gaskell via Madame Recamier and to Madame Mohl and the Rue du Bac (which we had visited whilst in Paris).

The afternoon and evening were free to explore the interesting streets and buildings around the area, and there were certainly plenty of those; to finish off the first full day, we had the difficult task of selecting which one out of the many fish restaurants and crêperies to choose for our evening meal.

## SATURDAY, 14th SEPTEMBER.

Our first full day excursion was by coach to Avranches, situated in the beautiful region between the Norman headland of Champeaux and the Breton Pointe du Grouin. It would appear from Mrs Gaskell's brief reference to Avranches (*Letters*, No.509b) that the town was not as attractive then as it is now: 'On the next morning by a carriage of the country to Pont Orson, where we breakfasted & thence to Mt. St. Michel, — that night to Avranches; where we staid 2 days, kept by the rain & a laudable desire to wash our clothes'. We, however, stopped at the Jardin des Plantes (the Botanic Garden) with its brilliant displays of flowers and shrubs and superb vantage point overlooking the Mont St. Michel Bay. We were not able to see the Mont as it was shrouded in the morning mist, a happy chance as it turned out, as our kindly driver made a detour on the way back and we were able to get within walking distance of the rock.

Arriving at Avranches for a brief stop many of the group climbed the winding path to visit the eleventh-century monument that indicates the original location of the Cathedral's west door. The Cathedral itself was destroyed during the French Revolution and never rebuilt; it is the place where Henry II made public penance in 1172 for the murder of Thomas à Becket. Fanny Trollope's son Adolphus, writing in 1840 in his book *Summer In Brittany*, tells us of Henry's attempt to justify himself before many of his nobles and the Papal Legate by declaring with his hand on the Bible that - "I swear that I neither ordered nor wished the murder of my Archbishop. When I heard of it I was extremely grieved" - Wonder if they had spin-doctors in the 11th Century!

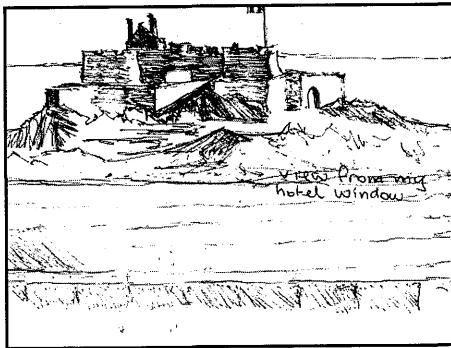
We drove on to Coutances and, as usual, it was first stop lunch. A large and pleasantly situated café overlooking the main square served us well and we were able to enjoy our lunch and at the same time watch the guests and bridal party arrive for the civil ceremony at the Hotel de Ville. Paying the bill for our meal caused a few problems as the proprietor apparently had not yet come to terms with euros and was still reckoning in francs but, soon sorted, we moved on to visit the Cathedral; a truly magnificent building that was completed in 1274 and has remained basically unaltered ever since. Its twin towers and the octagonal lantern dominate the surrounding area. Inside the cathedral was the outcome of over 900 years of continuous worship by the people of Coutances with ancient stained glass, medieval tiles showing the fleur de lys, emblem of the French Royal family, and many ancient effigies and monuments. It was lovely to see that the church is still in active use in the present day as flowers and orders of service were being set out ready for the religious part of the wedding ceremony that we had just seen in the town square. Sadly, there was no time to wait for the service as we had to get on the coach for our promised visit to Mont St. Michel. On the way we read more extracts

from *Summer in Brittany*, where Trollope describes in graphic detail his traumatic journey to visit the Mont, which was only accessible by a causeway at low tide. Seemingly, the guide they had booked could not be roused from his bed at 9a.m. as he had only been in it since 4a.m., so they had to find another one in a hurry. They eventually located one who agreed to take them but fell asleep on the journey and left the horses to find the way; perhaps he too had been out the night before. Trollope continues 'I thought it advisable that our guide should be awake.... I commenced very perseveringly jerking my elbow into his ribs but could get nothing out of him except "pas de danger" and then the brute snored again'. After a hair-raising time when the carriage and horses almost disappeared into the sands, local fishermen were able to pull them free with ropes. Anyway, no such problems with our guide, a perfect model of sobriety and efficiency! And after a walk to the bottom of the Mont and lots of photo-taking we were shepherded back onto the coach to complete our journey back to the hotel in time for dinner.

After dinner Christine gave us a talk about Madame de Sévigné, the seventeenth-century épistolière who was such a prolific correspondent and whose life Gaskell was researching; we were able to hear a very few extracts from some of the 1700 letters to her daughter reflecting the social history of the reign of Louis XIV.

#### SUNDAY, 15TH SEPTEMBER.

Our first free day. Early in the morning, when the causeway was clear, a group of enthusiasts crossed to a small island to visit the grave of Chateaubriand, others went to mass at the cathedral and some, following the advice of Friday's guide, Josephine, acquainted themselves with the numerous sights of interest in the town. From the moment of our arrival I realised St. Malo was an artists' paradise, so I used my free time filling my sketch book with buildings and views that attracted me. Our hotel was situated 'Intra Muros' and from my bedroom on the second floor I looked down on the old city walls and beyond to an island fortress proudly displaying the Tricolour.



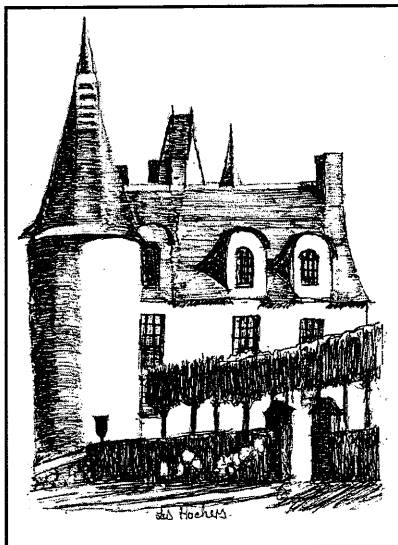
A walk round the wall was a favourite attraction for visitors and I spent an hour or two observing and recording the great variety of people indulging in this activity. I lunched at 'La Licorne' in the main square and then wandered up to the cathedral and admired the beautiful rose window through which the setting sun fired the glass into a glorious kaleidoscope of colour which made patterns on the old stone walls. Across the square was a 'Salon de Thé', where I observed an elegant French lady whilst I drank rose-scented tea and ate a slice of delicious rhubarb tart.

Returning to the hotel through narrow streets of art galleries and historic houses I met other members of the party enthusiastic about their afternoon in Dinard where they had walked, taken tea and in some cases visited art exhibitions. Two people had returned to Mont St. Michel by bus and explored the abbey.

#### MONDAY, 16th SEPTEMBER.

A very important day, for we were to follow in Mrs Gaskell's footsteps to the house where Madame de Sévigné spent her happiest hours. Whilst en route a letter from Mrs Gaskell to Catherine Winkworth was read to us. This gave an account of her journey in 1862 with her daughter Meta and a friend to 'Les Rochers'. I listened to her description of the countryside with its woods and little farmyard scenes, a truly pastoral setting, and, looking out of the window, felt that, apart from the state of the roads and our mode of transport, little had changed in the intervening years. We came to Vitré with its pink and white striped railway station in mid-morning. Our guide conducted us to the castle where we had a most interesting tour followed by a meander through the narrow streets looking at the old houses and eventually to the cathedral dedicated to Our Lady, a lovely building that had two pulpits, one internal and one on an outside wall. From there we went on to view the town house of Madame de Sévigné, which is in a sadly neglected state and about to be converted into apartments. Rather disheartened about this we took leave of our guide and went off in search of lunch. Four of us ate a delicious, reasonably priced meal at the 'Taverne de l'Ecu'. Back in the coach we drove through countryside displaying the early autumn colours, to 'Les Rochers'; the estate entrance was too narrow for the coach so we got out and walked to a building which now serves as ticket office, shop and small museum. From there we crossed to a grassy path bordered by a wood and eventually, just as Mrs Gaskell and her party had experienced, saw ahead an exquisite little chateau. By the entrance to the gardens our guide related the history of the building and the small chapel which Madame de Sévigné had had built in honour of one of her uncles who had been a benefactor.

The party then had a guided tour of the house, but I, following Meta's example, sat in the garden and sketched. We returned to St. Malo by the motorway route at the end of a very busy day.



## TUESDAY, 17th SEPTEMBER.

Another day when we made our own plans. Time for a second visit to somewhere, an opportunity to get to know more of St. Malo or just to drink a *citron pressé* whilst lazing in the sun. It was market day in the area so a few people went to a nearby town where there was a large market.

## WEDNESDAY, 18th SEPTEMBER.

This was the last excursion of our holiday and a chance to relax with a two and a half hours' sail along the River Rance to the medieval town of Dinan situated on its banks. We were told that the tidal forces of the estuary have been harnessed for the world's first tidal power station producing more than 600 million kWh of electricity a year and is the most popular site of scientific interest in France. The market town of Dinan is encircled by the ancient city walls and ramparts that give it its defining characteristics and is set at the top of a steep hill overlooking the port. A 'petit train touristique' is provided to take visitors from the quayside to the town but, sadly, only runs in the summer season so there was nothing for it but to start climbing.

The town has been designated a protected site and is a wealth of picturesque streets with pillared and timbered houses and much evidence of its past commercial importance included tradesmen's houses similar to the Shambles in York.

## THURSDAY, 19th SEPTEMBER.

We had a free morning on the last day and an opportunity to have a last wander round St. Malo and buy our souvenirs and postcards before departing for the flight home. Everyone agreed that it had been a super holiday, thanks in no small part to Christine Bhatt, who had given so much time to organising it and ensuring that everything ran smoothly. For myself I have a happy jumble of memories: of a chateau with 'witches hat' turrets, half-timbered houses, slate-roofed, that lurched in all directions onto cobbled streets, magnificent cathedrals and of course the crêpes. The only sadness was that there was no book. Elizabeth Gaskell obviously loved the region and wrote enthusiastically about it in her letters and in 'French Life'. It would have made a wonderful story.

## *The Alliance of Literary Societies AGM*

**Saturday 26th - Sunday 27th April:** hosted by The Dylan Thomas Society of Great Britain at The Dylan Thomas Centre, Swansea.

Last year several members of the Gaskell Society enjoyed a similar event hosted by The Arnold Bennett Society. This year, it promises to be a fascinating weekend with a varied programme, held in this attractive area to commemorate the 50th anniversary of Dylan Thomas' death. The Alliance of Literary Societies' homepage is at [www.sndc.demon.co.uk](http://www.sndc.demon.co.uk).

## BOOK NOTES

Christine Lingard

A few books to look out for this year:

*Women's Voices in the Fiction of Elizabeth Gaskell (1810-1865)*

by Marianne Camus of the University of Besançon, Edward Mellen Press, due January 2003, £74.95.

The author intends to study to Gaskell's work as a whole, avoiding the usual division between condition-of-England and other more intimate books, and to provide a discussion of her feminism.

*Women, work and representation*

by Lynn Mae Alexander, Ohio University Press, £34.95, due January 2003.

The condition of the seamstress was something of a cultural icon in the 1840s and 1850s, not only in literature by such authors as Dickens and Charlotte Elizabeth Tonna, but also in painting. Concern arose not only for the young girls' physical welfare but also for their morals, as they were often sent a long way from home and left to their own devices in their spare time: a situation that is particularly relevant to *Ruth* and concerned Gaskell not only in her fiction but in her personal life and philanthropic work. This study looks at the subject in general.

A new edition of *Lois the Witch*

with a foreword by Jenny Uglow is promised from Hesperus Press at the end of June, £6.99.

*Faithful Realism: Elizabeth Gaskell and Leo Tolstoy: a comparative study*

by Josie Billington of Chester College, Bucknell University Press, \$43.50.

This book, published in June 2002, includes information on which the author has addressed the Society and published in the *Journal*, namely the importance of the rewriting of *Wives and Daughters*.

*Elizabeth Gaskell: A Literary Life*

by Shirley Foster, Palgrave Macmillan, 2002, £15.99.

The aim of the Literary Lives series is to offer 'stimulating accounts of the literary careers of the most admired and influential English-language authors. Volumes follow the outline of the writers' working lives, not in the spirit of traditional biography, but aiming to trace the professional, publishing and social contexts which shaped their writing'. Shirley's book fulfils all these aims, making it an excellent addition to Gaskell studies. The book is aimed at students, but its usefulness is certainly not confined to them. It will be fully reviewed in the next *Journal*.

#### **Note:**

Graham Handley, series editor for the Everyman Elizabeth Gaskell series and regular contributor to the London and South-East meetings of the Gaskell Society, has been commissioned by Palgrave/Macmillan to write a 'Chronology' of Elizabeth Gaskell in their Author Chronology Series. He would like to hear from any Gaskell enthusiast who has firm dates not listed in the *Letters* or biographies, and from anyone who could lend him a copy of *Letters and Memorials of Catherine Winkworth*, ed. Susanna Winkworth and Margaret Shaen, 2 vols, privately printed, Clifton 1883-6. He hopes to complete the Chronology by the late summer, and can be contacted by email: graham@pentonhouse.co.uk or by letter to Dr. Graham Handley, Penton House, 18 High Street, CHESHUNT Herts EN8 0AE. Tel: 01992632399. Any expense incurred will be paid.

## *Gaskell Society North-West*

Meetings at Manchester and Knutsford have been well attended.

On the last Wednesday in the month at St. John's Church Centre, Knutsford: meetings begin with buffet lunch. This year, *Sylvia's Lovers* has been the theme, with discussion and talks on naval history (by Christine Lingard) and on the historical novel (by Elizabeth Williams).

At Cross Street Chapel: subjects have had a Manchester connection: Beatrix Potter, Dickens and North West England, Sir James Kay-Shuttleworth.

At the New Year Lunch at Cottons Hotel, Knutsford, we were fortunate to have with us Bob Barnard, chairman of The Brontë Society who spoke to us about the problems of writing a biography of Emily Brontë.

The three local outings we took in Gaskell's footsteps, on 27 May, 14 August and 16 October made us realise that it is time we put this together in print so that others may explore the associations at their leisure. The four Unitarian Chapels all have interesting histories.

#### **June 4th 2003:**

Summer outing to Wirksworth, with George Eliot connections, and Well Dressing at Tissington.

#### **Future dates:**

**Knutsford meetings: 26th March, 30th April 2003 and May 28th**

#### **Cross Street Chapel, 11th March 2003:**

the topic will be 'Readers of Goethe in Manchester, with particular reference to the Gaskells', by Peter Skrine.

## *Forthcoming Events*

#### **5th April 2003:**

AGM meeting at Cross Street Chapel, Manchester

10.30: Coffee

11.00: AGM

11.45: Talk by Louise Henson: 'New perspectives on Gaskell and Science'

Louise completed her PhD on Charles Dickens, Elizabeth Gaskell and Victorian Science at The University of Sheffield in 2000 and has published many articles in this area (including a two-part article in the latest and the forthcoming volumes of our *Journal*). She is one of the editors of the forthcoming volume *Culture and Science in the Nineteenth Century Media*. She is now working on an online version of The Old Bailey Proceedings, 1670-1834, for the Humanities Research Institute at The University of Sheffield.

1.00: Lunch

2.15: Catherine Winkworth (1827-78) A compilation of her life and letters which will include singing some of her hymns

The meeting ends at 3.30p.m. approximately.

#### **1st - 4th August 2003:**

Durham Conference on the theme of Elizabeth Gaskell's early years, especially at Newcastle, and *Sylvia's Lovers*.

### *Gaskell Society South-West*

We were very pleased to welcome Gwen Clark from Oxford to our meeting in November. Gwen's subject was "Elizabeth Gaskell: Escape from the City" and, by close reference to the novels and letters, she showed us how, although Mrs. Gaskell enjoyed all the social and cultural life of Manchester and London, she was never so happy as when she was on holiday or staying with friends in the country. We had a comprehensive discussion about how far she would have enjoyed Hampshire on the grounds that living in the country is very different from enjoying a holiday, but Gwen pointed out that London would be very accessible for visits. In the evening, a group went to see *The Rivals* at the Theatre Royal, as a follow-on from some play-reading which we enjoyed at the August country tea, hosted by Alex and Kate Crawford in their garden at Norton St. Philip. I was rather worried in case Mrs. Gaskell would not have approved, but Kay Millard assured us that the Unitarians enjoyed drama and that many Unitarian churches had their own drama groups.

In January, twelve of us met in Fairfield Park Road, Bath, for a New Year Supper, after which we played card games found in Jane Austen's novels. These were very jolly round games and it was clear how Henry Crawford would have enjoyed helping Fanny. I was like Lady Bertram, and found it hard to understand!

### *Forthcoming Programme*

#### **Saturday, 5th April**

Bath Royal Literary and Scientific Institution, Queen Square, 2.00 for 2.30:  
Mrs. Kay Millard will speak on "Elizabeth Gaskell and Coleridge". Mrs. Millard is Secretary of the Bath Unitarian Fellowship and we always appreciate the depth of her knowledge and understanding. During May we hope to arrange a trip to Nether Stowey.

#### **Sunday, 17th August, 3.00 p.m.**

The Summer Tea at Murhill House again, kindly hosted by Janet and David Cunliffe-Jones.

#### **Saturday, 22nd November**

Bath Royal Literary and Scientific Institution, Queen Square. Dr. Ian Gregg will speak on "The Second Mrs. Stephenson", including some new material. Dr. Gregg is directly descended from Mrs. Gaskell's stepmother, and we look forward to seeing her in a new light.

### *Gaskell Society London And South-East*

#### **Saturday 10th May**

'The Web of friendship between women writers in England and America in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries' – **Jane Silvey**

#### **Saturday 13th September**

Title to be announced – **Shirley Foster**

#### **Saturday 8th November**

'Elizabeth Gaskell and Manchester: a difficult relationship' – **Gwen Clarke**

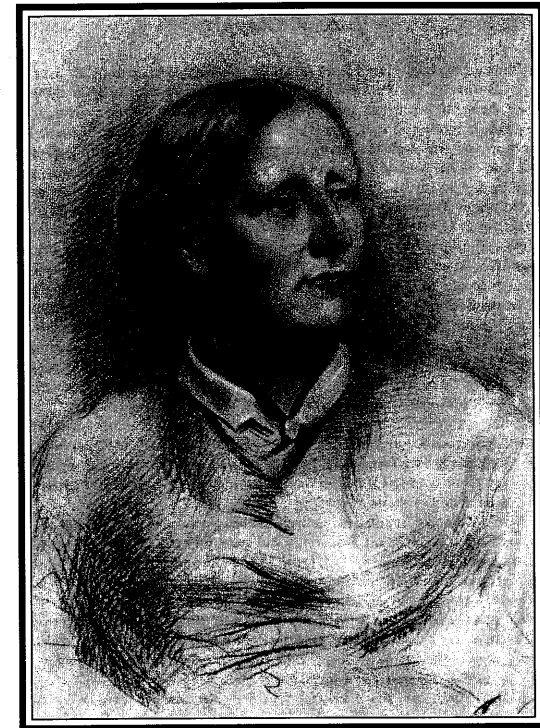
All the meetings will be held at the Francis Holland School, 39 Graham Terrace, London SW1W 8JF and will commence at 2pm. Francis Holland School is a few minutes' walk from Sloane Square underground station (District and Circle lines).

Anyone who wishes may meet at 12 noon at Sloane Square underground station for a light lunch at the Royal Court Tavern, also on Sloane Square. Those arriving later than 12 noon should proceed directly to the Royal Court Tavern. During the summer a Literary Walk will be led by **Sylvia Burch**. Details will be sent out later in the year. If further information is required please contact Dudley J Barlow.

**(Tel: 020 8874 7727)**



# The Gaskell Society



THE GASKELL SOCIETY HOME PAGE has all the latest information on meetings.  
<http://gaskellsociety.users.btopenworld.com>

If you have any material or suggestions for future Newsletters, please contact Mrs. Joan Leach,  
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## NEWSLETTER

Autumn 2003 - Number 36



## *Editor's Letter*

**Joan Leach**

Our 2001 Bath Conference, with the help of our SW members, was such a resounding success that we were apprehensive about being able to live up to it at Durham this year. We can now report that members present from 1 - 4 August at Collingwood College enjoyed the whole experience and several are saying, 'Here's to the next time'.

We are greatly indebted to our excellent team of speakers, who found time among their other commitments and vacations to join us. You will be able to read Mary Kuhlman's report on the conference in the next Journal together with several of the papers.

It is wonderful to have members meeting and renewing friendships on these occasions in true Gaskellian tradition. We are grateful to Janet Allan and Jean Alston who made planning trips to Durham and Newcastle and Christine Lingard who ran the book stall, other committee members who contributed to the success and all who came to Durham. The whole programme of papers and events was well balanced and our venue suited us perfectly.

In this issue we hope you will enjoy reading Marie Moss' article about Elizabeth Gaskell and Macclesfield. The Society hopes to publish a booklet on Gaskell's Cheshire associations. Christine Lingard links our recent visit to Whitby with other literary echoes. The Knutsford group studied *Sylvia's Lovers* last season and some members will join a trip to East Yorkshire in September to follow the trail. John Chapple gives us further notes on Gaskell Letters and Muriel Smith writes on Elizabeth Gaskell and the American Civil War which will link up with our American theme at the Autumn meeting on 27 September.

Group notices are towards the back of the Newsletter, including forthcoming events. Please let me have addresses of any non-member literary friends who might like to attend a Gaskell day in Edinburgh when we hope to raise enough interest to form a group.

Elizabeth Gaskell was fond of gardening so she might have approved on the Royal Horticultural Society's show at Tatton Park, alias Cumnor Towers. What she would have thought of herself in the form of a teddy-bear style figure in green box topiary, skirted by bedding plants, with picnic basket, model mill, a quill pen and book in flowers? This was commissioned by Knutsford Town Council and won a silver prize.

## *And What of Sylvia?*

Christine Lingard

A recent enquiry about illustrated editions of *Sylvia's Lovers* reminded me of a tenuous link between one of the least known members of Gaskell's family and Peter Pan!

When George Smith wanted an illustrator for the first illustrated edition of *Sylvia's Lovers* (first published in 1862), he decided on an unknown young artist on the staff of the *Cornhill Magazine* - George Du Maurier. The illustrations were not acknowledged but they made his reputation. Du Maurier thought that some pictures of Whitby would most suitably depict the novel - unknowingly hitting on the true setting of the book, which is referred to as 'Monkshaven' in the text. He was enchanted by the novel and it remained a life-long favourite, so much so that he called one of his own daughters Sylvia.

With *Sylvia's Lovers* at last out of the way, in 1863 Elizabeth Gaskell could turn her attention to more personal matters - the marriage of a daughter. Not the eldest, Marianne, for whom 'domestic activity will be her forte', or even the 'independent' Meta, already unlucky in love, but twenty-year-old Florence, the third daughter - the least frequently mentioned of the quartet 'who has no talent under the sun; and is very nervous, and anxious'. In fact she proved to be the only daughter to marry during her mother's lifetime.

Her choice of husband was a distant relation of her father - Charles Crompton, a lawyer, whom she had met the previous year. He was by ten years Florence's senior, and Gaskell's first verdict was: 'He lacks imagination enough to be what one calls spiritual' but later she called him 'sweet tempered'; on another occasion: 'his father & mother both say he has not given them a moment's uneasiness since his birth in any way. He has almost perfect health, & perfect temper; I should have said not clever; but he was a 4th wrangler at Cambridge and is a Fellow of Trinity, and is getting on fast very fast in his profession; so I suppose he has those solid intellectual qualities which tell in action, though not in conversation.'

He was the eldest of the seven children of a judge. His nearest sister Mary, just a year younger than himself, appears to have been a formidable character. She was married to Rev John Llewellyn Davies (1826-1916), Vicar of Kirkby Lonsdale, a religious writer, contributor to *Macmillan's Magazine*, and a follower of the Christian Socialist, Frederick Maurice; he was also associated with John Ruskin at the Working Men's College, where he taught mathematics. While in London he had so enraged Queen Victoria with a sermon against Imperialism that she arranged for his transfer to a Cumbrian parish as far away from London as possible.

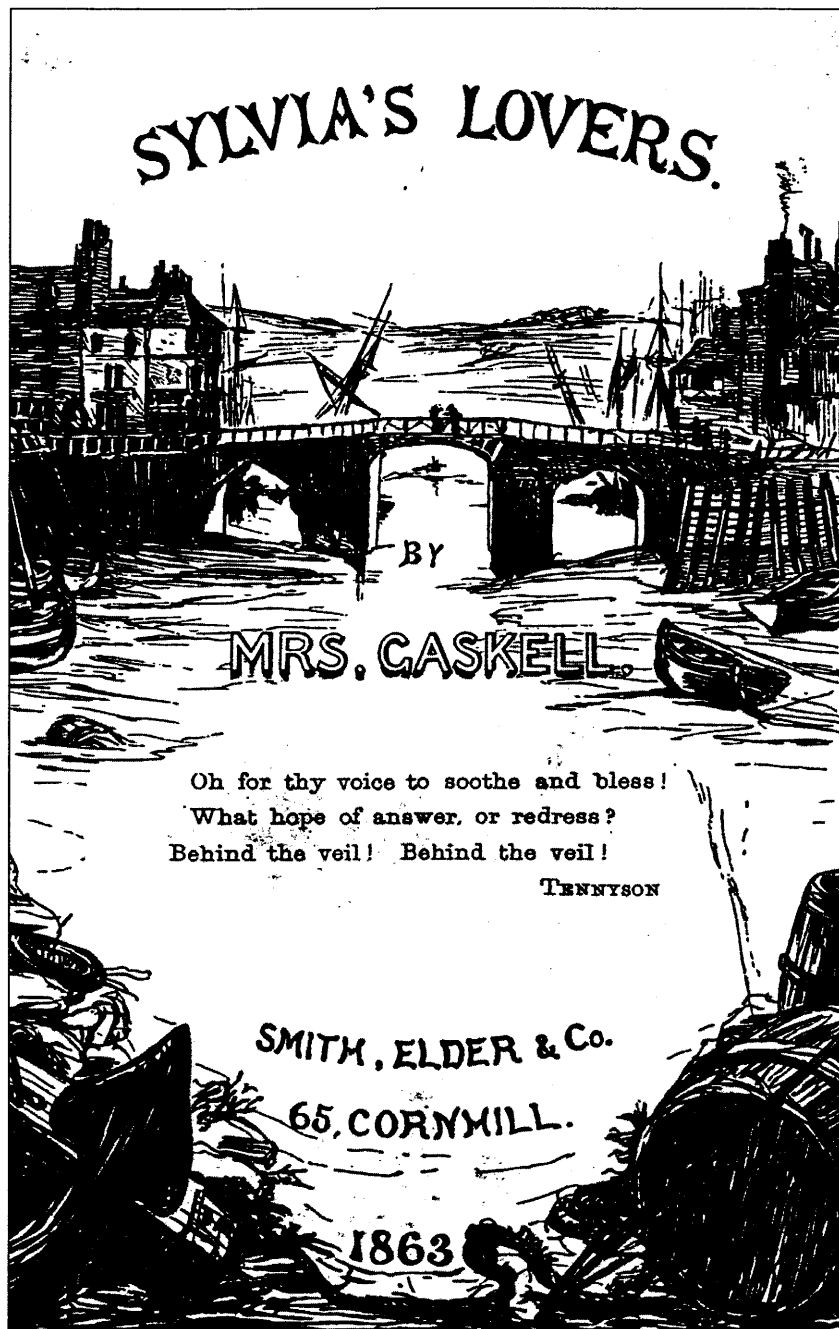
His sister was the renowned Sarah Emily Davies, of Girton College fame. It is reported that in thirty-six years of married life Mary Davies never once attended a single one of her husband's sermons.

Charles and Florence set up home in London and, despite her mother's description of their modest means, acquired a prestigious address at Oxford Terrace overlooking Regent's Park. It was a useful stopping-place for mother on her frequent trips to the capital. Charles was indeed moderately successful in his career. In December 1888 he was elected Liberal MP for the Leek division of North Staffordshire, but these were tumultuous times and in the following year the Liberal party split over the controversial Home Rule for Ireland issue. In July 1889 he stood again, this time as a Gladstonian Liberal in favour of Home Rule, but was defeated by the same Conservative candidate. Little is known of Florence's life after her mother's death and she died at the age of thirty-nine in 1881. She had no children.

Charles must have taken a great interest in one of his nephews, Arthur Llewellyn Davies (1863-1910), and on his own death ten years later, he left him three thousand pounds in his will. This was enough for the young man, also a lawyer, to marry his fiancée Sylvia Du Maurier at last, in 1892. Sylvia by now was an enchanting young woman, beloved by her mother-in-law Mary. But happiness was short. Arthur died of cancer at the age of forty-seven, and within the year Sylvia too succumbed to the same disease, leaving five young orphan boys. These were the very same 'lost boys' to whom J.M. Barrie told his stories of Peter Pan. He had already met the eldest boy George (then aged five) playing in Kensington Gardens, while walking his dog there. A great deal has been written about this relationship and the story has been televised. At first Arthur was concerned about the influence on his sons but he came to respect Barrie. It is thought that he is the basis for Mr. Darling.

*Further reading: Andrew Birkin, The Lost Boys (Constable, 1979).*

**Ed:** *Although George Du Maurier's title page illustration is clearly of Whitby, others are of characters in the story with no identifiable Whitby background, in the copy in the Whitfield Stanton Collection in Knutsford Library.*



## Elizabeth Gaskell and Macclesfield

Marie Moss

It was Professor R. H. Tawney who famously told a conference of medieval agrarian historians that what they needed in their search for sources was not more manuscripts but stronger boots. Well-shod Gaskell scholars need no reminding of the value that fieldwork can contribute to their knowledge of Elizabeth's life and work. With pleasure and profit we have followed her footsteps across the United Kingdom and some countries of Europe, but it is important that our enquiry does not ignore the evidence on our doorstep. Elizabeth spent much of her early life within a small area of north-east Cheshire, and even after her marriage, before fame and a modest degree of fortune enabled her to travel more widely, she found relief from the pace and grime of Manchester life by returning to the people and places of her early years.

With this in mind the 2002 summer excursions of the Knutsford group concentrated on an exploration of Elizabeth's - and thereby the Holland's - Cheshire, and our previous winter study of the text of *Ruth* made Macclesfield (a possible model for Eccleston) an obvious starting point. Writers of fiction must invent from what knowledge they have, so we set out to discover something of the Macclesfield Elizabeth would have known in the first half of the nineteenth century, and to consider to what extent a knowledge of the physical, social and economic landscape of Macclesfield may have influenced her writing.

Macclesfield became one of the earliest factory towns in England, when the throwing of silk was adapted to large-scale water-powered production in the eighteenth century. The town had also been an important market and service centre since the granting of its medieval charter, and the rapid increase of population and prosperity promoted by the twisted-silk button trade, and the later silk goods trade, prompted a retail revolution which had made the town, by the early nineteenth century, a regional focus for shopping and other pleasure pursuits. Members of the Holland family of both Sandlebridge and Dam Head, like the rest of north Cheshire's gentry and squirearchy, would have turned to Macclesfield for goods, services and entertainment, and Elizabeth must have been a frequent visitor as a young girl. Her well known delight in fabrics would have been satisfied and possibly nurtured by the wide range of drapers, mercers, milliners and haberdashers who stood the market or had shops in the town. Their hierarchy was dominated by number 9 Market Place, the high-class woollen-drapers owned by the Swanwick family, which catered for the carriage trade and attracted the custom of the Davenportes of Capesthorpe, the Stanleys of Alderley and Lord Stamford of Dunham Massey, with a dazzling stock of quality cloths, laces, buttons and buckles drawn from throughout the country and the wholesale houses of London.<sup>1</sup> Frances Davies,

daughter of the Headmaster of Macclesfield Free Grammar School (later King's), which educated a number of the Hollands, was a frequent customer here, purchasing handkerchiefs and ribbons, 'peaue satten' and ten yards of 'Puie poplin' sent especially from London in December 1819. Frances would have been known to Elizabeth Stevenson even before her infamous involvement in the abduction of the young Cheshire heiress Ellen Turner, which she plotted with her stepson Edward Gibbon Wakefield in 1826. Elizabeth refers to this scandal in a letter to Harriet Carr written in 1831. 2 As successful shopkeepers, doctors and mill-owners, members of the Swanwick family became well established amongst those living as gentlemen in north-east Cheshire, and Elizabeth acknowledges familiarity with 'Mr. and Mrs. Swanwick (of Alderley)' in a letter to Marianne in which she recalls her meeting with them at the wedding breakfast of Mary Robberds. 3

During the 1820s and early 1830s the superintendent of Swanwicks' emporium was a Mr. Hill. At the time of his death in 1833 he lived in a typical artisan house of the period less than a hundred yards from the shop in Brunswick Terrace, a house we thought worth looking at for the features it shares with the chapel-house, the fictional home of Mr. Benson, a man likewise in possession of social status above his income. The house has three stories with an enclosed hallway, front and rear parlour and front and rear bedrooms on each upper floor. The small walled back garden faces south-east allowing the morning sunlight to fill the back living room and giving to the back bedrooms a view to the line of hills, above which the moon rises, points on which Gaskell was especially precise in her narrative.

To the east of Macclesfield the hills which flank the Derbyshire dome rise abruptly from the Cheshire Plain and their proximity makes their presence strongly felt in the town. In similar fashion the hills, which Gaskell describes as Ruth travels to Ecclestone, are never absent from her story.

*"It is not much further now," said Miss Benson, apologetically, to Ruth. "...We have about eighteen miles of plain, and then we come to the moors and the rising ground, amidst which Ecclestone lies."...*

*A low grey cloud was the first sign of Ecclestone; it was the smoke of the town hanging over the plain. Beyond the place where she was expected to believe it existed, arose round, waving uplands; nothing to the fine outlines of the Welsh mountains, but still going up nearer to heaven than the rest of the flat world into which she had now entered."*

Knutsford was part of this flat world as Macclesfield and Ecclestone were not. From her window Ruth watched the moon light the hilltops on her first night in the town, and Bellingham observed them white-topped with snow as she later lay dead in the cold little room. Again, it was to the hills that Jemima fled when reeling from the shock of the milliner's revelation of Ruth's past:

*...Jemima did not go towards home, but to the direction of the outskirts of the town, on the hilly side...Soft white clouds had come slowly sailing up out of the west; the plain was flecked with thin floating shadows, gently borne along by the westerly wind that was waving the long grass in the hay fields into alternate light and shade.*

The topographical detail and the meteorological accuracy with which the prevailing westerly winds blow the clouds from the direction of the plain to cast the first shadows over the contentment Ruth had found in Ecclestone, suggest that Gaskell was drawing on a knowledge of a strongly pictured location for the fictional landscape of her small industrial town, one well matched by the geography of Macclesfield.

The coach which brought our members from Altrincham and Knutsford set them down in King Edward Street (formerly Back Street) which joins Jordangate at the north-west corner of Market Place. Here have survived a number of fine eighteenth-century houses which were built by the Macclesfield well-to-do and - to quote Gaskell - 'such of the county families as content themselves with the gaities of a provincial town', in this case Cheshire landowners and long time near neighbours of the Hollands, such as the Davenports, the Thornycrofts, and the Norburys. The increasing industrialization of the town after the mid-century diminished the appeal of such properties for seasonal residence and they were gradually put to other use. Sir Peter Davenport, a forebear of Elizabeth's Capesthorpe friends, had early disposed of his mansion to the Free Grammar School after it had become tainted by the occupation of The Young Pretender on his march south; by Elizabeth's life-time most of the other grand houses were occupied by attorneys, publishers, banks and medical practitioners, as they are today. Parts of old Manchester had experienced the same processes of change: Lower Mosley Street in particular had seen much conversion to commercial use, and it was a socio-economic phenomenon which captured the imagination of Gaskell and found expression in her writing. The opening pages of *Ruth*, albeit set in 'an assize town in one of the eastern counties', are devoted to an acknowledgment of the changing town landscape and the sensitive response of the romantic young seamstress to the fading splendour of her inappropriate surroundings.

Macclesfield's Unitarian Chapel lies obscured from sight behind these old buildings which line King Edward Street. The only approach to it is by a narrow passage, known locally as an 'entry', but undoubtedly a '*cul-de-sac*', as Gaskell describes the access to Benson's chapel in *Ruth*. Built in 1689, it is very similar in design to the Cheshire chapels at Brook Street, Knutsford and Dean Row, Wilmslow, but whereas they are made of brick, the Macclesfield chapel is built with local Kerridge gritstone, which is readily darkened and stained by atmosphere and weather as Gaskell suggests. The roofline is long and low and two outside staircases, located at each



**King Edward St, Macclesfield.** *The white portico conceals the entrance to the passageway leading to the concealed Unitarian Chapel.*

end of the rectangular walls, give access to the upper gallery. Victorian photographs, brought out for our visiting party, show the stone walls, once heavily hung with ivy which almost covered the windows and in sunlight could certainly have cast a tracery of shadow on white-washed walls within. The open space, which originally surrounded the chapel, was commercially valuable and had mostly been sold off by the end of the eighteenth century, some of it by the Rev John Palmer at the time of his doctrinal break with a large section of his congregation in the 1760s. However, when Elizabeth attended a service there in 1852, the Minister, John Wright (later joint editor, with William Gaskell, of the Unitarian Herald), had gardeners in his employ to care for the chapel exterior, so it is possible that 'a lilac-bush or two, a white rose-tree, and a few laburnums' were at that time growing in the chapel yard. There is however no burial ground, and we judged that the position of this chapel within a few yards of the market place could never have been near the 'outskirts of the town'.

The chapel in Macclesfield had its origins in the strength of Dissent, which flourished, notwithstanding fear of persecution, in the nearby hill villages in the seventeenth century. Original documents show that the initiative for its building came from Mr. William Stonehewer of the Hollins in Sutton and Mr. Humphry Higginbotham of Rossin Chase at the upper end of Sutton, a village which lies some two to three miles into the hills above Macclesfield. Both are described as 'London merchants', which means that they handled the London end of Macclesfield's silk button and twist trade and would have been known to members of the Holland family in the same trade.

They made the initial and largest of the subscriptions which quickly raised the £250 building cost and funded a pew for the elders and deacons to sit in and another to be given into the keeping of Mr. Joseph Stonehewer 'for the advantage of Suttin People sitting in it as He might see fitting'. The pews are still distinguished by the names of these benefactors today. Gaskell seems to have been aware of this background when she reflects on Benson's congregation which

*consisted of here and there a farmer with his labourers, who came down from the uplands beyond the town to worship where their fathers worshipped, and who loved the place because they knew how much those fathers had suffered for it.*

The Holland family name occurs several times in the early records of Macclesfield chapel. William and Daniel, the younger sons of John Holland of Dam Head, Mobberley, a confirmed Dissenter, are listed as original pew holders. Unable to inherit the family farm, they lived and worked in Macclesfield as chapmen (factors for silk twist and buttons) and were joined there by their father when he retired.<sup>4</sup> While there is no evidence that Adam Holland, the third minister at Macclesfield, was a relative, there were dissenting ministers in every generation of Elizabeth's Cheshire predecessors who would have been visiting preachers. Her great-uncle Peter Holland, a founder of the Warrington Academy, was present in 1765 to witness the ordination of the eccentric Reverend John Palmer, a former Warrington student, to whom Aunt Lumb or possibly Aunt Abigail was entrusted for schooling.<sup>5</sup>

For much of the nineteenth century the chapel was known locally as Brocklehurst's chapel, after the wealthy patron who was its principal support. John Brocklehurst (1718-1791) made the successful transition from silk chapman to silk manufacturer and founded a dynasty, which dominated silk production in Macclesfield until the late twentieth century. In 1816 John Brocklehurst II took over a failing bank in premises directly in front of the chapel and it was here, in a long unopened safe, that the seventeenth-century documents relating to the founding of the chapel were discovered in the late twentieth century, giving confirmation of what Gaskell had earlier known of its origins. John Brocklehurst III (1788-1870) was a contemporary of Elizabeth's. Like Gaskell's invention 'Mr. Bradshaw', he was not only the principal manufacturer in the town and a Dissenter but also an ardent Whig with political ambitions. He was elected M.P. for Macclesfield in the first elections of 1832 and represented the town for thirty-six continuous years. The Brocklehursts' chief rivals for the town's economic, social and political leadership were the Ryle family, manufacturers who owned a great deal of land within and around the town. John Ryle II inherited a fortune of a quarter of a million pounds, and gained Macclesfield's other parliamentary seat, with forty more votes than Brocklehurst. Ryle was an orthodox Tory and protectionist, a creed which enjoyed the support of the town's Tory newspaper *The Courier*. The Brocklehursts financed a new Whig paper called *The Herald* and for a while the rivalry between the two publications and their

supporters was as fierce as that Gaskell observed between two politically opposed newspapers in a small town in her short story Christmas Storms and Sunshine. In 1827 the *Courier* reported a call for all working men to boycott 'any shopkeeper, publican, hairdresser or other person who shall take in the *Herald*', when that paper opposed the interests of the self-employed artisan weavers.

The Ryles, like the Brocklehursts, were bankers. They took over the town's first bank in 1800 and did well for some years, opening a Manchester branch in 1821. The banknotes of the *two banks were familiar currency* in the district until injudicious investment caused Ryle's bank to fail in a spectacular crash in 1841.

Bank failures were of course not uncommon, and readers of Gaskell will be aware of the consequences the failure of a country bank could have for such as Miss Matty. John Ryle shared Miss Matty's honourable sentiments and tried to do the best he could for his creditors. For twenty years he made payments at intervals towards the settlement of the Bank's debts: his five-pound notes, headed 'Macclesfield and Cheshire Bank' and with successive payments noted on the back, are still to be found in the town. Of Ryle it was said, 'nature intended him for a country gentleman, and if her design had been fulfilled, as a country gentleman he would have shone'. He was perhaps not unlike the 'rich silk manufacturer of Macclesfield', whom Mary Howitt noticed at a country-house gathering in 1854 - 'a fat, jolly Conservative, whose work-people are emphatically hands and who thinks "Mary Barton" a dangerous, bad book'.<sup>6</sup>

Brought up in the Whig tradition, John Brocklehurst III became a progressive Liberal and supporter of Free Trade but, while recognizing the value of the removal of protection for the necessities of life, he knew that the exposure to competition, which the Cobden Treaty would accomplish, would not be in the interest of Macclesfield's silk industry. Henry Winkworth, whose family enjoyed an intimate friendship with the Gaskells, was caught on the horns of the same dilemma. The Winkworths moved from London to Manchester in 1829 and lived for a time in Oxford Road near to the Gaskell family before moving to Alderley Edge in 1850. Winkworth had a warehouse in York Street, Manchester, which had to be replaced after its destruction by fire in 1844, and manufactured silk at the Victoria Mills, Macclesfield, in partnership with James and Daniel Proctor. In her *Memorials Of Two Sisters*, Susanna Winkworth writes

*My father, true to his Free Trade principles, had worked with Mr. Cobden and others in promoting this treaty; indeed, if I remember rightly he was a commissioner for the silk trade. But in this case he was decidedly a martyr to his principles; for this treaty gave a blow to the English trade from which it never recovered, and my father was one of those most greatly affected by it.*

In the late 1850s the decline of trade was already causing large-scale

unemployment in Macclesfield and in January 1858 Catherine Winkworth wrote to her sister Emily

*Papa is busy about the terrible distress in Macclesfield; has been over there twice looking into the matter himself, and is out this afternoon with Mr. Jackson collecting for the relief fund... Papa's own mill and two of Mr. Brocklehurst's have been working three to four days a week all through, but that is a bare subsistence for the hands, and the other mills have nearly all been stopped. Two began partially this week, and one thinks this state of things cannot last much longer. 7*

It is interesting that Catherine did not hesitate to use the term 'hands', which so offended Mary Howitt, when speaking of her father's labour force.

Matters did not improve for the Winkworths: a first half-year profit in 1858 turned into a second half-year loss and the family were forced to spend their capital. During the slump which followed the enactment of the Cobden Treaty in 1860, Brocklehurst's mills were kept going at a loss to the firm of £70,000. John Brocklehurst is reported as saying, 'I have made my money in Macclesfield and I will spend it to the last sixpence before I will see the work-people starve'. Henry Winkworth did not have such deep pockets and he had no honourable recourse but to give up his business and his large Alderley house. In recent years the Victoria Mills, the earliest dating from 1823, were threatened with demolition and the properties had fallen into very bad repair. In the event the projected by-pass stopped short of the site and they have been wonderfully restored for present day use. Our visiting party was, therefore, able to go down to the Bollin valley to where the use of water-power drew early mill construction, to view the two buildings much as Elizabeth Gaskell would have known them.

In this area the spaces between the oldest mills were crammed with labourers' houses during the first phase of industrialization and the district gradually lost caste to become, by the 1840s, Macclesfield's Irish quarter, as the insanitary lodging-houses were woefully overcrowded by the multiple occupancy of recent immigrants. In 1849 two government health inspectors made a survey of the town preparatory to establishing a local Board of Health. Their preliminary report found these over-crowded quarters in the lower town a breeding ground for disease. In one court they reported that several Irish families were living in a two-roomed house, and in this group alone there were 24 persons suffering from fever. These findings were given tragic consequence by severe cholera and typhus epidemics which visited the town in the winter and spring of 1849, for which the Irish were widely blamed. In locating the origins of the typhus fever, which brought death to Ecclestone and to Ruth, in 'the low Irish lodging-houses' where 'it was so common it excited little attention', Gaskell was echoing a commonly-held view and one which was authenticated by the official report of the Macclesfield Board of Health published in 1853. <sup>8</sup>

Elizabeth Gaskell had many friends amongst those working to improve public health in Macclesfield at this time. Sir John Stanley and the Rev Edward Stanley, as Chairman and Vice-Chairman of The Board of Guardians, collected a mass of comparative statistics relating to health in the town and the neighbouring country districts, together with the cost of maintaining the poor. These statistics were embodied in the famous *Report of the Sanitary Condition of the Labouring Population of Great Britain*, issued in 1842 by Edwin Chadwick. This was at once the first great national survey, and the chief stimulus and starting point of the Victorian public health movement, which both Elizabeth and William Gaskell were anxious to support. Active propaganda and further reports followed, one of which, *Grainger's report on the origins and spread of cholera*, was enclosed with a letter to Elizabeth from Edwin Chadwick in 1851.<sup>9</sup> In Macclesfield, John May, acting clerk to the Poor Law Union, kept up the pressure with an annual record of public health statistics for the town and the Rev Edward Stanley gave a series of lectures on sanitation and cleanliness. These efforts were supported by Mrs. Caroline Davenport, who allowed the grounds of Capesthorne Hall to be used for a two-day garden party, organized by John May in 1850 in aid of Macclesfield's Public Baths and Washhouses. Gaskell contributed an offprint of two of her short stories, *The Sexton's Hero* and *Christmas Storms and Sunshine*, to be sold in aid of the fund; William Gaskell supported the work of the Rev Edward Stanley as an occasional speaker for Macclesfield's Useful Knowledge Society.

After our visit to the lower town, our party left Macclesfield for Hare Hill Gardens, where azalea and rhododendron walks originally laid out by the Brocklehursts are now being restored by the National Trust. In Prestbury we paused to look across a field towards Legh Hall, a house set back from the Prestbury-Wilmslow road near to the cross at Mottram St. Andrew. In the late nineteenth century this became the home of the Gaskells' niece, Susan Elizabeth Gaskell, on her marriage to Walter Greg, son of Samuel Greg II, whom Elizabeth Gaskell knew as a little boy at Bollington. It seems probable that this is the 'Lea Hall' at which Elizabeth and William stayed in September 1851, the night before the wedding William conducted for Emily Winkworth and William Shaen at Dean Row Chapel. The proximity of the house to the chapel, less than four miles, would have suggested it as a suitable place for the well-organized Elizabeth to request lodging for the night. She was later to regret her foresight when it turned out that the Winkworths had other plans for their transport to the ceremony. Her hosts were Mr. and Mrs. Hervey, with whom by chance she travelled on a train journey to Macclesfield in 1849. They left the train at Prestbury while Elizabeth stayed on to Macclesfield where she could hire a Fly to take her to the home of the Gregs in Bollington. On parting the Herveys insisted on seeing her before her return to Manchester and arranged to send transport over for her to spend the day with them before she left.<sup>10</sup>

Bollington was the last destination on our tour of the Macclesfield area. Here it was

possible to visit The Mount, the marital home of Elizabeth's childhood friends, Samuel and Mary Greg (née Needham) and to tread some well-authenticated footsteps. The house was built in 1845, on high ground above the mill and cottages where Samuel Greg had hoped to establish a Utopian industrial community. Mrs. Gaskell and her daughter Florence stayed at the house in November 1849 and although it is now a nursing home there is much about it which has not changed since their visit. We were able to see the staircase Elizabeth and Florence descended, delayed by a button which had to be restitched to Florence's slipper, and therefore late for tea taken informally with 'the two eldest little things at home playing about'. We saw the original main entrance and the drawing room; upstairs there are still bars at the windows of the 'famous nurseries' where Florence joined the little Gregs in celebrating Katie's second birthday with butter the children had made with cream from the farm. When Elizabeth, with Meta and Florence, came back to stay at the Mount the following May, the children were thoroughly at home, Meta mounting and riding the pony brought to meet her, and Florence 'as happy as happy can be with Alice'. On this occasion the party attended Sunday service at King Edward Street Chapel and were made very tired by the hilly, hot and dusty three-mile walk into town. On both these visits and on others, Elizabeth combined her trip to Bollington with time spent with her good friend Mrs. Davenport at Capesthorne Hall, but the children were not usually included in the Capesthorne country house parties. Here Gaskell was introduced to a wide range of house-guests. Some like 'our two nice clergymen', Mr. Weigall of Holy Trinity Church, Macclesfield, and Mr. Osborne, Principle of Rossall School but formerly of King's School, whom she met there in February 1852, drew her closer to Macclesfield life. She came greatly to admire the Rev Weigall for his Benson-like devotion to 'our manufacturing population' and for the reasons he gave her for refusing her help towards a better living.<sup>11</sup> Mrs. Davenport was soon to remarry and for everyone's entertainment brought down her wedding finery. This display included six Indian shawls, 'the lowest priced one 90 guineas...*oh dear!* they were so soft and delicate and went into such beautiful folds'.<sup>12</sup> A scene Gaskell was graphically to recall in the opening chapter of *North and South*.

There was not time for our party to journey on to Capesthorne, although properly it should have been included in our itinerary of Gaskell's Macclesfield, so for our last visit we dropped down Moss Brow, to Greg's 'Happy Valley', where the mill at Lower Houses is still in use, although not for cotton spinning. The workers' terraced cottages which Greg improved for their comfort have been further modernized, and their allotments have been developed in recent years for modern housing, obscuring the view the mill-workers once had of the mill clock. The old home farm together with the Sunday School and Reading Room which Samuel Greg provided for the education of the mill-workers and their children have also been adapted for residential use. Greg's was a well-intentioned attempt to make a mill community a



vehicle for social change. He shared his first Bollington home, Turner Heath, with his work force, inviting respected workers to Saturday evening tea parties with conversation, music, reading and games, in an effort to know them better and share with them his values, but the huge financial losses the business incurred crushed the experiment. Only the Greg fortune and the efforts of Greg's more business-like brothers saved the firm and kept the labour force from want. Greg's 'stinging grief' at his failure spoke to Elizabeth Gaskell as eloquently as the strong words of criticism directed, by William Rathbone Greg and others, at the 'one-sided' philosophy of Mary Barton. It shook her confidence in her ability to write, as many urged that she should, on 'the other side' of the question. 'I believe that there is much to be discovered yet as to the right position and mutual duties of employer, and employed', she told Lady Kay-Shuttleworth in her own defence.<sup>13</sup> However when she came to write her next industrial novel, *North and South*, some of the ideas of Samuel Greg found expression, and the difficulties and infinite anxieties of the mill-owning class were affirmed in a stronger voice.

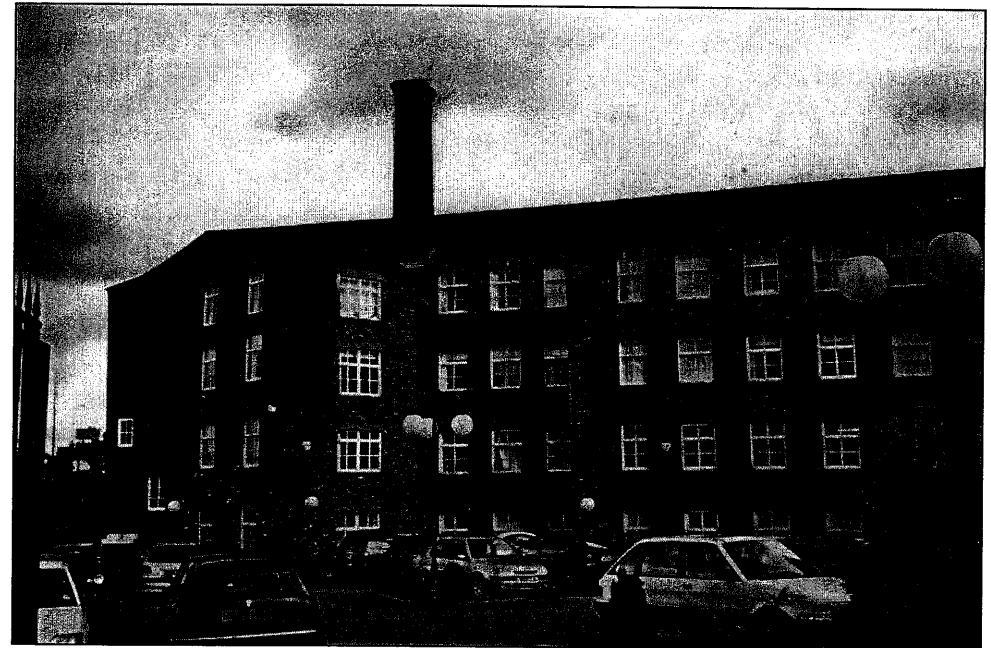
In truth our short pilgrimage around mid-nineteenth century Macclesfield did not wear out much shoe leather, but in this varied social and physical landscape and in the evidence of Elizabeth Gaskell's association with it, there was much to send us back to re-read with well-rewarded pleasure her letters and works of fiction.

#### Notes:

The evidence for their custom is a fragment of a Day Book recording credit sales for December 1819. The Rev Edward Stanley was the most frequent customer (6 calls), the Stamfords the biggest spenders (£54 11s 7d); Miss Davenport purchased 'Pelise Cloth' and paid for the making up of four cloaks for charity, and Mr. Walter Davenport also bought grey cloaking for charity and fabrics for a jacket for his 'Keeper'.

- 2) John Chapple and Alan Shelston, *Further Letters of Mrs. Gaskell* (Manchester, 2000), p.10.
- 3) J. A. V. Chapple and Arthur Pollard, *The Letters of Mrs. Gaskell* (Manchester, 1997), no.126.
- 4) Gaskell shows her knowledge of the legislation introduced to arrest the decline of Macclesfield's button trade in *Sylvia's Lovers* (Penguin Classics, ed Shirley Forster, p. 51) 'Silk weavers has been petitioning Ministers t'make a law to favour silk buttons', complains Daniel Robson.
- 5) John Chapple, *Elizabeth Gaskell, The Early Years* (Manchester, 1997), p.137. Information on the Holland family was kindly supplied by Christine Lingard.
- 6) Mary Howitt, *An Autobiography*, vol. II, ed. Margaret Howitt (London, 1889), p.106, letter of 21 May 1854.

- 7) *Memorials of Two Sisters* (London, 1908), ed. Margaret J. Shaen, pp.173-4.
- 8) *First Annual Report Macclesfield Local Board of Health, 1853*. Ms. Copy, Macclesfield Town Hall, pp. 81-2.
- 9) *Letters Addressed to Mrs. Gaskell*, John Rylands Library, 1935, ed. R. D. Waller, p.14.
- 10) *Letters of Mrs. Gaskell*, nos. 21, 101, 100a; and *Further Letters*, p. 46.
- 11) *Letters of Mrs. Gaskell*, no. 104; and *Further Letters*, pp. 62, 165, 167, n.3.
- 12) *Further Letters*, p. 62.
- 13) *Letters of Mrs. Gaskell*, no. 72a.



**Victoria Mills, Macclesfield.** The section shown dates mostly from 1823; onto this section Winkworth and Proctor added an extension for power-loom weaving, in 1837.



## Editing Elizabeth Gaskell's Letters

John Chapple

One of my earliest academic tasks was to transcribe ninety folio leaves, closely written circa 1575 by the musician Thomas Whythorne in a very singular 'new orthography' he had devised. The manuscript was also badly worn in places, so immense care was taken in preparing it for the press. Nevertheless, a postgraduate student, whom I had myself taught to read Elizabethan Secretary hand, was able to correct my transcription of one clearly written word.

Even perfectly correct readings can seem doubtful. Shirley Foster suggests that Jane Whitehill's 'home' might be preferred to Chapple and Pollard's 'Rome' in a letter Gaskell sent to Charles Norton on 19 January 1860: *'Sometimes I dream I am in America, but it always looks like Rome, when I know it is not.'* (See Elizabeth Gaskell: A Literary Life, 2002, pp.132, 187, n.12.) Conjectural readings are by their very nature plausible, but there is no doubt that 'Rome' is the correct reading of the actual manuscript. Nor does it seem likely that Gaskell herself made a simple mistake. The context also shows that America is represented by 'cities' as well as 'country' and 'forests'; the immediately-following reference to Norton's European courier, François Boggia, indicates that her mind had briefly reverted to the joyous days she had spent in Rome in the spring of 1857. Norton picked this up in a postscript to his reply on 7 February 1860: *'Three years ago we met in Rome!'*

The editors of Elizabeth Gaskell's letters, however, unfortunately missed one important fragment. Shirley Foster rightly notes (p.190, n.63) their omission of Gaskell's judgment on *Sylvia's Lovers*, quoted from a lost letter by A.W. Ward in his introduction to volume 6 of the Knutsford edition: *'It is the saddest story I ever wrote.'* Are there any more overlooked snippets out there? An Autolycus wanted.

### Here we go round the mulberry bush

It was about two years ago that I was asked if I remembered a mulberry tree growing in the grounds of Knutsford Library, I didn't and no one else I asked did either, but when the cellars of the old library were being cleared ready for a move to the new library (which houses the Whitfield collection so well) a metal plaque was found. This recorded the gift to Knutsford of a mulberry tree by the trustees of Shakespeare's Birthplace Trust. I am holding this plaque in the accompanying photograph.

I wrote to Stratford upon Avon to ask if they had any record of when this had happened but none could be traced; however I was told that we could purchase another scion of the tree. It is now thriving in the garden of Brook Street Chapel and we intend to mark it with a new plaque.

### The Gaskell Mulberry

THIS TREE IS A SCION OF  
THE MULBERRY TREE GROWING IN  
SHAKESPEARE'S GARDEN IN NEW PLACE,  
STRATFORD UPON AVON,  
IT WAS PLANTED BY PROFESSOR JOHN CHAPPLE,  
PRESIDENT OF THE GASKELL SOCIETY,  
ON 20 MARCH 2002 IN MEMORY OF  
ELIZABETH GASKELL'S TWO YEARS  
AT SCHOOL IN STRATFORD UPON AVON

IT REPLACES AN EARLIER TREE DONATED BY  
THE SHAKESPEARE BIRTHPLACE TRUST TO  
COMMEMORATE BOTH WRITERS



**20 March 2002. At the tree planting:** Chapel members with Knutsford Town Mayor, George Walton and Gaskell Society members, including President John Chapple, resting on his spade, and Chairman Janet Allan (third from the right). Taken by Elizabeth Williams, sadly we neglected to get a photo of the whole group because we expected the local paper photographer to do it but he arrived too late.

# Elizabeth Gaskell and the American Civil War

Muriel Smith

On Monday 10 June 1861 (Letters, No. 488), Elizabeth Gaskell wrote a very prompt answer to Charles Eliot Norton, headed:

*'Dining-room in Plymouth Grove, breakfast things not as yet removed, your letter came at breakfast.'*

On the Sunday, she and Meta had been talking of their American friends:

*'then we talked over your politics, and could not understand them;...I understood 'the Union' to be an expansive, or contractive contract. Expansive (as being capable of including more than the original thirteen United States) it has proved itself to be. But it seems to me that...its power of expansion involved that of its dissolution (or contraction as I have called it above) if need were.... You included (by your annexations) people of different breeds, & consequently different opinions...; the time was sure to come when you could not act together as a nation; the only wonder to me is that you have cohered so long. And yet you say in this letter 'I do not feel sure that under any circumstances the right of secession could or would have been allowed'...altogether I (average English) cannot understand how you (American) did not look forward to 'secession' at some time not very far distant.... I should have thought (I feel as if I were dancing among eggs), that separating yourselves from the South was like getting rid of a diseased member, (possibly there are cases where amputation is a more impatient & consequently a more cowardly thing than the slower process of trying to bring the leg back to a healthy state). We have a proverbial expression in Lancashire 'Good riddance of bad rubbish' that I thin I should have applied to the Southern secessions.*

The first shot of the war, that carried away the Stars and Stripes at Fort Sumter, was an unfortunate mistake; as with the Charge of the Light Brigade, 'someone had blundered'. Major Anderson, commanding Fort Sumter, had reported to Washington on 5 March 1861 (the day after Lincoln's inauguration) that unless reinforced he could not hold out for more than a few weeks. Lincoln decided to re-provision the fort but not reinforce it. When Beauregard demanded its surrender, the provisions were still on the way. Anderson replied that if he did not receive either them or specific instructions from Washington he would surrender on 15 April. Then on 12 April the shot rang out across the bay of Charleston. Certainly the gunners were not aiming at the flag, or they would never have hit it first go.

When the Constitution of the United States was declared to be in force, 13 September 1788, the right of secession was generally assumed, and the states of

Virginia, Rhode Island and New York made it an express condition of ratification. There were two cultures, agricultural and industrial, and neither half of the Union regarded itself as unbreakably bound to the other, given sufficient cause to part. Lincoln, however, denied the right of secession: he was in the hands of the people who had supported his election in return for the promise of jobs in the Cabinet. His last words, in the last debate before the war began, were:

*And open Charleston as a port of entry, with their ten per cent tariff! What then becomes of my tariff?*

Charleston was exporting slave-grown cotton to be spun and woven in Manchester by free workers paid as little as possible and turned off at any downturn in the business. Boston, concurrently, imported West Indies molasses and turned it into rum, which was shipped to West Africa and sold to African traders in exchange for fellow Africans (if not actually fellow-tribesmen) who were to be shipped across the Atlantic as slaves. Any air of moral superiority assumed in Lancashire or Massachusetts was hardly justified.

Meanwhile, Elizabeth Gaskell is showing a good grasp of American history and is, moreover, stating the South's case and supporting Jefferson Davis, without, apparently, having any idea that she is so doing.

## BOOKSTALL NOTES

Members who were at the Durham Conference will have enjoyed Christine Alexander's talk on 'Elizabeth Gaskell and Victorian Juvenilia', which will also appear in the next volume of the Journal. But copies of Juvenilia Press titles, by a number of famous budding authors, failed to arrive on our bookstall. We now have the following books, very interesting and handsome they are, for a modest £5 each, including p&p:

### Jane Austen:

*Jack and Alice • Love and Friendship • Lesley Castle  
The History of England • Frederick & Elfrida*

### Charlotte Bronte:

*My Angria and the Angians • Tales of the Islanders Vol 1  
Tales of the Islanders Vol 2 • Tales of the Islanders Vol 3*

### George Eliot:

*Edward Neville*

### Philip Larkin:

*Incidents from Phippy's Schooldays*

**Anna Maria Porter:**  
*Artless Tales*

We are also ordering copies of the handsome Hesperus Press paperback edition of *Lois the Witch*, with an excellent foreword by Jenny Uglow, which will shortly be available at £5, including p&p.

Please send your orders for these and any other books on our booklist (which is on the website or I can send you a printed copy), to me, **Janet Allan**, at:

**10 Dale Road, New Mills, High Peak, SK22 4NW**

**Tel: 01663 744233 and email: janet@janetbook@fsnet.co.uk.**

## BOOK NOTES

**Christine Lingard**

*Lois the Witch*, with an introduction by Jenny Uglow (Hesperus Press, £6.99) is now available in bookshops.

A number of volumes containing Gaskell's short stories are currently available: *Oxford book of Victorian Ghost Stories*, edited by Michael Cox and A. R. Gilbert, containing *The Old Nurse's Story*, first published in 1991, is now published in paperback (Oxford University Press, £9.99).

*The Oxford book of English Love Stories*, edited by J. A. Sutherland, containing *The Heart of John Middleton* (OUP, £9.99) and *The Oxford book of Victorian Love Stories*, edited by Kate Flint, containing *Right at Last*, are also now available in paperback.

Two titles of critical analysis continue the current interest in industry and literature: *Figures of Finance Capitalism* by Borislav Knezevic, Routledge, £50, was published in February. It aims to provide a reading of middle-class misgivings about a class system still dominated by a patrician élite, taking its illustrations from texts by Dickens, Gaskell, Thackeray, and Macaulay.

*Patent inventions: intellectual property and the Victorian novel*, by Clare Pettit of Newnham College, Cambridge (Oxford University Press, £45, due in January 2004) 'shows how novelists Charles Dickens, Elizabeth Gaskell and George Eliot participated in the debates over the value and ownership of labour in the 1850s, such as patent law and the married women's property law'.

*The Lunar Men: The Friends who made the Future: 1730-1810* by Jenny Uglow is now available in paper back. Faber at £9.99

## THE LITERARY NORTH WEST - THE CROSS STREET CHAPEL TALKS

This winter we are continuing our successful series of Tuesday lunch-time talks on literary figures in the region, interspersed with a little festive cheer. As usual they will start at 1 o'clock, but you are welcome to join us beforehand for sandwiches bring your own or buy them next door at Pret-a-manger) tea and coffee available in Cross Street Chapel's dining room.

**Tuesday 14 October, 1pm Gaskell.**

*'Escaping an adominable, wicked world'*. Gaskell, Wilkie Collins and sensationalism in *The Cornhill Magazine* by Marie Cairney.

We welcome a new face on the Gaskell scene with an intriguing title to her talk: Maria Cairney is a postgraduate student of Alan Shelston's at the University of Manchester.

**Tuesday 11 November, 1pm.**

*Elizabeth Raffald and the making of Manchester* by Hannah Barker.

Elizabeth Raffald was the Mrs Beeton of her day. Her book *The Experienced English Housekeeper*, made her name on a national scale. In late eighteenth century she was also famous for producing Manchester's first town directories which mapped the phenomenal commercial growth of the city. This talk explores the life of Elizabeth Raffald and her place in the transformation of Manchester. Hannah Barker is senior lecturer in history at the University of Manchester. She has published several books on the late eighteenth and early nineteenth-century political press.

**Tuesday 9 December, 1pm Cross Street.**

*Carols for Gaskellians.*

To open the festive season we have a carol service arranged by Alan Myerscough of the Cross Street Chapel staff, who so ably assisted in our presentation on Catherine Winkworth's hymns earlier in the year.

**Tuesday 6 January 2004, 1pm.**

*Edwin Butterworth of Oldham (1812-48): a window on early industrial Lancashire* by Dr. Michael Winstanley.

During his short life, Edwin Butterworth published numerous local history books, visited every parish in the county as Edward Baines's research assistant for his four-volume history of Lancashire, and sent regular reports to Manchester newspapers on events in his home town of Oldham. This talk assesses the man and his work through his surviving manuscripts and his publications. Dr. Winstanley is a lecturer in the History Department at Lancaster University.

**Tuesday 10 February.**

*Frances Hodgson Burnett* by Ann Thwaite.

**Tuesday 9 March.**

*Howard Spring* by Barbara Frost.

Howard Spring's books on Manchester were best-sellers, and many of us remember with pleasure, *Fame is the Spur*, *Shabby Tiger*, *Rachel Rosing*, *My Son My Son* and *The Houses in Between*. We have persuaded Barbara Frost, Blue Badge Guide and long-time supporter of the Gaskell Society, to talk to us about the author and (probably) the Manchester he wrote about.

**The Knutsford meetings are on Wednesdays October 29, November 26, Jan 28, Feb 25, March 31 and April 28 at St. John's Parish Rooms, Church Hill at 12.15 for lunch. Studying *North and South*.**

## *The Gaskell Society South West*

### **Activities this half- year.**

We have had a very interesting year so far in the South-West. As we are not too far from the Quantocks, we thought that a closer acquaintance with The Romantic poets Coleridge and Wordsworth would be a worthwhile topic. We knew that Mrs. Gaskell enjoyed the poetry of both writers. In 1836, she wrote from Sandlebridge describing herself sitting in the corner of a field studying Coleridge and Wordsworth in such an idyllic situation that "One can't think of anything but poetry and happiness." At our April meeting at BRLSI in Queen Square Bath, Kay Millard spoke to a very appreciative audience on "Elizabeth Gaskell and Coleridge", concentrating on shared Unitarian ideals.

As they developed in the 19th century. Those wishing to know more will find a succinct and scholarly account of the development from the doctrine of Necessity to the "cloudy transcendentalism" of Coleridge in Jenny Uglow's biography, page 6. We were most indebted to Kay, Chairman of the Bath Unitarian Fellowship for her scholarly talk.

This led to a mini visit to the Quantocks in May, when seven members stayed overnight in Alfoxden House, now a lovely hotel, and visited Coleridge's cottage in Nether Stowey, walked though the scenery described in some of his poems. Mr. Tom Mayberry, Chairman of the Friends of Coleridge, join us for dinner and gave us a wonderful talk on the relationship between the Wordsworths and Coleridge, illustrated by excellent slides. When he had gone home, we read "The Ancient Mariner" aloud in the room in which Coleridge was said to have read it for the first time to William and Dorothy!

Our thanks are due to Marie and Derek Moss who visited Nether Stowey earlier in the year, invited me down for the day and showed me where everything was,

including the Hotel which we would never have found otherwise. We did so much in 24 hours, including being introduced to "Chocolate Lumpy Dumpy Pudding" which must be the most delicious and calorific dessert ever, and did you know that Coleridge walked from Nether Stowey to Bristol to change his library books?

Sunday August 17th was another delightful tea party at the Cunliffe-Jones house overlooking the Frome valley, where we sat in the shade, ate a sumptuous tea, admired the view and read our favourite pieces from Mrs.Gaskell's work. It has been a lovely year so far.

*Congratulations to Peter and Celia Skrine on their latest grandchild.*

### **Forthcoming Event**

On November 22nd, we are looking forward to welcoming Ian and Mary Gregg, when Ian will speak to us on the rehabilitation of his ancestor, ECG's step-mother. Knowing Ian, this will be a very good experience.

**Rosemary Marshall**

## *London and South East Group*

**Meet at The Francis Holland School, 39 Graham Terrace, near Sloane Square, 13 September at 2.00pm.**

Shirley Foster: *Violence and deconstruction in Gaskell short stories*

**8 November.**

Gwen Clarke: *Elizabeth Gaskell and Manchester: a difficult relationship*

**Further details from Dudley Barlow 020 8874 7727 or e-mail.**

## *AUTUMN MEETING IN KNUTSFORD AT ST. JOHN'S PARISH CHURCH ROOMS SATURDAY 27 SEPTEMBER, 2.00PM-4.30 APPROX.*

Dr. Jane Silvey will speak on:

*'It all began with Jane Eyre': the complex trans-atlantic web of women writers.*

Afternoon tea at 3.00pm, provided by Cross Town WI at £3.50 each, followed by: *Trans-atlantic friendships*: Readings from letters of Elizabeth Gaskell, Charles Eliot Norton and others arranged by Joan Leach.

**Brook Street Chapel** will be open for visits from 11.30- 12.30. Upstairs some of the Chapel's library books for Sunday reading will be displayed including those donated by Aunt Lumb. Don't forget to look at the mulberry tree and the Gaskell grave with flowers for Elizabeth's birthday (29 September). Members will be welcome at Brook Street Chapel's harvest festival on 28 September.

**As part of Knutsford's Literary Festival Joan Leach will lead a walk:**

Discover Knutsford's Cranford Days on **Sunday 5 October at 11.am** from **Jardines Book shop on King Street (£2).**

On **Saturday 4 October** *Mr. Dickens is coming* by Gerald Dickens, great, great grandson of the author. Using extracts from novels, diaries and letters he re-creates Dickens on stage. Festival programmes are available at libraries etc and bookings can be made at TIC, Toft Road, Knutsford WA16.

Tel: 01565 632611 Web page: [www.knutsfordlitfest.co.uk](http://www.knutsfordlitfest.co.uk)

There will be a linked exhibition at The Heritage Centre where Knutsford's Millennium Tapestry is also on display.

Please make a note in your diaries of the A.G.M. in Manchester on **Saturday 3rd April 2004.**

## *Unitarian College Manchester 1854-2004*

In connection with the forthcoming 150th anniversary of the Unitarian College Manchester a commemorative volume is to be published in May 2004, entitled "Unitarian to the Core: Unitarian College Manchester 1854-2004." The work will primarily be of interest to alumni and supporters of the College, but there will be much of interest to Gaskell enthusiasts, particularly because William was the co-founder of the College with John Relly Beard. It will be an illustrated, hardback, subscription edition with names of subscribers printed in the volume where we receive orders in time.

**Send Joan Leach an SAE for a flyer or check our home page for details.  
Cost £20 plus postage.**

Details and order form by e-mail from [joyce.ashworth@lkh.co.uk](mailto:joyce.ashworth@lkh.co.uk) or by post from:  
The Administrator, Unitarian College, Luther King House, Brighton Grove,  
Rusholme, Manchester M14 5JP.

# The Gaskell Society

*A grand day out at Dunham Park, June 2003.*



THE GASKELL SOCIETY HOME PAGE has all the latest information on meetings.  
<http://gaskellsociety.users.btopenworld.com>

If you have any material or suggestions for future Newsletters, please contact Mrs. Joan Leach,  
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Telephone - 01565 634668 E-mail: [joanleach@aol.com](mailto:joanleach@aol.com)

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## NEWSLETTER

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## Editor's Letter

Joan Leach

Our first event of 2004 was a very pleasant New Year Lunch in Knutsford when Dr. Mary Summers gave us a talk on *Education, marriage and parenting seen through the eyes of Anne Brontë and reflected in the writings of Elizabeth Gaskell*. Our SW group, too, had a social meeting and they are planning a short visit to Oxford in June staying overnight at the Harris Manchester College. A North West group will be visiting Stratford-upon-Avon and area for its Gaskell and literary associations, staying in Worcester for three nights from July 3rd to 5th. We have recently discovered several letters in the Elgar Birthplace Museum from Meta to Mrs. Elgar: the Elgars were due to visit Manchester for a performance of *The Dream of Gerontius* and might have stayed at Plymouth Grove if all had gone to plan. We are also planning day trips to Liverpool and Lancaster.

Dudley Barlow who has done sterling work as secretary of our London SE group has moved to York and we are grateful to Frances Twinn for taking over.

I was intrigued to read in the N.T. North West News that Elizabeth Gaskell's *Life in Manchester: Libby Marsh's Three Eras* was partly the inspiration for a 'Grand Day Out' in June 2003 for school children from two Cheshire Schools. They dressed in their Sunday best in Victorian costume, including home made shawls and skirts, and sailed by canal barge to Dunham Park where they sang factory songs, had a picnic and played traditional games.

The sad incident of the Chinese cockle pickers drowned in Morecambe Bay may have reminded members that Elizabeth Gaskell knew the treacherous conditions and wrote about them in *The Sexton's Hero* (1847), which was reprinted as a sixpenny pamphlet, with *Christmas Storms and Sunshine*, to be sold for the benefit of Macclesfield Public Baths and Wash-houses. If you do not have a copy you can read or download it from Mitsu's web page: <http://www.lang.nagoya-u.ac.jp/~matsuoka/EG-etexts.html>.

There has been a series of letters recently in *The Times Literary Supplement* about a portrait owned by Elizabeth Rye, who was told that it was of Elizabeth Gaskell; she has been diligently researching it. We have noted this in earlier *Newsletters* but feel members will like to follow the debate here. Also in this issue John Chapple follows the connections between Tennyson and Gaskell, Frances Twinn considers Gaskell's depiction of Haworth church yard in *The Life of Charlotte Brontë*.

My apologies are due to Marie Moss for unsatisfactory numbering of footnotes in the last Newsletter due to problems at our printers' and my failure in proof reading.

# Elizabeth Gaskell and Tennyson<sup>1</sup>

J.A.V.Chapple

The woods decay, the woods decay and fall,  
The vapours weep their burthen to the ground,  
Man comes and tills the field and lies beneath,  
And after many a summer dies the swan ...

I do not suppose that members of the Tennyson Society expect me to indulge myself now in the great pleasure of reading *Tithonus* aloud. As a member of the Gaskell Society, I have come to speak of the close relationships between two Victorian authors who were in some ways very different from each other.

They were close contemporaries - Tennyson born in 1809, Elizabeth Gaskell in 1810. She was a novelist and writer of short stories. He was the complete poet. He once confessed to Emily Sellwood that 'of all horrors, a little country town seems to me the greatest...' (*Tennyson Letters*, I.171). Elizabeth Gaskell, brought up in Knutsford, was the author of *Cranford* and *Wives and Daughters*. For her, the writing of letters, no matter how busy or ill she was, never ceased. He once declared, 'You know that I would any day as soon kill a pig as write a letter' (quoted in Ricks, *Tennyson*, p.209n). And on another occasion he wrote, 'Gossip is my total abhorrence' (*Tennyson Letters*, I. xxviii). She begged her young friend Harriet Carr for 'every little, leetle particular [and also] gossipry, and scandal'. Letters were as important to her ... as tobacco was to Tennyson.

As far as we know, she does not refer to his first true volume, *Poems, Chiefly Lyrical* (1830). She might just have heard of Tennyson, if her highly successful cousin in London, Dr. Henry Holland, was the doctor whose opinion was canvassed after Arthur Hallam had died in Vienna in September 1833 (*Tennyson Letters*, I. 93). The recently discovered letters to her friend Harriet Carr show that Tyrolese, Swiss and Spanish songs, Spurzheim on Phrenology, Mrs. Trollope on America and Bulwer's novels were her delight when she was young. In 1832 she married a Unitarian minister in Manchester, William Gaskell. He was also a teacher and lecturer, who joined with her in studying earlier poets such as Wordsworth, Coleridge, Crabbe and Byron. 'Poets and poetry of humble life' became their special subject.

On a deeply human level, however, Elizabeth Gaskell and Tennyson were at one with the rest of humanity. She wrote very little poetry indeed, but there is a private sonnet in 1836, 'On Visiting the Grave of my Stillborn Little Girl':

Thee have I not forgot, my firstborn, thou  
Whose eyes ne'er opened to my trustful gaze,  
Whose suff'rings stamped with pain thy little brow...

Tennyson and his wife were to suffer in the same way with their own first-born, in April 1851:

Little bosom not yet cold,  
Noble forehead made for thought,  
Little hands of mighty mould  
Clenched as in the fight which they had fought.  
He had done battle to be born  
But some brute force of Nature had prevailed  
And the little warrior failed...

This, too, was a private poem that remained unpublished in their lifetime.

At last, in 1838, Tennyson's poetry makes an appearance in Gaskell's correspondence. In a rather high-flown letter to that very literary couple, William and Mary Howitt, she writes, 'The dog-rose, that pretty libertine of the hedges with the floating sprays wooing the summer air, its delicate hue and its faint perfume, is unlucky. Never form any plan while sitting near one, for it will never answer.' Such self-consciously poetical prose! (Quite uncharacteristic of this liveliest of letter-writers, I should note.) We are not surprised when she goes on to evoke the 'deserted old halls' she had seen in Lancashire and Cheshire. 'Do they not remind you of Tennyson's "Deserted House" - "Life and thought are [have] gone away", &c.' (*Letters*, no.12, p.32).

Published in Tennyson's 1830 volume, this is not a brilliant poem when compared with the heart-rending stanzas of *In Memoriam* 7, 'Dark house, by which once more I stand / Here in the long unlovely street ...'. But it is a poem that was admired by that tough egg whom Tennyson called 'Topsy Kit' (suppressed), and 'Crusty / Rusty / Musty / Fusty Christopher', that is, Professor John Wilson.<sup>2</sup> Its religious borrowing from 2 Corinthians - the earthly house transformed into a mansion incorruptible - would have appealed to Mrs. Gaskell, whose belief in an afterlife was strong rather than troubled or faintly trusting.

I do not think they ever met, though there was a near miss about April 1849. Tennyson told Mary Howitt that he would have to postpone his meeting with 'the authoress of that fine book *Mary Barton*' (*Tennyson Letters*, I.299). Quite suddenly she had become more than a wife, mother and simple lover of literature. She too was an author, of a very successful first novel, though I doubt very much if she bothered as much as Tennyson did about errors of the press. 'I was with the unlucky author when the proof reached him' claimed Locker Lampson. 'He gazed at it with horror and gave a very prolonged and remarkable groan, which not having been set to music, I cannot do justice to here' (Hagen, p.51). William Gaskell used to look after such little matters for his wife.



She was bold enough to ask John Forster to beg Tennyson for a copy of his poems, as a present for Samuel Bamford, 'a great, gaunt, stalwart Lancashire man, formerly hand-loom weaver'. (Bamford, unable to afford a copy of his own, used to learn the poems by heart whenever he had a chance.) Tennyson turned up trumps, and on 7 December 1849 Mrs. Gaskell was able to send Forster a triumphant account of tracking down Bamford as he came out of 'a little old-fashioned public house' in Manchester, presenting him with the volume and leaving him in the middle of the road reading aloud, of all things, 'The Sleeping Beauty'. Of course, in some danger of being run over. (*Letters*, no.59; *Tennyson Letters*, l.307-9, 314 n.)

In about July 1850 Elizabeth Gaskell was overwhelmed by *In Memoriam*. She found it 'a book to brood over - oh how perfect some of them are - I can't leave them to go on to others, and yet I must send it back tomorrow. By dint of coaxing, however, I've got Wm to promise he'll give it to me, so I sing Te Deum' (*Letters*, no.73). The manuscript underlining of 'give' is interesting, but we might also notice the use of the Latin title, *Te Deum*. The Unitarian who once wrote, 'I do not like the putting in, D V. [*Deo volente*] but it is always in my heart' (*Further Letters*, p.157), evoked a more Catholic tradition when greatly moved.

In August of that year Mrs. Gaskell met Charlotte Brontë for the first time in the Lake District. This was the famous occasion when Sir James Kay-Shuttleworth proposed to drive over to Coniston - they 'very cozy' in a carriage with 'Sir James on the box' - and introduce them to Tennyson, but had turned back when it began to rain. 'I held my peace, and bit my lips', Elizabeth wrote crossly (*Letters*, nos.75 and 79, at pp.124, 130).

As for Charlotte Brontë, 'She and I quarrelled & differed about almost every thing', Mrs. Gaskell told Charlotte Froude, '- she calls me a democrat, and can not bear Tennyson - but we like each other heartily...' (*Letters*, no.78). Charlotte had actually given up reading *In Memoriam* half-way through, she told Mrs Gaskell in a follow-up letter of 27 August, distrusting 'this rhymed and measured and printed monument of grief. What change the lapse of years may work - I do not know - but it seems to me that bitter sorrow, while recent, does not flow out in verse' (*Charlotte Brontë Letters*, II. 457). 'She calls me a democrat, and can not bear Tennyson'. The collocation is intriguing. Had Elizabeth Gaskell attempted to defend Tennyson as speaking for all of us, for humanity, in *In Memoriam*? And we remember that neither Tennyson nor Gaskell had published their private poems of grief.

By 27 August 1850, Elizabeth Gaskell had her own copy of *In Memoriam*, which she promptly plundered in chapter 6 of *The Moorland Cottage*, published on 14 December that year. She quotes the poem (XCVII. 33-6) directly, to express Frank Buxton's trust in Maggie, whose 'faith is fixt and cannot move, / She darkly finds him

great and wise, / She dwells on him with faithful eyes, / "I cannot understand - I love". The sale catalogue (lot 430) of the Gaskell's house in Manchester shows that on 22 November 1852 her husband William also gave her a first edition of Tennyson's 'Ode on the Duke of Wellington'. I can't quite work out what significance this might have.<sup>3</sup>

It is wonderfully easy, however, to appreciate my next instance of the connection between the two authors. When in 'A Love Affair at Cranford' (*Household Words* on 3 January 1852), an aging Miss Matty tremulously met the lover of long ago whom she had been discouraged from marrying, Mr. Thomas Holbrook, he proved to be a devotee of Tennyson, quoting from 'The Gardener's Daughter' the lines about the cedar's 'dark-green layers of shade' and the blackness of ash buds. Besides this, the emotions expressed in the poem could hardly be more appropriate in this particular context. You will surely remember these lines:

Behold her there  
As I beheld her ere she knew my heart,  
My first, last love; the idol of my youth,  
The darling of my manhood, and, alas!  
Now the most blessed memory of mine age.

The literary allusion intensifies, for those who can bring it to mind as they read, the everlasting love and nostalgic emotion involved.

Just as pertinently, Mr. Thomas Holbrook, *yeoman*, went on to read from 'Locksley Hall', a poem in which Tennyson wrestled with his doomed love for Rosa Baring and the *superbia* of the Tennyson D'Eyncourts. But with the tact of a prose realist Mrs. Gaskell makes Miss Matty fall asleep during what we could believe was an impassioned reading. In her youth Miss Matty did not have the strength to resist the disapproval of her father the rector and her sister Deborah. It was ultimately more likely and, despite the irony of this allusion to 'Locksley Hall', more touching, that she would wear something resembling a widow's cap after Mr. Holbrook's unexpected death and keep the volume of Tennyson's poems he had given her beside her Bible.

We can conclude, I think, that Elizabeth Gaskell's general sensibility was attuned to Tennyson's, even in part created by him. His poetry comes to her mind with talismanic force, as when in a letter of December 1857 to Charles Eliot Norton she reminds him of 'that exquisite dreamy Torcello Sunday, - that still, sunny, sleepy canal, - something like the Lady of Shalott - tho' how, why, & wherefore I can't tell' (*Letters*, no.384, at p.489).

Fortunately, Professor Marion Shaw, in her study of the fatal return theme in *Sylvia's Lovers* and *Enoch Arden* (*Gaskell Society Journal* 9), has teased out more subtle literary relationships between the two Victorian authors.<sup>4</sup> Perhaps I should have adopted that more terse new form, the e-mail. The poet who even in his teens was well acquainted with advances in science, and who later was able to envisage 'airy navies grappling in the central blue', became Poet Laureate. Prophetically, perhaps, when wishing to travel incognito in Cornwall in 1860, he suggested that 'Mr. Poelaur would be a good name to direct to me by' (quoted, Ricks, p.232). Lower case, no spaces and no proper punctuation nowadays, of course: mrpoelaur@verseserve.co.uk. That might even arrive on the screen of Andrew Motion. To become Poet Laureate confers a kind of pleasing immortality, I imagine.

## Endnotes

<sup>1</sup> Tennyson Society, Memorial Service Address, 2000. Reprinted, with acknowledgements, from the *Tennyson Research Bulletin* 7, 4 (November 2000).

<sup>2</sup> John Jump, ed., *Tennyson: the Critical Heritage* (Routledge, 1967), p. 59.

<sup>3</sup> [Ed. note] Perhaps William gave Elizabeth a copy of 'Ode on the Duke of Wellington' on 22 November 1852, to console her for missing the awesome occasion of his funeral. She wrote to a friend: 'Mr. Chapman [her publisher] wrote a polite invitation to me to come and see the Duke's funeral from his shop window (a sight I should dearly have liked,...)' (*Letters*, no.137, dated ? October 1852). Her daughter Marianne took her place instead and was requested by her mother to write her 'a particular account, *not* so much of the Duke's funeral, as of Mr. Mrs. [*sic*] Chapman & their ménage & children. Everybody here is going into mourning.' (*Letters*, no.140)

<sup>4</sup> Saverio Tomaiuolo has recently stressed the importance of *Sylvia's Lovers* for Tennyson (*Tennyson e il senso del narrare*, Pescara 2003, pp.152-58). Gaskell Sale Catalogue, lots 553 and 555 show 'Enoch Arden', 1st edn 1864, and 'Idylls of the King', 1859.

## Books

J.S. Hagen, *Tennyson and his Publishers* (Macmillan 1979)

Christopher Ricks, *Tennyson* (Macmillan 1989).

*The Poems of Tennyson*, ed. Christopher Ricks (Longman, 1969).

*The Letters of Alfred, Lord Tennyson*, ed. C.Y. Lang and E.F. Shannon (3 vols, Clarendon Press 1981-87).

*The Letters of Charlotte Brontë*, ed. Margaret Smith (2 vols, Clarendon Press, 1995, 2000).

# Haworth through unfamiliar eyes

Frances Twinn

*The Life of Charlotte Brontë* appeared in two volumes in 1857. The frontispiece in each of the volumes in many ways represents the subject of the biography. Volume 1 opens with Richmond's portrait of Charlotte Brontë; Volume 2 interestingly contains a drawing of the immediate environs of Haworth Parsonage, Charlotte's home.<sup>1</sup> This pen-and-ink drawing is attributed to Elizabeth Gaskell who, like most Victorian women, would have been taught to draw. Therefore she would have executed the view 'with the eye of the amateur painter'.<sup>2</sup> She was determined to illustrate the biography with 'the old wild place' and, in the end, she wrote to George Smith saying,

I send you a sepia drawing from a sketch of mine of Haworth Parsonage...<sup>3</sup>

However, like her fiction and elements of the biography, the drawing seems to have been a combination of observation and imagination.

Her drawing indicates a rather bleak view of a landscape dominated by a churchyard. This is surely testimony to Gaskell's preoccupation with the deaths which bedevilled Charlotte's life (and perhaps her own). Interestingly the tombstones are a combination of the prostrate and the vertical. There are about forty-five upright gravestones in the drawing. It is not possible to count the number of horizontal ones as they are not so clearly delineated, although there appear to be more than forty-five. If her memo to George Smith, her publisher, is anything to judge by, Gaskell had a clear picture in her mind of the churchyard for she wrote,

The gravestones in Haworth Church Yard, are FLAT, not many head-stones; and not a tuft of grass between.<sup>4</sup>

Ironically the drawing conflicts with the biography which it seeks to illustrate. Gaskell's authorial comment that 'the graveyard is terribly full of upright tombstones'<sup>5</sup> is followed at a much later stage in the book by a quote from Jane Arnold's account of her visit to Haworth. She wrote more accurately of the churchyard as

a dreary, dreary place, literally paved with rain-blackened tombstones (*The Life*, p.363)

The drawing has few buildings other than those associated with the church and the parsonage. Gaskell listed these as the 'Sexton's Shed, School-house, Sexton's (tall) House (where the Curate lodged), and the Church'<sup>6</sup> when she sent her 'sepia drawing' to George Smith. As might be expected, the church and the parsonage have prominent positions.

The stone wall 'keeps out the surrounding churchyard'<sup>7</sup> by delimiting the garden which is depicted by the shrub and bushes adjacent to the wall. The garden can be clearly seen as a buffer zone between the house and churchyard and must have been a godsend given the health hazard posed by the bodies buried just beyond the wall. Just as the foreground is dominated by gravestones, so the background is dominated by treeless hills which are, presumably, moorland-clad although the vegetation is not clearly delineated. The parsonage appears somewhat dwarfed by the hills which rise quite steeply behind the house, certainly more steeply than they do in reality. Wilks' caption to the engraving in his volume on the family observes,

Mrs Gaskell allowed herself a romantic but telling exaggeration of the desolate prospect facing the parsonage children<sup>8</sup>

I am sure there is a romantic element but I would argue too, that her perception of this environment stemmed from unfamiliarity. Indicative of Gaskell's unfamiliarity with this landscape is her exclamation found in the biography,

Oh! Those high, wild, desolate moors, up above the world, and the very realms of silence. (*The Life*, p.439)

I have argued elsewhere that the exclamation 'represents a sharp intake of breath and a frisson of emotion as she re-captured the memory of her first encounter with these moorland expanses around Haworth'.<sup>9</sup> The drawing is her visual representation of that unfamiliarity because for Gaskell those moorlands loomed large in her mind when she thought of Charlotte's home environment.

Disappointed with the photographs commissioned for the biography, Gaskell wrote to George Smith,

They give an idea of wildness and desolation but not of height (*sic*) & steepness, and of the sweeping lines of the moors beyond.<sup>10</sup>

She was determined that her view should prevail, for she continues,

I should like an engraving of the wild old place, and I think perhaps this would be better than the Photograph.<sup>11</sup>

Arguably Gaskell's drawing distorts the reality - which is the gradual rise to a plateau of the moorland surface; but, unlike a photograph, the drawing is a product of the creative imagination and must reflect something of Gaskell's personal perception of the home of 'her dear friend' Charlotte Brontë. The latest Brontë Parsonage Museum souvenir guide highlights Gaskell's perception by juxtaposing a photograph taken before 1878, a contemporary photograph and her own engraving.<sup>12</sup>

It is evident from a comparison of these photographs with Gaskell's drawing that hers was a function of both mental image and artistic licence rather than the reality of the scene.

**Notes:**

- <sup>1</sup> Walter E. Smith, *Elizabeth Gaskell: A Bibliographical Catalogue* (Los Angeles: Heritage Bookshop, 1998), p.106.
- <sup>2</sup> An observation made by Professor Andrew Sanders in conversation, 30 Aug. 1999.
- <sup>3</sup> John Chapple and Arthur Pollard, eds, *The Letters of Mrs Gaskell* (Manchester: MUP, 1966), no.339, p.443.
- <sup>4</sup> *Letters*, no.343, p. 445.
- <sup>5</sup> Elizabeth Gaskell, *The Life of Charlotte Brontë* (Oxford: OUP, 1996), p.12.
- <sup>6</sup> *Letters*, no.339, p.443.
- <sup>7</sup> Gaskell, p.12.
- <sup>8</sup> Brian Wilks, *The Brontës* (London: Hamlyn, 1975), p.32.
- <sup>9</sup> Frances Twinn, 'The Landscapes of Elizabeth Gaskell's Writing', unpublished PhD thesis, University of Durham, 1999.
- <sup>10</sup> *Letters*, no.338, p.442. Interestingly, in his poem 'Haworth Churchyard April 1855', Matthew Arnold emphasizes the moorland and the lonely bleakness of the group of buildings. Clearly, Gaskell's perception was shared by others.
- <sup>11</sup> *Letters*, no.339, p.443.
- <sup>12</sup> Ann Dinsdale and Kathryn White, *Brontë Parsonage Museum. A Souvenir Guide* (Haworth: The Brontë Society, 1998), pp.9-10.



## *Gaskell's Works now searchable via new Hyper-Concordance*

**Nancy S. Weyant**

Concordances have long been essential reference tools for literary scholars engaged in textual analysis. They are a valuable aid for any analysis of writing style, imagery, or themes, as well as a useful way to quickly locate particular passages within a given text. On December 28, 2003, the one-hundredth anniversary of the death of George Gissing, fellow Gaskell Society member Mitsuha Matsuoka unveiled his hyper-concordance for the works of a range of Victorian authors, including Elizabeth Gaskell. This addition to the resources available to the Gaskell scholar is most welcome.

The complete collection of concordances for all 31 nineteenth-century authors resides on the Victorian Literary Studies Archives webpage (<http://victorian.lang.nagoya-u.ac.jp/concordance/>). The hyper-concordance for Gaskell can be accessed from a link on the first page of the Gaskell Web (<http://www.lang.nagoya-u.ac.jp/~matsuoka/Gaskell.html>) or directly by using the Gaskell Concordance's unique URL: <http://victorian.lang.nagoya-u.ac.jp/concordance/gaskell>. Upon selecting a specific author from the Archives or upon clicking on the link from the Gaskell Web, you are presented with a dropdown box from which you select a particular work. In the case of Gaskell, if you select "Short Stories", you are then presented with a third dropdown box that lists all of the individual stories. After selecting a specific work, the program allows you to limit or refine your search by specifying that your word or phrase be case-sensitive or non-alphabet-character sensitive (which allows you to search for numbers, types of punctuation - alone or in conjunction with particular words - or symbols such as £) as well as to specify the "head length" and "tail length" (the letters before and after your word or phrase - in other words the textual context for the word or phrase for which you are searching). If you enter no specific term or phrase and click on the "Search" button, two boxes display below. One posts the total number of text lines, the total word count and the number of unique words; the other enumerates all unique words and the number of occurrences of each. If you enter a specific word or phrase, three boxes display below: the same line and word profile of the individual work, each occurrence of the specified word or phrase searched and the full text of the work in question. Each line of the text is numbered, and the line number for each occurrence of the word/phrase displayed serves as a link to its location in the full text at the bottom of the screen. According to Mitsu, the scanned texts are from the Knutsford edition, enhanced by reference to later editions during proofreading.

The ease and speed with which the texts of Gaskell's works can be searched is truly amazing and exciting. For example, it took me less than two minutes to confirm that the words "book" and "books" appear 20 times in *Mary Barton*, 19 times in *Ruth*, 36 times in *Cranford*, 52 times in *North and South*, 43 times in *Sylvia's Lovers*, 53 times in *Cousin Phillis*, 101 times in *Wives and Daughters* and 168 times in *The Life of Charlotte Brontë*. Likewise, it took me less than ten seconds to identify the exact line in *Cranford* (line 5028) on which my e-mail signature quotation ("I'll not listen to reason...") appears. The implications for future Gaskell research and scholarship are significant.

As any visitor to the Gaskell Web knows, Mitsu's computer skills are exceptional. His introduction to the Concordance profiles the program used (C++), identifies "Windows 2000/XP and the latest Microsoft Internet Explorer as the best and quickest way to view the Hyper-Concordance website", and gently notes the need for patience on the part of Macintosh users. This Hyper-Concordance is a wonderful example of how technology greatly enhances our access to literary texts. Everyone who uses computers for their Gaskell research should bookmark this concordance for easy access. Gaskell scholars and librarians alike owe a debt of gratitude to Mitsu Matsuoka.

## *Mrs Gaskell and Miss Fergusson: a new connection*

**Alan Shelston**

While working in the John Rylands University Library recently I came across a further link between Elizabeth Gaskell and her governess, Barbara Fergusson. Readers of the *Newsletter* will remember that a cache of letters to Miss Fergusson dating from 1847 was included in *Further Letters of Mrs Gaskell*, and that following that date she seemed to have disappeared from our immediate view. While working on the early editions of *Cranford*, however, I discovered that the Library's copy of the so-called 'Second edition' - in fact a second impression of the first edition of 1853, and published in the same year - bore the inscription on its front end-paper: Barbara B[?] Fergusson, with the kind love and affectionate remembrance of E.C. Gaskell/ Plymouth Grove./Sept 29. 1853. This seems not to have been recorded formally, although when I showed it to Carol Burrows, archivist at the library, she said that she had been aware of it, and she kindly gave me a photo-copy.

This clearly confirms that Mrs Gaskell retained her affection for Barbara Fergusson and that she remained in contact with her for some years after she left her employment at Plymouth Grove.

An account of what is known about Miss Fergusson, by Dr. Jean Lindsay, was published in *The Gaskell Society Newsletter* 29, February 2000



## *A Gaskell Portrait?*

Members with long memories and carefully filed *Newsletters* might remember this portrait, dated 1850 or 51, and an article about it in *NL* 5 (1988 ) by the owner, Elizabeth Rye, (then E Jacobi) who bought it at an antique fair in 1987. She added a plea for help with research in *NL* 33.

She was told on buying the picture that it was of Mrs Gaskell and another dealer added that it had come from the family of Mary Warner in 1974. Her researches into the artist, who might have commissioned the portrait and why , and the family who owned it have been extensive and are ongoing.

Ms. Rye succeeded in finding a descendant who confirmed that the Warner family had owned it. Mary Warner was an actress who died young and in debt in 1854, leaving three children who were charitably educated with assistance from William Charles Macready and Angela Burdett-Coutts. Ms. Rye believes that the link between the latter, known as a benefactor, and Mrs Gaskell may be significant. She has recently had an article published in the *Times Literary Supplement* (21.11.03) about the provenance of the picture<sup>1</sup> and wrote:

As I had suspected her association with Miss Coutts and knew that Mrs. Gaskell's work often involved children, I wondered whether she might have been involved in this case? Though the name Warner is not mentioned in Mrs. Gaskell's letters, Mrs. Gaskell had two meetings with Macready shortly before and after the date of Mrs. Warner's death. And only three weeks after Mrs. Warner's death, in October 1854, a letter from Mrs. Gaskell to a Mrs. Ouvry provided the details requested of a private school for girls in Hampstead. Mrs. Ouvry was the wife of Miss Coutts's solicitor. Could this information have been for the benefit of Mrs. Warner's daughter, Ellen, who was thirteen when her mother died? It seems possible that the heavily committed Miss Coutts might have given a portrait of Mrs. Gaskell to Ellen in order to encourage her to contact her if she had any problems.

This is an interesting chain of circumstances, but it has to be said that there is no proven link between Miss Burdett-Coutts, and the artist Herbert Smith, who was mainly known as a copyist. There are some similarities in pose and features between this portrait and those known portraits of Elizabeth Gaskell, but many members will probably agree with another *TLS* correspondent, Anne Kindersley, who wrote:

My doubts about Herbert L. Smith's sitter begin with her hair and go on to her clothes. Mrs. Gaskell was only forty in 1850; she was unlikely to have had glossy white hair [ed: one of the last known photographs of her, dated about 1864, shows her with brown hair]. She was a good looking and elegant woman who took great care with her clothes ... [she] would not have been seen dead in the dowdy, elaborate outfit that Herbert L. Smith painted. ... The blue-and-white tippet (not shawl) the frilly collar and cuffs, and the voluminous black dress are quite alien to her simple and becoming style.

Professor Angus Easson voiced similar doubts in his letter to *The Times Literary Supplement* (2.1.04)

I was intrigued to see Elizabeth Rye's 'Portrait of a Lady: An Unattributed Portrait of Mrs. Gaskell?' (21 November 2003), since some time ago Ms. Rye spoke to me about it by phone. She was understandably excited about

the possibility of Herbert L. Smith's watercolour being a portrait of Mrs. Gaskell, though I was doubtful about the connections that she needed to establish between sitter and the picture's presumed subsequent owner, Ellen, daughter of the actress Mary Warner. Ms. Rye also needed to show that Ellen was given it by Angela Burdett-Coutts. While continuing to admire Ms. Rye's enthusiasm and research and her discretion in still not insisting upon the sitter's identity, I am now, having read her essay, deeply sceptical about both the proposed connections and the sitter's identity.

First, there is the likeness itself. Anne Kindersley (letter, 5 December 2003) reacted interestingly to the sitter's clothes and noted the grey hair, unlikely in a woman of 40, though Kindersley accepts that 'the face is right'. Along with the clothing and the hair colour, I would add that I am not convinced that the face is 'right'. True, portraits necessarily involve subjective elements, both in their execution and in the viewer's response: W.Thomson's lively miniature of Elizabeth Gaskell in 1832 suggests a rather slimmer, more flighty subject, than David Dunbar's bust of 1829, while George Richmond's drawing of 1851 clearly exhibits his notorious idealisation of his subjects. But looking at Dunbar, Thomson (perhaps the facial shape closest to Smith's sitter), Richmond, and Samuel Laurence's pastel of 1854, <sup>2</sup>the impression is of Mrs. Gaskell as a woman with a marked chin, full lower face, and a nose prominent even to beakiness, indented at the top and suddenly pointed. Smith's portrait has an elongated face, chin rounded but neither the prominent lower cheeks nor projecting nose.

Second, in constructing her argument, Ms. Rye links Mrs. Gaskell with Dickens and Angela Burdett-Coutts, suggesting that Burdett-Coutts commissioned the portrait - and by implication, gave it at some considerable time later to Ellen Warner: Smith's picture is dated 1850/51 and Burdett-Coutts only undertook to provide for Ellen's education in 1853. It may be enough to underline that while Mrs. Gaskell's concerns link her to Dickens's and Burdett-Coutts's work at Urania Cottage, both in sympathy and practically, her direct contact with Burdett-Coutts was so slight that a commissioned portrait must seem unlikely. Indeed, a portrait of Burdett-Coutts, as generous benefactor, might have been a more obvious gift to Ellen Warner than a portrait of Mrs. Gaskell.

Third, and more particularly, Ms. Rye does propose a direct link between Mrs. Gaskell and Ellen Warner, when she suggests Mrs. Ouvry - perhaps the wife of the solicitor, Frederic Ouvry - wrote to Mrs. Gaskell about a possible school for Ellen Warner. The Hampstead school, where Mrs. Gaskell's eldest daughter, Marianne, had been educated, was Unitarian. Why should Burdett-Coutts, a committed Anglican (she built, for example, St. Stephen's, Rochester Row) think of sending Ellen Warner, who

presumably was an Anglican and certainly married a Church of England clergyman, to a Unitarian school? We only have Mrs. Gaskell's reply to Mrs. Ouvry, but to read it (*Gaskell Letters*, ed. Pollard & Chapple, pp.802-03), calls in doubt that placing a pupil in the school is at issue at all. Mrs. Gaskell writes that she can 'answer for the safe, though it might be a busy, place, if she did apply'. It being 'a place', with its busyness, and to be applied for, suggests that this is an opening for a servant, a point strengthened by the rest of the letter, about a servant whom Mrs. Gaskell is taking over from Mrs. Ouvry. That Ellen Warner here links Mrs. Gaskell and Mrs. Ouvry surely doesn't survive scrutiny.

I fully understand the wish to give a portrait an identity. But even more than Elizabeth Rye, who wants to suggest but tactfully does not insist that her picture is of Mrs. Gaskell, I must doubt that the sitter has been identified and decline to accept it is Mrs. Gaskell.

The possibility of establishing whether or not the portrait is of Mrs. Gaskell by using techniques of computerised imaging, comparing the new portrait with those that have been authenticated, is currently being investigated.

<sup>1</sup> Elizabeth Rye is still researching the various links. Her article from the *TLS*, and requests for help in research, can be found on the 'Alliance of Literary Societies' web page <http://sndc.demon.co.uk/erye.htm>.

<sup>2</sup> *Members* might like to compare the Smith portrait with the Laurence of Mrs. Gaskell which was on the cover of our last few Newsletters. *NL* 33 gives reasons for dating the Laurence pastel portrait as 1864 rather than '54.

## *Alliance of Literary Societies AGM 24th April*

This will be hosted by The Graham Greene Birthplace Trust at Berkhamsted, linked to a Spring Centenary Weekend. For info e-mail: [secretary@grahamgreenebt.org](mailto:secretary@grahamgreenebt.org)

**The Trollope Society** is holding a one-day conference on Saturday 24<sup>th</sup> April at The Institute for English Studies at London University. This is to coincide with the forthcoming BBC production of *He Knew He was Right*. Contact no.020 7862 8675

**The Arnold Bennett Society** has a one-day conference on 12<sup>th</sup> June at Staffordshire University's Stoke-on-Trent campus info. from: [l.ashwell@staffs.ac.uk](mailto:l.ashwell@staffs.ac.uk)

**The Martineau Society** has its 10<sup>th</sup> annual conference in Birmingham 2-4 July. Info from Alan Middleton: [alan@ajmidd.demon.co.uk](mailto:alan@ajmidd.demon.co.uk).

## *The North West Group*

Knutsford meetings at St. John's Parish Church room: North and South themes. March 31 and April 28. Lunch at 12.15. Trips to Liverpool and Lancaster for Gaskell/Literary links. Dates to be arranged. Autumn meeting September 25.

## The Gaskell Society Postal Bookstall

Here is the complete Gaskell postal bookstall list. These books are on our bookstall at major meetings of the Society, and can be sent by post at other times. The prices are given against each title. The books are hardback unless stated otherwise. In some cases there are only one or two copies remaining. To order please contact Janet Allan, 10 Dale Road, New Mills, High Peak, SK22 4NW; phone: 01663 744233; email: [janet@janetbook.fsnet.co.uk](mailto:janet@janetbook.fsnet.co.uk).

**UK orders:** cheques should be payable to The Gaskell Society. Please add postage of £3 for volumes costing £10 and over: those less than £10 are sent post free.

*Anne Brontë: educating Parents* by Mary Summers; Highgate Publications, 2003, paperback £9.95

*Artless Tales* by Anna Maria Porter; Juvenilia Press 2003, paperback £5

*At home with Elizabeth Gaskell* by Barbara Brill; Teamband, 2000, £2.50 paperback

*The Brontës; High Weaving Heather*, a selection of poems; Phoenix 1996, paperback 60p.

*Cousin Phillis and other Tales* by Elizabeth Gaskell; World's Classics, Oxford University Press, 1981 paperback £3.99.

*Cranford*, a reading of the complete text by Prunella Scales. 3 Tapes. Cover to Cover £25.

*Cross Street Chapel in the time of the Gaskells* by Geoffrey Head. Cross Street Chapel, 1999, £1.

*Edward Neville* by Marianne Evans (George Eliot) Juvenilia Press, 1995 paperback £5.

*Elizabeth Gaskell a biography*, Winifred Gérin, Oxford University Press 1976, secondhand copy £10.

*Elizabeth Gaskell, a habit of stories* by Jenny Uglow; Faber and Faber, 1993, £12.50.

*Elizabeth Gaskell, the Early Years* by John Chapple; Manchester University Press, 1997, £19.

*Elizabeth Gaskell: a Literary Life* by Shirley Foster; Palgrave Macmillan, 2002, paperback, £14.

'Elizabeth Gaskell's *Mary Barton*: a novel of 1848?' by Angus Easson. Offprint from the *Transactions of the Lancashire and Cheshire Antiquarian Society* vol 86, 1990. £2 paperback.

*Emily Brontë* by Robert Barnard; The British Library, 2000, £11 paperback.

*The Experienced English Housekeeper* by Elizabeth Raffald; Southover Press 1997, £15.

*Further Letters of Mrs. Gaskell*, edited by John Chapple and Alan Shelston; Manchester University Press, 2000, hardback £38.50, paperback 2003, £12.50.

*Gaskell Society Journals* vols 1-15, and 17, 1987-2001, 2003. Gaskell Society. Paperback, £6 each. Volume 16, 2002 with index to vols 1-16, £9.

*A History of England* by Jane Austen; Juvenilia Press, 2003 paperback, £5.

*Knutsford and Elizabeth Gaskell*, Gaskell Society, 2000, £2.50 paperback.

*Incidents from Phippy's Schooldays* by Philip Larkin; Juvenilia Press, 2002, paperback £5.

*The Letters of Mrs. Gaskell*, edited by J.A.V. Chapple and Arthur Pollard, 1997, reprint, Manchester University Press, £13.50 paperback.

*The Life of Charlotte Brontë* edited by Clement K. Shorter; 1930 reprint, second-hand £5.

*Love and Friendship* Jane Austen; Juvenilia Press, 2001 reprint, paperback £5.

'*Mary Barton*' by Elizabeth Gaskell, edited by Angus Easson. Ryburn, 1993, £12.

*Mrs. Gaskell's Observation and Invention* by John Geoffrey Sharps; Linden Press, 1970, £15.

*Private Voices: the diaries of Elizabeth Gaskell and Sophia Holland*, edited by J.A.V. Chapple and Anita Wilson, Keele University Press, 1996, £8.

*The Reverend William Turner; dissent and reform in Georgian Newcastle-upon-Tyne* by Stephen Harbottle; Northern Universities Press, 1997 paperback, £17.50.

*The Story so far: Manchester Academy of Fine Arts from 1859 to 2003* by Sheila Dewsbury; Manchester Academy of Fine Arts, 2003, paperback, £8.95.

*Tales of the Islanders* by Charlotte Brontë; Juvenilia Press, 2001-3, 3 volumes, paperback, each £5.

*William Gaskell* by Barbara Brill. Illustrated. Manchester Literary and Philosophical Society, 1984, £5.

*Wives and Daughters*: a reading of the complete text by Prunella Scales. 8 Tapes. Cover to Cover, £55.

*The Society also sells postcards, notelets, badges and paperweights on the bookstall.*



## Book Notes

Christine Lingard

*Making of the Victorian novelist: anxieties of authorship in the mass market* by Bradley Deane (Visiting Professor of English, Northwestern University, Chicago); Routledge £45.

An original discussion of the social and cultural pressures to which Victorian novelists were subjected, including chapters on Walter Scott's *Waverley*; Dickens' *Pickwick*; Henry James' *Princess Casamassima*; the final chapter is "Veiled women in the marketplace of culture: authorships and domesticities in Gaskell and Eliott."

*Fiction, famine and the rise of economics in Victorian Britain and Ireland* (Cambridge Studies in Nineteenth-century Literature & Culture) by Gordon E Bigelow, Cambridge University Press, £45.

Continuing the current interest in socio-economics and the novel, this book deals with the interest in economic subjects displayed in general by Victorian novelists and in particular by Dickens and Gaskell (chapter 5 - 'Toward a social theory of novels of Elizabeth Gaskell'), and argues that such literature had a profound effect not only on public opinion but also on the development of political economic theory itself. It compares their writing to contemporary descriptions of the Irish potato famine.

## For Jane Austen Fans

We are delighted that Jane Alderson, C.E.O. of the **CHAWTON HOUSE LIBRARY, HAMPSHIRE** is coming north to give a presentation about the centre's important work.

The event, which is being hosted by "The Bookworm's Club" at the **NORTH MANCHESTER SYNAGOGUE, BURY, LANCASHIRE**, will be on **SATURDAY 20TH MARCH 2004 at 8.00 p.m.** We are sure that as members of a highly regarded literary society, you would not want to miss the opportunity to meet Ms. Alderson and to learn more of the work being accomplished at Chawton, once the home of Jane Austen's brother, Edward.

We hope also to see representatives of libraries, along with academics and students from local colleges, at the meeting, as well as members of reading and writer's groups. Mr. Ivan Lewis, M.P. for Bury South and a Minister in the Department of Education, will open the event.

We are asking only £3.00 entrance to the event, simply to cover Ms. Alderson's travel expenses. For further info. consult: Natalie Wood, 55 Ajax Drive, Sunny Bank, Bury, Lancs. BL9 8EE Tel/Fax - 0161 796 8018.

## AGM Meeting at Cross Street Chapel, Manchester

on Saturday 3<sup>rd</sup> April 10.30 for 11.00am

### Programme

10.30 Meet for coffee

11.00 AGM

12.00 (approx)

Dr. Leonard Smith, editor of *Unitarian to the Core: Unitarian College Manchester, 1854-2004* and Geoffrey Head, chairman and past president of the college, will speak about the origins of the College, the Gaskells part in it, its students and history.

1.00-2.15 Buffet lunch

2.15 The Daphne Carrick Lecture by Dr. Ann Secord:  
Elizabeth Gaskell and the Working-Class Naturalists of Manchester.

In Elizabeth Gaskell's novel *Mary Barton*, with its ambitious suggestions for the improvement of class relations in Manchester, a pivotal role is played by a working-class naturalist, Job Legh. Gaskell could place such importance upon Legh because she had carefully drawn his fictional character from published accounts of impoverished Lancashire artisan naturalists. This talk explores how the philanthropic context in which these accounts were produced, and the cultural context in which artisans actually practised their science, contributed to Gaskell's creation of one of our most enduring images of the Victorian working-class naturalist.

Anne Secord was trained in the history of science at London University. She worked as assistant editor of *The Correspondence of Charles Darwin* for the first seven volumes and is currently an Affiliated Research Scholar in the Department of History and Philosophy of Science, Cambridge University. Her research and writings focus on popular, particularly working-class, natural history in nineteenth-century Britain. She has a forthcoming book *Artisan Naturalists*, which will be published by University of Chicago Press in 2005.

The meeting is expected to close at about 3.30 / 4.00pm

### Summer events

We are planning a visit to Liverpool, (probably late May early June) to trace Gaskell associations. Our guide will be John Tiernan who read a paper on the subject at our Durham conference.

IN early September we will have a similar trip to Lancaster. Please indicate on the form if you would like further information and whether you prefer a mid-week or weekend date.

As we go to press Friends of Plymouth Grove is being inaugurated.



## *The Gaskell Society South-West*

On Monday, January 12<sup>th</sup>, fourteen very local members met for our annual New Year Supper - this is a very social occasion, given a little intellectual respectability this year by a Shakespeare Quiz, which was much harder than we realised. Janet Cunliffe-Jones emerged as a worthy winner.

On Saturday, April 17<sup>th</sup>, Professor Christine Alexander, Professor of English Literature at the University of New South Wales and presently spending a year as a Distinguished Fellow at Cambridge University, is coming to speak to us on 'A Study of Victorian Juvenilia with special reference to the Brontës and Elizabeth Gaskell'. I know she impressed everyone at Durham and we are looking forward to her visit. The event is being run jointly with the Bath Royal Literary and Scientific Institution. Money donated by Waterstones was organised by Ian Wallace, late Professor of German at Bath University.

Then on Saturday, May 22<sup>nd</sup>, we are looking forward to hearing Professor Barbara Hardy, from the University of Oxford, speaking on 'The Art of the Novella: exemplified by *Cousin Phillis*'. Professor Hardy tells me that *Cousin Phillis* is her favourite Gaskell book and she intends to develop the theme of 'intricate simplicity'.

June 23<sup>rd</sup> - 24<sup>th</sup> is the date of our visit to Oxford, where we shall stay in Harris Manchester College, dine in Hall and visit as many of the places enjoyed by Mrs. Gaskell as we can. Gwen Clarke is bearing the brunt of the organisation of this jaunt and we are sure that it will be a good successor to our trips to Penzance and the Quantocks.

Everyone is of course welcome to any of these events. For more details, ring Rosemary Marshall tel: 01225 426732, or e-mail [rosemarymarshall@yahoo.com](mailto:rosemarymarshall@yahoo.com). Best wishes to everyone in the Gaskell heartland from the South-West Branch.

## *The London and South-East Group* Programme for 2004

### **Saturday, 15<sup>th</sup> May**

"A Dark Night's Work" Reconsidered' - Dr. Graham Handley

### **Saturday, 11<sup>th</sup> September**

'Editing the Brontë Letters' - Margaret Smith

### **Saturday, 13<sup>th</sup> November**

'Mme de Sévigné - Gaskell's Eternal Woman' - Howard Gregg

Meetings are held at the Francis Holland School, 39 Graham Terrace, London SW1W 8JF, starting at 2 p.m. Tea and biscuits follow the talks. It is necessary to ring the bell to gain access, for security reasons. Francis Holland School is a few minutes walk from Sloane Street Tube Station (District and Circle Lines).

It has been traditional for some members to meet for a light lunch at the Royal Court Tavern, which is next to the tube station. We meet from 12 noon onwards.

As you may know, Dudley Barlow is moving to the north of England and I have taken over the organisation of this branch of the Society. Please feel able to contact me if you would like further information about the meetings themselves or the arrangements. I hope that the programme appeals and that you will be able to come to the meetings. I look forward to seeing you during 2004.

Frances Twinn, 85 Calton Avenue, London SE21 7DF (tel: 020 8693 3238); email: [frantwinn@aflex.net](mailto:frantwinn@aflex.net).

## **International Conference Manchester Centre for Regional History, Manchester Metropolitan University**

### *Elizabeth Gaskell and Manchester:* **Identity, Culture and the Modern City 19 - 21 July 2005**

#### **CALL FOR PAPERS**

Elizabeth Gaskell is the nineteenth century's most important novelist of industrial society. Her era was of considerable intellectual importance in the making of the modern world. This conference seeks papers which explore Gaskell's intellectual and cultural context. It will explore how such literary legacies also influence the construction of place identities and inform cultural regeneration. It occurs at a particularly appropriate time, as Manchester applies for world heritage status.

Possible themes for papers include but are not limited to the following:

- Gaskell and other nineteenth-century literary figures and movements
- Manchester's cultural and literary significance before and beyond the nineteenth century
- Literary representations of the industrial north-west
- Sense of place in the changing city: the social and the built environment
- Rewriting the post-industrial (and postmodern) city
- Insiders and outsiders: migrant cultures and urban identities
- Official and unofficial narratives of the city

Contributions which are comparative or interdisciplinary in nature or which address other aspects of the conference theme are welcome, as are exhibitions and multi-media presentations.

Send abstracts of papers (200-400 words) or suggestions for panels on particular themes and topics to Dr. Craig Horner, Administrator, Manchester Centre for Regional History, Department of History and Economic History, Manchester Metropolitan University, Geoffrey Manton Building, Rosamond St. West, Off Oxford Rd., Manchester M15 6LL. Email: [c.horner@mmu.ac.uk](mailto:c.horner@mmu.ac.uk)  
Conference web site: [www.mcrh.org.uk/gaskell](http://www.mcrh.org.uk/gaskell)

Deadline; 30<sup>th</sup> September 2004 - Please note that paper presenters will still need to register for the conference and pay the registration fee.

# The Gaskell Society



**Members at Anne Hathaway's Cottage, Shottery**

THE GASKELL SOCIETY HOME PAGE has all the latest information on meetings.  
<http://gaskellsociety.users.btopenworld.com>

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.  
Telephone - 01565 634668 E-mail: [joanleach@aol.com](mailto:joanleach@aol.com)

**Hon Treasurer:** Brian Williams, 15 Cawley Avenue, Culcheth, Warrington, Cheshire WA3 4DF

**Membership Secretary:** Miss C. Lingard, 5 Moran Crescent, Macclesfield SK11 8JJ

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## NEWSLETTER

Autumn 2004 - Number 38

## Editor's Letter

Joan Leach

It was an emotional day for committee members and especially for our chairman, Janet Allan, when we met at 84 Plymouth Grove for the first time with the key in her possession. It has been nine years from Janet starting negotiations with Manchester University to the Manchester Historic Buildings Trust taking possession. This is a milestone but the road is a long one. Now we are busy planning an open weekend for Heritage Days 11th and 12th September, when we hope to see many members and friends. We are grateful to our US members for their fund raising efforts and especially to Nancy Weyant who has made a major contribution of her royalties and helped to organise collections. Thank you to those who have enrolled as Friends of Plymouth Grove.

Our home page lists forthcoming events and also has a list of books available by post; the address is on the back page.

BBC has completed filming of *North and South* and screening is provisionally scheduled for November. On a visit with her local history study group to Queen Street Mill and Textile Museum at Burnley member Hilda Holmes was surprised to find BBC filming there in a cloud of cotton dust but had to tell the team that Mrs. Gaskell did not actually take her readers into a mill. BBC have also filmed in Edinburgh where they transformed the Travelling Light shop on William Street into a Victorian drapers'; as the street is still cobbled it takes on a Victorian ambience once double yellow lines and parking meters are removed. Our members in Scotland are planning an inaugural meeting in Scotland to be held in Edinburgh on 26th and 27th November.

This Newsletter has reports of various group visits which you may be able to follow at some time. Marie Moss writes about her experiences with our SW group in Oxford and NW members enjoyed a three day trip to Stratford-upon-Avon and Gaskell associations which Janet Kennerley recaptures for us. We also had a trip to Liverpool.

Dudley Green pays his tribute to Brian Hechle, a faithful member we could ill afford to lose: we will remember him at our first Manchester meeting on 12th October. We send our sympathy to our Japanese members on the death of Professor Asahi, whose translation of *North and South* will be published on the day of their joint meeting with The Dickens Fellowship, on 3rd October, at which Alan Shelston will speak. Our good wishes for this meeting.

On a personal note may I thank members for their support and sympathetic messages on the death of my husband, Chris, on 26th June. Knowing that this came as a release from suffering helps to sustain me, together with the memories of our 44 years together. He will be remembered, too, for his writing; though his works are out of print Boston University keeps his archives.

## Brian Hechle

In the autumn of 1995, soon after my retirement from teaching, I decided to take advantage of my new-found freedom and to come to the Society's monthly lunch-time meetings at Knutsford. When I mentioned my intention to Joan she told me that there was a gentleman from Liverpool who was thinking of coming to these meetings who would be glad of male company! This is how I first met Brian Hechle and we became firm friends at once. Apart from our love of literature we were very dissimilar. Brian was precise, bordering on the pedantic, and meticulous in his actions and movements. Always well-dressed in a delightfully matching outfit, he was a keen gardener and a skilled cook. It is to his credit that he tolerated my impetuosity, my disregard for the refinements of food and clothing, and my dashing here and there in pursuit of my latest objective.

We were constant companions on all Society holidays and activities. I used to ring him the evening before to check the arrangements and when I arrived I would always be greeted by a wave from Brian who would have kept me a seat. At conferences there would be a knock on my door at the pre-arranged time every morning for us to go down to breakfast. We did everything together. He seemed to value my friendship and I hope it gave him pleasure. He certainly helped me in my shyness at meeting people. It's so much easier when there are two of you. I also feel that his friendship was a great privilege, for he was a very reserved man. I think the Gaskell Society can be proud of the way in which they brought Brian out as a person. He became a most loyal member and whenever any outing was announced he would turn to me and say 'Are you going?' He took great delight in being a member of the Gaskell family and he seemed to blossom in the context of this society.

At meetings he was always readier to listen than to speak, but when he did make a contribution it was always significant and illuminating. He was also very sensitive over other people's feelings. Whatever doubts he might have had about the arrangements for a meeting or about the quality of a talk, he reserved them for a quiet word with me afterwards. He was also his own man. On several occasions when I said that I had not appreciated a talk, Brian would tell me what good qualities he had found in it.

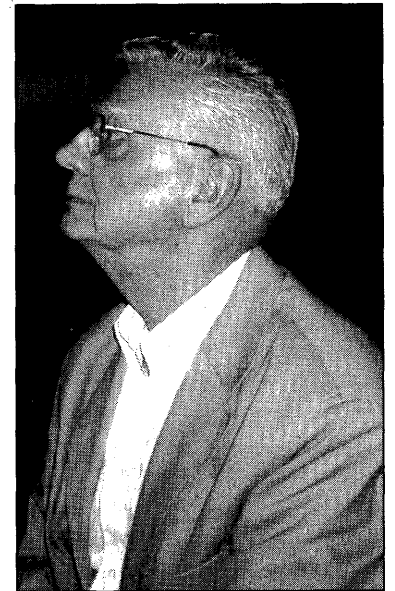
Brian was a very thoughtful, conscientious man, careful in everything he did, but never boring in his attitude. When abroad he was always observant of the rules for crossing roads, although in Belgium I did once manage to get him to move against a red light, which I took as a great triumph! He also had his own rules about eating. He normally did not have lunch, although he made an exception for the Knutsford

meetings, and usually had his main meal in the late afternoon. At Manchester meetings I always used to ask him as he sat drinking his coffee, 'What are you having for tea today?', and he would describe some exotic dish for which he had just been buying the ingredients. He was also an avid gardener and no visit to Knutsford would be complete without a visit to Fryers Garden Centre. We used to talk to Jean Hynd about her garden and on one day last autumn Jean kindly invited us to lunch to see the garden. We had a lovely time and were planning with Jean to come back sometime this summer, but sadly that is not to be.

One of Brian's greatest qualities was his respect for, and care of, the disabled. He had spent most of his life teaching blind children at the Royal School for the Blind in Liverpool and a concern for the well-being of the disabled never left him. He was always willing to be of assistance where there was any need. When, on our journey to Paris, Robert Atkinson had not turned up at the airport and we were getting anxious, who should volunteer to stay with Joan at the check-in till the last minute but Brian? And when, during our visit to Belgium, there was the need for someone to sit with Robert who was feeling tired, it was Brian who immediately said to me, 'You go on, I'll stay'. This was typical of his approach to life. He was the kindest and gentlest man I have known. In the Society he always seemed to know if someone had a bereavement, or was out of work or needed some other special consideration, and he would have a quiet word with me so that I would know the situation.

Brian was a devout churchman and I always knew that I was not to ring him between 6 and 8 on Sundays because he would be at Evensong. He was also a regular contributor to his church magazine, often reviewing books which he thought would be of interest. He was very careful over taking on more obligations in his retirement and it is to the credit of the Gaskell Society that it won Brian's wholehearted support and commitment. I greatly enjoyed being with him and I am missing him terribly. My one compensation is that I think that it was in our company and on our activities and holidays that some of his happiest moments were spent.

**Dudley Green**



# *Elizabeth Gaskell and Tennyson: a footnote*

Alan Shelston

This short comment is offered as a footnote to John Chapple's illuminating discussion of Elizabeth Gaskell's affinity with Tennyson in the last Newsletter. In his article Professor Chapple adduced a number of instances when Mrs. Gaskell had quoted from Tennyson's poetry. In this note I want to draw attention to an occasion when she may have actually removed some lines of the Laureate's from one of her works.

The first instalment of Gaskell's *North and South* appeared in Dickens's *Household Words* on 2 September 1854. It had no chapter titles or chapter mottoes, but the *Household Words* text was preceded by a stanza from Tennyson's poem 'Will Waterproof's Lyrical Monologue' which concludes 'But for some true result of good/ All parties work together.' These lines, and indeed the complete stanza, are an appeal for social cohesion and thus reinforce the social theme of the novel. However they do not appear in the two-volume first edition of *North and South*, nor do they in any later edition that I have seen. It is clear from a comparison of the *Household Words* text and that of the first edition that Gaskell took the opportunity of the short time available to her between the completion of the serialization in *Household Words* and the publication of the first edition to make a number of revisions. We know that Dickens had a considerable editorial influence on the *Household Words* text and the inference that may be drawn from this is that Gaskell was now presenting her novel as she wished it to be. That being so we can perhaps assume that it was Dickens who was responsible for including the quotation from Tennyson's poem in the first place, and Gaskell who was responsible for removing it.

As I have said, Tennyson's lines are appropriate to the industrial theme of *North and South*. It is arguable however that this may have been more Dickens's priority than Gaskell's. Dickens undoubtedly accepted *North and South* for his journal because of the social agenda that it promised. In this it followed his own *Hard Times* which had preceded it in the pages of his magazine. The consideration of an appropriate title in fact went on for some time after Gaskell first submitted manuscript to Dickens, and is detailed in the correspondence between them. On 2nd July 1854 Dickens wrote to Gaskell: 'Margaret Hale is as good a name as any other; and I merely referred to its having a name at all, because books usually have names, and you had left the title of the story blank.' But later (27th July) he writes: 'North and South appears to me a better name than Margaret Hale. It implies more, and is expressive of the opposite people brought face to face by the story.' It may also be to the point that the issue of *Household Words* that preceded the publication of the

first instalment of *North and South* carried a story with the title 'Margaret.' Be this as it may, it was Dickens who seems to have given Gaskell's novel its distinctive title, drawing on an observation in Chapter 8 by the workman Higgins to Margaret Hale, Gaskell's heroine - 'North and South has both met and made kind o' friends'.

But for Mrs. Gaskell, in her correspondence to friends at the time, the novel was always 'Margaret' - i.e. the story of its heroine - and when she revised the novel for volume publication much of her attention was given to filling out the later part of Margaret Hale's story in a way appropriate to the theme of her self-development. In particular she added a new chapter, Chapter 46, where Margaret returns to Helstone with Mr. Bell, and she expanded and re-divided the London chapters that follow. The effect of this was first to bring Margaret as a returning native back to her emotional roots - but only to learn that natives can never return - and then to emphasise her sense of personal uselessness, having left Manchester - and Mr. Thornton - behind her. The reader is thus prepared more effectively for the emotional moment when Margaret and Thornton are able to declare their love for each other in the final chapter.

Undoubtedly the way that *North and South* developed, after the chapters of industrial conflict, took it further and further from Dickens's priorities, and will have played its part in his increasing frustration with his contributor. By October 1854 he was 'alarmed by the quantity of North and South'. Writing to his sub-editor, Wills, he complained that 'Mrs. Gaskell's story, so divided, is wearisome in the last degree'. His comments are not without point. The sequence of deaths running from chapters twenty-eight to forty-eight (Bessy Higgins, Mrs. Hale, Boucher, Boucher's wife, Hale himself, Mr. Bell) makes for gloomy reading, as does the somewhat remorseless analysis of Margaret's guilt and anxiety about the lie she has told which she believes to have lost her Mr. Thornton's good opinion. Certainly the story as it turned out was a long way from the kind of uplifting material for which *Household Words* was originally devised. Dickens's relations with his favourite contributor were never the same again, despite the fact that she continued to contribute to his periodical throughout the decade.

Without a manuscript or the relevant correspondence we cannot say with certainty who was responsible for the inclusion of Tennyson's lines at the outset of *North and South*. But it may well be that, for all her admiration of Tennyson, Mrs. Gaskell may have felt that they gave her novel an emphasis that, as on several other occasions, she seems to have resisted. This is not to devalue her commitment to ideas of social justice, but it does suggest an increasing commitment to the importance of her heroines. In *Mary Barton* and *Ruth Hilton*, Mrs. Gaskell had already shown her

interest in the potential of strong female characters. The commitment to psychological and emotional analysis reflected in her treatment of Margaret Hale, if an unwelcome development for Dickens, was anticipated by her presentation of her heroine in *Ruth*. It leads on to her portrayal of Sylvia Robson, of Phyllis Holman and of Molly Gibson, to go no further, in the later works.

## *Samuel Holland and Liverpool*

**Christine Lingard**

In May 2004 the Society enjoyed an interesting trip to Liverpool and the Wirral. Gaskell was familiar with the city from her youth, and made several visits to her uncle Samuel Holland and his sons Charles and Samuel. Samuel Holland senior (1768-1851) was a successful businessman whose many interests included lead and copper mining and quarrying in North Wales, ship-owning and the Herculanum Pottery in Liverpool. This was a major manufacturer of quality bone china which existed till 1841 and whose wares are still highly collectable to this day. In this latter enterprise he was in partnership with his cousin John Holland of Dam Head Farm, Knutsford and Michael Humble, a Liverpool businessman. They were also involved in corn milling, ochre grinding, flint grinding, and supplying agricultural produce to the Merseyside area. They sold hemp, rope, oil, corn, hogshead staves, sail canvas and ships' chandlers' materials. He became a very wealthy man.

But why did this young man from rural Cheshire choose to pursue his business interests in Liverpool nearly thirty miles away? Living where he did he could have just as easily entered the textile industry. There was a small silk industry in Knutsford and he had a cousin who was involved in the cotton industry in Manchester only 12 miles away. The family were also acquainted with the Greg family whose cotton mills were at Styal, near Wilmslow. Or he could have moved the twenty miles south to Stoke-on-Trent, the centre of the pottery industry. Josiah Wedgwood knew Knutsford well as he was related to the Stringers, a local family of artists. John Holland of Dam Head tried to get his nephew an apprenticeship with Wedgwood. By the time Samuel had embarked on his career the links were even stronger as the two families were by then linked by marriage. Two of Samuel's brothers married daughters of Josiah's sister and her husband, Rev. William Willetts.

Michael Humble, a Unitarian, came originally from Bradford but later bought an estate at Bawtry, near Doncaster. He was a friend of the Lumb family of Wakefield - Samuel Lumb married Hannah Holland, Samuel Holland's sister. The marriage was not successful and she returned to Knutsford and undertook the upbringing of her motherless niece Elizabeth. Humble also had family ties with Knutsford - with the Whittakers, who were good friends of the Lumbs. He is recorded as having

interests in Liverpool shipping as early as 1789 and in some of his ventures was joined by Samuel Holland. He was a tough customer but very wealthy and generous. One of the Whittakers describes being entertained at his home where they dined off a 200lb turtle specially shipped from Liverpool to Bradford.

Holland's earliest business ventures seem to have been in the slate industry in North Wales and he had dealings until 1819 with Lord Penrhyn, a quarry owner in the area who was related by marriage to Rev Oswald Leycester, vicar of Toft near Knutsford. His son Edward Leycester adopted the name Penrhyn on receipt of an inheritance. Later the family was to become connected with the Stanleys of Alderley Park, some six miles from Knutsford. Peter Holland, one of Samuel's brothers, was doctor to the Stanleys and there is evidence in Gaskell's letters that the acquaintance between the two families lasted for many years. Samuel Holland's home Plas Penrhyn was owned in the 20th century by Lord Stanley's grandson, Bertrand Russell.

Humble's interest in pottery may have stemmed from his relationship to the firm of Humble and Green & Co., manufacturers of Leeds pottery, another celebrated ware. The two men acquired interests in a modest Liverpool earthenware firm in 1796. They moved to the Toxteth site in about 1800 and the name Herculanum, reminiscent of Wedgwood's Etruria, indicates the aspirations of the company. Samuel's interest in the company does not seem to have lasted long after 1806.

It is also interesting to note how many of Holland's activities mirror those of the Macclesfield firm of Roe and Company (Macclesfield is about twelve miles from Knutsford.) It is probable that Gaskell's aunts Hannah (later Mrs. Lumb) and Abigail, who were Samuel Holland's sisters, received part of their education from the eccentric minister of the town's King Edward Street Unitarian Chapel, Rev John Palmer, and a cousin Rev Philip Holland sponsored Palmer in his inauguration so it is not inconceivable that the Holland brothers were also familiar with the town.

Charles Roe (1715-1782) founder of this company was the leading figure in the industrial revolution in Macclesfield in the eighteenth century and there are several memorials to him in the town, not least the mighty Christ Church, which he had built in 1775. He was born in Castleton, Derbyshire, the son of the Vicar. Interestingly his maternal grandfather was the Rev Kettelsby Turner, the last minister of the established church in Knutsford whose services were patronised by the Holland family before they became Dissenters.

Roe lost his father early and came to Macclesfield to be with his brother who was vicar there. He is first recorded in the silk button trade in the 1740s and he built a silk mill, so becoming a key figure in the industry for which the town is famous, but sensing a shift in the market around 1758 he turned to the business of smelting

copper at works on Macclesfield Common. His earliest supplies came from the ancient Alderley Edge mines nearby. The problems of transporting goods at that time were major and Roe instigated a campaign to build a canal running East to West from Macclesfield to join the River Weaver at Witton near Northwich, and thence to the Mersey and the Irish Sea. The route was to pass through Nether Knutsford at the foot of Adam's Hill (perilously close to Brook Street Chapel!). A public meeting was held at the George Hotel, King Street on 12th December 1765 and the scheme received enthusiastic support from the local business community.

The scheme failed however because of opposition from the Duke of Bridgewater whose business interests lay with supplying Josiah Wedgwood in the potteries with coal. He preferred a canal running North to South which was duly built. (The present Macclesfield canal was a Telford enterprise of the 1830s). Consequently, the following year Roe opened a smelting works in Liverpool under the managership of his son William (1746-1827) and eventually, as the Alderley supplies dwindled, the copper industry in Macclesfield was abandoned and is now only commemorated in street names. In the 1780s the company moved to a larger site on the banks of the Mersey in Toxteth, on land leased from Lord Sefton, but soon decided to transfer their operations to South Wales. This is the site that was acquired in 1800 by the Herculaneum Pottery Company.

Around 1763 Charles Roe acquired copper works in the Parys Mountains on Anglesey, which the company worked for over 20 years. They also mined at Penrhyn Dhu and the Llyn Peris near Llanberis on the Llyn peninsular, though neither was profitable. By 1811 Samuel Holland was also mining copper and lead in this area as well as quarrying slate. This industry was to be developed even more extensively by Samuel Holland junior who also had interests in the Festiniog Railway.

In 1779 William Roe was living in Duke Street, Liverpool where the Herculaneum Company later had its showrooms and where Samuel Holland junior was born in 1803; in later years he lived in Queen's Square and eventually returned to Macclesfield. He and his business partners were also ship owners. John Johnson, the manager of Roe's warehouse in Manesty's Lane, Cornhill, had a quarter share in the *Delamere* along with Michael Humble. This ship was to be burnt by the Russians in the Baltic in 1795. Roe, Johnson and another Macclesfield man Christopher Shaw sold a ship called the *Lucy* in 1795 to Thomas Losh of Whitehaven. John Chapple states that "the firm of Humble and Holland sent the potters Wedgwood and Byerley a neat little advertisement for their 'unexceptionable good vessel, copper bottomed and armed,' the fast-sailing *Lucy* which they intended should join the next convoy to the Mediterranean." I have not however proved that this is the same vessel. Holland's involvement in the shipping business was highly colourful. This was the time of the Napoleonic Wars, remember, and there is

evidence of a little privateering. There is obviously a lot more to be found out about him and I should be grateful for any more information.

### Further Reading

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## Visit to Liverpool

On 22 May members enjoyed a visit to Liverpool for its Gaskell associations with member Ann Jones as our guide. We started at Toxteth Old Chapel which has an interesting connection with Elizabeth Gaskell.

Richard Mather went to Liverpool as a young school master in 1611 and after completing his degree at Oxford was ordained in 1619, probably by the Bishop of Chester. The chapel at Toxteth was built for him though not consecrated as it was outside parochial boundaries. Mather was a controversial preacher and after being suspended for disobeying church law he sailed for Massachusetts in 1634. His grandson, Cotton Mather, who was involved in the Salem witch trials, supplied Elizabeth Gaskell with the pseudonym for her early work: Cotton Mather Mills, perhaps indicating an early fascination with this history which she later used in *Lois the witch*.

Toxteth Chapel continued to serve its dissenting congregation including Samuel Holland's family. One of our knowledgeable members spotted a memorial to Jeremiah Horrox, 1639, who was the first to recognise the transit of Venus across the sun, which was observed again this June.

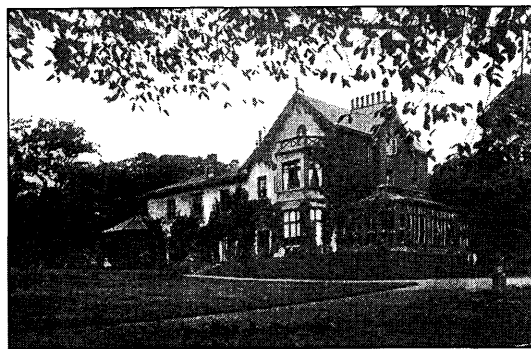
Our guide then took our coach through Liverpool to see the fine civic buildings, including the Law Courts and to Pier Head and The Albert Docks where Mary Barton



was rowed out to Will Wilson's ship to beg him to prove Jem's alibi. We can only speculate how Elizabeth gathered the details of Liverpool docks and tides and the ship *The John Cropper*. I spotted in Macclesfield Courier for Feb 10th, 1827 'By the *James Cropper* which arrived in Liverpool on Sunday we have received the New York papers to the 20th of Jan.' Perhaps the Liverpool Hollands were business colleagues of the Cropper family: James was a leading force in the abolition of the Slave Trade.

We crossed the Mersey by tunnel rather than boat to the Cheshire side where Elizabeth Gaskell had stayed with Aunt Lumb at Branden Street, Woodside in 1831 and some of her earliest letters were written from there. Though we did not identify this house we were able to visit Liscard where Charles Holland lived with Elizabeth Gaskell, William's sister and their nine children. Now known as Vale House it stands in pleasant grounds overlooking the Mersey and serves the community in many way such as lunch clubs, classes and playgroups. We were welcomed with freshly baked scones and tea and only regretted that the band was not performing at the rotunda in the garden.

Elizabeth would have been pleased to find the house so well used.



**Liscard Vale House**

## *Friends of Plymouth Grove: Update*

**Janet Allan**

The membership of the Friends is steadily growing, and in the last three months we have raised over £1750. Until the restoration starts the owners of the house, Manchester Historic Buildings Trust, have to find the money for running expenses, and we will be looking at ways to give us this essential core funding.

The capital cost of the restoration itself will be in the region of two million pounds, and the Trust is to apply to the Heritage Lottery Fund for about half of this. We already have £400,000 promised in matching funding, but will have to set up a major fund-raising programme to raise the balance.

### **Heritage Open Days, 11th and 12th September**

We hope that you will be able to pay us a visit when the house is open for Heritage Open Days on Saturday and Sunday, 11th and 12th September, from 10a.m.- 4p.m.

The house is in need of total refurbishment, as you will appreciate. You will be able to see its present condition and our plans for the future. There will be displays about its history, the restoration project, Elizabeth Gaskell and her family, short slide presentations about Plymouth Grove and the neighbourhood, and a bookstall. There will also be refreshments.

Please come if you can. There is very limited parking in front of the house, and access to the ground floor is by five steps. Our plans for the restoration include full disabled access.

## *American members aid to Plymouth Grove appeal*

A group of American Gaskell scholars and enthusiasts have banded together to make a collective contribution to the fund to renovate 84 Plymouth Grove. When a neighbour of Nancy Weyant's returned from a semester in London with a copy of the Guardian announcing the £2.2m restoration project for the property, Nancy made the decision to contribute the royalties from her latest annotated bibliography of Gaskell scholarship to the fund. She also contacted Janet Allan with the idea of spearheading an initiative to solicit contributions from American members of the Gaskell Society. Arrangements were made to have members send their contributions to Nancy who, in turn, will send a single check for the total amount to



Lucy Magruder, American secretary for the Society. Lucy will deposit the collective contribution in the Society's bank account. Nancy will report the names of the contributors to Janet Allan. The plan is to have the donation arrive in time to serve as a "Birthday Gift" for Elizabeth Gaskell. Contributions received by Nancy after September 1st, 2004 will likewise be forwarded to Lucy. All members are reminded that there is a form that individuals can use to make individual contributions. It is available on the Gaskell Web at:

[http://gaskellsociety.users.btopenworld.com/index\\_page0011.htm](http://gaskellsociety.users.btopenworld.com/index_page0011.htm)

## *The Oxford Visit 23-24 June 2004: A Personal View*

**Marie Moss.**

We drove down to Oxford in torrential rain as the weatherman forecast the deepest summer depression since D-Day was postponed, but the unremitting gloom brightened the minute we crossed Magdalen Bridge. Academics in colourful doctoral robes of scarlet, purple, green and blue were gathering for the University garden party, sheltering their mediaeval velvet caps and best-dressed wives under large golfing umbrellas. This was certainly very 'un-Manchester'. No wonder Elizabeth Gaskell loved it.

When Elizabeth visited Oxford in 1857 and 1860 the issue of allowing Fellows who were also Professors to marry was dividing the colleges. As we turned our car in Jowett Walk we recalled Gaskell's disappointment when the Balliol man was denied the privilege by a rather dodgy postal vote rigged by Dr. Pusey, to outwit Elizabeth's Cheshire neighbour and rising Oxford star, Arthur Stanley. 'Now Mr. Jowett would like to marry, this is well known to his friends, not anybody in particular, but to have a home, for he is a very affectionate man,' Gaskell reported to Charles Eliot Norton, indulging her motherly concern and detailing the internal politics she so relished being in the thick of.

The hosts for our visit, organized by the Gaskell Society South West, were Harris-Manchester College, but for the most part our group was to be housed in the newly built University Club, a building of glass and steel at the cutting edge of technology. First impressions suggested that it was a building without a door, but once we had been trained to perform a sequence of button-pushing and card-swiping manoeuvres, access to our rooms was achieved. Here we found walls and bed linen of such startling whiteness that only a single black chair defined the space and encouraged entry. We hurried down the street to take tea in the more familiarly comfortable surroundings of Manchester College's Victorian Gothic.

Rosemary Marshall welcomed the assembled group and Gwen Clarke reminded us of the pleasures Elizabeth had packed into her short visits to the city and of the many friends she had there ('dinner at Queens, Ch. Ch. Balliol etc etc, & breakfasts & lunches every-where'). Her activities were too numerous for us to duplicate but more than sufficient to provide an enjoyable selection for our programme. After tea we climbed the broad stone staircase to the splendid college library where the collection has constantly been enriched by acquisitions from other libraries, as institutions for theological training have gradually reduced in number. The computerized catalogue system partly obscured the grandly-seated figure of James Martineau, but behind his restful pose the large Warrington window clearly defined the features and familiar names of that famous academy, Priestley, Turner, Dalton, Aikin, Barnes, Barbauld *et al.*, lighting the room with glorious stained glass. The librarian, Sue Killoran, had forsaken the University garden party to tell us something of the library's history and contents, and to our delight had laid out for inspection some manuscripts from the Robberds' Collection. These included a letter from Elizabeth written in characteristic haste to her old friend, Mary Robberds, in 1861, touching on the subject of the education of pauper children. (reproduced in *Further Letters*, p. 225). The Principal of Harris-Manchester, the Rev. Ralph Waller, returned from the sodden lawns of Magdalen in time to greet us as we came down from the library and he drew our attention to the exceptionally fine Chapel windows designed by Burne-Jones and executed by W. Morris & Co. Much less enigmatic than the PRB decoration of the Oxford Union where Gaskell found herself 'trying to understand the meaning of the paintings, - and in a little measure understanding'.

After cocktails (Pimms actually) and a leisurely dinner in Hall, our group of twenty or so retired to the Senior Common Room, not for dessert and port, but for entertainment in Gaskell Society tradition. Cynthia Baron, a S.W. member now living in Cheltenham, made us laugh with a Lancashire accented rendering of the Battle of Hastings. This monologue is not from the oeuvre of Manchester working class poets admired and encouraged by William Gaskell, but they would certainly have enjoyed it in the Poet's Corner of the Sun Inn as much as we did. Afterwards Caroline Jackson-Houlston, senior lecturer in English Literature at Oxford Brookes University, directed our thoughts to the pathos and serious purpose which lie close to the surface of Gaskell's light comic writing in Cranford.

Next morning breakfast was served in a first floor 'long room' of the University Club, with windows wide open on to balconies overlooking New College cricket ground. The sun was shining, the sky was blue and the breakfast menu was to die for. Elizabeth remembered breakfast at Arthur Stanley's as the highlight of her first visit to Oxford and my husband felt that 'full English' with black pudding gave promise of being the most memorable of his. A visit to New College was planned for the morning. If not from 'kitchen, cellar and buttery to the muniment chambers', then as

much as we could see. Our visit was expected, but the College had overlooked the fact that they were officially closed to visitors to allow preparation for a Ball. All was resolved; we were allowed to creep around at will, so long as we kept clear of the hectic activity and most importantly avoided personal injury. So warned, our discreet party strode over kilometres of cable which encircled the quads, circumvented mammoth marquees which covered the lawns, crept stealthily behind staging large enough to host The Three Tenors and a full orchestra, and dodged countless cases of champagne being chain-ganged from pallet to party. A recording was taking place in the Chapel, so even here we negotiated several tons of technology to admire the glass and carving, while a puzzled soprano attempted to run through her scales. Doubly puzzled because Gwen, thinking her of our number had signalled to her to be quiet! In the kitchens we found the warm welcome which Gaskell's celebrity called forth. The characterful head chef celebrated our interest and conducted us with exhaustive commentary around his historic domaine, as the aromatic smell of herb-roasted peppers and steam from the bain-marie rose above our heads to escape through the lofty mediaeval ceilings.

There was time by late morning for a long restful lunch taken at the Turf Tavern (of Morse fame) or by the more bookish at Blackwell's. The Tavern quickly filled up with students wearing their examination 'sub-fusc', i.e. boys with white winged collars and white bow-ties, the girls (and how Gaskell would have approved of them) with black ties, carrying their mortar-boards. Two such came tethered together with ribbons supporting balloons announcing 'Engagement'. With a coterie of followers they raised their glasses to the end of 'finals' and the start of their future together.

An extended tour of the Bodleian was our agenda for the afternoon and we duly met our guides under the magnificent fifteenth-century vaulted ceiling of the Divinity School. This was built as the University's first examination school and oral examinations continued here until the nineteenth century. One of our group surprised the guide by telling him that she sat 'Schools' in this hall in the 1940s when wartime emergencies pressed the Bodleian and its underground storage areas into a variety of uses. The thrilling upper storey, with its galleried shelving and deep hush of scholarship, was added to accommodate Duke Humfrey's Library. Only three of these original volumes still survive in the collection, which later flourished because of the energy and talent of Sir Thomas Bodley (born 1544). Bodley was a man who shared with Gaskell the capacity of 'stirring up other men's benevolence', achieving much by networking his friends in academia and public life. There was opportunity to visit the Radcliffe Camera where Elizabeth was rushed up to the roof for the 'splendid view of towers and pinnacles' and to pop into the University church of St. Mary's, where she confessed 'I extremely liked the sermon - I a sermon hater'. The subject was 'faith and good works'.

That evening we had tickets for The Oxford Playhouse, and after a day spent in Gaskell footsteps it was impossible not to be aware of the parallels between the plot of Shaw's *Candida*, and life at Plymouth Grove. The Reverend James Mavor Morell, popular Christian Socialist clergyman, ever in demand for sermons and lectures to working men's clubs, is adored by young spinsters who hang on his every word, (Winkworths?), and cared for by his self-sacrificing wife, Candida, on whom falls the full burden of home and family. A sacrifice resented by the sensitive young poet she has befriended (Charles Eliot Norton perhaps?), who must do the honourable thing; suppress his affection and distance himself from her!

We had left the University Club, which had multiple TV screens, filling up for the England v. Portugal vital quarter-final. When we returned from the theatre it was overflowing with excited fans re-charging their glasses for extra time. Had England succeeded in the penalty shoot-out, like Gaskell we too might have danced until four in the morning, but it was not to be. The crowds of Oxford youth dispersed disconsolately, silence descended, sleep was possible and there was another fine breakfast to look forward to (No wonder 'Oxford' serves as an adjective to marmalade!).

Grateful thanks are due to Rosemary Marshall, Gwen Clarke and the S.W. team and to all who made our Oxford visit such a pleasure. Elizabeth Gaskell wrote to Edward Hale 'I like the society in Paris very best of all; and then Oxford'. I find if you travel with The Gaskell Society the best is always with you.



Members of the South West group in the Hall at St. John's college

# Visit to Worcester and Stratford-upon-Avon

5th - 8th July 2004

Janet Kennerley

The sun was out to greet us as over thirty members set out by coach from the usual Macclesfield and Knutsford locations and we soon seemed to arrive at Hanbury Hall, near Worcester, for our first interesting visit of the day.

Hanbury Hall and Gardens, now in the care of The National Trust, was completed in 1701, and is a beautiful example of an English gentleman's country home, containing the Watney collection of fine porcelain and Dutch flower paintings. We all enjoyed the stunning reconstructed formal gardens set in delightful parkland, in perfect weather. Some members took advantage of the Batricar from the visitor-reception up to the forecourt of the house while others took quite energetic walks to the orangery, mushroom house and 'snobs tunnel' in the grounds, but everyone felt we had made an excellent start to our short holiday. It was one of the stops not directly linked to Elizabeth Gaskell, as far as we are aware at present, but she would certainly have known it existed and may have deliberately used the name of Hanbury in 'My Lady Ludlow'.

Our next visit of the afternoon was to Boughton House, near Worcester, where Elizabeth Gaskell stayed with the Isaac family, and from where she wrote important letters relating to *The Life of Charlotte Brontë*. Edward (1806-75), son of Swinton Colthurst Holland, married Sophia Isaac of Boughton (1813-51) in 1832. Their son Thurstan married Marianne Gaskell. Sophia's brother, John Isaac, married Edward Holland's sister, Charlotte. The property is now the Clubhouse to the Worcester Golf Club, and we received a warm welcome. We were most fortunate that the previous Club Secretary had just vacated the rooms upstairs which meant that we were able to view much more of the property than expected. We wondered which rooms Mrs. Gaskell had occupied. I felt that she had probably enjoyed the lovely views across to the Malvern Hills, as she wrote her correspondence to her publisher, George Smith, for example, during July and August of 1856. In June 1854, she wrote to Marianne: 'the Isaacs (want me to go) to Boughton but home I must be by the end of next week' - just like us in fact! As we enjoyed a very welcome cuppa in the Clubhouse lounge, two portraits of the parents of Sophia and John looked down upon us and how I wished they could talk!

We arrived at our accommodation for the next three nights - the Bank House Hotel, Bransford, near Worcester (four members who had travelled independently joined us here) - in good time to settle in and freshen up for dinner, which was followed by a very lively talk by Laura Kranzler. Her enthusiasm for 'Gothic Tales and ECG' kept most of us awake for the rest of the evening!

On Tuesday morning, the sun was shining brilliantly again as we set out for Shottery, to visit Anne Hathaway's Cottage. Members enjoyed the delightful garden here also, and thought of Mrs. Gaskell's stay with her Worcestershire cousins during the spring of 1849. It is said that she sank back into the cushioned existence of the 'very pretty, really old-fashioned cottage' at Shottery as yet unidentified, which could have been the home of her cousin Catherine (sister of Charles Holland) and her husband Richard Greaves.

We moved on to Clopton House for a short stroll to view this old house (now turned into luxury apartments), the subject of Elizabeth Gaskell's first prose publication. Some of our members did get a brief glimpse of the much older black and white wing to the rear of the property, but not before seeing quite a lot of the brown and white parts of a gentleman sunbathing nearby! Unfortunately the Chairman of the Residents' Committee who had agreed to show us round was not at home, but another neighbour kindly helped out. She showed us through the main entrance where we saw 'the wide shelving oak staircase', and then into a very pretty inner courtyard to view the chapel window (both mentioned by Gaskell). This location provided an ideal spot for a group photo!

Our next destination on this hot afternoon was Stratford-upon-Avon where we were at liberty to visit Shakespeare's Birthplace, Hall's Croft, Nash's House and New Place Garden (where Shakespeare's mulberry tree grows, from which a scion was planted in Brook Street Chapel's graveyard in Knutsford). Several people ventured as far as the Holy Trinity Church and adjoining Avonbank Gardens, the site of Avonbank School, now demolished, which was run by the Byerley sisters from 1824, after the move from Barford.

In spite of a weather forecast to the contrary, Wednesday was cooler but still a very pleasant fine day for the short journey from our hotel to The Elgar Birthplace Museum. The country cottage where Edward Elgar was born in 1857 still has a very simple, rural feel to it, while the modern Elgar Centre opened in 2000 provides a superb display area and modern facilities. Everyone seemed to enjoy this fascinating insight into the life, music, family and friends of one of England's greatest composers, and we looked ahead to the day when Plymouth Grove will be open to visitors in a similar way! Special arrangements had been made for us to view letters written in a very fussy style from Meta Gaskell to the wife of Edward Elgar containing details of an anticipated visit to Plymouth Grove in 1902, which after all had to be cancelled! It is hoped that further research into the diary kept by the Elgars can be done to ascertain whether later arrangements were made. We wondered if Meta's 'troublesomeness' might have put them off the idea! After coffee, we had a short drive through the pretty village of Powick, and spotted the stone gateposts of 'Powyck Court' - all that now remains of the residence once

occupied by a son of Edward Holland. We enjoyed free time in Malvern to visit the Priory Church with its fine windows, excellent collection of medieval tiles and the sixteenth-century tomb of Sir John Knutsford and his wife, which Knutsford historian, Joan, particularly wanted to examine (Ed: I have since our visit directed the Nutsford family from N.Z. to see it).

The last visit of the day was to Dumbleton Hall, former home of Edward Holland. Set in the beautiful Worcestershire countryside, this impressive mansion is now a superb hotel, with magnificent oak-panelled lounge and views over several acres of gardens and woodlands. Rebuilt in the mid-nineteenth century using Cotswold stone, the Hall was home to Edward's fourteen children, including Thurstan, who became the husband of Marianne Gaskell only after a very long engagement following her mother's sudden death in 1865. On Edward's death in 1875 it had to be sold, but I couldn't help thinking of Marianne's visits to Dumbleton and what a change of scenery from her own home in Plymouth Grove in Manchester. We enjoyed tea in the Hall before a brief visit to the local church where we found various family graves, including some of the Wedgwood family who were cousins residing at the Rectory. Wednesday had been my favourite day so far, rounded off with another enjoyable dinner, concluding with the appearance of a candle-lit cake for Joan as we all sang 'Happy Birthday'. After blowing out her candles (we didn't count how many!), Joan kindly produced a video for us to watch of Ken Russell's black-and-white version of the life story of Elgar, as first shown by the BBC about thirty years ago - a pleasant and fitting end to a perfect day.

Thursday was the final day of our trip, but the drizzle did not dampen our spirits as we left the hotel to visit a superb fifteenth-century cruck-beamed tithe barn at nearby Leigh which is the largest surviving agricultural building of its type in the country. We all thought it was worthy of a stop, being the nearest place of historical and architectural interest before moving on to Worcester. Here we had an opportunity to visit the Cathedral (where sharp-eyed members noticed a memorial to some of the Isaacs family of Boughton who died in the First World War), the Commandery, the Royal Worcester factory, museum and shopping complex, and the lovely National Trust property of Greyfriars. Lynda Stephens and I wandered through the town as far as the Guildhall, a superb building of 1721-3, and wished we had dined in the Assembly Room there which is one of the most beautifully decorated Italianate rooms in the country.

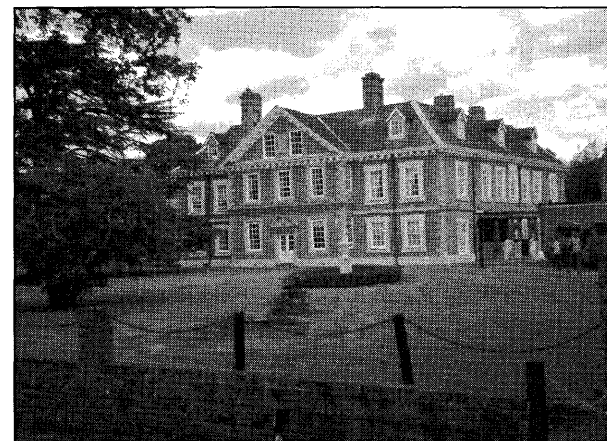
By this time, the rain had cleared up and we were later able to enjoy a walk in Barford, where the young Elizabeth Stevenson went to the school run by the Byerley sisters before it moved to Stratford. Unfortunately, Barford House is looking rather dilapidated these days, but as building work is about to take place to convert it to apartments, we were asked to view from the outside at the front only. We wandered

back to St. Peter's Church where we were met by the vicar and churchwarden. Elizabeth would have been taken to this church as a young schoolgirl, but we heard that although the tower had remained unaltered, she probably would not have recognised the interior, which had been altered during the mid-nineteenth century. In 1820, Katharine Byerley gave up teaching when she married William Stevenson's friend and new brother-in-law, Anthony Todd Thomson, who was also the doctor who had been present at Elizabeth's birth! This wedding took place at Barford Church.

Sadly, it was soon time to begin our journey home, but not before a final delicious tea with scones - and some people had several - at the De Mountford Hotel in Kenilworth. We had a splendid view of Kenilworth Castle before joining the new toll section of the motorway. I thought of the contrast between our comfortable return trip in a modern coach, using our mobile phones to let our families know of our progress, and those travels of Elizabeth Gaskell as she went at a much more sedate pace to all the places of such interest to us in the Gaskell Society nowadays!

Many thanks indeed to Jean and Hugh for their meticulous preparation for this trip, to Joan for all she does behind the scenes to keep us informed of interesting and relevant points, to Christine Lingard for her research into fascinating links with other authors, and to Barry, our driver, for his skill and courtesy.

**Editor's note:** Elizabeth Gaskell was an enthusiastic tourist with Meta: '... we have done Warwick and Kenilworth Castles; first walking[,] 2nd in the carriage'. I intend to read Sir Walter Scott's *Kenilworth* which got her 'in a scrape' as Mrs. J. J. Tayler was 'shocked at such a subject of conversation on a *Sunday*' with the Sunday School girls. (*Letters*, no.32)



## Book Notes

Christine Lingard

*Anny: a life of Anne Thackeray Ritchie* by Henrietta Garnett; Chatto & Windus, £18.99.

A new biography of William Makepeace Thackeray's daughter Anne Isabella Ritchie; an author in her own right and a link between the age of Dickens and the London of the Bloomsbury group. Her sister married Leslie Stephen, who by his second wife was the father of Virginia Woolf. Anny was still regarded as part of the family and was an honorary aunt to the future novelist. Her connections are fascinating and included no less than Meta and Julia Gaskell and she was entertained in style at Plymouth Grove with a lunch of pheasant jelly, Apollinaris water and champagne. The book is illustrated with line drawings from the diaries of Anny, her father and sister Minny. The author, herself a great-niece of Virginia Woolf, has been able to draw on a lot of new material.

*A house to let* by Charles Dickens; Hesperus Classics £6.99. This is in fact a compilation volume originally published in 1858 which includes chapters by Wilkie Collins and Elizabeth Gaskell's *Manchester Marriage*. It is a rare opportunity to read one of her stories in its original context.

*The idea of music in Victorian fiction* by Nicky Losseff (University of York) and Sophie Fuller (University of Reading); Ashgate £47.50.

Due in July, this is a series of eleven essays by various authors. It includes a chapter entitled 'The voice, soul and poverty in *Thyrza* (Gissing) *Mary Barton*, *Alton Locke* (Kingsley) and *A Child of the Jago* (Arthur Morrison)'. Nicky Losseff discusses the character and function of Margaret.

### **An Elizabeth Gaskell Chronology**

**by Graham Handley is to be published in November**

Pre-publication endorsements:

'Dr. Handley has provided an invaluable chronology for all devotees of Elizabeth Gaskell. This essential volume facilitates our understanding of individual works in terms both of her total literary output and of relevant contemporaneous cultural, social and political events. It richly enhances our appreciation of the diverse sources and resources which went into the making of a delightful correspondent, a gifted biographer and an author of memorable novels and tales.' - J. G. Sharps, author of *Mrs. Gaskell: Observations and Invention*.

'This chronology of the daily course of Elizabeth Gaskell's life illustrates to the full the remarkable range of her interests and activities. The absorbing detail of a crowded and fascinating life is revealed for us by Graham Handley's work.' - Alan Shelston, Gaskell scholar and co-editor of *The Further Letters of Mrs. Gaskell*.

Hardback 138mm x 216mm November 2004 1403902135

288 Pages •\$55.00 (\$80.00) ISBN 1-4039-0213-5

URL: <http://www.palgrave.com/products/Catalogue.aspx?is=1403902135>

## *Victorian Literary Quiz Book*

We have had a book sent to us for review, entitled *Victorian Literary Trivia* - 640 Questions and Quotations from Jane Austen to Oscar Wilde, compiled by Kelley A Dickenson. This obviously includes Elizabeth Gaskell, and most of us should have no problems with questions such as "Who was married to a Unitarian minister?" or "What was the name of Molly's stepmother in *Wives and Daughters*?" On the other hand, do you know which author was arrested for participating in a traditional snowball fight, or whose mother submitted her teenager's stories to a magazine without his or her knowledge? I didn't, but if you know the answers to those, you'll probably find the questions in this book generally too easy. The fifteen authors referred to in the questions are helpfully listed at the front, along with their works, and none are particularly obscure, although I offer my congratulations to anyone who can remember all the details of every book they read. Can you remember (instantly) who the perpetual curate of Hoggstock was?

The questions seem to be a balance of the familiar, the "Oh dear, I should know that", and the more obscure. If you were entertaining guests with an interest in Victorian Literature or going on a very long plane journey it could be useful, but at £9.75 it seems quite expensive. Anyone who is interested should contact Kelley A. Dickenson at 425 Lakeshore Drive, Madison, MS 39110, USA, or by Email at [Kelley@victorianliterarytrivia.com](mailto:Kelley@victorianliterarytrivia.com). And by the way, it was Robert Louis Stevenson who threw the snowballs, and Rudyard Kipling who sent off his stories to a newspaper.

**Elizabeth Williams**

## *Autumn Meeting*

25th September at Knutsford, St. John's Church room, 2.30pm

The theme will be the editions of Gaskell's works and the role of editors.

Professor John Chapple will consider the 1906 Knutsford edition, the first complete edition, and its editor A.A.Ward.

Professor Angus Easson, as advisory editor and Dr. Josie Billington, as editor of *Wives and Daughters* will talk about their work for the Chatto and Pickering Edition, due to appear in 2005 and 2006.

After a cream tea it is hoped that members will walk down to Brook Street Chapel for the dedication of the plaque at the mulberry tree and to lay flowers on the Gaskell grave.

## *North West Programme*

Monthly meetings at St. John's Church Rooms, Knutsford will be on Oct 27th, Nov 24th, Jan 26th, Feb 23rd, March 6th and April 27th. Buffet lunch is at 12.15 finish about 3.00pm.

This season we will be studying *Wives and Daughters*. At the first Meeting on October 27th Christine Lingard will talk about scientists in the novel and Joan Leach about the local background.

The New Year Lunch will be on Wednesday 12th Jan. Further details later.

## *Meetings at Cross Street Chapel, Manchester*

All are welcome to these monthly meetings at 1.00pm on Tuesdays. You may like to come earlier to have a sandwich lunch, perhaps from nearby Pret-a-Manger.

### OCTOBER 12th

This meeting will commence with a short memorial tribute to Brian Hechle.

Speaker: Robin Allan on **The Theatre in 19th Century Manchester**.

### NOVEMBER 9th

**Art in 19th Century Manchester** with Sheila Dewsbury, author of the history of the Manchester Academy of Fine Art, and Gaskell Society chairman, Janet Allan with slides.

### DECEMBER 7th

Speaker: Terry Wyke, senior lecturer in social and economic history at MMU: **Mrs. Gaskell's Manchester Men**.

Followed by a short service of traditional carols after a sherry and mince pie.

### FEBRUARY 8th

Speaker: David George, MMU lecturer in Industrial History (retired).

An illustrated lecture on **The industrial background to Elizabeth Gaskell's Manchester novels**.

### MARCH 8th

Speaker: Dr. Julie-Marie Strange on **Popular religion, class and ethnicity** in Manchester. Dr. Strange is a lecturer in Manchester University Department of History.

### APRIL 9th

A.G.M.

## *The Gaskell Society South-West*

Saturday November 20th, 2.00 p.m. for 2.30

"Elizabeth Gaskell's Manchester" - Janet Allan, Chairman of the Gaskell Society. This should be of great interest both to those who believe that civilisation stops at Watford, to ex-pats nostalgic for their northern roots and of course to students of 19th century history.

Bath Royal Literary and Scientific Institution, 16 Queen Square, Bath.

Rosemary Marshall, 138 Fairfield Park Road, Bath BA1 6JT.

Tel: 01225 426732 Email: [rosemary\\_marshall@yahoo.com](mailto:rosemary_marshall@yahoo.com)

## *The London and South-East Group*

Saturday 11th September: Editing Brontë Letters by: Margaret M Smith

Saturday 13th November: Gaskell's Eternal Woman by Howard Gregg

For further details contact: Frances Twinn, 85, Calton Avenue London SE21 7DF

Tel: 020 8693 3238 Email: [Frantwinn@aflex.net](mailto:Frantwinn@aflex.net)

## *Inaugural Scottish Meeting*

A seminar for Gaskell society members is planned for Friday 26th November with an afternoon and evening talk.

This will be followed by a Saturday morning meeting after which members are invited to join The Carlyle Society AGM and pre-Christmas party.

The seminar will take place in the Centre for Lifelong Learning at 11 Buccleuch Place, Edinburgh.

Accommodation can be arranged in a number of B&B houses within walking distance.

The conference fee and all the details will be available soon. Please send an S.A.E. to one of the addresses below if you are interested:

Mrs. H. James, Wind Rose Cottage, Barbour Road, Kilcreggan, Argyll & Bute, G84 0LB or Mrs. M. Sutherland, 7 Lennel Avenue, Edinburgh, EH12 6DW.

## *The Visual Life of Elizabeth Gaskell*

The Visual Life of Elizabeth Gaskell by Tat Ohno (vers. 2) is now available at the following site. The film is 56-minute long (still developing), and divided into six parts from VLEG2\_1 to VLEG2\_6. Two editions (low and high) are ready, so choose the appropriate one for your computer. Some Gaskell Society members including Joan briefly appear in the film. I sincerely hope they don't mind it! To view the film, you may need a free copy of Real Player 10 (<http://www.real.com/?lang=en&loc=us>).

[http://dist.dc.kumamoto-u.ac.jp/campus/kouza.php?next\\_KamokuTantouCD=69](http://dist.dc.kumamoto-u.ac.jp/campus/kouza.php?next_KamokuTantouCD=69)



## A black and white sketch of the Gaskell House, a two-story building with a prominent entrance and bare trees in the background. The sketch is done in a simple, expressive style with visible lines and shading. The building has a central entrance with a small porch and several windows. Bare trees are sketched around the building, and the foreground shows a path or road. The entire sketch is enclosed in a rectangular border.



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## Editor's Letter

Joan Leach

This will be a memorable year for us and we hope many of you will join us at our Manchester Conference, hosted jointly with Manchester Metropolitan University, from 19th to 21st July. The programme offers a wide variety of papers from speakers homing in from all parts of the globe, and special events, including guided walks and dinner at Manchester's Victorian Town Hall: the architect, Alfred Waterhouse, also designed the Natural History Museum and Knutsford's market hall. You can find details of the conference on the internet, at [www.mcrh.mmu.ac.uk/gaskell](http://www.mcrh.mmu.ac.uk/gaskell).

The long anticipated BBC TV production of *North and South* aroused mixed feelings in member viewers and others, as you will see from Elizabeth Williams' collected reviews and comments. It has encouraged readers to go back to the book and, I am told, stimulated a revival of cravats as a fashion item!

The BBC's next project will be a great contrast and will show Elizabeth Gaskell's talents as a humorist. It is to be called *CRANFORD CHRONICLES*, because it is an amalgam of three Gaskell works: *Cranford*, *Mr Harrison's Confessions* and *My Lady Ludlow*, though *Cranford* was the starting point and is at the heart of it. The three books have been closely interwoven, so all the major and minor stories are threaded together for a four-part series. Expect some surprises!

It is the result of three years' enthusiasm and work by Susie Conklin and Sue Birtwistle, who worked together on *Wives and Daughters* and *Pride and Prejudice*. Sue Birtwistle will produce it, and the script is written by Heidi Thomas. Jenny Uglow has acted as consultant throughout. It is hoped that filming will start in a few months' time.

There are two recent publications by Gaskell members to be noted: Dr. Graham Handley's *Elizabeth Gaskell Chronology* (Palgrave) will be much appreciated by students of Elizabeth Gaskell's life and works. It not only summarises the letters succinctly but collates them with her life and contemporary literary events. Graham has done us the honour of dedicating his work to Frances Twinn, our London and S.E. group secretary, and The Gaskell Society.

Alan Shelston's Norton edition of *North and South* has plenty of extra material to answer any questions you might have after watching the TV version or re-reading the book, and is a most attractive paper back. Both will be reviewed elsewhere.

We are looking forward to a trip to the Lake District, staying at Grasmere, from 2nd to 5th May 2005, following the literary trail of the Gaskells, Wordsworth, Harriet

Martineau and others.

You receive notice of all our major events in the Newsletter and can also check on the home page: <http://gaskellsociety.users.btopenworld.com> but there are times when we may want to arrange an extra visit or tell you about an event in the North West. There are many members who are not able to participate in such events for various reasons, so to save expense on postage we will create a North-West mailing list. Please will you fill in and return the form enclosed with this Newsletter, or sign up at a meeting.

## *Scientists in Wives And Daughters*

Christine Lingard

In *Wives & Daughters* Gaskell created the character of Roger Hamley, younger of the two sons of a country squire, and recently graduated from Trinity College, Cambridge. He shows a fascination with natural history, never happier than when walking alone or making scrupulous records of the specimens he has gathered, and during the course of the book he undertakes a journey to Africa to collect specimens for a museum.

There is no doubt that Gaskell had Darwin in mind when she sent Roger on his voyage of discovery. She says so in a letter to her publisher in 1864, outlining the plot of her proposed novel. Initially she had planned to send him round the world too, but modified her plot, sending him to Abyssinia and the Cape. But the character is more complex and it is evident that there are other sources for her inspiration.

Gaskell described Darwin as her cousin. This is not strictly the case. He was a cousin of some of her Holland cousins who were descended from Rev. William Willett, husband of Josiah Wedgwood's sister Catherine. Darwin was the grandson of Wedgwood. Gaskell's cousin, Edward Holland of Dumbleton Hall, in particular was a friend of the Darwins and there are several references to this branch of the family in Darwin's correspondence. But there is only one recorded meeting between Gaskell and Darwin - at a party for the birthday of Julia 'Snow' Wedgwood.

But it is claimed that the character of Roger Hamley emerged during a visit she made to Manor Place, Edinburgh early in 1864. Her host was George Allman (1812-1898), Professor of Natural Philosophy at the University. Allman, an Irishman born in Cork, married in 1851 Emily, sister of the Gaskells' solicitor William Shaen, the man charged with clearing up the mess caused by the publication of *The Life of Charlotte Brontë*. Shaen in turn was married to one of the Winkworth sisters. Gaskell described Allman as an old friend, having known him since his marriage:

[he] is the most charmingly wise and simple man I ever met with. I mean he is full of deep thought & wisdom & knowledge and also like a child for unselfconsciousness, and sweet humility ... They have no children; but their happiness seems perfect, even without. (*Letters*, No. 546)

Allman was a prolific writer of scientific papers if not books. His speciality was marine biology - in particular gymnoblastic hydrozoa (jellyfish). All his works were meticulously illustrated and are believed to have had an influence on Thomas Huxley. They remained standard for many years. He was also actively involved with setting up the Edinburgh Natural History Museum. Being totally absorbed in his work, he appears to have had few outside interests, rarely travelled and hardly fits the bill as the dashing romantic hero of fiction: but Gaskell would have been able to observe his method of working at first hand, as she could not with Darwin.

Both these men were experienced scientists with well-established reputations. She did not know either of them as students, so I should like to offer another suggestion for a model. Marianne Gaskell had a long-standing affection for her second cousin Thurstan but his parents opposed marriage, not because of consanguinity but on financial grounds. His father Edward Holland had twelve children to divide his fortune between and Thurstan would have to earn his living. In her disappointment in 1861, Marianne left to spend the winter in Rome, where to her parents' dismay she came under the influence of Cardinal Manning. Whether their prejudice was as strong as Squire Hamley's - he 'held all Roman Catholics in dread and abomination something akin to our ancestors' hatred of witchcraft' - is a subject for debate. Marianne made the return journey via Dumbleton where she renewed her acquaintance with Thurstan. While on a family visit to London that summer Thurstan's younger brother Fred took lodgings nearby and helped to make 'plans'. After a trip to Eton and the boat races when they tried to watch fireworks over the river in the rain Marianne and Thurstan were as good as engaged. A huge family row ensued.

In the previous year Gaskell had secured for Fred a post as curate at St Andrew's, Ancoats, one of the poorest areas of Manchester. In a letter to her cousin Effie Wedgwood in December 1862 (quoted by Jenny Uglow), Meta Gaskell, after expressing her distress at the rift, says of Fred: 'I am so full of the Dumbletonians and Fred - He is much the best and agreeable too!'

Frederick Whitmore Holland graduated from none other than Trinity College, Cambridge, in 1861 (Thurstan had studied law at the same place but unlike that other son of a country squire - Cynthia Kirkpatrick's Mr Henderson who only played at being a barrister, Thurstan had to do the job of barrister in earnest). Fred was ordained the same year and spent the next four years in Manchester - a period

when Meta suffered a good deal of ill health and depression, but kept busy ministering to the poor during the cotton famine.

Some time in 1861, as well as graduating and taking up his post, Fred managed to fit in a trip to Sinai. This isn't as lengthy an undertaking as it sounds. The Suez Canal had been opened in 1860 expressly to take steamships to Australia, so this area was becoming more frequently visited. According to the diary of a Macclesfield lady, Marianne Brocklehurst, the steamship from Brindisi to Egypt in 1873 took only four days.

Not very much is known about Holland's first trip - who accompanied him or who financed it - but in 1865 he was there again. This is the year that *Wives and Daughters* was being serialised in the *Cornhill Magazine*. Geoffrey Sharps quotes Marianne as saying that her mother did not have a firm plot when she started but the story developed as she wrote. Fred arrived in Suez in February. One can only speculate on how long the trip was in the planning. This time there are some accounts of his activities. He visited the ancient Egyptian turquoise mines at Wady Mughara and left his companions, to wander solitarily in the desert finding archaeological relics, copying hieroglyphics and surveying mountains.

In 1866 he was part of an officially-sponsored expedition to chart the area. Fred's trips were all of a geographical or archaeological nature but requiring detailed recording of data with all the precision of the scientist. He gained a bit of a reputation in geographical circles. On his return to England in 1865 he became Vicar of All Saints', Evesham, not far from Dumbleton, and in his final years was headmaster of Evesham Grammar School. His adventuring spirit continued to the end. He died at the relatively early age of 41 from heart disease, while on a mountain in Switzerland.

There may be nothing more to this than a mother's ambitions for her daughter. We will probably never know the truth but I think you will find there are a lot of characters in *Wives and Daughters* who may be drawn from life, so why not?

Chapple, J.A.V. & Pollard, Arthur, eds, *The Letters of Mrs Gaskell* (Manchester University Press, 1997 reprint).

Papers of the Royal Geographic Society, April 23 1866.

Sharps, John Geoffrey, *Mrs Gaskell's Observation & Invention* (Linden Press, 1970).

Uglow, Jenny, *Elizabeth Gaskell. A Habit of Stories* (Faber & Faber, 1963)

## Elizabeth Gaskell and Dickens in All the Year Round

Deborah Wynne

Alan Shelston's interesting discussion in the last Newsletter, outlining the relationship between Gaskell and Dickens during the period when *North and South* was serialised in *Household Words*, prompts me to add a few comments about the development of this relationship when Dickens became editor of *All The Year Round*. Alan Shelston indicates that Gaskell may have felt pressurised to make changes to *North and South* to suit Dickens's requirements, while on the other hand Dickens considered Gaskell to be intractable and unaware of the demands of weekly serialisation. However, despite these tensions, the 'back-to-back' serialisation of two important 'social problem' novels in the pages of *Household Words* constitutes one of the most significant moments in Victorian publishing history. What is less well-known, however, is that this 'double act' was resumed in 1859 when Dickens established his new weekly magazine, *All The Year Round*.

Dickens inaugurated his new magazine with the serialisation of *A Tale of Two Cities* and he chose a three-part short story by Gaskell, *Lois the Witch*, to run with the novel's climactic later instalments between 8th and 22nd October 1859. In many ways *Lois* and *A Tale* were as well-matched thematically as were *North and South* and *Hard Times*. Dickens's historical novel depicts the violent events of the French Revolution of 1789, while *Lois the Witch* is based on the Salem witch trials of the 1690s. Gaskell's gloomy yet powerful novella, in which the teenage heroine is executed as a witch, was positioned by Dickens alongside those instalments of *A Tale of Two Cities* which depict Darnay on trial in France and the dramatic discovery of Dr. Manette's 'forgotten' letter. The effects of this pairing of *A Tale* and *Lois* must have been particularly exciting for readers of *All the Year Round* who were able to turn immediately from Dickens's representation of history to Gaskell's equally powerful rendering of the past.

The story of the serialisation of *A Tale* and *Lois* has a further twist, however, for the ending of Gaskell's narrative, which depicts the innocent, condemned Lois comforting her fellow prisoner, Nattee, the Native American servant, as they are both led to the gallows is a foreshadowing of Sydney Carton's attempt to comfort the French seamstress as they make their final journey to the guillotine at the end of Dickens's novel. This scene in *A Tale of Two Cities* appeared a few weeks after *Lois* had completed its serialisation. It is feasible that Dickens, having read Gaskell's moving account of Lois's execution, was inspired to borrow the detail of the main protagonist comforting a weaker companion for his own famous scene. Although

readers of *All The Year Round* were treated to two dramatic executions within the space of four weeks, few would have been aware that Gaskell was the author of *Lois the Witch*, for Dickens imposed a policy of anonymity on his contributors while retaining the right to sign his own contributions. Indeed, it may have been Dickens's insistence on Gaskell's anonymity that led her to arrange for her next serialised novel, *Wives and Daughters*, to be published in *The Cornhill*, where her name was prominently displayed.

## Book Notes

Christine Lingard

The year 2005 should prove to be an important one in Gaskell scholarship with the publication in the summer of the first volumes of new Pickering & Chatto edition of the complete works of Gaskell - a prestigious and scholarly project which will introduce a number of unfamiliar works of Gaskell as well as new readings of the text and new editing. More in future journals and newsletters.

*Elizabeth Gaskell Chronology* by Graham Handley. Palgrave Macmillan, £55. This is a long established series which has covered all the major British authors and will prove a valuable reference tool. It treats the Gaskell story systematically and chronologically. Graham Handley is a prolific author on Elizabeth Gaskell and a member of the Society.

*The Pre-Raphaelite Art of the Victorian Novel: Narrative Challenges to Visual Gendered Boundaries* by Sophia Andres. Ohio State University Press, \$89. An interdisciplinary study of painting and literature, coupling Victorian novels with painters and revealing new links and influences between the two genres. It concentrates on Gaskell, Wilkie Collins, George Eliot and Hardy. It includes full colour illustrations.

*Medical women and Victorian fiction* by Kristine Swenson. University of Missouri Press, \$39.95. A comparison of the medical women (both doctors and nurses) in *Ruth*, *The Woman in White* and other books with their real life counterparts, this book offers a new insight into the problem of the prostitute in Victorian culture and society.

*Educating the Proper Woman Reader: Victorian Family Literary Magazines and the Cultural Health of the Nation* by Jennifer Phegley. Ohio State University Press, \$39.96. A discussion of the influence of women on contemporary literary taste, analysing their reading habits and showing how literary magazines such as *The Cornhill*, *Belgravia* and *Victoria* catered for them, and illustrating the role played by

fiction writers such as Mrs Braddon, Dickens, George Eliot, Gaskell, Thackeray, Trollope and Mrs Oliphant in this.

*The Moral of the Story: an Anthology of Ethics through Literature*, eds Peter and Renata Singer. Blackwell Publishing, £17.99. An extensive collection of extracts from literature demonstrating the treatment of ethics. An extract from *North and South* is used in the section on 'Work Ethics'.

## North and South on BBC TV

The following are a selection of comments on the recent television adaptation of *North and South*.

### From Gaskell Society members:

'I think the important thing about adaptations is that they should be judged for what they are, and not simply in terms of fidelity to the original. If the director wants to leave material out, or invent material, that's fine by me. According to this principle I had no problems with Mr Darcy's wet shirt. But it does have to be in the spirit of the original, or at least of the period, and that is where so much of *North and South* fell down. To take the most obvious example, Margaret would hardly have gone out to dinner, in company she didn't know, in a dress that Nell Gwynne might have found too revealing. Neither would she have gossiped about her friendship with Thornton with Bessy and her sister.'

'Part of the adaptation I felt was powerful and excellent. I found the scene in the silent mill, in the last episode for example, deeply moving, underlining visually (which is what television can do so well) the reality of Thornton's loss. I felt that the Margaret/Thornton relationship was handled with great sensitivity apart from the lack of respect for 19th-century conventions in the final kiss! Still that's what they really felt for each other. The beating-up in episode one was unfortunate, as it was quite out of character with Gaskell's - and the BBC's - interpretation of Thornton.'

'What the director, or the designer, did not understand was the visual contrasts Gaskell uses throughout the novel which are a gift for TV... Lots of close-ups and too few establishing shots, which an actress friend of mine assures me are to save money.'

'I found it too melodramatic, too mid-Victorian Romantic - sadly lacking in the subtlety of Gaskell.'

'Many people who have not read the book will now do so. I have had conversations with people from a wide variety of age-groups who will now read and enjoy Gaskell for the first time.'

'For me, the adaptor's greatest transgression lay in the distortion of character. Margaret - she of the thousand pouts - seemed to drift endlessly through the series

in a state of utter bewilderment ... Mr Bell - a man-about-town - positively leered at Margaret.'

'All those chubby workers who looked as if they had never missed a meal or contracted TB. Surely there are some thin extras around? What about a few Big Issue Sellers?'

'What a pity that it was confined to four episodes, as the ending was condensed and inaccurate.'

'Production beautifully photographed but ... quite unhistorical.'

'I was very impressed and thought it excellent'.

'..."sexed-up" for a modern audience.'

I was so disappointed with the casting of the main characters... but I found the minor characters very engaging.'

'Margaret was convincing - but I hated her hat!'

'Mr Thornton was very good-looking and easy to watch.'

#### From the press:

'For the life of me I cannot imagine what some Tristram saw in Mrs Gaskell's *North and South* that made him imagine this weirdly arch, mawkishly patronising and hopelessly dated story about the divide between 19th-century rural and industrial England would have any conceivable interest as a television drama'. A. A. Gill in *The Sunday Times*.

'... the longing for a 100 per cent proof hit of excitement, mystery and passion has an outlet... John Thornton ...played smoulderingly by the previously little-known Richard Armitage, as a blue-eyed, dark-haired stunner, the Darcy *de nos jours*... Historical accuracy can go hang when you are imagining yourself in Margaret's place.' Anne Ashworth in *The Times*, reporting on the female public's reaction.

'Visually this was terrific - especially Margaret's first astonished glimpse of the inside of a textile mill: the air so thick with cotton that it looked as if she'd stumbled into an Arctic blizzard. The supporting roles too are very well done: Tim Pigott-Smith as Margaret's ineffectual father and Lesley Manville as her shell-shocked mother.' John Preston in *The Sunday Telegraph*.

'John Thornton (Richard Armitage), strides, a Mephistophelean shape, through the perpetual snowstorm of his cotton mill. Dark and thunderous, he seems to be forever grinding a ruthless tooth. Margaret (Daniela Denby-Ashe), a marmoreal beauty with great, astonished eyes, is an attractive heroine. Kind, clever, decided, doggedly optimistic ... Under the bludgeoning of fate, her bonnet is knocked only slightly askew.' Nancy Banks-Smith in *The Guardian*.

'Author's in-laws owned sailcloth business in Buttermarket Street.' Headline in the *Warrington Guardian*.

'In many ways, as Welch [Sandy Welch, who adapted the novel for this production] points out, Mrs Gaskell succeeded in "having it all" where later, more emancipated generations of women failed. "She managed to have a happy marriage and lots of

children at the same time as bringing out a book every year and having a fulfilling intellectual and social life. At the end of her life she travelled to Italy, where it is rumoured she took a younger lover.'" Article in the *Radio Times*. [Ed.: Not entirely accurate!]

#### From the internet:

The following comments were sent to the BBC website by members of the public. There is also a message board devoted to *North and South*, which had received 13846 messages (all favourable, and some starting interesting discussions) while the message board devoted to all the soap operas had received a total of 2002.

'My Sunday nights will not be the same without my weekly fix of *North and South*.'

'It was a lovely, lovely ending. But I just wish that the producers had used the ending in the book. Anyway - thank you BBC, for cheering up these cold winter nights with some real smouldering passion!'

'I speak as an average teenager - for a television drama to have coaxed me into a bookshop to buy a book written over 150 years ago - well, it's impressive! I thought the production was fantastic - the costumes, locations, the script and screenplay...and the acting! I have found the entire series gripping!'

'Up until the final scene everything was just great then disaster struck! What was Sandy Welch thinking of when she wrote the last scene?'

'Wonderful! The re-written final scene was one of the most moving bits of drama I have watched for years.'

'I was crying solidly for the last 15 minutes! I can't believe it's over. I definitely prefer Mr Thornton to Mr Darcy...it's the smouldering looks! Mmmm!'

'I've not enjoyed a programme so much since the BBC's *Pride and Prejudice*.'

Editor: We are much indebted to Elizabeth Williams for collecting all these items and to members who helped.

## A Forgotten Wedding Custom

#### Jenny Uglow writes:

A week or so ago, I had a query from Natasha McEnroe, who is Curator at Dr. Johnson's house in London, saying "You know in your book on E Gaskell she is bogged down labelling all her clothes prior to getting married - why were they being labelled with the initials of her maiden name? Am I correct in assuming that it is bad luck to sign your married name (or initials) before you are actually are, maybe that was why?" I immediately thought I had got it wrong, then remembered that my grandmother's trousseau - of which some bits are still here - was also labelled with her maiden name. So Natasha looked further, and found an old *Dictionary of Superstitions* (1948):

A more active superstition is that which forbids the use of the married-name-to-be before the wedding day. If anyone addresses an engaged girl by it, or if she writes it down for the pleasure of seeing what it looks like, she may never bear it in fact. At one time, this idea extended even to the marking of clothes and house-linen in advance; they had to either be left unmarked until after the wedding, or marked with the girl's maiden name.

**Editor:** Dr. Josie Billington is to read a paper at our Manchester Conference entitled 'A commodity of good names: Elizabeth, Mrs, or ECG'.

## *A Visit To Japan*

**Alan Shelston**

Last year I had the great good fortune to be invited by the Gaskell Society of Japan and the Dickens Fellowship of Japan, to speak at a specially organized joint meeting of the two societies. When I mentioned this invitation to friends they expressed surprise - how can the Japanese be interested in an English novelist? However, Gaskell Society members have good reason to know of the interest shown in Elizabeth Gaskell and her work by Japanese scholars and enthusiasts, and in fact there is a wide interest in nineteenth and twentieth-century literature in English generally in Japan. The Dickens Fellowship there, under the presidency of Professor Takao Saijo is both long-standing and very active, and other nineteenth-century British authors, like the Brontës, George Eliot and Thomas Hardy, are held in high esteem. Where Gaskell is concerned this interest perhaps originates from the fact that the distinguished Gaskell scholar A. Stanton Whitfield taught for a considerable period in Niigata, Japan, earlier in the twentieth century, while the establishment of the Japanese Gaskell Society, hard on the foundation of our own society, gave added impetus to the study of her work. Since that time many of Gaskell's works have been translated into Japanese, and now Japanese scholars and critics are producing their own critical commentaries and biographical studies. One has only to consult the Japanese society's website (<http://www.soc.nii.ac.jp/gaskell/index-e.html>), established by our old friend Professor Mitsuharu Matsuoka - surely the best of its kind - to see how this tradition of Gaskell scholarship has been sustained. Equally we have been privileged in England to receive many Japanese students of Gaskell in Knutsford and in Manchester, when they have visited this country. The link is a strong one, and likely to continue so.

The main event of my visit was the Dickens-Gaskell lecture at Nishinomiya, a location between Kobe and Osaka, where I endeavoured to satisfy all parties by speaking on the subject of the publishing relationship between Mrs Gaskell and Dickens. The lecture was chaired by Professor Matsuoka, himself a Dickens as

well as a Gaskell specialist. This was a great personal pleasure to me, since I have very good memories of the year Mitsu spent with me in Manchester when I supervised his thesis. Along with another Gaskell and Knutsford friend, Professor Tatsuhiru Ohno, Mitsu had been responsible for much of the organization of the visit: indeed without his efforts on our behalf it could never have taken place. At the reception after the lecture my wife and I were delighted to meet Professor Yuriko Yamawaki, founding President of the Japanese Society, and another friend known to Gaskell lovers through her Knutsford visits. She was accompanied by the Secretary of the Society, Mariko Tahira, who does so much to sustain the Gaskell tradition.

Our hosts had arranged two further lectures, the first at Jissen Women's University in Tokyo, where Professor Yamawaki had a long and distinguished career, and where we were entertained by Emeritus Professor Akiko Suzue, who has translated *Sylvia's Lovers* into Japanese, and the second at Kobe Women's University, where the English department was headed by Professor Yoshiko Hiyashi. These lectures were extremely enjoyable occasions, not least on account of the enthusiasm of the students, who were brave enough to try out their English both with questions and in informal discussion. Much in Japan was different, but students are the same everywhere - especially the keen ones, and of these there were plenty.

But as well as the lecture programme we extended our visit to include an exciting tour that took in the mountain resort of Hakone, Tokyo itself, the historic site at Nikko, where Professor Hidemitsu Togo, whom I first met some years ago at Knutsford, was our guide, and finally Kyoto, famous for its shrines and temples. Hakone was spectacular, with a range of volcanic mountains, and sulphur springs gushing up below us. Had I seen the video of the cable-car crossing high over the site that Mitsu sent us afterwards I might not have embarked on it! It was here that Mitsu arranged for us to stay at a beautiful Japanese hotel, with a room of great serenity, complete with its own hot tub on the balcony - an especially Japanese experience. The room was positioned to provide a fine view of Mount Fuji, provided that atmospheric conditions allowed. Tokyo was quite different - a very modern city with skyscrapers and brilliant neon lighting at night; we saw it from the fifty-fourth floor of a skyscraper where Akiko Kimura (another Knutsford visitor) and Tomoko Kanda had taken us for dinner. Later we were shocked by mild earth tremors in our hotel - our hosts assured us that it was nothing, and indeed that they slept through these things. Nikko, a World Heritage site, gave us a lovely day, with excellent weather and an extended visit through its various shrines and temples. Little parties of Japanese schoolchildren were being taken round in their distinctive baseball caps - yellow for one group, red for another; things like this reminded us again that in Japan one should not always think of difference. It was so good to renew our acquaintance with Hidemitsu Togo, who if memory serves me right first floated the

idea of our going to Japan when he came to Knutsford some years ago - if that is the case, we had very good cause to be grateful to him. Finally Kyoto - and one more weather scare because a typhoon was threatened. It did indeed rain very heavily, and we had only a short visit, but we were able to visit its beautiful gardens and shrines, and we had the bonus of watching a traditional Japanese wedding, apparently quite a rare event. At the airport we had one last evening with Mitsu before our early morning departure.

It is difficult to do justice to the kindness of our hosts throughout our visit. If Mitsu and Tat Ohno deserve special mention for their organisation of our itinerary - and everything went like clockwork, or perhaps I should say, like a bullet-train - they organized a team of helpers who simply could not do enough for us. We could never have managed such a journey on our own, and we shall always be grateful to them. We went to Japan not knowing what to expect, and we came back having made many new friends, some of whom will be contributing to the Gaskell Conference in Manchester later this summer. That, I hope, will give us a chance to renew our acquaintance, and to repay at least some of their kindness.



**Alan Shelston (on the right) at a reception for the Gaskell Society & Dickens Fellowship of Japan.**

## *Lancaster Visit*

**Mary Clark**

On a bright September day, over forty Gaskell Society members enjoyed a visit to the Ruskin Library of Lancaster University and the city of Lancaster. Elizabeth Gaskell knew the artist and philosopher John Ruskin and had a profound admiration for his writings, especially the seminal work *Modern Painters*. She also had a number of associations with the city of Lancaster itself. Samuel Gaskell, who was her husband William's brother, was the Resident Medical Superintendent at Lancaster Asylum from 1840 to 1849. She had a long-standing friendship with James Langshawe and his wife Emily, who was a niece by marriage of the Knutsford doctor, Peter Holland. Mrs Gaskell visited Lancaster on several occasions and recorded that on a hurried visit in 1857 with her daughter Meta, they had 'cold beef, bread and beer' at the King's Arms Hotel, which was the establishment where Charles Dickens stayed during visits to Lancaster.

The Ruskin Library is a splendid new building opened in 1998 and housing an outstanding collection of manuscripts, books, drawings and watercolours by Ruskin in optimum conditions and with the latest research facilities for scholars. The Curator, Stephen Wildman, gave us a guided tour of the reading room, with its view out over Morecambe Bay, the art galleries and the archive room, where we were able to appreciate some rare editions of Ruskin's work. Mr Wildman's immense knowledge and enthusiasm for his subject made me want to return to spend more time there.

After lunch in Lancaster, we were free to visit a range of buildings in the historic centre of the town. The Castle is an impressive building, with its stone keep dating from the 12th century, and is still in use as a Court and Gaol - fortunately none of our members was incarcerated by mistake! Near the Castle, the Priory and Parish Church of St Mary's was founded in 1094 and has fascinating fourteenth-century misericords; it is the church where Mrs Gaskell's friend, James Langshawe, is commemorated in the church porch added in 1903. The Cottage Museum is an eighteenth-century artisan's house, saved from demolition and restored by the City Council in the mid-1970s. Now furnished as it would have been in the early nineteenth-century, it is a tiny, cramped house on five levels - we had to mind our heads as we went up and down the stairs. The Judges' Lodgings, a superb 17th-century town house, reputedly the oldest in Lancaster, was magnificent in comparison, with its splendidly restored period rooms, featuring furniture by the Gillows of Lancaster and a Childhood Museum. We all appreciated tea and cream cakes in the tearoom at the end of the afternoon. Our last glimpse of Lancaster, from the M6, was of the austere buildings of the Lancaster Asylum, where Samuel



Gaskell was Medical Superintendent, and which is now Moor Hospital.

We owe our thanks to Janet Kennerley for her meticulous organisation of the visit, her thorough research and detailed documentation. Thank you, Janet, for a most interesting day.

**Editor:** Elizabeth Gaskell and Emily Langshawe, née Sharpe, had known each other from childhood days in Knutsford and exchanged visits over the years. In 1857 Emily stayed at Plymouth Grove for few days after visiting Knutsford. Away from home on one occasion Elizabeth wrote to Marianne: 'If the little Langshawes come over get buns'. Elizabeth wrote, after Marianne had visited them in Lancaster, that: I do think Mr and Mrs Langshawe are charming and as you say he is so thoroughly good, and true and kind' (*Letters*, No. 198a). He was a doctor and probably like his father and grandfather before him, was organist at the parish church and all the family were involved in music. When the Gaskells were buying a piano 'Uncle Langshawe was to have "the trade reduction of price"'. An obituary in the local Lancaster paper dated March 1893 records that Emily was

an enthusiastic supporter of the Lancaster Choral Society, founded by her brother, the late Mr E Sharpe, and sang for many years at the concerts. She also displayed a lively interest in the management of the Girls' Blue Coat school and was very diligent as a district visitor.

'E. Sharp' was the Edmund who many years earlier had been tipped out of a hand-cart while riding with Elizabeth and had suffered a broken arm, which Peter Holland set. He was an architect noted for 'pot churches' - so named from his use of terracotta; his architectural firm became Paley and Austin, who built many noted Northern churches.

## LANCASTER GRAND THEATRE

**Tuesday 19th - Saturday 23rd April at 7.30pm**

Jane Eyre

'Willis Hall's creative adaptation, originally staged at the Crucible Theatre, Sheffield, has retained all the familiar passionate qualities of Charlotte Bronte's classic novel.

**Monday 25th - Thursday 28th April at 7.30**

Lancaster Royal and Lancaster Girls Grammar Schools present

*North and South*: a musical

'With a large, talented cast, performing exactly 150 years after the original novel was published, this promises to be a very special production.'

[www.lancastergrand.co.uk](http://www.lancastergrand.co.uk) or phone 01524 64695 for tickets.'

## 84 PLYMOUTH GROVE

**Work continues on the Lottery application and on the upkeep of the house.**

### Open Days

The house is now open every first Sunday in the month, from 12 - 4 pm. There will be a bring-and-buy bookstall, refreshments and displays.

### Friends of Plymouth Grove

We now have over 100 Friends of Plymouth Grove, and a programme of events, fuller details of which have been sent to members. Do join us!

**Sunday, 27 February 2005, 11 am. - 1.30 pm:**

LITERARY LUNCH, PLYMOUTH GROVE STYLE

Anthony Burton, Chairman of Trustees, The Charles Dickens Museum, will give an illustrated talk on 'Writers' House Museums: their attraction and purposes'. This is to be followed by a buffet lunch. There will be a charge of £6 per head to help with fund-raising.

**Saturday, 2 April 2005, 12 noon - 3 pm:**

SPRING LUNCH WITH WILLIAM AND ELIZABETH GASKELL

Please come and bring your friends! Leicester Warren Hall, Bexton Lane, Knutsford will be our venue. It has been used by both the Literary festival and the Gaskell Society. The food is traditional, there is a nice bar and ample car parking. After lunch Delia Corrie (whom many of you will remember reading from Elizabeth's letters at Plymouth Grove) and her colleague Charles Foster will present *At home with Elizabeth Gaskell*. Cost: £18 per head.

For more information, contact: Janet Allan, 10 Dale Road, New Mills, High Peak, SK22 4NW; tel: 01663 744233, or: Elizabeth Williams, 15 Cawley Avenue, Culcheth, Warrington, WA3 4DF; tel: 01925 764271.

## General Meetings

**On Saturday 9th April, the Annual General Meeting at Cross Street Chapel.**

**10.30 for coffee:**

11.00 Annual General Meeting.

11.45 approx. Alan Shelston will deliver The Daphne Carrick Lecture: The Eagle and the Dove: Dickens. Elizabeth Gaskell, and the publishing culture of the Nineteenth Century

1.00 Buffet Lunch

2.15 Visitors at Plymouth Grove introduced by Joan Leach, Robin Allan and others

3.45/4.00 approx. Finish



On **1st October**, the Autumn meeting at Knutsford will celebrate our twentieth anniversary with a special programme.



#### Autumn meeting 2004

From left to right: Joan Leach, Josie Billington, Angus Easson, Alan Shelston, John Chapple and Janet Allan. Thanks to Tat Ohno for the photo.

### *North West group*

Meetings at Cross Street Chapel, Manchester:

**Tuesday 8th March, 1.00pm** (bring your own sandwich lunch 12.15):

Dr. Julie-Marie Strange: 'Popular religion, class and ethnicity'

£2 members, £3 non-members

Knutsford meetings at St John's Church Centre:

**Wednesday 16th March:** Speaker: Professor Angus Easson: *Secrets in Wives and Daughters*

**Wednesday 27th April:** Final discussion on *Wives and Daughters*

**Wednesday 25 May:** Visit to Over Peover Hall, which has some features of Hamley Hall. £8 to include entrance and Tea. List, cars etc to be arranged at Knutsford Meetings, or contact Joan Leach.

### *The London and South East Group*

#### PROGRAMME FOR 2005

**Saturday 14th May:** 'Who exactly were Mrs Gaskell's friends, the Winkworths?' by Professor Peter Skrine

**Saturday 10th September:** 'George Eliot and Mrs Gaskell: Mutual fascination between two sister writers, and a common interest in their two greatest novels' by Dr. Brenda McKay

**Saturday 12th November:** '*Cranford*: Mrs Gaskell's most radical novel?' by Caroline Jackson-Houlston.

Meetings are held at Francis Holland School, 39 Graham Terrace, London SW1W 8JF starting at 2pm. Francis Holland is a few minutes walk from Sloane Square tube station which is on the District and Circle lines. It is necessary to ring the security bell in order to gain access to the building. Someone will answer the door!!

During the course of 2004 **sandwich lunches** prior to the meeting at the school were introduced. By common consent these will continue. Lunch (which consists of sandwiches, cake and a cold drink) will be provided and tea and biscuits will follow the meeting. Lunch and tea afterwards give members an opportunity to have a chat and get to know one another. Everyone is very welcome to come for lunch anytime after 12.45pm. It is not necessary to let me know in advance although it is helpful to have some idea of numbers!

Contributions for lunch and tea will be collected at the meeting for which a nominal charge of £2 is made.

A **bookstall** has been established to raise money for Plymouth Grove. If you have unwanted books that you think other members might like to buy please bring them along. You need not take them home again. They can go into store until the next meeting!

I hope that the programme appeals and I hope to see you during the course of 2005 at some or all of the meetings.

Fran Twinn

### *The South-West Group*

#### PROGRAMME FOR 2005

**Thursday 5th May:** Visit to Clevedon, including the Poets' Walk to St. Andrews Church where there is a Memorial to Arthur Hallam. In the afternoon there will be a visit to Clevedon Court (National Trust), where our group will be given a tour by a dedicated guide. (Tennyson's 'In Memoriam' was a great favourite with Mrs. Gaskell: *Letters*, Nos. 73, 79).

**Saturday, 2nd July:** Mrs. Joan Leach, with two other readers, will give her lively presentation of the Winkworth sisters. Professor Peter Skrine will add his unique view of the Winkworths in Bristol. Bath Royal Literary and Scientific Institution, Queen Square, Bath. 2.00pm for 2.30pm

**Sunday 12th August:** Summer Tea by kind invitation of Kate and Alec Crawford, at Norton St. Philip.

We hope to arrange a visit to Knutsford to coincide with the Autumn Meeting on **1st October**. There should be a chance for South West members and friends to see some of Mrs. Gaskell's Cheshire and make a visit to Plymouth Grove.

All members and friends are very welcome. For more details, contact Mrs. Rosemary Marshall on 01225 426732 or email [rosemary\\_marshall@yahoo.com](mailto:rosemary_marshall@yahoo.com).

## *Group Meetings in York and Edinburgh*

Joan Leach

After enjoyable meetings in Manchester and Knutsford I often have regrets that more members are prevented from joining us by reason of distance. When Rosemary Marshall moved from Cheshire to Bath she missed our meetings, so, with encouragement from Professor Peter and Mrs Skrine from Bristol, the South West group was formed.

The London and South East group started from an annual meeting held in November; Richard Beckley consulted members about more regular meetings and Dudley Barlow agreed to act as group secretary. Recently Dr Frances Twinn has taken on this task. Dudley and Howard Gregg have moved to Yorkshire; we were considering getting together with other Yorkshire members when The Jane Austen Society, Northern branch, invited our members to join them at a meeting in York on 20th November 2004. The speaker was Dr. Joanne Shattock of Leicester University, who is also a member of our Society and editor of the forthcoming Pickering & Chatto edition of Gaskell's works. She spoke on 'Jane Austen and Elizabeth Gaskell: Lives and Letters'. The two societies have members in common and it was a pleasure to meet at The King's Manor. York is accessible and offers many attractions so we plan to follow this up with a Gaskell meeting: if a regular group results from this we might consider Leeds as an alternative meeting place. A date has been fixed for Saturday 21st May at The Meeting House, Friargate, York, probably with a buffet lunch. Yorkshire area members will be mailed with further details, or send an SAE to Joan Leach. Further details will be on the homepage.

## *Edinburgh*

Elizabeth Gaskell had several links with Scotland particularly through her father, and from her own visits to Edinburgh we have the first and last portraits of her. She admired the Scottish accent which she attributed to Dr. Gibson in *Wives and Daughters*: perhaps she had in mind her cousin, Sir Henry Holland, who had studied medicine at Edinburgh University. The Society has several members in Scotland who would like to participate in Gaskell events but too few at present to form a group. With assistance from Professor Ian Campbell, editor of the Carlyle Letters and a good friend to our Society, we shared a day with The Carlyle Society. Braving railway problems five members travelled from Cheshire, almost as a diplomatic mission: myself, Elizabeth Williams, Mary Syner, Sheila Stephenson and Janet Kennerley.

On the morning of 26th November members from both Societies met at The Centre for Continuing Education, Edinburgh University, for a Gaskell morning. After I outlined Elizabeth Gaskell's Edinburgh and Carlyle associations, Elizabeth Williams gave an introduction to Gaskell's life and works; then Dr Brian Ridger considered how Gaskell collected and used information for *The Life of Charlotte Brontë*. We look forward to reading more of this in Brian's work on the writing of biographies.

During the buffet lunch Professor Paul Kerry of Brigham Young University, Utah, arrived from America just in time to deliver his paper for the Carlyle Society afternoon, after a brief AGM.

He read a paper 'On history again': how history is interpreted for us by historians and especially Carlyle. I wonder how much of Carlyle's historical writings the Gaskells read. We concluded a lively day with an informal Christmas party.

We hope to follow this up with a seminar at the same venue on Victorian writers.

## *Residential Course on Gaskell and Brontë theme*

Jackie Wilkin (University of Manchester part-time tutor) will be giving a 24-hour course to University Adult Programme students at Chancellor's, the University's Residential Conference Centre in Fallowfield, from 2pm on **Saturday 21 May to Sunday 22 May**. The course finishes after lunch on the Sunday. Cost is £79.50 for accommodation plus approximately £18 for course fee. A £10 deposit will be needed for residential students (cheques made out to 'The University of Manchester') with the balance due in April. Copy of the programme and day student cost (depending on whether lunch is required) from: Jackie Wilkin, Room W.213 Humanities Bldg. (Lime Grove); E-mail: [jackie.wilkin@manchester.ac.uk](mailto:jackie.wilkin@manchester.ac.uk); Tel. 0161 275 3079 (Voicemail: leave a message).

# *The Charles Lamb Society*

has much pleasure in inviting you to  
THE ALLIANCE OF LITERARY SOCIETIES WEEKEND  
in London on 21st and 22nd May 2005

## **Programme of Events**

### **Saturday, 21st May**

Swedenborg Hall

**10.00 am** Coffee

**10.30** Welcome and introduction to Charles and Mary Lamb

**11.00** Alliance of Literary Societies annual general meeting

**12.30 pm** Lunch

**2.00** Guided walks around Lamb's London  
or visit(s) to local museum(s) of relevance to the Lambs

**4.00** Tea at Swedenborg Hall

**4.30** 'Lamb's Tale or My Gentle-hearted Charles' - a One-man Play in Two  
Acts, based on the life of Charles Lamb, written and performed by G.  
Leslie Irons

At Ye Olde Cheshire Cheese

**7.30** Drinks, 8.00 Dinner

### **Sunday, 22nd May**

Sunday will be given over to a visit to the Lambs' delightful cottage and their graves  
at Edmonton in North London. Details to be announced.

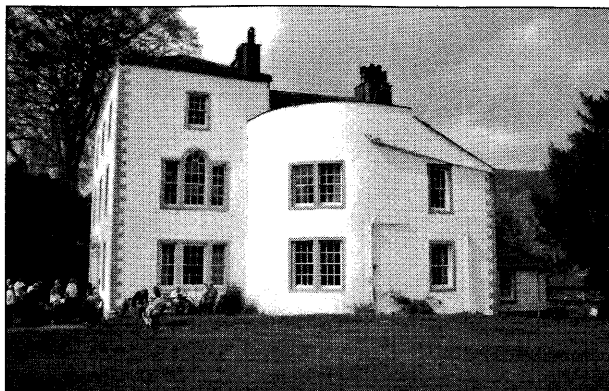
## **General Information**

Venues: Swedenborg Hall is at 20-21 Bloomsbury Way, London, W1. It is located  
on the south side of Bloomsbury Square, just along from St George's Church,  
Bloomsbury (the 'artists' church', by Hawksmoor). The entrance to the Hall is around  
the corner to the right from the Swedenborg House shopfront.

Meals: coffee and tea are courtesy of the Charles Lamb Society. Lunches and  
dinner will need to be paid for individually. If you have any special dietary needs  
please tell us.

Travel: We shall assume that everyone will travel by public transport. Although  
there is car parking close to Swedenborg Hall it is extremely expensive.

While it is not essential to book in advance for any of the weekend events, apart  
from the dinner on Saturday evening, it would assist us to have an indication of  
numbers, especially for the coach on Sunday and for those guiding the walks. If you  
would like to attend any weekend events, please contact The Charles Lamb Society,  
ALS, BM-ELIA, London WC1N 3XX as soon as possible, or go through the website  
named above ([www.allianceofliterarysocieties.org](http://www.allianceofliterarysocieties.org)) and look for 'Charles Lamb  
Society AGM' where all details and an application form can be found.



**Greta Hall, home of Southey and Coleridge**



**The Old Grammar School at Hawkshead  
where Wordsworth and his brother were pupils**

THE GASKELL SOCIETY HOME PAGE has all the latest information on meetings.  
<http://gaskellsociety.users.btopenworld.com>

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.  
Telephone - 01565 634668 E-mail: [joanleach@aol.com](mailto:joanleach@aol.com)

**Hon Treasurer:** Brian Williams, 15 Cawley Avenue, Culcheth, Warrington, Cheshire WA3 4DF

**Membership Secretary:** Miss C. Lingard, 5 Moran Crescent, Macclesfield SK11 8JJ

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# The Gaskell Society



## NEWSLETTER

Autumn 2005 - Number 40

## Editor's Letter

Joan Leach

The highlight of our year has been the Manchester Conference at which Gaskell members, from the UK and overseas, were joined by other delegates; you can read some members' comments in this Newsletter and will be sure to hear more in future Journals. We are grateful to all at Manchester Metropolitan University who worked to make this such a success.

Congratulations are due to Jo Pryke, our Journal editor and her team for being chosen in August as the journal of the month, by The Council of Editors of Learned Journals. With this accolade Jo feels it is time for her to retire as editor and will work with Frances Twinn who will take on the task after the next issue.

Talking of accolades I must express my thanks to those members who sponsored me for the award of an M.B.E which was a lovely surprise and a great honour. You can read about how this was achieved. I will soon be getting a 'summons' to go to Buckingham Palace to receive this and have recently had my 'warrant' for the award.

The Gaskell Society of Japan are to be congratulated on completing their translation of Gaskell novels by the end of this year. We hope they will attract new Gaskell readers. I am delighted that to have been invited to visit their Society next June.

Our trip to the Lake District in May was most enjoyable and we are grateful to Mary Clark for writing an account of our visits so that some of you may like to follow our footsteps. Robin Allan was with us on this trip and members will be sorry to know that he has been dangerously ill but is out of intensive care and recovering. We wish him well. Our next venture in group travel may be a trip to Rome next September. Please consult our home page (address is on back cover) if you have not received details of this or other events.

William Gaskell's 200th anniversary on 24th July did not pass unobserved for Cross Street Chapel held a fine commemorative service and provided birthday cake. In the afternoon Terry Wyke led a city centre walk to re-discover buildings and sites known to the Gaskells. Alan Shelston has also written on the Manchester background and we hope to print a booklet on this theme using funds from Brian Hechle's bequest to our Society. Please make a note of forthcoming meetings. AGM for next year will be 8th April at Cross Street Chapel and we are to have our New Year Lunch there on 10th January with a programme from North-West film archives.

News has just come to us about a new event to be launched at Whitby: The 1st Caedmon Literary Festival will be from 23-28 April 2006 with a varied programme. There will certainly be a Gaskell input with a *Sylvia's Lovers* theme. The organisers aim to draw 'artists and writers to this cradle of English Literature on the East Coast just as nearly 2000 years ago it drew kings, scholars and more to the great Synod of Whitby in 664 AD.'

# The Cober Hill Conspiracy

## Chapter 1

Elizabeth Gaskell and her daughters were able to keep the secret from William Gaskell of the purchase of a new family house in Hampshire. Following in this tradition some Gaskell Society members were also entrusted with a secret in September 2003.

With her usual expertise Joan Leach had organised a visit to Cober Hill near Scarborough - a lovely Centre which is perfectly located for exploring Whitby and the surrounding areas linked with *Sylvia's Lovers*. Joan had been looking forward to returning, following a previous Gaskell Society visit some years earlier which she had also organised. Unfortunately the ill health of Joan's husband Christopher prevented her second visit. As we sat round the dinner table feeling very fortunate to be in such a lovely location - Cober Hill is within walking distance of the cliffs above Cloughton Wyke - three members discussed with two Committee members how sorry we were that Joan had not been able to join us. The discussion continued around Joan's activities for the Gaskell Society and the Committee members related Joan's achievements in and around the Knutsford area. These included extensive connections with the Knutsford Heritage Centre, the Knutsford Literature Festival and lecturing on local history. As far as we could tell Joan must have turned down an honour in recognition for all her voluntary work. The Committee representatives were certain that this was not the case but in response to a request that the Gaskell Society Committee pursue an honour for Joan, the task was promptly entrusted to the non-Committee three although the support of the Committee was assured. The plot was hatched.

On returning from Cober Hill the first stage of the process was to find out through the Internet how the procedure worked. A site named 'Ask the Prime Minister' proved to be useful. It later became clear where Prime Minister Blair had stolen the idea - 'Ask Joan Leach' on the Knutsford Heritage Centre's web site had obviously been his inspiration. The Society's Manchester meetings at Cross Street Chapel were ideal for updating the conspirators. By November 2003 the promised support from Committee Members increased our number by three so our hopes of containing the secret were high.

Once the necessary letters of support together with the nomination had been provided (which resulted in three more conspirators) the process was set in motion in March 2004. The hardest part was trying to be patient! We discovered that the whole procedure can take as long as eighteen months and the recipient of the

honour is the only person who is notified of the outcome. A conspirator gathering information found that the greatest hurdle to overcome was trying to contact the Knutsford Heritage Centre without Joan's knowledge. In the end this was overcome by the adoption of the traditional fictional private detective's idea of using an alias and telephoning when Joan was actually in view at Cross Street Chapel.

Many Manchester meetings later, an AGM, a visit to Worcester in July 2004, another AGM (and one more conspirator) and the Society's visit to Grasmere in May 2005 passed and the conspirators remained in the dark as to the outcome.

## Chapter 2: Joan Leach

Our trip to the Lake District in May was a memorable experience which I thoroughly enjoyed (see Mary Clark's report in this Newsletter). I arrived home, tired and gasping for a cup of tea, to find a large pile of post which I thought I would tackle the next day; however as I flipped through it one letter stamped '10 Downing Street' demanded attention.

It was telling me that I had been awarded an MBE and would I reply, by return, to acknowledge my acceptance. What a wonderful surprise! However I could not share my excitement because my official instructions were that no-one was to be told until 12 hours before the announcement of the Queen's Birthday Honours list on 11th June. The MBE was to be listed as: Joan Leach, *Secretary of The Gaskell Society: for services to Literature and the Community of Knutsford*. I decided that Janet Allan, our Chairman, must know something about what had happened behind the scenes so I let her know, trusting that she would contact others who needed to be told.

A few days before the Honours list was due to be released I was at a committee meeting for Knutsford Literature Festival with Marie Moss a Gaskell committee member who was then going abroad for a holiday so I thought it permissible to drop a hint about the forthcoming announcement; then she told me a little about all that had been done for me. I am really touched by the faith in me which so many have evinced and regard it as an accolade to The Gaskell Society. The *Manchester Evening News* gave it a mention after the announcements and our local Knutsford papers had a field day.

Many are the congratulations I have received, ranging from flowers and delightful cards to thumbs-up from passing cars...I have not, at present, been told of the date for my visit to Buckingham Palace but hope a few Gaskell members will accompany me. And I am filing offers of hats to borrow!!

Thank you all for your friendship, support and encouragement.

## *Manchester Conference Reviewed*

Elizabeth Gaskell and Manchester: Identity, Culture and the Modern City  
sponsored by the Gaskell Society and the Manchester Centre for Regional History  
at Manchester Metropolitan University, 19-21 July 2005

This conference was attended by 130 delegates including a number from overseas. The wide range of papers read and varied events made this event was an outstanding success as you will gather from these comments by delegates:

Robert Poole  
Reader in History  
St Martin's College  
Lancaster

Last week's Gaskell conference was one of the most enjoyable I have ever attended. It was made so very largely by the informed enthusiasm of the Gaskell Society members, and I just had to join. What you have achieved is quite remarkable - congratulations.

Mary Haynes Kuhlman, Ph.D.  
Department of English  
Creighton University  
Omaha, Nebraska 68178 USA

Message posted on the Gaskell Correspondence page:

Our recent conference "Elizabeth Gaskell and Manchester: Identity, Culture and the Modern City", sponsored by the Gaskell Society and the Manchester Centre for Regional History at Manchester Metropolitan University, was so excellent and so enjoyable (to me, but I'm CERTAIN to others) that I just have to use this list to broadcast a THANKS and a REPORT.

THANKS first, last, and long after to the committee who planned and worked at this event and particularly Craig Horner and Melanie Tebbutt of Manchester Metropolitan University.

I would also thank every single person who attended and thus contributed to the fine audiences, insightful discussions, and friendly conversations. I might list various attendees and committee members and presenters that subscribers to this list already know - people like Janet Allan, Mary Syner, Joan Leach, Mary Clark, Christine Lingard, John and Kate Chapple, Brian & Elizabeth Williams, J. Geoffrey and Heather Sharps, Tat Ohno, Jenny Uglow - but no, I'll stop there today, but I wish to thank so many MORE people, many of whom readers of our messages or of the *GS Journal* know whose presence contributed to the conference's success.

REPORT: just a quick summary of the impromptu summing-up remarks of keynoters & organizers in a final summing-up session, including Alan Shelston, Linda K. Hughes, Alan Kidd, Martin Hewitt and Melanie Tebbutt: they spoke of Gaskell's 'diversity' (range of genre, theme, etc.), her connection to the wider culture, complexity of her relationship to Manchester, her emerging stature as a major author, 'visiting' as a mode of knowledge, and the delight of conference organizers and delegates in bringing literature and history together in an event that really lived up to the conference's title.

Alan Shelston  
Manchester University

Various things stood out for me from the conference - the quality and diversity of the contributions; the responses to them; the coming together of specialist academics and wider readers; the appropriateness of the various supporting events; the conjunction of the two themes 'Gaskell' and 'Manchester', plus the fact that this never acted as a constraint on wider considerations; above all the atmosphere of friendship and cooperation that existed.

A message from two of our Japanese delegates, Professor Masaie Matsamura and Tomoko Kanda who gave papers at the conference:

Congratulations on the great success of the conference. We were honoured to read our papers at such a wonderful conference. The time we spent there was made thoroughly enjoyable by the courtesies extended to us from Japan, by the conference committee members, presenters, and attendees. Many thanks to the lecturers and presenters for the excellent and highly informative lectures and papers, and deepest thanks to the committee members for everything you did for the conference. And our heartfelt thanks to every fellow Gaskellian with whom we enjoyed talking. We also would like to express special thanks to Alan Shelston and Joan Leach, for their efforts to develop a deeper friendship between the Gaskell Society and the Gaskell Society of Japan. Again, our thanks for a very pleasant and enlightening experience. It will be always our fondest memories of your country.

# Elizabeth Gaskell and Dickens in All the Year Round

Deborah Wynne

Alan Shelston's interesting discussion in the last Newsletter, outlining the relationship between Gaskell and Dickens during the period when *North and South* was serialised in *Household Words*, prompts me to add a few comments about the development of this relationship when Dickens became editor of *All The Year Round*. Alan Shelston indicates that Gaskell may have felt pressurised to make changes to *North and South* to suit Dickens's requirements, while on the other hand Dickens considered Gaskell to be intractable and unaware of the demands of weekly serialisation. However, despite these tensions, the 'back-to-back' serialisation of two important 'social problem' novels in the pages of *Household Words* constitutes one of the most significant moments in Victorian publishing history. What is less well-known, however, is that this 'double act' was resumed in 1859 when Dickens established his new weekly magazine, *All The Year Round*.

Dickens inaugurated his new magazine with the serialisation of *A Tale of Two Cities* and he chose a three-part short story by Gaskell, *Lois the Witch*, to run with the novel's climactic later instalments between 8th and 22nd October 1859. In many ways *Lois* and *A Tale* were as well-matched thematically as were *North and South* and *Hard Times*. Dickens's historical novel depicts the violent events of the French Revolution of 1789, while *Lois the Witch* is based on the Salem witch trials of the 1690s. Gaskell's gloomy yet powerful novella, in which the teenage heroine is executed as a witch, was positioned by Dickens alongside those instalments of *A Tale of Two Cities* which depict Darnay on trial in France and the dramatic discovery of Dr Manette's 'forgotten' letter. The effects of this pairing of *A Tale* and *Lois* must have been particularly exciting for readers of *All the Year Round* who were able to turn immediately from Dickens's representation of history to Gaskell's equally powerful rendering of the past.

The history of the serialisation of *A Tale* and *Lois* has a further twist, however, for the ending of Gaskell's narrative, which depicts the innocent, condemned Lois comforting her fellow prisoner, Nattee, the Native American servant as they are both led to the gallows, is a foreshadowing of Sydney Carton's attempt to comfort the French seamstress as they make their final journey to the guillotine at the end of Dickens's novel. This scene in *A Tale of Two Cities* appeared a few weeks after *Lois* had completed its serialisation. It is feasible that Dickens, having read Gaskell's moving account of Lois's execution, was inspired to borrow the detail of the main protagonist comforting a weaker companion for his own famous scene. Although

readers of *All The Year Round* were treated to two dramatic executions within the space of four weeks, few would have been aware that Gaskell was the author of *Lois the Witch*, for Dickens imposed a policy of anonymity on his contributors while retaining the right to sign his own contributions. Indeed, it may have been Dickens's insistence on Gaskell's anonymity that led her to arrange for her next serialised novel, *Wives and Daughters*, to be published in *The Cornhill*, where her name was prominently displayed.

## Elizabeth Gaskell and the Isle of Man

Peter Skrine

Elizabeth Gaskell's associations with North Wales and the Lake District are well known, but what about the Isle of Man, visible on clear days from both these favourite holiday haunts of hers? She mentions it seldom, and her references to it have attracted little attention. Yet, astonishingly enough, the Isle of Man is mentioned no fewer than eight times in her first novel, *Mary Barton*. These allusions are all connected with Will Wilson, Mrs Wilson's foster-son, and play an integral part in the creation of suspense as the events of the narrative are followed through. As such, they are of no particular consequence except insofar as they help to conjure up a sense of space. Margaret's singing of the old canzonets she has lately learnt, and its effect on the 'handsome, dashing, spirited' sailor-lad Will Wilson in Chapter 13 lead to Will's offer to bring Job Legh a live Manx cat. 'A what?' exclaims Job. 'I don't know its best name,' says Will humbly, 'but we call 'em just Manx cats. They're cats without tails.' In spite of all his knowledge of natural history Job has never heard of such animals. But Will's offer is quite genuine, since he intends to see his mother's friends on the island before joining his ship, so as a further inducement he adds: 'They look so queer ... Especially when you see 'em walking a roof-top, right again the sky, when a cat, as is a proper cat, is sure to stick her tail stiff out behind, like a slack-rope dancer a-balancing; but these cats having no tail, cannot stick it out, which captivates some people uncommonly.' Further on in the novel, Will, now in much less buoyant mood, comes to say good-bye to Mary, and in doing so reveals more of his insider's knowledge by telling her he must be off because he promised his uncle - and he specifies 'my mother's brother, him that lives at Kirk-Christ beyond Ramsey in the Isle of Man that we would go and see him and his.' This topographical detail is more telling. How did Elizabeth Gaskell come to know that Kirk-Christ is the name of a parish in the North-West of the island? In fact Kirk Christ Lezayre was in those days the parish in which the small fishing port of Ramsey was located.

Elizabeth Gaskell visited the Isle of Man only once, as far as we know, and little importance has been attached to her visit: the island is not even mentioned in the



index to Jenny Uglow's expansive biography, though she mentions the visit in some detail on p. 360.<sup>i</sup> It took place in late August 1854, and the only evidence for it are the letter she wrote to her daughter Julia, containing the news 'We have seen two Manx cats without tails and uncommonly ugly they are', and a shorter one to her daughter Marianne.<sup>ii</sup> Neither letter is dated or carries an address, but she does tell Marianne that 'there is scarlet fever in Ballaugh,' the place which Meta, with whom she was holidaying, had 'set her heart upon, 8 miles from here', a detail which indicates she is writing from Ramsey, which *The People's and Howitt's* journal had described as a 'very pretty place' in 1849. What this scanty documentation also tells us is that the weather was uncharacteristically bad for the time of year, so plans had to be altered and they ended up staying somewhere where the arrival of small children soon after them caused some irritation. However, the letter to Julia also tells her that 'there is not a dirty little cottage by the road-side but what has its fuchsia growing as high as the roof', a detail which rings true to anyone familiar with the Island today. Ballaugh, fuchsia and real Manx cats. Beyond these sparse facts there is only speculation.

Or are there echoes of this Manx experience in 'French Life', the fascinating piece Elizabeth Gaskell published anonymously in *Fraser's Magazine* ten years later in April/June 1864? Here she recalls staying at an inn in Avignon, where, gazing at the flying sparks of a fire which one of her daughters was poking, she is reminded of a story heard long ago in Ramsey, in the Isle of Man. 'We were questioning a fisherman's wife ... about the Mauthe Doog of Peel Castle, in which she had a firm belief,' she writes. This is an obvious allusion to one of the Isle of Man's best-known legends, that of the 'black dog', or 'moddey dhoo' in Manx, which is said to haunt the picturesque ruins of Peel Castle. From this, the conversation turns to fairies. 'Are there any on the island now?' she asks. 'Gravely, of course, for it was a grave and serious subject with her, the fisherman's wife replies, 'None now. My brother saw the last that ever was in the island. He was making a short cut in the hills above Kirk Maughold, and came down on a green hollow ... He heard the larks singing up above; but this time he heard a little piping cry out of the ground.' He looks more carefully, and finds 'a fairy ever so weak and small, crying sadly. Her own people have left her behind all alone, and she is faint and weak.' Well-meaningly he picks the crying fairy up to take her home as a plaything for his children. But when he opens his hand to tell her he is doing this for her own good, he finds he has crushed her to death. 'So, as he said, there was no use bringing her home in that state; and he threw her away; and that was the end of the last fairy I ever heard of in the island.' Gaskell's 'folktale' sounds authentic, almost as if told in a true Manx voice, yet it does not seem to have a Manx source and is quite different in tone from authentic Manx folktales. Perhaps she created it for her daughters when their holiday was over and they had come home on the 'Manx Fairy', a smart iron vessel which came into service with the Ramsey Steam Packet Company in 1853, prompting intense

'fairy' mania, or later still, when they heard about the misfortunes which soon befell the elegant but unlucky steamer, and inspired a thirteen-year-old Ramsey girl called Margaret Kermode to write an elegy which ends with the lines:

She is gone, she is gone! She will never return  
Fare well to thee, bright little fairy.<sup>iii</sup>

#### Notes

- i. In the text of her biography of Elizabeth Gaskell Jenny Uglow refers to a 'hilarious account' sent by Meta to Marianne, but mentions no source. See *Elizabeth Gaskell. A Habit of Stories*, p. 360.
- ii. *Letters*, nos. 208 and 209.
- iii. Constance Radcliffe, *Shining by the Sea. A History of Ramsey 1800-1914* (Douglas, 1989), p. 67. The young author of this poem was a great-great-aunt of the author of this article.

## John Ashton Nicholls in Boston

John Chapple

John Ashton Nicholls (1823-1859), the lively son of two members of the Cross Street congregation, toured America between 29 August 1857 and 21 February 1858. In Boston he saw the 'Faneuil Hall, so celebrated in the revolution'. The next day, 1 November, he made another kind of historical pilgrimage to see the Federal Street church, 'a nice, clean-looking, old-fashioned place'. This was where the great American Unitarian William Ellery Channing (1780-1842) used to preach. The inward and spiritual nature of his eloquence had confirmed James Martineau in his break with the rationalistic tradition of Joseph Priestley. But Channing's influence amongst British Unitarians extended far more widely, even amongst traditional ministers, as we see from the many copies of his publications in the Gaskell Sale Catalogue of Books (1914). Nicholls attended a Federal Street service in November 1857, taken by Dr E. S. Gannett (1801-1871), Channing's co-pastor and eventual successor. It was 'an excellent discourse', but it had its unexpected side.

He wrote to his mother:

The pulpit was very wide, and the minister sat down, quite away from the desk, during the singing, performed by the choir, and not joined in by the congregation, who all sat still and listened. I do not like that way; I prefer to hear the voices of all united.

Three or four times during the sermon the minister coughed, cleared his throat, and leaning to one side, gave a good genuine spit out, so I presume, must have been

furnished with a spittoon, which article I saw was in all the pews; fancy, at the end of a beautiful passage, a climax in the divisions of the sermon, the preacher spitting out, and then wiping his mouth with his handkerchief? What should we say if Mr. Gaskell did so? I will ask him, when I see him, how he would feel under similar circumstances. It disgusted me, and I hoped, in my mind, that Dr. Channing did not spit in the pulpit, yet I fear the practice is universal in places of worship. There are nearly twenty Unitarian churches here, our body being the largest and most influential in this city.

(*'Letters from America', In Memoriam. A Selection from the Letters of the Late John Ashton Nicholls*, edited by his mother and privately printed, 1862.)

Sadly, this mischievous young man died not long after his return from America. William Gaskell delivered one of his finest funeral sermons about him at Cross Street on 15 September 1859. We also know now, from *Further Letters*, (pp. 203-5) that it was Elizabeth Gaskell who wrote a description of his deathbed for his travelling companion, John Rotherham, on behalf of the stricken mother.

## *The Alliance of Literary Societies*

The 2005 AGM weekend in London 21/22 May was hosted by The Charles Lamb Society with an excellent programme. There are now 109 member societies.

The 2006 AGM weekend will be in Bath, May 13/14 hosted by The Jane Austen Society.

It was sad to hear of the death of Giles Hart, Chairman of The H.G. Wells Society, who was killed on the No. 30 bus on 7th July. He was a "prominent British support of the Solidarity movement in Poland throughout the 1980s, especially when Poland was under martial law. His obituary in the Times demonstrates Mr Hart to have been an exemplary person who will be missed greatly. He came to many of the A.L.S. A.G.Ms

For info. on ALS: <http://www.allianceofliterarysocieties.co.uk>

There are details of many literary events and societies including Gaskell. You might like to read the newsletter of the ALS here.

## *A forgotten wedding custom and Jane Eyre*

Ian M Emberson

I was interested to read Jenny Uglow's short article 'A Forgotten Wedding Custom', with its reference to the superstition that it's unlucky for a bride-to-be to label her things with her married name before the wedding, and that if she does so, she may never bear that married name (Newsletter 39, p. 9). After reading it I wondered if there was an echo of this in Chapter 25 of Charlotte Brontë's *Jane Eyre* (Volume 2, Ch.10 in some editions). On the eve of her wedding to Mr. Rochester, Jane writes of '....my trunks, packed, locked, corded, ranged in a row along the wall of my little chamber....', but adds: 'The cards of address alone remained to nail on: they lay, four little squares, on the drawer. Mr. Rochester had himself written the direction, "Mrs. Rochester, - Hotel, London", on each. I could not persuade myself to affix them, or to have them affixed. Mrs. Rochester! She did not exist...'. If Jane is obeying the ancient superstition, her obedience is in vain, for the next day the wedding service is interrupted by those terrible words: 'The marriage cannot go on: I declare the existence of an impediment'.

## *The Lake District in the footsteps of Elizabeth Gaskell*

Mary Clark

From the early years of her marriage, Elizabeth Gaskell had a long association with the Lake District and Morecambe Bay on its southern fringe. In 1836, she stayed at Grange-over-Sands with her infant daughter Marianne and from 1843 onwards spent many summer holidays at Gibraltar Farm and Lindeth Tower in Silverdale, and then at Mrs Preston's Mill Brow Farm, up from Skelwith Bridge. Her letters show all of her immense enthusiasm for the Lake District, with its busy social and literary scene. Through the good offices of Wordsworth's son-in-law, Edward Quillinan, she met, to her delight, the 'sage of Rydal Mount' shortly before his death, and visited also the Arnolds of Fox How, the Davys of Lesketh How and Mrs Elizabeth Fletcher of Lancrigg, as well as Harriet Martineau at The Knoll, the house which she had built on the edge of Ambleside. So it was fitting for a group of almost forty Gaskell Society members to spend four days in the Lake District in early May visiting so many of the places associated with Gaskell and her friends, as well as with the Lakeland poets whom she so greatly admired. We were based at the Prince of Wales Hotel on the shores of Grasmere Lake, within a stone's throw of Wordsworth's Dove Cottage.

On our first day, we headed north to Morecambe and from Hest Bank looked out across the treacherous sands of Morecambe Bay, the setting for 'The Sexton's Hero'. In Silverdale, we visited the farm where Gaskell often stayed, in a 'queer pretty crampy house', as she described it in a letter to Charles Eliot Norton. In a drawing-room at the top of Lindeth Tower she wrote a considerable part of *Ruth* and from the roof, it was easy to recall her description of the shimmering sands of the Bay where the Bradshaw daughters played so joyously, but which seemed much more threatening at Ruth's fateful meeting with her former lover Bellingham. A few miles away, we were able to visit the Sheiling, the late Victorian house built for Gaskell's unmarried daughters, Meta and Julia.

With Gaskell's profound admiration for Wordsworth, it was appropriate that in the evening we should have a lecture given by Dr Pamela Woof of the University of Newcastle, who is the leading authority on Dorothy Wordsworth. In her lecture Dr Woof concentrated on Dorothy's relatively little known early life, with great erudition but also immense sensitivity towards her subject. The following morning we headed for Cockermouth to visit the Wordsworth House, a fine Georgian town house, the birthplace and childhood home of William and Dorothy Wordsworth. It has recently been refurbished by the National Trust, to reflect the family home and garden as it would have been in Wordsworth's day. After visiting Crosthwaite church, near Keswick, where are the graves of the poet Southey and Canon Rawnsley, a founder of the National Trust, we went on to Greta Hall, an imposing square white house set up from Keswick, in which Southey, Coleridge and their families had lived in the early nineteenth century. The present owners gave us a warm welcome and we enjoyed a home-baked afternoon tea. To round off the day, we joined the Wordsworth Society for an evening reading of poetry and prose by the Scottish poet Kathleen Jamie. I felt that her feeling for place and the sensitivity of her recollections were not too remote from those of Elizabeth Gaskell herself.

On the following morning, we headed for Hawkshead to see the Grammar School attended by William Wordsworth and his brothers. In the schoolroom, where William had carved his name on his desk, there was still the atmosphere of the rigorous discipline of those schooldays, though we were fascinated to learn that the boys were each allowed two pints of small beer with their dinner. In the afternoon, we took to minibuses to negotiate the narrow roads leading to a variety of houses with Gaskell associations. We visited Briery Close, where, as a guest of Sir James and Lady Kay-Shuttleworth, Gaskell first met Charlotte Brontë, famously describing her in a letter to Catherine Winkworth as 'a little lady in a black silk gown' who 'came up & shook hands', though she was evidently quite overcome with shyness. The house has been extended and radically altered in Victorian times and more recently, with the impressive gardens being designed in the early years of the twentieth century, but the glorious view across Windermere to Coniston Old Man remains exactly as

Elizabeth Gaskell and Charlotte Brontë would have known it. Townend Farm, Troutbeck, owned by the National Trust, is much as it would have been in the seventeenth century - a solid stone and slate house. It belonged to the same family of wealthy 'statesmen' farmers, the Brownes, from 1626 to 1943, and its collection of books, papers, furniture and domestic implements was largely accumulated by the family. It seemed a rather grander version of the 'stateswoman' Mrs Preston's Mill Brow Farm, where Gaskell often stayed and of which she wrote in a letter to a young friend, Charles Bosanquet, that 'the family [had] lived in that house and on that land for more than 200 years'. Gaskell no doubt had Mill Brow Farm and the Prestons much in mind in her short story 'Half a Life-Time Ago' and its precursor 'Martha Preston'. In 'Cumberland Sheep-Shearers' also, Gaskell describes the solid stone farmhouse, with its great bed-chamber and 'houseplace', and all the excitement of the annual sheep-shearing festivity. Lancrigg, in Easedale, which is now a vegetarian hotel, was the home of Mrs Elizabeth (Eliza) Fletcher, found for her by Wordsworth. Mrs Fletcher had been the wife of an Edinburgh attorney and had a wealth of friends prominent in the intellectual, artistic and political life of the city, and was known to Gaskell's father, William Stevenson, at the turn of the century and to Elizabeth herself when she visited Edinburgh shortly before her marriage. Gaskell's memories of Mrs Fletcher's 'salon' may have inspired her collection of short stories, 'Round the Sofa'. Mrs Fletcher's son, Angus, was the sculptor of Wordsworth's bust in Grasmere church and of Dorothy Wordsworth's gravestone.

Outside the formal programme, a few of us were privileged to be invited to visit The Knoll, the house which Harriet Martineau built on the edge of Ambleside and where she established her small model farm. The house, half of which is now owned by Barbara Todd, who edited the recent edition of Martineau's 'A Year at Ambleside', seems to have changed little in outward appearance from Martineau's time, when Gaskell visited her, seeking information for *The Life of Charlotte Brontë*, and it was fascinating to look down and still see the boundaries of Martineau's farm.

In the evening, after the earnestness of the day's pursuits, we had a little gentle relaxation in watching the BBC *Omnibus* programme on Elizabeth Gaskell and seeing the members of the Gaskell Society Committee following in her footsteps in Rome and elsewhere.

On our final morning, we visited Cartmel, with its fine Norman priory, where we caught the end of the Ascension Day service, and then Lindale, where the characters of 'The Sexton's Hero' had their home. We went on to Levens Hall, where the BBC filmed *Wives and Daughters*. In Kirkby Lonsdale, on a dank and rainy afternoon, only a brave few followed up the Ruskin connections, while the second-hand bookshops and the tearooms seemed to do a brisk trade. On our way home, through the Lune valley, we paused briefly at Cowan Bridge, where Charlotte

Brontë and her sisters attended school and which was to be Lowood School in *Jane Eyre*. We recalled how movingly Gaskell described the scene: the burbling river, the garden which the girls had tended and the sad, deserted dormitory. From the coach, we had a fleeting glimpse of Burrow Hall, where Gaskell stayed with the Alcocks when she visited Cowan Bridge; they rented the house from the Fenwick family: Mrs Alcock was the sister of Dr Robberds.

While the Lake District has changed greatly over a hundred and fifty years, for a few brief days we were able to feel all of its beauty and its spirit, so dear to Elizabeth Gaskell and her friends, and to the Lakeland poets. Our thanks are due to all those who so generously opened up their houses to us, to Alan, our coach driver, and especially to Joan Leach and Jean Alston for all their detailed research and the excellent organisation of the tour. Thank you, Joan and Jean, for a most memorable trip.



**Lake District Trip - Members outside The Shelling**

## *Plymouth Grove*

The house was open the day before the Manchester conference, and we welcomed new and old friends to a performance in the drawing room of 'Elizabeth Gaskell and Charlotte Brontë' by the InterTheatre team. This raised £500.

The regular open days are on the first Sunday of the month, from 12-4. The house will also be open during the national Heritage Open Days, on 10 and 11 September from 10-4. As well as refreshments, exhibitions, tours and our bring-and buy bookstall, there will be special childrens' activities and a local corner for people who have memories of Plymouth Grove and its neighbourhood. We welcome visitors and volunteers.

Fundraising is crucial, and much needs to be done. We have had some successes. English Heritage have awarded £17,650 towards general upkeep and a further grant of £19,000 has been applied for. The Local Mayor's Charity Fund have given £1000, and the Manchester Guardian Charitable Trust £500. Our application to the Heritage Lottery Fund for a £50,000 Project Planning Grant has been submitted.

You can help by joining the Friends of Plymouth Grove, and by organising fundraising events. Please do!

In the autumn Greater Manchester Cares will provide a team of 45 volunteers to paint and clean the house and the Cultural Regeneration Partnership for Inner Manchester plan to convert the lower ground floor for short term leasing and community use.

## **Book Notes**

**Christine Lingard**

*Voice and the Victorian Storyteller* by Ivan Kreilkamp (Assistant Professor of English at Indiana University) in the series, Cambridge Studies in Nineteenth-century Literature and Culture, Cambridge University Press, £45. This demonstrates the way in which Victorian culture represents the human voice, from political speeches and governesses' tales to staged performances, and shows that the printed word did not supersede audience interest in oral story telling; with discussion of Charlotte Brontë, Browning, Carlyle, Dickens, Disraeli and Gaskell.

*The Idea of Music in Victorian Fiction*, edited by Nicky Losseff and Sophie Fuller in the series, Music in Nineteenth-century Britain. Ashgate, £57.50. A collection of eleven critical essays, including 'The voice, the breath and the soul; song and poverty in *Thyrza* (Gissing), *Mary Barton*, *Alton Locke* (Kingsley) and *A Child of the Jago* (Arthur Morrison)' by Phyllis Weliver, which discusses various aspects of the function and depiction of music in Victorian fiction.

*The Carlyles, John Ruskin and Elizabeth Gaskell by their contemporaries*: third in the series of 'Lives of Victorian Literary Figures', general editor Ralph Pite. Pickering and Chatto, 3 volume set, £275. Gaskell volume edited by Valerie Sanders. An anthology of articles and criticism dating from 1866 to 1932 on a group of authors for whom London as a centre was a pressing concern; Gaskell, though living and working away from the capital, retained her contacts with its literary world. There are extracts from Henry James, Matthew Arnold, Harriet Martineau, Mrs Oliphant and Anne Thackeray Ritchie.

*Femmes et Filles*: translated by Béatrice Vienne. Paris, Cahiers de L'Herne, 2005. A welcome indication of the international reputation of Elizabeth Gaskell, this translation of *Wives and Daughters* fills a gap identified by our French members.

*Voices from the Past* by Jean M. Wright. Privately published, 144 pages and 130 photographs, £15 + postage, from 1a Hall Hill, Bollington, Macclesfield, Cheshire SK10 5ED. Jean Wright inherited from her husband's family a fascinating collection of letters and memorabilia which she draws on for this amply illustrated book, partly in colour, of family photographs and Victoriana. The narrative is also filled out by recollections of Martha Ann Wright (1868-1969) who lived a full century in this Cheshire manufacturing community. Of special interest to our members is the material on the Gregs of Bollington and the village life supported by Lowerhouse Mill. Martha Ann's mother served as lady's maid at The Mount to Miss Agnes Greg, who went from Quarry Bank, Styal, to live with her brother Samuel and his family. The letters of this period are revealing social history, as are letters from family who emigrated to New Zealand and Canada - a course of action at one time considered by Samuel Greg himself when Elizabeth Gaskell was a house-guest at The Mount (*Letters*, no.114). The surviving material, mainly letters, is not used to tell the family story chronologically but follows individual family members' lives through their letters: this is sometimes repetitive or confusing: more linking annotation might have helped.

#### ANNUAL SUPPLEMENTS TO

#### Elizabeth Gaskell: An Annotated Guide to English-Language Sources TO BE ADDED TO GASKELL WEB SITE

<http://lang.nagoya-u.ac.jp/~matsuoka/EG-Society.html>

Nancy S. Weyant

Even in the age of "camera-ready" manuscripts and "print-on-demand" publishing, there are a variety of realities that impact the currency of any published bibliography, especially, an annotated one. In addition to the time required to locate, acquire, read and write the annotation, there is a time-lag of anywhere between six months and three years between the publication of a scholarly work (be it a journal article or a book chapter) and the indexing of that work in one of the many electronic databases. Furthermore, some book chapters are not separately indexed anywhere. To date, I

have identified almost 175 sources published since 2001 that conform to the criteria for inclusion in my two previous bibliographies. Because the next decennial bibliography won't be considered for publication for another seven years, I contacted Mitsuharu Matsuoka and proposed that I create comprehensive annual supplements that can be added to his Gaskell Web. (He not only graciously accepted my offer; he facilitated my having a separate web page to which he will provide a link. The supplements for 2002 and 2003 should be available by October 1st. Any sources for those years that subsequently come to my attention will be added as discovered. The annual supplements will not have annotations. (I do plan on a third book and Scarecrow Press is not likely to be interested in publishing something that is freely available on the Internet.) However, if the title does not clearly identify the work(s) discussed, that information will be added to enhance the value to anyone seeking to identify ALL the publications discussing a particular Gaskell work. I will add the 2004 supplement as soon as the electronic databases catch up with indexing that year. I am pleased by this collaboration between myself and Mitsu and hope the improved bibliographical control of works about and by Elizabeth Gaskell proves an asset to Gaskell scholars.

### *The Yorkshire branch of The Gaskell Society*

Dudley J. Barlow

With the support of the Gaskell Society Committee a meeting was held in York in May to discuss the formation of a Yorkshire Branch of the Society. A letter had been sent to all members living in the county or within easy travelling distance. There was a good response and the meeting was attended by twelve members, two non-members and two Gaskell Society committee members. A further ten members were unable to attend but expressed support.

Considerable enthusiasm was shown and it was agreed that a Yorkshire Branch should be formed. York was felt to be the most central point for us to meet and the Quaker Meeting House in Friargate to be a suitable venue. We hope to meet four times each year. In order to cover expenses we decided to ask members to contribute £3 per meeting attended and non-members to contribute £4. I was asked to make the necessary arrangements.

**Saturday, 12 November:** Brian Spencer (Editor of the *Transactions of the Yorkshire Dialect Society*): 'Mrs Gaskell and the Dialect of Whitby'.

The meetings will commence at 2.00pm, though the room will be available from 12.30pm so that those who wish may bring a picnic lunch. Tea and coffee will be provided at lunchtime and again with biscuits at the close of the meeting.

Several of our members are also members of the Jane Austen Society, Northern Branch, and we look forward to a close and friendly contact between the two groups.

All members of the Gaskell Society able to attend our meetings are warmly invited to do so. Further details, if required, from Dudley J Barlow, 6 Kenlay Close, New Earswick, York YO32 4DW. Telephone: 01904-750 366.

## North-West Group Programme

### **Saturday 1st October:** Autumn Meeting

This will be a special meeting to celebrate the 20th Anniversary of The Gaskell Society at St Vincent's Church Hall, Knutsford (near Tatton Street Car Park).

- 10.30am for Coffee  
11.00: Welcome, introductions and appraisal of The Gaskell Society's first twenty years  
11.30: 'Elizabeth Gaskell's Cheshire': illustrated talks by Joan Leach and Marie Moss  
12.45: Buffet Lunch  
2.30: At Knutsford's Little Theatre:  
**Elegant Economy:** presented by The History Workshop

Members will be welcome at Brook Street Chapel's morning service at 11.00am, after the laying of a commemorative flowers on the Gaskell Grave at 10.45am.

**Monthly meetings at Knutsford Parish Church Rooms** will be held on the last Wednesday of each month, except December. 26 October, 24 November, 26 January, 23 February, 23 March, 27 April.  
The book for study is *The Life of Charlotte Brontë*.

Buffet Lunch is served from 12.15 at a cost of £7.50 which includes room-hire expenses etc.

### **Meetings at Cross Street Chapel, Manchester**

Lunch time on Tuesdays (not always the 2<sup>nd</sup> Tuesday) at 1.00pm. Tea and coffee available from 12.15. Bring sandwiches or buy from Pret a Manger, next door.

A series of talks on 'Women of note' known by Elizabeth Gaskell:

**18 October:** 'Elizabeth Gaskell's "Eternal Woman": Mme de Sévigné' by Howard Gregg

**8 November:** 'Harriet Martineau at Ambleside' by Barbara Todd

**6 December:** 'A Christmas Miscellany' with carols and mince pies

**10 January:** 'The North West on Film' by Marion Hewitt of the N.W.Film Archive followed by lunch

**7 February:** 'Queen Victoria as a woman of letters' by Dr. Deborah Wynne

**14 March:** 'Florence Nightingale' by Dr. Aled Jones

## The South-West Group

On Monday 17th January Celia Skrine led a preliminary trip to Clevedon to plan a visit later in the year, suggested by Mrs. Gaskell's admiration for Tennyson's 'In Memoriam'. Arthur Hallam is buried in St. Andrews Church, Clevedon, and Tennyson made several visits. Even in January Clevedon is a pretty little seaside town and it was wonderful to get some sea air as we went to the church along the Poet's Walk. On Thursday May 5<sup>th</sup>, ten Gaskell members met at the Beach Cafe and made the walk to the church with its cliff-top graveyard. Celia had arranged for the church to be opened so we were able to see Arthur Hallam's memorial tablet imagined by Tennyson....

And in the dark church like a ghost  
Thy tablet glimmers to the dawn.

We sat in the graveyard and read Mrs Gaskell's account of Samuel Bamford's feelings about Tennyson and some verses from 'In Memoriam', and went back to a good lunch. In the afternoon we went on to beautiful Clevedon Court, home of the Elton family. Hallam's mother was the favourite daughter of the Rev. Sir Abraham Elton, and Tennyson stayed there in 1850. Thank you to Peter and Celia Skrine for organising this memorable day.

We all enjoyed having Joan Leach's visit to Bath on July 2nd when she gave the South-West group her readings of letters between the Winkworths, Charlotte Brontë and Elizabeth Gaskell. (Peter Skrine's characterisation of Catherine Winkworth was much admired!) The letter in which Charlotte Brontë, by then Mrs. Nicholls, described her fall from her horse in Ireland provoked some speculation about why Mrs. Gaskell made no reference to the incident in her biography. My own feeling is that she did not wish to revive or make public any painful memories for Arthur Nicholls who may have blamed himself for not realising that Charlotte was trapped under the horse. The event was preceded by a pleasant lunch at the Francis Hotel where we made the acquaintance of some new members, including Mr. Tom Murray who had come by train from Exeter.

Sunday August 14th is the annual Summer Tea hosted by Kate and Alex Crawford

in Norton St Philip. Their house is called Valley View and with good reason. We sit in the sun and read poetry and eat cake and drink tea - what could be better?

A small group is planning to come to the Autumn meeting at the beginning of October, staying at Radbroke Barn. While making arrangements with the Proprietor I mentioned that we had lived in Alderley Edge for 20 years. 'Oh you poor things', was his reply. If anyone wants to join us, do get in touch as soon as possible. (email to [rosemary\\_marshall@yahoo.com](mailto:rosemary_marshall@yahoo.com) or phone 01225 426732).

## *London and South-East Group*

Meetings are held at Francis Holland School, 39 Graham Terrace, London SW1W 8J, a few minutes walk from Sloane Square tube station. Sandwich lunch at 12.45 (£2 only) and meeting at 2 pm. Contact Frances Twinn 85 Calton Ave; London SE21 7DF Tel. 020 8693 3238 email [Frantwinn@aflex.net](mailto:Frantwinn@aflex.net)

**Sat 12 November:**

**Cranford: Mrs Gaskell's most radical novel?**

**By Caroline Jackson-Houlston**

## *Invitation to Carlyle Society Meeting in Edinburgh on 24th September*

Gaskell members are invited to join the Carlyle Society at their meeting on 24<sup>th</sup> September 2005, when the subject will be: "The 'Dark Expounder' and the 'Melodious Voice': Thomas Carlyle and Elizabeth Gaskell on Chartism", a paper by Maurice Milne.

The Meeting will be held at 11 Buccleuch Place, Edinburgh, at 14.15 p.m.

## *Mary Barton: the Opera*

An obituary in The Times of the British composer Arnold Cooke, who died recently in his 99<sup>th</sup> year, noted the fact that 'during the late 1940's and early 50's he laboured on his only full length opera: *Mary Barton*'. Unfortunately 'it has yet to be staged'. Cooke was a prolific composer, and was a professor at the Royal Manchester College of Music in the 1930's which was where, presumably, he discovered Mrs Gaskell's novel. It is not clear whether the score still exists; if it does perhaps one of our more musical members might like to explore the possibilities. A. J. S.





# The Gaskell Society



THE GASKELL SOCIETY HOME PAGE has all the latest information on meetings.  
<http://gaskellsociety.users.btopenworld.com>

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.  
 Telephone - 01565 634668 E-mail: [joanleach@aol.com](mailto:joanleach@aol.com)

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**Membership Secretary:** Miss C. Lingard, 5 Moran Crescent, Macclesfield SK11 8JJ

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## NEWSLETTER

Spring 2006 - Number 41



## *Editor's Letter*

**Joan Leach**

Members will be saddened to learn of the death of Geoffrey Sharps in hospital at Scarborough on 6th January. Those of us who knew him will miss his genial presence at our events and meetings. Although in poor health he was able to attend our 20th anniversary meeting, assisted by Heather, when we shared memories of our first meetings in 1985. Geoffrey had been a constant supporter and encourager ever since our inception. In this Newsletter John Chapple has written an obituary and other members have added their memories and tributes. Alan Shelston's obituary of Geoffrey will follow in the Journal.

I had occasion recently to look at the Whitfield collection in Knutsford Library, there as a result of Geoffrey's efforts. I found there letters from Gaskell biographer Annette B. Hopkins: : *Elizabeth Gaskell: Her life and Work (1952)* from the time when Knutsford was celebrating the 150th anniversary. There was mention of starting a Society then but it had to wait another 25 years!! A letter to Geoffrey from A.B. Hopkins thanks him for pointing out some errors and a page of corrections, with acknowledgment to Geoffrey, appeared in the next edition of her book. (1971)

Thank you to all who sent me cards and congratulations on the award of the MBE. I regard it as a tribute to The Society and our joint success. On 8 December I went to Buckingham Palace accompanied by Elizabeth Williams, Frances Twinn and Ann Waddington. It was a splendid occasion, and awe-inspiring to walk through the Palace gates and into the red and gold galleries. Fran Twinn has captured the thrill of the event for you in her account and she also crowned our day by hosting, with her husband Ian, a delightful dinner party for 15 members. Thank you to all who were involved in any way.

Christine Lingard has collected details of translations of Gaskell works over the years and continents and also extracted from the OED words ascribed as 'first use' by Elizabeth Gaskell, more of these another time.

We are looking well ahead to our next conference, which will be at Christ Church University, Canterbury, from Friday( teatime) 27 July to Monday ( after breakfast) 30 July, 2007. The University has en-suite accommodation and is conveniently situated for the town. We are fortunate to have several members there who will be able to help us in planning the conference. The proposed theme is: Gaskell, Darwin and Dickens: the scientific and cultural background to their work.

# John Geoffrey Sharps (1936-2006) and Gaskell Studies

John A.V.Chapple

I first met Geoffrey in Manchester during June 1961 when Arthur Pollard and I, both lecturers at the university, were preparing a collected edition of the widely dispersed letters of Elizabeth Gaskell. The boy who had gained a scholarship to Sir John Deane's ancient grammar school at Northwich, who excelled in both arts and sciences and was a fine tackler when playing Rugby there (one is delighted to learn from his school friends, John Tasker and Kenn Oultram) had truly remarkable energy, drive and pertinacity. He had gained an MA in English in the University of Edinburgh and was completing his Oxford BLitt thesis on Gaskell. At this time he was also engaged in studies for his DipEd (1962) and MEd in Psychology at Queen's University Belfast (1963). Arthur Pollard and I were experienced in research, but we soon recognised Geoffrey's very special qualities: single-mindedness, stubborn integrity, a desire to be comprehensive combined with total generosity in sharing the results of his investigations. Our statement in the introduction to *The Letters of Mrs Gaskell* (1966) that it 'would have been immeasurably poorer without his help' was heart-felt.

In 1964 his BLitt thesis was accepted at Oxford and became the foundation of his *Mrs. Gaskell's Observation and Invention*, which appeared in 1970 after he had joined the staff of North Riding College of Further Education, Scarborough, in 1964, lecturing at first in English and Educational Psychology but concentrating on the latter from 1967 until his retirement in 1987.

There has been a fashion in recent years for massive bio-critical studies of single authors, some merely assembled from secondary sources. Few of them can match Geoffrey's Gaskell study for its many personal discoveries and thoroughly investigated texts and contexts. Relentless pursuit of detail can be wearisome, but his book is so full, so meticulous and so accurate that sections have never been superseded as essential sources of information and analysis. He used to maintain that he had said all he had to say in this major work, but in fact his Gaskell discoveries continued and were made known to those interested, though he rarely published them.

His amusing laying of the *Dublin University Magazine* ghost of 'The Half-Brothers', which 'vampire-like' obdurately refused to die, did appear as 'a resurrectionist note' in the *Gaskell Society Journal* for 1994. The Japanese scholar Tat Ohno also recalls that in September 2003 he announced the news that the authentic Gaskell

story with that title had appeared first in an obscure provincial publication. This discovery never saw print under Geoffrey's name. Fortunately it was communicated to and acknowledged by the editor of Volume 3 of the new Pickering edition of the *Works of Elizabeth Gaskell*. His own Gaskell collection became perhaps the largest in private hands; it was liberally made available to serious researchers. He both responded to and initiated scholarly contacts. The list of his correspondents was world-wide and their grateful acknowledgements of his assistance are very many.

Gaskell studies were not for Geoffrey an abstract, desiccated pursuit. His description of Elizabeth Gaskell fits him with uncanny aptness too: '... she was always ready to remind her readers of historical associations, to link present observations with memories of the past' (*Mrs. Gaskell's Observation and Invention*, p. 465). Our Honorary Secretary treasures her copy of this extraordinary book, inscribed 'To Mrs Joan Leach: In gratitude for a memorable tour of Mrs Gaskell's Knutsford on Sunday 29 September 1985, 175 years after the birth of the authoress.' He used to appear with an old leather bag bulging with books, which he then asked their authors to sign. He later presented many of them to friends and admirers of Elizabeth Gaskell, adding his own graceful inscriptions.

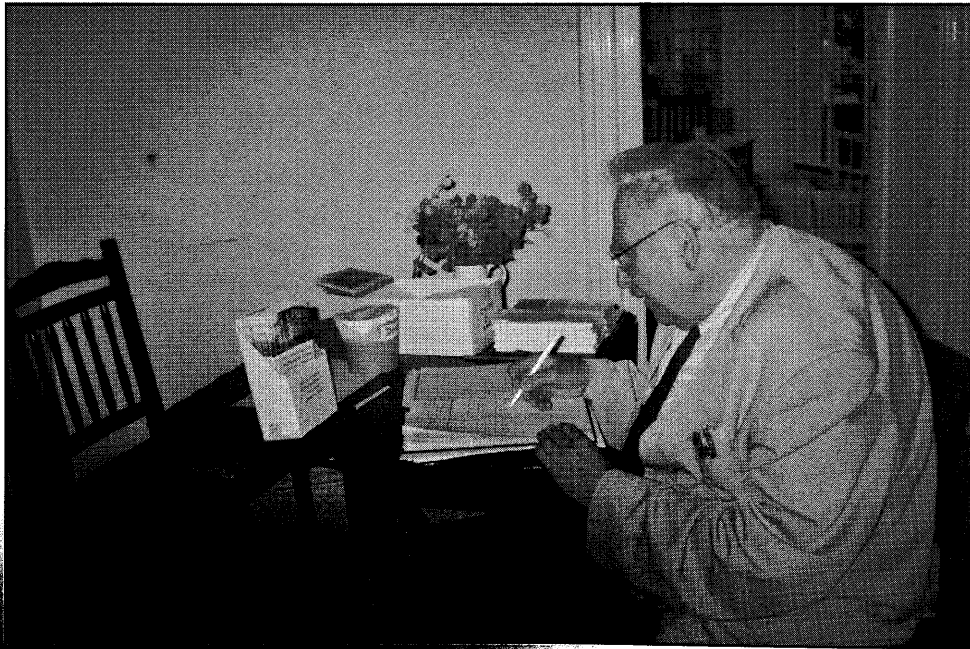
He would speak of older writers like Mrs Chadwick as if he had known them personally. He befriended pre-war writers on Gaskell like A. Stanton Whitfield or the American scholar Mrs Jane Whitehill, happy to arrange for me to meet her when she came to England some years ago. He was an active member of the Brontë Society and his association with the universities at which he had studied was lifelong. These came to include Hull University, where Pollard and I had joined the staff and Mrs Heather Sharps obtained her BPhil in English (1974) with a successful dissertation upon that notable Victorian Sir James Kay-Shuttleworth. About 1990 both Arthur Pollard and Geoffrey took the BTh at Hull via the part-time route, their intellectual stamina quite undiminished by age. Typically, Geoffrey was very pleased to learn that the set of grammar tapes he used to tackle his rusty New-Testament Greek had been created by Christopher Strachan, a member of the Classics department and a great friend of mine.

His special genius probably flourished most in the Gaskell Society. He was present as a member of the steering committee at its first meeting in 1985, and later served a term as President. He attended almost all meetings and conferences. At many of them he spoke, always calmly, judiciously and courteously, though there were powerful depths of passion for justice and accuracy beneath the surface. His gift for personal relationships within the Society never flagged. He also delighted in

meeting and encouraging new members, younger scholars and visitors from overseas.

We all retain memories of him sitting in the front with his tape-recorder, creating a sound archive of our meetings. Who can forget the Society's visit to Whitby when he led us around the places associated with *Sylvia's Lovers*, his panama hat raised high upon a stick as we straggled through the curious holiday crowds? Like William Gaskell he was especially fond of puns. This visit produced a joyously outrageous series - *Dracula* had brought its author '(for whom much was at stake) undying fame' ... here is 'yet more of my humour in the *jugular vein*' ... 'well, *fangs* for the memory!' Admiration for Geoffrey's learning was accompanied by affection for his outgoing, generous nature.

In more recent years, as his health deteriorated sadly, Heather's loyal support enabled him to travel and attend our meetings in his old enthusiastic way. It is fitting that our Honorary Secretary should find the quotation about Charles Kingsley that best expresses our feelings about John Geoffrey Sharps: 'How shall we ever replace him? Who can be to us what he has been?'



## *Memories and tributes to John Geoffrey Sharps*

**From Nancy S Weyant, librarian and bibliographer:**

I met Geoffrey and his remarkable wife, Heather, when I attended my first Gaskell Conference - at St. Hilda's College in Oxford in 1995. My first Gaskell bibliography had been published the previous year. During that year, I made the decision to join the Gaskell Society and subsequently made the decision to attend the Conference. The second day I was there, Geoffrey gave a post-dinner speech in which he traced the role of Americans in Gaskell bibliography and gave me a very generous compliment as part of that tradition. I was stunned! I didn't even know he knew who I was. It turned out that he had brought his copy of my book so I could autograph it for him. *Again*, I was stunned! We librarians are a modest group, in general. He then wanted to interview me about how I became interested in Gaskell. He taped it!

But Geoffrey was also a purist. About three months after the Conference, I received a letter from him, pointing out about a half-dozen mistakes he had found - but also apologizing for communicating them to me. He had been so generous and so supportive, I felt that somehow I had failed *him*. I had hoped to include corrections in the subsequent volume but that was *not* part of the contract with Scarecrow.

Geoffrey and I have corresponded over the last decade. When my second volume came out, I sent him a gift copy. True to form, he checked it for errors. *Much* to my delight, he responded that he had not yet found any, but that he *would* keep looking. When I went to the Conference in Manchester last summer, he purchased a *second* copy of my book and again wanted me to sign it. I smiled and (of course) did so. In 2003 when I went to England for the Durham Gaskell Conference, I stayed with Graham Handley and his wife. Graham loaned me a copy of a BBC program on Elizabeth Gaskell that included multiple scenes with members of the Gaskell Society. Geoffrey was one of the participants - clad in one scene at Whitby in shorts! I treasure that tape too.

In shorts or in his linen sports jacket, Geoffrey was very much a type of British scholar that we Americans can not seem to replicate. Geoffrey was, as I said a gentleman and a scholar - a rare scholar with encyclopaedic knowledge. More importantly, he was a scholar who thrived on encouraging young (and not-so-young) Gaskell scholars. I shall miss him.

**From Dr Irene Wiltshire:**

For several years my copy of *Mrs Gaskell's Observation and Invention* was seldom out of reach, and it continues to be a good reliable friend. Yet when I think of Geoffrey Sharps I recall more than his meticulous scholarship. My personal recollections of

Geoffrey fall into three categories: the Committee Man; the Listener; and the Humorist.

The time I served on the Gaskell Society Committee coincided with the last few years of Geoffrey's Presidency. Throughout this time he was assiduous in attending, not just the AGM, but ordinary committee meetings held in Manchester, or Knutsford. Most committee members lived in Cheshire but Geoffrey lived in the North-East of England so the meetings involved him in an arduous cross-country journey of more than three hours in each direction. The then Chairman of the Society, John Chapple, had an onerous enough journey, driving from Hull on the East Coast via the Trans-Pennine motorway, but, en route, he would collect Geoffrey, who had already travelled by train from Scarborough. Following the meetings, the two would race back across the Pennines so that Geoffrey could catch a suitable train home. All of this was done in a spirit of immense geniality.

When listening to speakers at conferences, and other events, Geoffrey developed his own technique. He would often choose to sit on the front row with his tape recorder switched on. As the temperature rose he would appear to take a cat-nap, eyes closed and chin on chest, but at the appropriate moment he would stir and change over the tape in the recorder. Having accomplished this essential task, he would then sink into a deeper repose, and at times appear to be in danger of falling off his chair. Such a catastrophe never happened and I am sure all those lectures were given an encore back home in Scarborough, before the tapes were carefully stored.

When in jocular mode, Geoffrey could be a humorist par excellence. Some years ago a Gaskell Society event involved a walk in Manchester city centre, led by Terry Wyke from Manchester Metropolitan University. The weather was inclement to say the least; nonetheless, Geoffrey travelled, apparently alone, by train from Scarborough to participate in this walk. Along the way, Terry showed us the site of one of the Gaskells' early homes in the city. Geoffrey recalled the time just before the property was demolished, and how, with scholarly interest, he had knocked on the door of this house and ingenuously enquired of the householder if he (Geoffrey) might 'come in and look round'. The reply apparently was in the negative and the door was firmly closed. We can all sympathise with any reluctance to admit strangers into our homes, but if only this particular householder had been acquainted with Geoffrey, he may well have been a little more welcoming, and then what tales we would have heard.

Geoffrey is now in that place of rest to which we are all destined. When our turn comes to apply for admission, will he encourage us to 'come in and look round'? I think the answer will be in the affirmative.

#### **From Akiko Suzue, President-Elect of The Gaskell Society, Japan:**

I am saddened to learn that Geoffrey Sharps has passed away. I met him at the Durham Gaskell Conference, 2003. During that period he was very kind to me. I talked about my translation of *Sylvia's Lovers*, just completed, and he had given me insightful advice. I was also impressed by the devotion of Mrs Sharps to him. I shall miss the feeling of togetherness I enjoyed at the conference and I shall cherish the memory of our association of that summer.

#### **From Mitsu Matsuoka:**

Professor of English at Nagoya University, Gaskell Society web master

The members of The Gaskell Society of Japan extend profound condolences to Mrs. Sharps, with warm affection and gratitude for his scholarly achievements. I myself was deeply shocked to hear that Professor Sharps had passed away. It was at the 1996 AGM held at the Royal George that I had the honour of meeting him. I looked up to him for his conscientious study of Gaskell. We greatly appreciated not only his outstanding contribution to the Gaskell Society but also his warm personality. It is still really hard to believe we shall never see him again.

#### **From Tatsuhiro Ohno:**

Associate Professor of English Literature, Kumamoto University

In hearing the sad news about the demise of Geoffrey Sharps, I am wondering if I could share my four memories about him with those who knew him.

1. In return for my complimentary copy of the first Japanese translation of *Sylvia's Lovers*, he sent me a copy of his book in which the following dedication was written: "To Tatsuhiro Ohno, Translator of *Sylvia's Lovers*, From John Geoffrey Sharps, Another Admirer of This Novel, Scarborough, North Yorkshire, 10 March 1998". I was moved by his kindness to an obscure Gaskellian in the country of the Far East.

2. After listening to his speech at Cober Hill Centre, Cloughton, 17 September 2003, about his discovery of the book in which "The Half-Brothers" was first published (cf. Sharps, p. 311) and about the correct publication date of *The Life of Charlotte Brontë* - 25th March 1857, not 27<sup>th</sup> - I asked him to publish the outcome of his research; he replied "Yes. Probably in the Newsletter". When we met in Knutsford, 25 September 2004, I made an inquiry about his paper; he said, "It will be published in the Journal". I had a chance to talk with him about his long-expected paper at the Manchester conference on 19 July 2005; his reply was "I haven't written it yet". Has the opportunity to have his discovery published gone forever?

3. In his letter dated 25 January 2005, he kindly wrote, "I can now congratulate you upon your very scholarly Journal article on *Ruth*, well argued and supported by a wealth of references: you are certainly most knowledgeable about earlier Gaskell contributions as well as recent ones. I found your statistical analyses indeed impressive." No word can express how much I was consoled by his remark, since I had long been depressed by unfavourable criticism of my methodology.

4. He did me the honour of attending my presentation at the Manchester conference on 20 July 2005. His comment of "Well done" was one of the precious rewards for my preparation.

Geoffrey Sharps was pleased to know the tradition of Gaskell study begun by A. S. Whitfield in 1929 was still continuing in our country. As a Japanese Gaskellian, I would like to do my best to keep this tradition, which is probably the very thing he would expect us to do.

**Ed.** I am grateful to our Society and The Gaskell Society of Japan for organising a visit to Japan for me from (May 31 to 8 June) when I will talk about Knutsford and Cheshire in the life and works of Elizabeth Gaskell; I first became a Gaskellian from growing up with Gaskell Avenues and Cranford cake shops! and wanting to know about the town in her time.

**From Dr. Larry K. Uffelman:**

Professor Emeritus of English, Mansfield University PA

Like others who have written to comment on the death of John Geoffrey Sharps, I feel a sense of loss even though I hardly knew the man. I met him but once, at a conference in London when I presented a paper on *North and South*. He and his wife sat in the front row looking up at me and, I think, tape-recording my talk. Although this might have been scary, it wasn't. He chuckled in the right places and introduced himself at the end of the session as we drifted toward coffee cups. Later we had a brief conversation at the end of which I produced a copy of his book and sought his autograph. Of course I'd used his book many times before then and have continued to do so.

Later we had an exchange of letters which had more to do with our respective grandchildren and our efforts to learn German than with anything Gaskellian. Of course I didn't know him as well as many of the rest of you, but I found him warm, congenial, and supportive. In short, I liked him a lot.

## *Recollections of Plymouth Grove*

**Susan Hartshorne** of New Earswick, York, writes that for nearly 20 years she and her late husband were resident in Hulme Hall, the University Hall of Residence in Manchester, close to the Gaskell House in Plymouth Grove. During that time she attended many functions when the House was a hostel for international students run by the University International Society.

Before her marriage Susan had lived even nearer, in the same house in which her grandparents, Dorothy and Edward Vipont Brown had lived. Her grandparents were friends of Meta and Julia Gaskell. In his 'Reminiscences' written many years later her grandfather wrote:

'We also came to know the Misses Gaskell (Miss Meta and Miss Julia), daughters of the authoress, who lived in Plymouth Grove. I had been pleading for a District Nurse for Gorton<sup>1</sup> at a meeting in the Town Hall, and Miss Gaskell wrote to offer her help in getting one. When my efforts were crowned with success, the sisters gave me a beautiful bound volume of *Mary Barton* inscribed by them, which I still treasure on my shelves.'

In her grandmother's contemporaneous journal on 3 October 1900, she wrote:

Then we went to Miss Gaskell's At Home in the afternoon, and shook hands with Richter<sup>2</sup>! It was a never-to-be-forgotten opportunity! They are *charming* ladies.

**Ed.** In an undated letter to Mrs Elgar, Meta sends reviews from *The Manchester Guardian* and *The Courier* of a performance of Elgar's Ode<sup>3</sup> - and adds: 'In leaving the concert last Thursday, Dr Richter said to me - "Oh, it was magnificent - the Elgar - It is fine! It is fine!"

Mrs Elgar's diary records their visit to Liverpool in October 1901 for the premiere of the first two *Pomp and Circumstance* marches when Meta and Julia were at the dinner before the concert. In March 1903 her diary recorded: 'We had prepared to go to Manchester by the 10.17 train to stay with the Miss Gaskells for the grt. performance of *Gerontius* that evening but late in the PM Mr Forsyth telephoned that it was postponed till 12<sup>th</sup> Coates being ill. Much disappointment in Manchester, it was to be the great event & every seat was sold out in that Munimence Hall.'

The Gaskells had been involved in Manchester's music since the days when Hallé's man tuned their piano; further research will show Meta and Julia's work with the Royal Northern School of Music.

1. He was a G.P.
2. The famous conductor
3. 'The Ode' may have been Coronation Ode op. 44 with Land of Hope and Glory as the last movement.

# *Gaskell In Translation:- A Summary*

Christine Lingard

There can be no doubt that Gaskell was a success in her lifetime, a success by no means confined to these shores; she was read all over Europe - something that really amazed her. A major reason for this was the growth of the railways. The travelling public was seen as a lucrative market for book-selling and two international publishers in particular exploited this. In Leipzig from 1837 Baron Christian Bernhard Tauchnitz (1816-95) produced his Copyright Edition of contemporary authors in vast quantities. It included English and American authors in the original language. He made the unprecedented move of entering into contracts with authors and they were all fully recompensed. In all he published twelve Gaskell books, including two volumes of short stories. *A Dark night's Work* was given a volume of its own, much to her surprise as she didn't think it warranted it. Excluded were *The Moorland Cottage* (possibly her only flop), the short story 'Crowley Castle', and *Round the Sofa*, maybe because she had sold the rights to Sampson Low for a quick £100. She later regretted this and described him as 'rascally' for trying to pass the stories off as new. (*Letters*, no.414)

Tauchnitz editions often appeared simultaneously with the British and occasionally preceded them. The one exception was *Cranford*, which did not appear till 1867. Gaskell had sent him a copy as early as 1854 but in 1862 she was forced to write to him: 'I cannot help wishing that sometime or other you would collect *Cranford* out of *Household Words*, and publish it in your Series. Many of my friends, and several people who are unknown to me, have expressed their great wish to be able to purchase it abroad' (*Further Letters*, p. 245).

By contrast the Paris publisher Louis Hachette et Cie published English titles translated into French in two successful series - *Bibliothèque de chemins de fer* and *Bibliothèque des meilleurs romans étrangers*. He held a tight rein over translation rights in France and was known to have blocked several ventures. Gaskell had a contract with him for one and a half francs per page but had to badger him to publish *North and South*. A delay of three years ensued before it was done and she was on the verge of withdrawing the option. Nevertheless no other publisher issued her works in France during her lifetime, at least in book form. *Cousin Phillis* appeared in *Revue de deux mondes* and some of the short stories in other magazines. Grassart broke the monopoly with *Wives and Daughters* (1867) and in 1877 *The Life of Charlotte Brontë*, the only book Hachette had not issued. Hachette continued to produce editions of her work until 1890. Their relationship is revealed in their letters. She recommended a number of British authors as suitable for translation. [*Further Letters*, p.126]

During the past year I have been searching out Gaskell translations and it is fascinating to see how widely her work has spread. We can also get an insight into Gaskell's business acumen in her letters to publishers. In 1929 Clark S. Northup appended an extensive bibliography to Gerard DeWitt Sanders' biography. It includes many translations but is far from complete. With the exception of French editions he seems to have restricted his research to the British Library and ignored a lot of interesting developments in other parts of Europe. The first translations of Gaskell in fact were Dutch. *Mary Barton* appeared as early as 1849, and all her novels (except *Wives and Daughters*) and a number of short stories including *Lizzie Leigh* were translated in her lifetime. There were several publishers involved in Amsterdam, Middelburg, Utrecht and Haarlem, though the translator was often the same - C.M. Mensing. Dickens also used this translator without much success. He complained about the poor typography.

These books are extremely rare - the only references to them are in the catalogue of the University of Amsterdam. They are not available in the National Library of the Netherlands. Dutch publishers were small family businesses incorporating a bookshop. Print runs were extremely small, so one wonders if her books suffered the same problems as Dickens'. There is little available in the Netherlands today but in the 1980s several of her short stories were included in anthologies with works by other British women authors, e.g. Jane Austen. One of the most important early studies of Gaskell was by the Dutch scholar Johanna van Dulleman (1924).

Scandinavia soon followed and early translations are to be found in Denmark and Norway. These are comparatively more common. Swedish translations are much rarer, which may seem surprising considering the links Gaskell had with that country. Her good friend Mary Howitt translated from Danish and Swedish and she met Frederika Bremer, the Swedish novelist, who admired her work. The Swedes are natural linguists and many educated people may well have read her works in the original.

Translations of *Ruth* appeared in 1853, *North and South*, under the title *Margareta eller norra och södra England*, in 1856 and *Mr Harrison's Confessions* in 1866. There could well have been an edition of *Mary Barton*, subtitled *En berättelse ur lifvet i Manchester*, in 1854 but I have not yet found a location for this. One of the most important of Gaskell scholars, Aina Rubenius, was Swedish and recently Gunnel Melchers has done some remarkable work on dialect.

Germany was the first foreign country Gaskell visited and she made two other visits there. Though her husband was a noted German scholar she professed to having little knowledge of the language. She writes however of the fondness the Germans had for her work and of several deals with publishers, none of which appear to have come to fruition - for instance, a translation of *Cousin Phillis* in 1864 (*Letters*, no.

557). The first German translation came in 1851, not 1849 as Peter Skrine claimed. He has confirmed that a translation of *Mary Barton* thought to have been published in Grima in 1849 was a cataloguer's error. *Ruth* however provoked a great deal of interest. There were two different translations published in Leipzig and Stuttgart in 1853, as well as the Tauchnitz edition in English. Dr Gottlob Fink (1807-77), translator of the Stuttgart edition, also translated from Swedish, Medieval French and Italian. *Cranford*, *Sylvia's Lovers* and *Wives and Daughters* soon appeared, as well as several of the novellas. Surprisingly I can find no record of *North and South* ever having been translated into German, though in November 1857 she gave permission for a Mrs Taylor to translate it (*Letters*, no. 378). She had had problems with Hachette over the French translation.

*North and South* was originally serialised in *Household Words*. Sales of the magazine dropped while she was writing it and Dickens didn't like the book at all. He wrote to his editor Wills: "Mrs Gaskell's story, so divided, is wearisome in the last degree". One wonders if his views filtered through to the Continent. Several German translators were not acknowledged. She asked George Smith to send a copy of *Sylvia's Lovers* to "Frau von Schmidt, a German friend, who thinks she has the power of translating one of my books early" (*Letters*, no. 501), and refers to "Monsieur Mohl's neices [sic] - who translated *Sylvia's Lovers*, will translate *Wives & Daughters*, after Madame Mohl has read it" (*Letters*, no. 557). They were Ida von Schmidt Zaliarov, wife of a Hungarian Count in the Austrian army, and Anna Helmholtz, wife of a distinguished German scientist. I have no evidence that these translations were ever published. *The Life of Charlotte Brontë* didn't appear in German till 1995. The Germans are very proud of her story, *Six weeks in Heppenheim*, and credit her with promoting the local wine trade. Austria produced a number of school editions early in the twentieth century and the most recent German translations were issued in Zürich.

France was a country that Gaskell loved. She made regular trips to Paris where she met several of her translators, usually at the salon of Mme Mohl in the Rue du Bac. The most famous was Mme Louise Swanton-Belloc, translator of *Cranford*, an Irish woman married to a Frenchman and a personal friend of Maria Edgeworth (who recommended *Mary Barton* to her unaware that it was written by a kinswoman of her neighbour Miss Holland). There is in the Central Library, Manchester, a copy of *Pierre et Pierette* by Georges Sand, a personal autographed gift to Gaskell from Louise Swanton-Belloc. Her son married the English feminist Bessie Rayner Parkes, who was a friend of George Eliot and who also knew Gaskell, and her grandson was the poet Hilaire Belloc. Her translation of *Cousin Phillis* contains a biographical introduction.

There are several mentions of translators in letters to Hachette:

I am very glad to learn that you like the translation of Mlle [Octavie] Morel's [of *Mary Barton*] better on further inspection. To me she was recommended by Mme Geoffroy St Hilaire but when I became personally acquainted with her, I became interested in her for her own sake. [*Further Letters*, p. 134]

(She however translated little else.) Henriette Loreau (born 1815) who shared the translation of *North and South* with Mme Henriette L'Espine, was a prolific translator who corresponded with Darwin. Her other projects included Dickens, Charlotte Brontë and books about Burton, Stanley and Livingstone. She may well have been the wife of a scientist herself: 'If Madame Loreau be the lady I had the pleasure of meeting at your house last year I am sure she would translate it well' (*Further Letters*, p. 188).

Gaskell probably met the Guizot sisters too:

I was not aware that the only translation of 'Ruth' with whose existence I am acquainted was by either Mme Henriette or Pauline de Witt. I knew that they had translated portions of 'Mary Barton' (*Further Letters*, p. 134)

These two are easily confused and I am not sure every bibliographer has got them sorted. The two daughters of Louis Philippe's Prime Minister François Guizot were Henriette (1829-1908), a novelist in her own right (translated by Mrs Craik), who married the Dutch diplomat Conrad de Witt, and Pauline who married his brother Cornélis.

Guizot fled into exile in England after the 1848 revolution and met Gaskell at one of Monckton Milnes' breakfasts on her first visit to London as a 'celebrity'. He returned to France and became a historian. She mentioned him in her essay *French Life*. His output was prodigious. Henriette edited his works. A Swedish encyclopaedia claims that Pauline died in 1874 but *Lizzie Leigh* and two stories by Mrs Craik appeared in *Trois histoires d'amour par deux femmes* in 1882. A possibility is that this Mme de Witt was Pauline's daughter Madeleine, married to Henriette's son Cornélis Henry.

There was nothing new in France, apart from some versions of *Cranford*, until comparatively recently. Caroline Arnaud bemoans the decline in interest in France - no translation of Gaskell's work had been available at the time of her article. I am pleased to say that this has been addressed. The year 2004 saw a new translation of *Wives and Daughters* and a revised edition of *The Life of Charlotte Brontë*, which first saw light of day in Belgium in 1945, has been republished in Monaco.

Interest in Gaskell in other Mediterranean countries did not come till the twentieth century. Francesco Marroni states that the first Italian translation was a poor translation of *Cousin Phillis* serialized in 1929. This is not strictly the case. There was a volume of short stories, *Racconti inglesi*, published in Milan in 1868 with



*Lizzie Leigh* and stories by Dickens and Wilkie Collins. But they have more than made up for it in recent years with Professor Marroni himself at the forefront. The Italians have a love of the supernatural - there are no fewer than five translations of *The Old Nurse's Story*. They have still to enjoy *Sylvia's Lovers* and *Wives and Daughters*.

Interest in Spain is almost as great, even though the Society has few contacts with Spanish academics. It blossomed in 1926 with the merger of the firms Espasa brothers (founded in Barcelona 1860) and Calpe (Compañía Anónima de Libería y Publicaciones Españoles, founded in Barcelona 1910) to form one of the country's most respected academic publishers. This resulted in a major venture to make available translations of foreign literature in Spain. Calpe already had *Cousin Phillis* on its list and others followed, though *Ruth* has never been translated into Spanish. After the Civil War the firm moved to South America. Offices were established in Buenos Aires and Mexico City and the books were reissued there in the 1950s. In Panama a volume with both *Cranford* and *Pride and Prejudice* was published in 1960, using an existing translation. A less scrupulous publisher, Editorial Diana, brought out a pirated translation of *The Life of Charlotte Brontë* in Mexico City in 1950 with the title *Tormentas de pasión: la vida de las Brontë*. Recently there has been interest in the shorter works with translations of *Lizzie Leigh*, *Lois the Witch* and *A Manchester Marriage*. *Clopton House* is available on the Internet. Portugal too has editions of *Cranford*, *Mary Barton* and *The Moorland Cottage*. Another Portuguese translation of *Cranford* by the well-known Brazilian author Rachel de Queiroz was published in Rio de Janeiro in 1946.

Less well documented is the availability of her work in Russia. In 1857 she breakfasted with Dean Arthur Stanley, just returned from Moscow. She wrote to Charles Eliot Norton:

He told me something I liked to hear, & so I shall tell it to you. In Moscow he had seen a good deal of a priest of the Greek Church, - a pure Muscovite - but a very intelligent man. Speaking of forms of religion in England this priest was so well acquainted with the position of dissenting ministers with regard to their congregations that A S was surprised, & enquired where & how he got his knowledge. 'From an English novel, 'Ruth.' (*Letters*, no. 384)

And in 1858:

I am receiving *such* nice letters in *English* - from a Russian girl with an unpronounceable name, living many leagues South East of Odessa, - she wrote to me about Miss Brontë's life, but we go on very pleasantly, as harmonious *strangers* can do after all, more confidentially than inharmonious acquaintances. (*Letters*, no. 401)

While these people would most likely have read her work in English courtesy of Tauchnitz they could have read them in Russian. One man responsible for this was none other than Fyodor Dostoevsky. He was a great admirer of her work, and in 1861 commissioned the serialization of *Mary Barton* in *Vremya* (Time), the revolutionary periodical he founded with his brother Mikhail. The translator has been identified as Elizaveta Grigor'evna Beketova, grandmother of another famous Russian poet, Aleksandr Blok. In 1864 they began the serialization of *Ruth* but only one episode appeared, as the magazine was forced to close. Bibliographies also list translations of *North and South* (1857) published anonymously, *Cranford* (1867) and *Wives and Daughters* (1867) but little else is recorded about these publications. It was not till 1936 that another Russian translation of *Mary Barton* appeared.

There has been over the years a peppering of translations throughout the rest of Eastern Europe before and after fall of the Iron Curtain. Hungary led the way with *Mary Barton* in 1876 and *Cranford* (translated by the Bishop of Transylvania) in 1889. The latter has long been popular in the country. The 1957 translation (which comes back to English as 'Hick Town') has been reissued several times. There followed: Poland (*Cranford*, *Mary Barton*), Finland (*Cranford*, *Lizzie Leigh*, *Sylvia's Lovers*), Yugoslavia (*Cranford*, *Mary Barton*), Czechoslovakia (*Mary Barton*), Estonia (*North and South*), Roumania (*Cranford*, *Mary Barton*, *North and South*), Bulgaria (*Cranford*), Slovenia (*Cousin Phillis*), Turkey and most recently Greece (*Christmas Storms and Sunshine*, *Cranford*, *Cousin Phillis*). The latter are particularly welcome as we now have several Greek members in the Society.

In Asia the considerable interest in Japan is well known thanks originally to Stanton Whitfield who encouraged several translations in the 1920s. Due to the efforts of Professors Tatsuhiro Ohno and Yuriko Yamawaki all Gaskell's novels are now available in Japanese translation. It is particularly difficult to research books not in Roman script. However because many online library catalogues are presented in tabular form with proper names and numbers retained in the original you can find titles even though you may not be quite sure exactly what they are! Examples of such entries are to be found in Chinese and Korean collections. Middle Eastern and Southern Asian languages are even more difficult to access. Simplified editions in English of *Cranford* have appeared in India and Iran (with introduction in Farsi).

Gaskell is not unknown in the Arab world - a thesis on *Gaskell's attitude toward women's work* was presented to the King Fahad University, Riyadh in 1996. As the result of my research I have compiled a provisional file of 309 references to books from non-English speaking countries, including English editions and corrections to mistaken statements in circulation. I have not been able to examine every copy. Nevertheless I can state that Gaskell has been translated into twenty-four languages. *Cranford*, *The Life of Charlotte Brontë* and *Mary Barton* are by far the most



frequently translated. Next comes *The Old Nurse's Story*, one of the first choices for anthologies of classic ghost stories. Looking at the 1945 map of Europe, the only country from mainland Europe larger than Luxembourg not to have published Gaskell is Albania. She is truly an international figure.

Arnaud, C., 'Gaskell studies in France', *Gaskell Society Journal* 13, 1999, pp.112-6.

Chapple, J.A.V. & Pollard, A., eds, *The Letters of Mrs Gaskell* (Manchester University Press, 1966), cited as *Letters*.

Chapple, J.A.V. and Shelston, A., eds, *Further Letters of Mrs Gaskell* (Manchester University Press, 2000), cited as *Further Letters*.

Johnson, C.A. 'Russian Gaskelliana', *Review of English Literature*, vol. 7, July 1966, pp.39-52.

Marroni, F., 'Gaskell studies in Italy', *Gaskell Society Journal* 1, 1987, pp.41-7.

Northup, C., Bibliography in Sanders, G. DeWitt, *Elizabeth Gaskell* (Yale University Press, 1929).

Skrine, P.N., 'Fanny Lewald and Mrs. Gaskell', *Gaskell Society Journal* 4, 1990, p.56.

Yamawaki, Y., 'Gaskell studies in Japan', *Gaskell Society Journal* 13, 1999, p.138.

# Letters relating to The Life of Charlotte Brontë

Joan Leach

The Horsfall Turner collection of letters, which the Brontë Society acquired in July 2001, includes two letters to Ellen Nussey with a Gaskell interest. Both were written about the time of the publication of *The Life of Charlotte Brontë*, one by William Gaskell, the other by Marianne.

Marianne's letter is dated February 12, 1857, the day before she set off for Rome with her mother and Meta.

She writes to Ellen:

*I am very glad indeed that you enjoyed your visit here. I was so pleased to get to know you, first because you were dear Miss Brontë's friend but now because you are yourself dear Miss Nussey.*

*I had a very pleasant visit to Liverpool, on Saturday we went to see the Great Britain and had a most grand lunch on board her. I quite longed to be going a voyage in her every thing looked so comfortable and homey . . .*

*Mama sends her love, she is sorry ,very - that Miss Wooler objects to her name being mentioned but it is too late now, as the copies are struck off, also Mama says about Mrs Sedgwick she must take the consequence as it is too late to alter that also . . . When we come home I shall write, and tell you our adventures, and we will have a grand talking over when you come to see the exhibition.*

*Believe me to remain (with united love from all)*

*Yours affectionately*

*Marianne Gaskell*

In the third, revised edition of *The Life*, Miss Wooler's name has been replaced by Miss W-.

When Marianne writes '*Mama says about Mrs Sedgwick she must take the consequences*', presumably she means that her mother expects to take the consequences of naming the lady in *The Life*, but she is not identified in the text. Was this a last-minute change, perhaps among the 'one or two matters' mentioned by William in the following letter. Alan Shelston notes that she was Mrs Sidgwick (not Sedgwick) and was Charlotte's first employer. ECG writes '*I intend carefully to abstain from introducing the names of any living people*' (Penguin edn, p.186), but she gives a very critical account of the family in the *Life*, Vol 1, Ch 8. See also *Letters*, no. 266, and Juliet Barker, *The Brontës*, pp. 309-12)

William's letter is dated March 24th 1857:

*My Dear Miss Nussey*

*I don't wonder at your having begun to think that the Life was never coming; but it is now, I see, announced for tomorrow and I hope you will receive your copy close on the heels of this. After Mrs Gaskell left, Mr Smith grew nervous about the references to Newby's dealings, and one or two other matters, and begged me to rewrite a few bits here and there; but these were done more than a fortnight ago, and the delay, I believe, has been occasioned by the engravings. I think you will be pleased by the likeness, of which he sent me a proof about ten days back. I could not judge so well of the Haworth view, never having been there and once thought of sending it to you, and should have done, but for the loss of time to which this would have led.*

William tells Ellen the news he has had from the travellers of their delays from the 'Scirocco' wind and the bursting of the ship's boiler, then their arrival in Rome and seeing the Carnival.

*Since then they have been doing as people do in Rome - driving out to princely villas, with gardens full of flowers, and hedges full of camellias - seeing old churches - attending complines at St Peter's, seeing the Coliseum lit up at night, and visiting it by day, and awaiting to do ditto by moonlight - and going to receptions at this palace and that. The friends they are with are kindness itself and urge me to come too; but I am tied faster by the leg than ever. Mrs Stowe is in town and they have met her several times. Dr Manning, Aubrey de Vere, and some other perverts are among their visitors and Meta writes, 'We are all being prayed for in different churches - that is for our conversion or reception into catholicism. Don't they wish they may get us!'*

*Flossy and Julia are pleased to be remembered, and send their love. They are dear good little girls, and I'm only sorry I can see them but at meal times and in odd waiting moments.*

He concludes that he writes in haste, has several other letters to write and will not have a moment tomorrow.

William's use of the term 'perverts' is interesting, as the meaning has changed somewhat. I am indebted to Alan Shelston for the following references:

The word 'perversion' meant in the 1850s 'conversion' from the Church of England, apostasy': Robert Lee Woolf, *Gains and Losses* (1977); Edward Conybeare, *Perversion, or the Causes and Consequences of Infidelity* (1856).

William and Elizabeth were upset when Marianne, on a second visit to Rome in 1862, came under the influence of Cardinal Manning and seriously considered converting. William set about a course of reading and discussion with her but Elizabeth doubted the wisdom of this and wrote to W. W. Story, who been host to Marianne in Rome:

*I fear his extreme dislike & abhorrence of R. C.-ism; & thinking all the arguments adduced by its professors 'utterly absurd', makes her more inclined to take up its defence...* (GL, no. 507).

Shortly after this Marianne's engagement to her cousin Thurstan Holland meant she had other matters to attend to.

Thanks to The Brontë Society for permission to quote from Horsfall Turner Collection. BS XV

## *Gaskell Society Members at Buckingham Palace*

**Fran Twinn**

Under grey leaden skies and drizzling rain, Joan, Elizabeth, Ann and I met outside the imposing wrought iron gates of Buckingham Palace yesterday, 8th December, 2005, at 10am.

Joan looked wonderfully elegant in shades of brown and dusky pink. Her head was crowned with a pretty small-brimmed hat, de rigueur for an important occasion in such splendid surroundings. We made our way across the huge, windswept, gravel expanse that fronts the Palace watched by curious tourists. Looking back I paused to wonder whether we resembled decorative animals in a zoo!

Under the arch and into the inner sanctum of the smaller quadrangle away from interested eyes we relaxed somewhat. A warm welcome met us as we ascended the red carpet and entered the public apartments. Everything on these public occasions runs like clockwork. Attendants were on hand everywhere to welcome, direct and make us feel at ease. A trip to the 'Ladies' was essential, if only see the old-fashioned water closet with its wide mahogany seat and chain. These must be unique to the Palace and other stately homes in this day and age I think!!

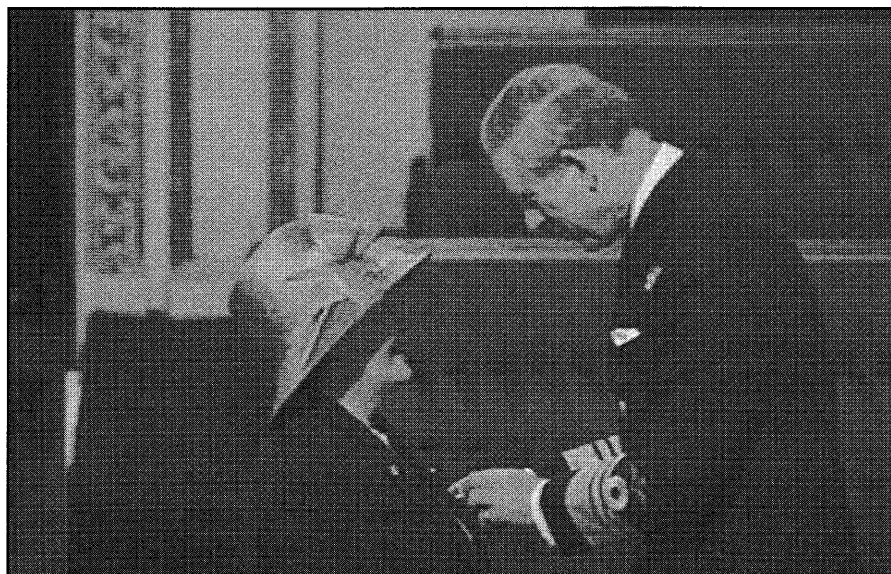
The investiture was held in the ballroom where state banquets and major parties are held. Whilst we waited for the proceedings to begin we were able to feast our eyes on the exquisite, enormous cut-glass chandeliers, wonderful paintings and sheer grandeur of the room which was as awe-inspiring as the ceremony itself. To watch the Prince of Wales speak personally to each of the one hundred people left us all in a state of admiration. He knew (before Joan could say anything) that she represented the Gaskell Society and their short exchange centred on the television adaptations of her novels (yes, he has seen and enjoyed them!) and Joan's disappointment about the Cranford Chronicles. [shelved by BBC TV]

For those few moments as the 'recipients' ascend the shallow steps to receive their honour the royal focus is on them entirely. What struck me most forcibly was the fact that until the recipient had bowed or curtsied for the second time and moved away, the Prince did not look away. He then picked up the next medal and continued.

Of course it is nerve-racking for those receiving an honour but for those of us spectating the treat was the wonderful mixture of the formality of the perfectly orchestrated ceremony combined with the orchestra of eight who serenaded the whole proceedings from a balcony above our heads. There's no 'canned' music in Buck House!!

I cannot really convey how proud and privileged we felt to be able to share in Joan's achievement and her 'big day'. Discouraged from applause at the opening of the ceremony, all we could do was smile broadly and hug ourselves as she received the silver medal backed by its rose pink ribbon. I am sure you will be able to see it on display eventually and Joan is threatening to buy a miniature to wear opposite her Gaskell Society badge, on her other lapel - a lovely idea, I think.

Finally the day was capped by a celebration supper when fifteen of us gathered in spite of London Transport problems to drink a toast to Joan and hear about the day. We had an enjoyable, happy, convivial evening: Gaskell would have approved! It was a chance to meet outside our Saturday afternoon meetings, maybe something we should do more often!



## Mrs Gaskell and the OED

The Oxford English Dictionary credits Elizabeth Gaskell as the first author to use these words in the English language:

1. bingy, a. 1857, Mrs. Gaskell, *Charlotte Brontë* (1857) l. 70 - said of milk: in the incipient stage of sourness.
2. breadlines. 1863, Mrs. Gaskell, *Sylvia's Lovers*, xxxix: daily breadlines: fellowship in earning or partaking of 'daily bread'
3. butterless, a. 1859, Mrs. Gaskell, *Round the Sofa*
4. butty 2. 1855, Mrs. Gaskell, *North & South*, II, xi: a slice of bread and butter
5. caustic, verb. 1852, Mrs. Gaskell, *Letters* 1 Oct, 852 6, trans: to treat with a caustic
6. Connemara. 1861, Mrs. Gaskell, *Letters* 26 Dec, 67 8
7. cwm. 1853, Mrs. Gaskell, *Ruth* l. Vii, 170
8. dinnery, a. Mrs. Gaskell, *Curious if True*: characterized by dinner or dinners.
9. drip-drop, n. 1848, Mrs. Gaskell *Mary Barton* ix
10. earlyish, a. and adv. 1838, Mrs. Gaskell, 17 July, 18 12: We set off earlyish 4 o'clock say
11. écossaise. 1841, Mrs. Gaskell *Letters*, 43
12. Eng. Lit. 1850, Mrs. Gaskell *Letters*, 25 Jan.
13. frab, v trans. 1848, Mrs. Gaskell *Mary Barton* iv. 15: to harass, worry
14. gaum-like, a. 1863, Mrs. Gaskell, *Sylvia's Lovers* II. 21: having an intelligent look.
15. Hallé. 1852, Mrs. Gaskell, *Letters*, 7 Dec, 217 17: we have 3 Hallé tickets for Thursday
16. instinctly, adv. 1855, Mrs Gaskell, *North & South*, xxii.
17. jettatura. 1855, Mrs. Gaskell, *The Accursed Race*: the evil eye; bad luck.
18. piggism. 1852, Mrs. Gaskell, *The Shah's English Gardener*: piggish behaviour
19. quiller, n.2. 1853, Mrs. Gaskell, *Ruth*, II. Vii: one who quills material, esp. into the form of a ruff.
20. repp. 1860, Mrs. Gaskell, *Right at Last*: textile fabric (of wool, silk, or cotton) having a corded surface.
21. repaper, v. 1854, Mrs. Gaskell, *North & South*, I. v, 23
22. retraite. 1860, Mrs. Gaskell, *Letters*, 27 Aug: en retraite, in retirement or seclusion.
23. rive gauche. 1862, Mrs. Gaskell, Jrnl. Feb. in *Fraser's*, 25.
24. saucerful. 1852, Mrs. Gaskell, *Cranford*, viii, 26.
25. schismatism. 1859, Mrs. Gaskell, *Round the Sofa*, 223.
26. scrubble, v. c1854, Mrs. Gaskell, *Letters*, 274: it will cost two guineas, and so I must scrubble up money for that.

# Sylvia's Lovers

Joan Leach

Meta Gaskell sent this letter to Thomas Seccombe, who had written the introduction to a new edition of *Sylvia's Lovers* in 1910, illustrated by M. V. Wheelhouse.\* The date of the letter obviously brought poignant memories to Meta. Seccombe had written in his introduction:

*'Those at home were preparing tea in the drawing room, to the accompaniment of an early winter fire, and Mrs Gaskell was discussing some project for the immediate future, when, in the middle of a sentence, she leaned forward, suddenly fell and succumbed to heart seizure 'without a moment's warning'.*

This is not an inaccurate description, hardly a 'mistake' but Meta felt the full details should have been told, especially for the relevant coincidence that her last, unspoken words would have been, '...when I am dead'.

Thomas Seccombe was a literary scholar and biographer. From 1891-1900, when the *DNB* was completed, he was assistant editor. His own entry in the current edition says, 'His kindness and courtesy made him a favourite with contributors'. He contributed over five hundred of the biographies himself, specialising the eighteenth century, and wrote prefaces to works of Boswell, Borrow, Gissing, Goldsmith and Smollett.

**John Chapple** adds:

'I have photocopies of two letters in Geoffrey Sharps's collection, from Meta to TS dated 16 January 1911 and 24 January 1911. Both praise the *Sylvia's Lovers* introduction, and there is a list of corrections - I think for a second edition if one came to be. This does not contain ECG's last words but 24 January letter does say there was no tea in the drawing room at Holybourne.' Also Geoffrey had a card Meta sent from the Sheiling, 9 September [1910], in particular asking if he (Seccombe) was going to 'interpolate those words of mine about Mrs Lumb in your "*Sylvia's Lovers*".' [Does Meta mean she had sent ECG's 'more than mother' words?]

In his introduction Seccombe wrote:

*Of this aunt she writes, 'She was my dearest friend - my more than mother - whose bodily appearance was a fit shrine for her pure and chastened spirit'.*

Princeton University Library also has a few letters from Meta to TS: 10 February 1913; 10 July no year; and no date at all, but acknowledging receipt of his *Wives and Daughters*.

1. In *Mrs. Gaskell, Homes, Haunts and Stories* by Ellis H Chadwick the 'tea' incident is changed between 1910 and 1913 edition.

Yours most sincerely M. E. Gaskell

1.

84, PLYMOUTH GROVE,  
MANCHESTER.

12 Nov. 1910.

Dear Mr. Seccombe,

It is 45 years today  
since my most dear  
Mother fell dead, 'with-  
out a moment's warning',  
and it has entered  
into my heart to write

3. the press-cuttings that  
I get through Durrant  
It is perfect - quite  
except for one mistake  
for which I blame my-  
self entirely. How I  
could have been so care-  
less as to let it pass,  
I cannot conceive.  
The last words spoken  
by my Mother were  
quoting to my brother-

2. to you and thank you  
once more for your  
wonderfully beautiful  
Introduction to the new  
Edition of "*Sylvia's  
Lovers*".

How it has been ad-  
-mired and praised,  
I have learnt through

4. - in - law something that  
his father, dead just a  
fortnight before, had  
said, and it is a pathetic  
coincidence that if she  
had finished the sentence,  
the next words would have  
been "when I am dead" -  
How often I have thought  
during the last few weeks  
of what grief you have  
been enduring for the  
loss of one so dear as your  
Mother - Aunt -

## Two Books about the Brontës

Elizabeth Williams

Ian Emberson, *Pilgrims from Loneliness: an interpretation of Charlotte Brontë's 'Jane Eyre' and 'Villette'*. The Brontë Society, 2005, pp. 150. Paperback, £9.95, ISBN 1-903007-10-0.

As the title indicates, this book deals with *Jane Eyre* and *Villette*, taking us through each novel incident by incident, and examining some of the references in the light of Charlotte Brontë's life and reading. At the beginning of the book Ian Emberson describes it as an interpretation of the novels 'in terms of their underlying mythology, and the basis of that mythology in Charlotte Brontë's early reading'. He is particularly interested in connecting the novels with *Pilgrim's Progress* and *Paradise Lost*, and examining the links with Biblical and classical reading which might lead to a deeper understanding of both of Brontë's novels. This is an ambitious enterprise and as he says himself, at the end of a discussion of *Jane Eyre*'s paintings, 'The possibilities... are endless'. There are references to art, to literature and to music, and a number of interesting connections are noted, deepening one's own understanding and appreciation. Echoes of one novel in the other are mentioned, as well as the fact that '*Villette* is a cry of pain: *Jane Eyre* is an affirmation', and he explains this in terms of the different circumstances of the author's life at the time of composition. Thus the title comes to cover *Jane Eyre*, *Lucy Snowe* and Charlotte Brontë herself, if in very different ways.

The book would be particularly useful to anyone needing to study the novels for exams, as the recounting of episodes and the lengthy quotations act as a clear revision aid, while the speculation about interpretation and the sources of ideas encourages thought and understanding. Ian Emberson has obviously thought long and hard about these novels, and the book encourages us to do the same.

George Sowden, *Recollections of the Brontës*. Angria Press, 2005, pp. 12. Paperback, £3, ISBN 0-9521693-5-5.

This pamphlet is a reprint of four articles which originally appeared in *The Hebden Bridge Parochial Magazine* in 1894 and were discovered by Ian and Catherine Emberson in the course of their research. George Sowden was the younger brother of Sutcliffe Sowden, who officiated at the wedding of Charlotte Brontë and Arthur Bell Nicholls, and although he honestly admits that his acquaintance with the Brontës was slight, he and his brother were close friends of Mr Nicholls. For this reason it makes an interesting balance to Elizabeth Gaskell's *Life of Charlotte Brontë* - the rather remote figure of Mr Nicholls presented by Gaskell becomes 'the gentlest and most affectionate of men' and we have a description of how he and the writer, meeting after a separation, astonished the company when they 'rushed into each

others arms and (after the old scriptural usage) embraced and kissed one another'. There are interesting glimpses of Charlotte and Branwell Brontë, as well as Mr Brontë in his 'stupendous' necktie - 'how it was constructed I could not imagine'.

The pamphlet is very short, but gives the sense of genuine memories, written with an honesty that makes the reader wish that Sowden had written more. It is available from the Brontë Parsonage, from good booksellers or, with an extra charge of 30p for postage, directly from the publishers, Angria Press at 1 Highcroft Road, Todmorden, OL14, 5LZ.

## 84 Plymouth Grove - The Gaskell House

**Saturday 1st April:** 2.15 pm: Talk by Professor Michael Rose (doors open at 2.00: **Across the Class Divide - Philanthropy and the Gaskells in Victorian Manchester.** £5.00 incl. light refreshments; (£3.50 Students).

**Sunday 2nd April: Open Day 12 noon - 4 pm**

**Sunday 7th May: Open Day 12 noon - 4 pm including Plant Sale**

**Sunday 4th June: Open Day 12 noon - 4 pm**

Other Events for 2006 are at the planning stage including the exciting news that **the actress Gabrielle Drake has agreed to perform her one-woman production as Elizabeth Gaskell 'Dear Scheherazade'** - venue etc to be confirmed.

## At Cross Street Chapel Manchester

### AGM meeting Saturday 8<sup>th</sup> April

- |               |   |
|---------------|---|
| 10.30         | Coffee followed by AGM at 11.00   |
| 11.45 - 12.45 | The Daphne Carrick lecture will be given by Dr Maurice Milne, Emeritus Professor of Humanities, Richmond American International University. On the theme:<br><i>The Dark Expounder and the Melodious Voice: Gaskell and Carlyle on Chartism</i> |
| 1.00 - 2.15   | Buffet lunch with service   |
| 2.15          | Dudley Green on: <i>The Letters of the Reverend Patrick Brontë</i> .<br>Dudley's newly published book will be on special offer to members on the book table.  |

Close about 3.45

## North West Group

Knutsford meetings continue with the study of The Life of Charlotte Brontë.

**Wednesdays - 29th March, 26th April.**

**Wednesday 17th May** we will visit Oakwell Hall and The Red House for their Brontë associations.

In July we hope to visit Ashbourne ( for Samuel Johnson and Holland connections) and Hope House Costume Museum and Restoration Workshop at Alstonefield.

NB. if you are not a member of the Knutsford group but would like information, when available, please let Joan Leach know.

**Cross Street Chapel, Manchester.**

**Tuesday 14th March:** Florence Nightingale by Dr Aled Jones.

**History Day School at The Portico Library, Manchester.**

**Saturday, 25th March.**

*On Library History in the North West*, organised by Lancashire and Cheshire Antiquarian Society.

Fee £12 or £18.50 with lunch.

## The Yorkshire Branch of the Society

**Programme, 2006:**

**Saturday 13th May:** 'Household Words: The first three editions', by Elizabeth Williams, Chairman of The Gaskell Society

**Saturday 9th September:** 'Knutsford and Cheshire in Mrs Gaskell's Life and Works', by Joan Leach, Secretary of the Gaskell Society

**Saturday 18th November:** Speaker: Dudley Green, editor of the recently published *Letters of the Reverend Patrick Brontë* and member of the Gaskell Society Committee.

All the meetings will be held at the Friends Meeting House, Friargate, York, and will commence at 2pm. The room will be available from 12.30pm for those who wish to bring a picnic lunch. To cover expenses a contribution of £3 is requested from members of the Gaskell Society and £4 from non-members.

## London and South East Group

Meetings are held at The Francis Holland School, 36 Graham Terrace, a few minutes walk from Sloane Square tube station. 12.45pm for sandwich lunch, meeting begins at 2pm.

Email: [Frantwinn@aflex.net](mailto:Frantwinn@aflex.net) or phone for info. 020 8693 3238

**Saturday, 13th May:** The title of Professor Barbara Hardy's talk will be: 'The Green World in Elizabeth Gaskell's fiction'.

## South West Group

Last year's programme was as usual: our New Year Supper, a visit to Clevedon organised by Celia Skrine where we read some of Tennyson's "In Memoriam" outside the church where Arthur Hallam is buried. "Oh how perfect some of them are" was her comment (*Letter* 73). In July we loved welcoming Joan Leach and enjoyed her talk on Mrs. Gaskell's relationship with the Winkworth sisters. Alex and Kate Crawford entertained us to tea in their scenic garden in Norton St. Philip in August - some delightful new members and their husbands came to this event.

A small group went to the Autumn Meeting in Knutsford and were made very welcome at the 20th Anniversary celebrations. It was a particular privilege to hear Geoffrey Sharps speak to us for the last time. It was with great sadness that we heard of his death on January 5th. What a lovely man!

There was a very full programme of events including morning service at Brook Street Chapel and a visit to Plymouth Grove, which was a surprisingly big house with spreading grounds. It was easy to see both why she loved it so much and also why she felt slightly guilty about it. There is a lot to do but the team has the restoration very well in hand.

### Events this year:

**April 8th** Flat 4, 97, Sydney Place, Bath, the home of Mrs. Joan Chandler at 2.30. We shall be discussing *Ruth* and the relevance of its attitudes to modern readers.

**May 17th** A group visit to Tyntesfield, the amazing home of the Gibbs family, which is being restored by the National Trust.

**August 13th** 3.30 - 5.00 (approx): Tea at Murhill House, home of David and Janet Cunliffe-Jones.

**November 4th** (provisional date): Talk by Dudley Green, a leading member of the Brontë Society, who has just finished editing the letters of Patrick Brontë. Dudley has visited us before and it will be a great pleasure to hear him again.

Any queries to Rosemary Marshall, 138, Fairfield Park Road, Bath, BA1 6JT  
Tel: 01225 426732 e-mail: [rosemary\\_marshall@yahoo.com](mailto:rosemary_marshall@yahoo.com)

## *Alliance of Literary Societies*

### **AGM at Bath, 13th and 14th May 2006**

You will find information about the Bath meeting, including accommodation, on the web at [www.sndc.demon.co.uk](http://www.sndc.demon.co.uk). or SAE to Joan Leach

#### **Saturday 13th May:**

10.00am: Coffee followed by AGM.

12.00am: 'She was come to be happy: Jane Austen and Fanny Burney in Bath': by Maggie Lane with readings by Angela Barlow.

2.30pm: Options: Guided walks, visit to Jane Austen Centre or to 4, Sydney Place.

7.00pm: Assemble at The Redcar Hotel for dinner, followed by: 'Jane Austen and Character: an actor's view', by Angela Barlow.

#### **Sunday 14th May:**

Members of the Bristol and Bath Jane Austen Society will be available to accompany delegates to sites in Georgian Bath: the Pump Room, the Assembly Rooms (which contain the Museum of Costume), St Swithin's church, The Georgian Garden, 1 Royal Crescent, etc.

12.30pm: Farewell lunch.

## *Whitby Caedmon Literary Festival*

### **22nd - 28th April**

A varied programme for which by The Gaskell Society has sponsored two of our members as speakers.

#### **Wed 26th April 7.00pm**

Dr Shirley Foster on *Elizabeth Gaskell, Whitby and Sylvia's Lovers*

Dr. Marion Shaw - *Gaskell and Religion in 18th century Whitby*

On the same day there will be a literary lunch with Kate Fenton as guest speaker.

#### **Tuesday 25th April 8.00pm**

Performance Robin Ellwood and co: *George Hudson and Whitby*: an evening of story telling about the railway coming to Whitby in the 19th century and life as a navvy, in costume , to include a supper.

There is a book fair on Thursday 28th and a Sylvia's Lovers walk 10.00 - 12.30pm.  
Phone 01947 810819 for programme details or SAE to Joan Leach.

# The Gaskell Society



**Gaskell Society of Japan members  
after a tea party on 3rd June at Jissen Women's School**

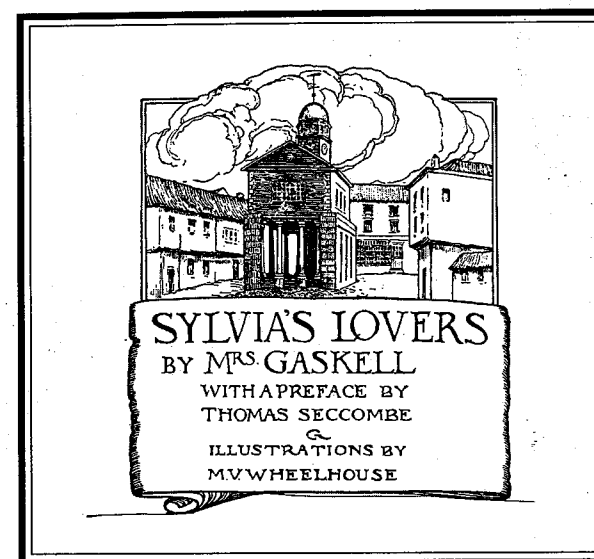
THE GASKELL SOCIETY HOME PAGE has all the latest information on meetings.  
<http://gaskellsociety.users.btopenworld.com>

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.  
Telephone - 01565 634668 E-mail: [joanleach@aol.com](mailto:joanleach@aol.com)

**Hon Treasurer:** Brian Williams, 15 Cawley Avenue, Culcheth, Warrington, Cheshire WA3 4DF

**Membership Secretary:** Miss C. Lingard, 5 Moran Crescent, Macclesfield SK11 8JJ

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## NEWSLETTER

Autumn 2006 - Number 42



## Editor's Letter

Joan Leach

This Newsletter is a little delayed by the late circulation of the Journal. You can read something about activities in our various groups and it brings you notice of future events which we hope some of you will be able to attend.

Our programme for the Canterbury Conference, next July, is not yet finalised but there is some information in this newsletter to whet your appetite. You will see that the programme and events will be wide ranging and the venue delightful.

September will be a busy month in the Manchester region with the production of *Mary Barton* at the Royal Exchange which runs until 14th October and Gabrielle Drake's brilliant one - woman performance *My Dear Scherherazade*, 14-16 September. We are greatly indebted to her for giving us a special performance, in Knutsford, on 15th October, to raise funds for the Gaskell house at Plymouth Grove. You can help to swell funds by reminding people that the house is open on the first Sundays in the month from noon to 4pm, teas are served and there is fine selection of second hand books on sale; plants, too, on the 2nd October.

We hope you will enjoy reading about our various activities, Jean Alston organised for us a most interesting trip to Ashbourne and Derbyshire. My trip to Japan to speak at a general meeting in Tokyo to our members was a wonderful experience that I am happy to share with you. I was privileged to be shown something of their fascinating artistic and historic culture and the fish diet suited my arthritic knee. It remains to be seen how the Italian food in Rome will affect it; you will have to wait until our next Newsletter to hear about our visit in Gaskell footsteps.

Members of the Brontë Society visited Plymouth Grove on 5th June. They first visited Manchester in February 1910 when they held their AGM at the Atheneum. They were addressed by Bishop Welldon, Dean of Manchester, who drew largely on the letters from Charlotte to Elizabeth Gaskell that had been lent to him by Meta. He and other speakers emphasised the need for preserving such mementoes of the Brontës as Manchester now possessed and notably the house of Mrs Gaskell. The Society did not visit it on that occasion. It was recalled that Patrick Brontë had come to Manchester for an operation on cataracts. At one time there was discussion about a statue of our two authors.

Many of you will have seen the photograph of Florence Nightingale, recently rediscovered and now on display at the Nightingale Museum at St Thomas Hospital, at Lambeth, London\* (until November). It shows her at the age of 38, sitting in the

garden of the family home at Embley, Hampshire and looking thin despite the voluminous crinoline. She shunned fame after her return from the Crimea and only seven other photos are known. Elizabeth described her in similar pose 'with her head a bent a little forwards one hand lying in repose on the other on her knees (Letters 217) She was writing to her friend Emily Shaen and told how her doctor brother-in-law Sam, had been 'carried off his feet' on meeting her, though before he saw her 'he called her my enthusiastic young lady and irritated me by speaking very contemptuously of her as *well-meaning etc.*' Elizabeth had met Florence at Lea Hurst, the Nightingales' Derbyshire home where she wrote part of *Ruth*.

\*For information: [www.florence-nightingale.co.uk](http://www.florence-nightingale.co.uk) or phone 020 7620 0374.

## My Visit to Japan

Joan Leach

Soon after The Gaskell Society was inaugurated in October 1985, our first president, Professor Arthur Pollard, told me that there was an interest in Japan in the writing of Elizabeth Gaskell and suggested that I should contact Dr Yuriko Yamawaki in Tokyo. She became our first Japanese member and in September 1987 spoke at our second AGM about Gaskell's works in Japan. Dr Yamawaki's interest had led her to visit Knutsford some years earlier but she and I did not meet then. It might be said that she was the Gaskell ambassador to Japan and with her enthusiasm and encouragement the Gaskell Society of Japan was formed and has worked so consistently to promote knowledge of Gaskell's works by their translations.

Dr Yamawaki was kind enough to invite me to visit The Gaskell Society of Japan some years ago but family circumstances made this impossible until this year, when I was delighted to accept the invitation - though in some trepidation about travelling so far with my very limited experience. Through the generosity of the Gaskell Societies here and in Japan all arrangements were made for my visit, from 30th May to 8th June, to meet members and to speak at the Regular Meeting on 3rd June at Jissen Women's School, Shibuya, on *Knutsford and Cheshire in Mrs Gaskell's Life and Works*.

Mrs Gaskell called Knutsford her 'dear, adopted native town' but I was born there and grew up knowing Gaskell landmarks such as the Memorial Tower, and the house where she grew up on Gaskell Avenue and her burial place in Brook Street Chapel graveyard. As a local historian I have researched the links between the town and Mrs Gaskell's life and works. I have collected pictures which I enjoyed showing to members in Japan, though there had been some difficulty in finding a slide projector for me as they are now becoming obsolete; but I am backward in mastering technology and in England slides are still used in talks to groups and Societies.



**Group in Japan**

I am particularly indebted also to Mrs Mariko Tahira, until recently secretary of the Society, Mrs Akiko Suzue, now President of the Society, Mrs Hisako Nagase, secretary, the committee and all those who made plans for me, arranged a varied and fascinating programme and those who were my guides. It was a special pleasure to be welcomed and cared for in the homes of Professors Hidemitsu Tohgo, Mitsuharu Matsuoka and Tatsuhiro Ohno.

The itinerary gave me great pleasure in seeing so much of Japan in a short time and I will be sharing my experiences by speaking to UK members and various other groups. I am grateful to have received gifts which are in the fine style and traditions of Japan and these I will enjoy showing when I give talks.

On 31st May, landing at Narita International Airport after my Air France flight via Paris, I was met by Professor Hidemitsu Tohgo who took me to his home in Saitama City. I was impressed by my first experience of rail travel in Japan. Hidemitsu and I had first met in 1983 when he came to Knutsford, not because of its Gaskell connections, but to meet my writer husband, Christopher. We were pleased to meet him, and his wife, Tomoko, on other occasions and it was good to renew our friendship at his home and to enjoy such fine hospitality with Japanese food and lifestyle, including my first visit to a sushi bar. Bathing at the hot springs was also a

novel experience for me and my only regret was that I could hear but not see the singing frog in the river valley!

Hidemitsu and I went on to Tokyo, which we saw from a tour bus skirting the Imperial Palace, and then joined a welcome celebration party of a splendid Chinese dinner on the evening of 2nd June, hosted by Dr Yuriko Yamawaki. We were all happy to share this evening with Yuriko and remember all she has done for our Gaskell world. Such a variety of dishes and I almost mastered the chopsticks! It was so good to meet some members again and those I had only exchanged e-mails with. From the hotel rooftop Ms Akiko Kimura showed me Tokyo's night scene with the tower lit up and next morning with Ms Kyoko Imamura showed me more of Tokyo, including the iris garden.

After the meeting at Jissen Women's School Professor Mitsu Matsuoka took me to his home in Nagoya. We visited the Tokugawa Art Museum where there is a replica of the scroll of the Gengi: the original can only be shown every ten years because of its frail condition. Nagoya is home to Toyota and also a splendid castle. The Meiji-mura museum had fascinating buildings dating from about 1850 onwards, reconstructed in a park setting; these including homes of Lafcadio Hearn and Natsume Soseki, writers who played such an interesting role in links between Western and Japanese literature. It was a surprise to note that the engine of the steam train carrying tourists around the park had been made in Manchester! I enjoyed the ride by shinkansen train from Nagoya to Kyoto where I was met by Ms Fumie Tamai and taken to the splendid Shin Miyako Hotel. My guides for the next day in Kyoto were Ms Akiko Nakajima, and Mr Oomaie. We visited the splendid Sanjusangen-do with its 1,000 standing Buddhist - style images founded in 1164 and completed in 1266; and the beautiful Temple of the Golden Pavilion. I am now reading the novel by Yukio Mishima which is set there.

Ms Ishizuka arrived early on 6th June to take me by bus to Itami airport on my way to Kumamoto airport where Professor Tatsuhiro Ohno was to meet me. We had a nerve-racking journey as there were traffic delays but all was well in the end. At the Kumamoto Middle School I stood in the classroom once used by Lafcadio Hearn. Professor Ohno and his wife, Yuka, took me to the lovely Suizenji Gardens and the spectacular Mount Aso, where there is the world's largest caldera. I was happy not to experience the earthquake which happened near the area a few days later.

I am grateful to him, Professor Mitsu Matsuoka and other members who took fine pictures for me to remember and relive my tour. It was a special pleasure to be welcomed in the homes Hidemitsu and Tomoko Tohgo, Mitsu and Mio Matsuoka and Tat and Yuka Ohno. Thank you to all who introduced me to the culture and delights of Japan.

## *Visit to Ashbourne, Alstonefield and the Hope House Costume Museum, 5th July 2006*

Thirty members and friends set off from Congleton, Knutsford and Macclesfield. We were well on time, arriving at St Oswald's Church, Ashbourne, as the clock struck 11.00. Church members generously allowed us to use their parish room facilities and prepared coffee and biscuits in return for a contribution to their church appeal fund. We were met in Ashbourne Church by Ruth, who had retired to Ashbourne but had been a Derbyshire resident for much of her life. Ruth appropriately began her talk with a reference to Gaskell. Named 'Ruth', she had been given a copy of the novel during her teenage years. She claimed to have then gone on to enjoy Gaskell's other works.

In Ashbourne Church, we were pleased to see an engraving of Captain Frederick Holland's home, Ashbourne Hall, as it would have been in his day. There was also a plaque in appreciation of his life and his contribution to life in the town. St Oswald's is described as 'one of the grandest churches in Derbyshire'. Its many fine features include: a Tree of Jesse window by Kempe, 1902; a pre-Raphaelite window designed by Christopher Whall, 1904, commemorating the Turnbull sisters of Sandybrook Hall; and exceptionally fine tombs and effigies, dating from 1372, of the Cokayne and Bradbourne families. However, probably the finest effigy is of Penelope Boothby, aged 5 years, who is said to have spoken four languages. Penelope died in 1791; this fine white marble tomb was the work of Thomas Banks. She was the daughter of Sir Brooke and Lady Boothby of Ashbourne Hall, who had disagreed on how to deal with her illness and, in their distress, had refused to communicate with each other after her death.

From Ashbourne, we travelled to Hartington, an old Derbyshire market village, where some of us sat by the village pond and others ate lunch in one of the various cafés. After Hartington, we made a short visit to Alstonefield Church, famous for its very early oak pulpit and box pews, and for its connection with Charles Cotton and Isaac Walton.

Hope House, Alstonefield, the beautiful seventeenth-century home of Notty Hornblower, was to become a very enjoyable highlight of the day. Her museum of finely restored fashion clothing, covering several centuries, is situated in the barn close to the house. As well as individual costumes, there were 'stage sets' of groups, such as Miss Marple and Hercule Poirot in a set from an Agatha Christie novel.

Tea, consisting of large scones, cream, jam and Victoria sponge, was served in

Notty's fine, early Derbyshire stone home. We were able to see her tastefully furnished guest bedroom and Victorian-style bathroom.

We were very fortunate that the occasional rain showers, forecast for the area, seemed to miss us by a mile or so. We saw the clouds on occasion but never the rain. On our return journey, our driver was tempted to drive through the Manifold Valley; however, we managed to warn him of fragile narrow bridges and divert him to Warslow and to the Ashbourne-Leek road home.

Just another enjoyable and successful day with Gaskell friends.

**Jean Alston**

### **Lost Property?**

At the end of the outing to Alstonefield, a bag was left on the coach, containing a pair of Flyflot sandals and a polythene box; would the owner like to phone Mary Syner on 01625 583622 to recover them?

## *Cranford Houses*

**Joan Leach**

As a Knutsfordian by birth and growing up in the town I have been long acquainted with Elizabeth Gaskell; in childhood days I ate cakes from the Cranford Cake shop, bought aspirins at The Matty Pharmacy and often walked down Cranford and Gaskell Avenues. I share with Elizabeth Gaskell a great affection for the town, which led her to recreate scenes and people she knew in childhood.

As a local historian I was fascinated by finding links between characters, events and settings in fictional *Cranford*, *Wives and Daughters* and other works, and their real life counterparts. The parallels seem to have been acknowledged by her contemporaries, including the Rev Henry Green, minister of Brook Street Chapel, who wrote in his *Knutsford: Its History and Traditions*:

Cranford which in my judgement, while depicting life in almost any country town, is specially descriptive of some of the past and present social characteristics of Knutsford. I know that the work was not intended to delineate this place chiefly or specially, but a little incident within my own experience will show the accuracy of the pictures as applied to our town.

He wrote that when he had lent the book to an elderly lady she returned it to him saying,

'Why, Sir! That Cranford is all about Knutsford; my old mistress, Miss Harker, is mentioned in it; and our poor cow, she did go to the field in a large flannel waistcoat, because she burned herself in a lime pit.'

Note the name 'Miss Harker', who became Cranford's Miss Barker. The sale of her house contents included a large milk-cooler.

The *Manchester Guardian* obituary of Elizabeth Gaskell, 14th November 1865, noted that the

greatest work and that for which she will be longest known, is her *Life of Charlotte Bronte*. In the earlier editions of this now standard work, some personal references were made which created much discussion, and which were omitted from subsequent editions. A similar feeling had been occasioned at an earlier period in Mrs Gaskell's literary career, for in sketches entitled 'Cranford', which appeared in *Household Words*, she had drawn portraits rather too accurately of some living personages.

If there was some feeling in Knutsford about Mrs Gaskell's fictional portraits being identifiable as Knutsford residents no evidence of this is now to be found; perhaps if her own relations recognised themselves any objections they had were not made public.

Linking actual buildings with fictional counterparts was less controversial and when post cards became popular there was a series of scenes from *Cranford*. One of these shows Mrs Jamieson's house as Brook House, which stood below Brook Street Chapel. It was a large, rambling house, probably late seventeenth century in origin with Georgian additions, a walled garden and a stable block; it was demolished after suffering wartime occupation. It was certainly Knutsford's most aristocratic house, having been, from about 1780-1803, the home of Lady Jane Stanley, daughter of the 11th Earl of Derby. She was a strong-minded spinster lady who suggested for her epitaph 'A maid I lived and a maid I died, I never was asked and never denied'. A relation from the Stanleys of Alderley family wrote,

It is a pity that she sometimes has a roughness of manner that conceals from those who are unacquainted with the valuable qualities of her heart. Her vivacity, memory and strength of body and mind are wonderful. She is very poetical too and such a connoisseur of painting, statues etc.

Many of such items she bequeathed in the longest will I have ever seen. She also left legacies to many ladies, mostly single, who might have been her protégées in the style of the fictional Lady Ludlow

Henry Green described how Lady Jane Stanley had walked the pavements with her gold - knobbed cane and reproved those who did not 'give her the wall' by rapping

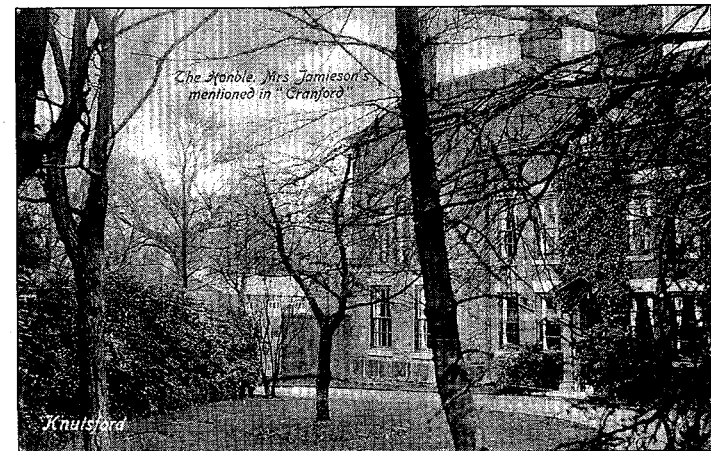
them on the shoulder with it: *My Lady Ludlow* behaved in a similar manner. Lady Jane had paid for the pavements to be laid, stipulating that they should not be wide enough to accommodate 'linking', that was courting couples walking arm-in-arm. The charity money she left in her lengthy will helped to maintain the paths and roads for many years and part of it still provides for patriotic flags to be flown, as her will decreed.

Lady Jane's religious principles and prejudices were shared by Lady Ludlow who deplored the Baptist baker. Lady Jane was well known in the town for her acts of charity, but when an aged silk weaver, no longer able to walk to Macclesfield, appealed to her for assistance she refused at first because he was a Methodist, then relented when she found him staunch in his principles too. Her sedan chair makes an annual appearance at Knutsford Royal May Day Festival.

Mrs Gaskell would not have known Lady Jane Stanley but her aunt and other relations would tell her about this redoubtable lady who seems to be a twin to Lady Ludlow, but whose house in that story bears no resemblance to Lady Jane's. In *Cranford* there is reference to Lady Jane's house. When Mrs FitzAdam came to live in the town she

had taken a large rambling house which had been usually considered to confer a patent of gentility upon its tenant, because, once upon a time, seventy or eighty years before, the spinster daughter of an earl had resided in it...the Earl's daughter, Lady Jane, had a sister, Lady Anne...

The Cranford ladies' doubts about Mrs FitzAdam's gentility were partly dispelled by the status that her occupation of this house conferred.



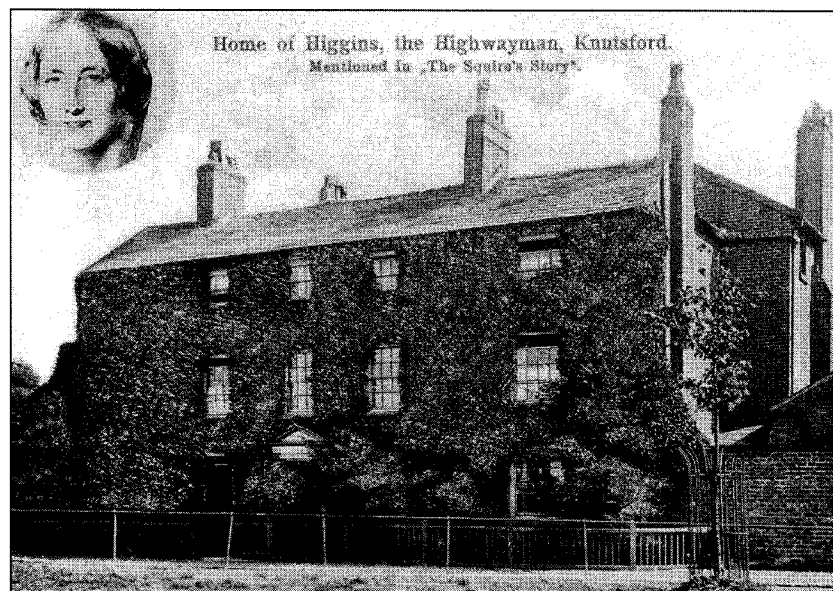
**Brook House, once Lady Jane Stanley's Home**

That the postcard defines it as *Mrs Jamieson's house* is not surprising as she was *the* aristocrat of Cranford who dictated the social mores, so local tradition ascribed to her the most aristocratic house. But in *Cranford* her house is described as on a street that

ran right before the house, which opened out upon it without intervening garden or court. Whatever the sun was about he never shone on the front of that house'.

Mr Mulliner's head, with powdered wig, could be seen from the road as he read the St James Chronicle, a fact that irked the ladies who were waiting their turn for it. This house must have been Heath House on Gaskell Avenue and possibly the real life Hon. Mrs Grey, resident there in Elizabeth Gaskell's early years, was a model for Mrs Jamieson. It also had a history as the home of Edward 'Highwayman' Higgins, whose story was related by Henry Green and adapted by Elizabeth Gaskell for 'The Squire's Story'. Mrs Legh, another scion of an aristocratic family, followed Lady Jane as tenant of Brook House; she left money in her will for an annual dinner for the Ladies Benefit Society.

Henry Green's *Knutsford Its Traditions and History* grew from a series of lectures he gave. Elizabeth Gaskell made several enquiries on his behalf. It was published in 1859 by Smith and Elder and has had several reprints since.



This house fits the description of Mrs Jamieson's house in *Cranford*

## BOOK NOTES

Christine Lingard

*Cranford & Selected Short Stories* with introduction and notes by John Chapple. Wordsworth Classics. £1.99

One of the most welcome of publications as many of Gaskell's shorter works have been out of print for some time. As well as *Cranford* this edition contains 'Mr Harrison's Confessions', 'The Doom of the Griffiths', 'Lois the Witch', 'Curious if true', 'Six weeks at Heppenheim' and *Cousin Phillis*, and, unusually for Wordsworth editions, it contains notes and an interesting introduction by Professor Chapple.

Ed: We hope to have copies to sell at group meetings and at Plymouth Grove

*William Gaskell's Poetry and Poetry Lectures* by Irene Wiltshire, first published in the *Transactions of the Lancashire and Cheshire Antiquarian Society* 101 (2005), has been issued as a separate pamphlet and is available from Janet Allan, 10 Dale Road, New Mills, Derbyshire SK22 4NW.

This is an important piece of research which provides a valuable insight into a figure who deserves to be assessed on his own merit not just as the husband of a great novelist.

*The Oxford Companion to the Brontës* compiled by Christine Alexander and Margaret Smith, Oxford University Press, £14.99

A useful A-Z sequence reference work which is a valuable contribution not only to Brontë studies but also to Gaskell. Originally published in 2003, it is now available in paperback.

*The Idea of City in Nineteenth-century Britain* edited by B.I. Coleman, Routledge, £80, due November.

A reissue of the book originally published in 1973. A collection of extracts and quotations concerning urban matters from such authors as Gaskell, Dickens, Ruskin, Engels, Morris and H.G. Wells.

*Nineteenth-Century Narratives of Contagion* by Allan Conrad Christensen, Routledge, £80. A discussion of the reaction to disease, health, nursing and the hospital environment with particular reference to Dickens' *Bleak House*, Gaskell's *Ruth* and Zola's *Le Docteur Pascal*.

*The Ideas in Things: Fugitive Meaning in the Victorian Novel* by Elaine Freedgood, University of Chicago Press. Due November, \$26. Taking mundane materials, the author explores the social background to their production and the political implications they reveal, such as mahogany furniture and slavery in *Jane Eyre* and Negro head tobacco in *Great Expectations*. Chapter Two is entitled 'The Vicissitudes of Coziness: Checked Curtain and Global Cotton Markets' in *Mary Barton*.

Gaskell production on the Continent still continues to flourish with translations of *North and South* in Spanish: *Norte y sur*, Alba Editorial, 30 Euros; and French: *Nord et Sud*, Fayard, 25 Euros; and *The Life of Charlotte Brontë* has now been translated into Latvian: *Šarlotes Brontë dzīve*.

## Mrs Gaskell and the OED (Part 2)

Christine Lingard

The *Oxford English Dictionary* credits Elizabeth Gaskell as the first author to use these words in the English language

27. shopper, *n.* 1860, Mrs Gaskell, *Letters*, No. 476, 27 Aug 1860 - one who frequents a shop or shops for the purpose of inspecting or buying goods.
28. slummocky, *a.* ?1861, Mrs Gaskell, *Letters*, No. 484, 28 Feb 1861 - slovenly, untidy. Hence slummockiness.
29. slushing, *ppl. a.* 1863, Mrs Gaskell, *Sylvia's Lovers*, X. That slushes or splashes, *spec.* pertaining to or designating a viscous oil or grease used to protect bright metal surfaces, when paint or other fixed coatings cannot be used.
30. softy, *n.* 1863, Mrs Gaskell, *Sylvia's Lovers*, II. A weak-minded or silly person; a simpleton, noodle, gull.
31. squiffy, *a.* ?1855, Mrs Gaskell, *Letters*, No. 273. 'Curious enough there is a Lady Erskine, wife of Lord E, her husband's eldest brother living at Bollington, who tipples and "gets squiffy" just like *this* Mrs. E'.
32. sticky, *verb trans.* 1865, Mrs Gaskell, *Wives and Daughters* XXXV. To smear with something sticky.
33. sweet Nancy. 1848, Mrs Gaskell, *Mary Barton* VIII. The pheasant-eyed narcissus, *narcissus poeticus*, esp the double variety.
34. unbeknownst, *a. or adv.* 1848, Mrs Gaskell, *Letters*, No.30, 11 November 1848.
35. uncleaned, *ppl. a.* 1854, Mrs Gaskell, *North and South*, I.x.
36. unnative, *v.* 1855, Mrs Gaskell, *North and South*, XLI.
37. villino ?1863, Mrs Gaskell, *Letters*, No. 527, 16 July 1863. A small (rural, suburban or urban) house in Italy.
38. yo 1848, Mrs Gaskell, *Mary Barton* I.vi. In mod. Use, repr. dialect pronunciation of *you*, *your*, esp. in Black Country English.

Note from Mary Syner: I looked up some of these in the *Letters* and found that 'slummocky' occurs there as 'slammocky-as-to-figure' (though the OED does give slammocky as an alternative spelling). If Mrs Gaskell puts quotation marks around 'gets squiffy', she must have regarded it a questionable usage herself: perhaps she had only recently come across it. In the *Letters*, 'unbeknownst' is printed with the last three letters (nst) in italics, so it seems that Mrs Gaskell underlined the ending of the word: again, perhaps she wondered whether she was correct in adding those

letters - the OED offers 'unbeknown' and 'unbeknowns' as alternatives. It seems that Mrs Gaskell was, as we might expect, an experimenter in language use!

## Visit to Plymouth Grove on Monday 5 June 2006 by Members of The Brontë Society.

As part of the events for their AGM weekend the Brontë Society was fortunate to gain access to the house of Elizabeth Gaskell in Plymouth Grove, Manchester. The house is currently being cared for by the Manchester Historic Buildings Trust and, although work is only in the planning stage, we were delighted to go into a house which features in Charlotte Brontë's correspondence and also in the letters and biographies of Elizabeth Gaskell herself.

Despite the house having last been used as a university hall of residence the atmosphere in the beautiful drawing room was moving. We could almost see Elizabeth at work there, coping with the many interruptions she had before she could start her real day's work. We were delighted with the talk given to us by Mrs Janet Allan, Chairman of the Manchester Historic Buildings Trust, and also with a skilled theatrical performance, based on correspondence, of the relationship between the two women. Between the two we were treated to the best lunch of the weekend, which was organised by members of the Gaskell Society. We are tremendously grateful to have had this opportunity and look forward to the final refurbishment of the house, which will certainly be another visit for us.

Coreen Turner

Brontë Society Council member and Chair of the Membership Committee

Recent events at Plymouth Grove  
Ann Waddington

'Thank you from the North Texas Visitors'

'I can't thank you enough for the wonderful memories you made for us at the Gaskell House. The lunch, the talk and slides, the house were all wonderful. But best of all was seeing the dedication the group has to Gaskell herself! I will think fondly of 84 Plymouth Grove often, especially when I am teaching one of her novels. Thank you again'.

The above tribute was paid by Sandra Spencer of the University of North Texas and addressed to Janet Allan. The visit had been organised by the University as part of their country-wide tour this Summer. In addition to a lecture by Janet the students met the writer and poet Jackie Kay at Plymouth Grove. Jackie Kay will return in October to read her own short story as part of the Manchester Literary Festival



when the BBC will record for radio specially commissioned short stories in the Dining Room in front of an invited audience.

Other Groups have visited this year and included the 'local' visitors from the Bramhall History Society and the Tameside Local History Forum. In June The Bronte Society returned after a gap of ninety-six years.

At the beginning of April the first of what is hoped to become a regular feature at Plymouth Grove took place. Professor Michael Rose gave a Talk 'Across the Class Divide: Philanthropy and The Gaskells in Victorian Manchester' to a packed Drawing Room. Due to the speaker's enthusiasm and his involvement of the audience in questions afterwards this was an occasion full of atmosphere. To look around the Drawing Room and notice the present Minister of Cross Street Chapel provided an instant thought of William Gaskell in the same room discussing the same subjects.

Topics for 2007 have already been chosen by the Speakers who have been kind enough to volunteer their services. The first of these events will take place on Saturday 17 March 2007 when Ann O'Brien will speak about Meta Gaskell. Full details of the Talks will be available nearer the time. The Talks are open to non-members of the Friends and it is hoped that they will result in an increase in the membership and widening of the interest in the preservation of the Gaskell House.

Members were lured to The AGM in April by the promise of a Victorian Tea afterwards. Thanks are due to all the Friends who volunteered to bake a Victorian recipe. These recipes were provided by Olga Shipperbottom who also gave a talk on the subject.

Involvement with the local community continues and the House was open to visitors during the Swinton Grove Park Fun Day on Saturday 6 July. The quiet sanctuary it provided on the day was appreciated by the families who attended.

At the moment the House looks a little forlorn as the garden needs a lot of attention. It is hoped that by the time the English Heritage Open Days on 9 and 10 September take place everything will look welcoming. A new Banner will be in place across the front of the House as a regular feature. Heritage Banners will also advertise those Open Days. It must not be forgotten that without the hard work from all those who volunteer their services at Plymouth Grove none of the events and Open Days would take place.

The house is open every Sunday from 12 noon until 4 pm. and has a large selection of second hand books on sale. On the 1st October there will also be a plant sale.

## *The next GASKELL CONFERENCE,* *27-30 JULY 2007*

The Society's next conference will be held at Christ Church University, **Canterbury**, from **27th to 30th July 2007**. The general theme is the religious and scientific background to three writers, Gaskell, Dickens and Charles Darwin. We have (so far) four distinguished speakers: Dame Gillian Beer from Cambridge, on Darwin; John Beer, who is Emeritus Professor at Cambridge and will speak about the Romantic period; Professor Andrew Sanders, who has just retired from Durham University and has spoken to us before, on Dickens and science; and Professor Elisabeth Jay, who has also spoken to us before, on Gaskell and religion. Jenny Uglow will be there, and John Chapple, and so will our President, Alan Shelston.

**Christ Church University** is just outside the walls of Canterbury but within easy walking distance of the centre and the cathedral. Its facilities will be good: the lecture rooms are modern, you can choose en-suite accommodation or the cheaper bed-only-shower-down-the-corridor type; all our meals will be in their dining-hall (self-service mostly), and tea and coffee will be provided. We shall have to move between buildings (sleep in one, eat in another, attend talks in another) but the campus is self-contained and easy to negotiate. Canterbury is full of interest and all of it easily reached; a great deal of the centre has been pedestrianised. You will have two free afternoons: we are arranging a visit to Down House, where Charles Darwin lived, and this will be done on Saturday **and** on Sunday afternoons, as only half the party can go at one time (the car park can accommodate only one coach at a time); the other half will have the afternoon free to explore Canterbury - with a guided walk if wanted. Down House is an attractive large house with a splendid garden, and has been arranged to show both Darwin as a working writer and scientist and as a family man: and in upstairs rooms there are displays about his work: the mixture of information and instruction is similar to that in Erasmus Darwin's house in Lichfield.

### **Travel**

The University campus has only limited parking for cars. As it is impossible to drive into the centre of the city (because within the walls it is mostly pedestrians only), we recommend that everyone who can should come by public transport; once you are there, you really will not need a car. For those who live in the North West, we are thinking of providing a coach on Friday 27th July from the Knutsford/Manchester area - a coach which will stay with us and take us to Down House and bring the north-west party home again on Monday 30th July, making a stop at an interesting place on the way back. For those making their own way there by train, there are two stations in Canterbury, Canterbury East and Canterbury West; which one you arrive

at depends on whether you started from London Victoria or London Waterloo East (Waterloo East is accessible from the main Waterloo concourse). But both stations are within walking distance of the College, though it might take about 15 minutes. There are taxis available at either station.

**The cost of the conference** itself will be in the region of £315 (this is for ensuite accommodation; for a non-en-suite room, it would be £270). This may seem expensive compared to the last conference in Manchester, but that one was subsidised for Society members (by a grant from English Heritage which the organisers, MMU, were fortunate enough to obtain). For those going and returning by coach the cost of travel will be in the region of £30, if we can get at least 35 people to use the coach. The fewer who do, the greater the cost will be, so do consider it - it will certainly be the easiest way to make the journey from the North West.

We do think that the facilities at Canterbury will be good and that we have some prestigious speakers: we hope that you will support this conference - and come and have a good time!

## *Society Events in the North-West*

The Royal Exchange Theatre, Manchester, is to stage *Mary Barton* from 6th September to 14th October. The programme says 'Fast-paced, epic and exciting, Rona Munro's adaptation presents a panorama of Manchester life from the mill-owners' new prosperity to the thousands of ordinary working people living and dying in their factories'. North-West members have already been notified about this (and the events given below), but for anyone who is interested in this production the Box Office is on 0161 833 9833 or at [www.royalexchange.co.uk](http://www.royalexchange.co.uk)

There is to be a special Meet the Director event in connection with *Mary Barton* on Tuesday 26 September from 2-4 p.m. This is by invitation to Gaskell Society members, Friends of Plymouth Grove and Friends of the Royal Exchange. The charge per person will be £6. This covers the cost of coffee/tea and biscuits, plus a donation to the Friends, all of which goes to the Theatre. There will be a raffle, with the proceeds split between the Theatre and Plymouth Grove. No tickets will be required but we need to know numbers and to have payment in advance; cheques should be made out to 'The Royal Exchange Theatre Co. Ltd.' And sent to Janet Aslan, Friends Organiser, Royal Exchange Theatre, St Anne's Square, Manchester M2 7DH.

### **Gabrielle Drake in *Dear Scheherazade***

Elizabeth Gaskell is the subject of a one-woman show, using extracts not only from the novels and short stories but also from her wonderful letters.

Gabrielle Drake, who has created this show and is giving a few performances of it in the Royal Exchange's Studio Theatre during the run of *Mary Barton*, is very generously giving a special performance at Knutsford's Little Theatre, Queen Street, Knutsford, in aid of Plymouth Grove's restoration fund; this will take place on Sunday, 15th October at 2.00 p.m. Tickets cost £18 (£15 concessionary). If you would like to book, please contact Joan Leach; cheques should be made payable to 'Manchester Historic Buildings Trust'.

## *North West Group*

At Knutsford, meetings are held at St John's Church Rooms, on the last Wednesday in the month, beginning on 25th October (then Nov 29, Jan 31, Feb 28, March 28). The book for study this year will be *Mary Barton*, under the expert guidance of Elizabeth Williams.

If you have not already got a copy you are recommended to buy the OUP edition 2006, edited by Shirley Foster; and reviewed in the Journal (p.137)

At Cross Street Chapel, Manchester, At Cross Street Chapel, Manchester, there will be a series of talks on social and philanthropic aspects of Victorian Manchester, on the Tuesdays at 1.00 p.m. Members may choose to meet for a sandwich lunch before the meeting; bring your own or buy them from Pret-a-manger next door. The cost of meetings is £2 to members and £3 to visitors.

**10 October 2006:** Geoffrey Head: '*Cross Street Chapel's social and philanthropic role in Manchester*'.

Geoffrey is a retired Civil servant and Chairman of Cross Street Chapel Trustees. He was former Treasurer and President of the General Assembly of Unitarian and Free Christian churches and served in many other capacities. He is author of a number of studies of Unitarianism in the Manchester area.

**14 November 2006:** Alan Fowler: '*The Cotton famine and relief*'

Alan has 36 years experience of lecturing at Manchester Poly. now the Metropolitan University, on economic and social history of the region. He has served on the committee of the Economic History Society and has recently published *Lancashire Cotton Operatives and work 1900-1950*.

**13 December 2006:** The Minister Rev John Midgley will conduct a carol service

**13 February 2007:** Terry Wyke: '*Mingy Mancunians: Charity in Cottonopolis*'.

Terry Wyke teaches social and economic history at Manchester Metropolitan University. His interests include the history of Manchester, including the writings of Elizabeth Gaskell.



**13 March 2007:** Professor Alan Kidd: '*Rich lives, poor lives in the first industrial city*'. Alan lectures at MMU, working with the Manchester Centre for Regional history and is co-founder of the Manchester Region History Review. He is author of the recently published *Manchester : A History* (Carnegie Press).

## *The Yorkshire Branch of the Society*

### **Programme, Autumn 2006**

**Saturday, 18 November:** 'Speaking for himself: the letters of Reverend Patrick Brontë'  
Speaker: Dudley Green, Editor of the recently published Letters of the Reverend Patrick Brontë and member of the Gaskell Society Committee.

**Saturday 10 February :** Speaker Howard F.Gregg

All the meetings will be held at the Friends Meeting House, Friargate, York, and will commence at 2pm. The room will be available from 12.30pm for those who wish to bring a picnic lunch. To cover expenses a contribution of £3 is requested from members of the Gaskell Society and £4 from non-members.

## *London and South East Group*

Meetings are held at The Francis Holland School, 36 Graham Terrace, a few minutes walk from Sloane Square tube station. 12.45pm for sandwich lunch, meeting begins at 2pm. It is necessary to ring the security bell in order to gain access to the building. Someone will answer the door! After the meeting there is tea, biscuits and cake.

Email Frantwinn@aflex.net or phone for info. 020 8693 3238

**Saturday, 11th November:** Professor Angus Easson, Research Professor of English in the School of English at the University of Salford

His subject will be:

Secrecy and Revelation in *Wives and Daughters*

Angus has indicated that he likes to have audience dialogue and is happy for you to make comments as he goes along so again you may wish to be refresh your memory of the text. It makes it all more worthwhile. Hence the homework!!

**Saturday, 10 February:** Mrs Joan Leach, Secretary of the Gaskell Society, 'A visit to Japan and literary links'

Joan will talk about her recent experiences in Japan which she visited on behalf of the Society and where she went to a general meeting, gave a paper and met and visited many Japanese academics and our members.

**Saturday, 12 May: Dr Brenda McKay, 'Dramatising Mrs Gaskell';** Discussion, with excerpts from TV adaptations from the novels'

Brenda has given this presentation to other groups and has found it to be popular. We have been treated to adaptations of Gaskell's novels in the past few years and I know everyone has views about the BBC interpretation of her writing. This will be an opportunity to listen, watch clips and offer opinions!!

## *South West Group*

**November 4th:** Bath Royal scientific and Literary Institution, 16-18 Queen Square 10.00 "Always at My Post" Dudley Green will give us an insight into the life of Patrick Brontë as revealed in his letters which Dudley has just published.

11.15 Dr. Tom Winifrith of the Brontë Society will speak on "The Brontës and Religion", with special reference to Mrs. Gaskell

12.15 Finger Buffet lunch

To cover expenses we ask for £4 from Gaskell and Brontë members and £5 from non-members

**January 8th New Year Supper** at 138, Fairfield Park Road . "Bring and Share". Let me know if you would like to come nearer the time. R.Marshall

**Saturday March 31st** 99, Sydney Place, Mrs Joan Chandler.

"Mrs. Gaskell and the Roman Experience" Members £2 Non Members £3

Any queries to Rosemary Marshall, 138, Fairfield Park Road, Bath, BA1 6JT  
Tel: 01225 426732 Email: rosemary\_marshall@yahoo.com

## *Autumn Meeting*

**Saturday, 30 September at St Vincent's Catholic Church Hall, Knutsford.**

10.30 a.m for coffee.

11.00 a.m. Michael Rose, Professor (retired) of 19th-century History at Manchester University, Chairman of the Friends of Manchester Regional History Centre: 'Across the Class Divide. Philanthropy and the Gaskells in Victorian Manchester'.  
Buffet Lunch 12.30 approx.

2.00pm. Joan Leach will give an illustrated talk on her visit to Japan and the literary links.

There will be a book stall. Cost £10, to include buffet lunch, to be paid on the day.

**Sunday 1st October**

The Gaskell House at Plymouth Grove will be open, with a plant sale

**Saturday 11th November**

Book Sale at Plymouth Grove

Further information or booking;

Joan Leach 01565 634668 or email: joanleach@aol.com

# The Gaskell Society



**Tomb designed and sculpted by William Wetmore Storey for his wife, Emlyn, at the English Cemetery where Keats and Shelley are also buried.**



**THE GASKELL SOCIETY HOME PAGE** has all the latest information on meetings.  
<http://gaskellsociety.users.btopenworld.com>

If you have any material or suggestions for future Newsletters, please contact Mrs. Joan Leach,  
Far Yew Tree House, Chester Road, Tabley, Knutsford, Cheshire WA16 0HN.  
Telephone - 01565 634668 E-mail: [joanleach@aol.com](mailto:joanleach@aol.com)

**Hon Treasurer:** Brian Williams, 15 Cawley Avenue, Culcheth, Warrington, Cheshire WA3 4DF

**Membership Secretary:** Miss C. Lingard, 5 Moran Crescent, Macclesfield SK11 8JJ

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## NEWSLETTER

Spring 2007 - Number 43

## Editor's Letter

Joan Leach

We are looking forward to a lively programme for 2007 and especially to our conference at Canterbury, when we will have more than 100 members attending. Our groups, meeting in Knutsford, Manchester, London, Bath and York offer opportunities to share Gaskell lectures and social events.

We hope you will enjoy in this Newsletter reading about the trip to Rome following Gaskell footsteps and we are grateful to Peter Skrine for his account of our activities. We felt we were recapturing some of the pleasures Elizabeth Gaskell had found in Rome; she had some trouble getting there because a ship's boiler burst: we had problems at airports because of increased security measures but we felt that Rome welcomed us.

Some of you will have heard the news that BBC is starting to film *Cranford Chronicles* in April. We were disappointed when this was shelved a couple of years ago but now the funds have been secured to go ahead with this classic drama series of five one-hour episodes. The script has been carefully devised by combining *Cranford* with parts of *Mr Harrison's Confessions* and *My Lady Ludlow*. It will have humour, drama and pathos with Judi Dench playing the role of Miss Matty.

The idea for the series originated with Sue Birtwistle who also produced *Wives and Daughters*. Sue grew up in Northwich so knows the Knutsford and Gaskell setting. Sadly *Cranford* days cannot be reconstructed in Knutsford so filming will be in the Cotswolds and London. Even the Royal George with its old assembly rooms is no more. Only this week I had an e-mail from a couple in Australia planning to return there to celebrate their wedding night of 40 years ago and were puzzled as to why they could not find it on the web.

Sue Birtwistle tells me a great deal of trouble is being taken to be true to Gaskell's writing and that with Jenny Uglow on board as advisor they feel it as near as they can get to Gaskell's approval.

BBC will be filming for 14 weeks with a post-production schedule of 18 weeks.

You may like to get a copy of the Wordsworth edition of *Cranford and other Stories* with introduction and notes by John Chapple. This includes *Mr Harrison's Confessions* and other stories. Good value at £1.99. It will be available at meetings, Knutsford Heritage Centre and Plymouth Grove or you may order it from your bookshop.

This year is the 150th anniversary of the publication of Gaskell's *Life of Charlotte Brontë*. The Brontë Society will have linked events and our Autumn meeting on 29th September at Knutsford will retrace the Gaskells' year of 1857.

We look forward to seeing many of you at our Canterbury conference, July 27-30, or you may like to visit North Wales with us. Details are at the end of this Newsletter.

## John Geoffrey Sharps

### From Heather Sharps:

I, and my son and daughter, Paul and Rosalind, wish to thank all who wrote appreciative tributes (in the Spring 2006 *Newsletter*) to my late husband, John Geoffrey Sharps, who died on 6th January. Alan Shelston's tribute in the *Manchester Guardian* will also be remembered. They acknowledged, movingly, Geoffrey's scholarly work and devoted activity in the Gaskell Society, for the promotion of Gaskell studies and for the recognition of Elizabeth Gaskell as an important and influential novelist and biographer. Such appreciation has been a consolation to us who cannot adequately express how deeply he is missed. Finally, we shall always be grateful for the numerous letters of condolence which conveyed kind thoughts and wishes.

Geoffrey and I first met in 1963 at The Queen's University of Belfast shortly before Geoffrey graduated Master of Education and I, Bachelor of Arts in English (Honours). Two years later we were engaged, and in 1966 we married in Belfast. Our marriage lasted for thirty-nine years. Our interests and pastimes were the same: respectively, English Literature and Education, travel, the theatre and the cinema.

We assisted each other greatly in our careers: Geoffrey encouraged me in my teaching of English and Modern Languages (to adolescents and adults), as well as research on Sir James P. Kay-Shuttleworth. In fact it was Geoffrey who suggested that it would be worthwhile to carry out a study of Sir James' novels and some of his other works. Part of this research was ably supervised by Professor John Chapple of the University of Hull and part by Professor John Hordern and Dr. Frank Felsenstein of the University of Leeds. I helped Geoffrey in his career as lecturer in Psychology under the Leeds Institute of Education (in chauffeuring him to numerous schools where he had to supervise and inspect the quality of the students' teaching); in proof-reading the manuscript of his book on Mrs Gaskell, and assisting him to have

it published. Furthermore, we were hosts to a number of Gaskell scholars from the United Kingdom and abroad. In fact Geoffrey introduced me to Mrs Gaskell, and that is why I became a founder member of the Society and have written on the relationship between Mrs Gaskell and Kay-Shuttleworth as well as on the similarities and differences in their works of fiction. In my Hull dissertation I also compare his fictional works with Charlotte Brontë's *Shirley*.

Geoffrey stipulated that I, as his sole executor, should donate most of his collection firstly to the John Rylands Library of Manchester where a large part of *Gaskelliana* already resided; secondly to the Brotherton Library at Leeds (which possesses the manuscript of *Sylvia's Lovers*), and thirdly to the Manchester Central Library, which specialises in foreign translations of works originally written in English. Christine Lingard, a staunch member of the Gaskell Society, welcomed this last donation with enthusiasm. I also gave a number of copies of Elizabeth Gaskell's books to Plymouth Grove (a gesture greatly appreciated by Janet Allan). I am sure Geoffrey would have wanted me to do this.

Finally I must convey my gratitude to the following for their advice and assistance in the administration of Geoffrey's collection: Walter Smith, friend and excellent bibliographer of Elizabeth Gaskell's works; and our long-standing archivist friends, Dr David Iredale and Alyne Slasor.

Last but certainly not least, I wish to thank Frances Baker for her infinite patience and thoroughness in finalising the organization and transportation of the material to the John Rylands Library. Of great importance to me too, is the gratitude of Chris Shepherd, the admirable archivist of the Brotherton Library at Leeds University, who regarded it a privilege to be able to choose important volumes of Elizabeth Gaskell's works which would add interest and value to the Library's collection. I thank also stalwart members of the Gaskell Society, Janet and Pauline Kennerley of the North West Branch, who last year transported copies of my husband's book, *Mrs Gaskell's Observation and Invention*, as well as a large number books designated for the Manchester Central Library and Plymouth Grove.

If, in the future, there is an Elizabeth Gaskell Exhibition in Manchester, part of the collection may be put on display. My family and I wish to keep, as well as some of the author's books, her Wedgwood teapot and copy of the Book of Common Prayer (dated 1865); but we would be willing to 'lend' these items for use at an exhibition.

Geoffrey was a family man too, a loving father and eventually grandfather. Unfortunately the last years of his life were dogged by ill-health - pulmonary fibrosis, heart failure and cellulitis. However he remained cheerful, despite having to be attached to an oxygen machine for fifteen months before he died. The following

tribute from the Book of Remembrance in Woodlands Crematorium in Scarborough expresses most fittingly his family's emotions:

*Sharps, John Geoffrey  
Worthy of Remembrance  
As a husband, father, grandfather, scholar and lecturer,  
also for his integrity, generosity and kindness.*

**Editor:** So many of us have continued to miss Geoffrey but are cheered by happy memories. In our next *Newsletter* Frances Baker, keeper of collections at John Rylands Library, will write about their work and the Gaskell collection.

Many of Geoffrey's books were bought by book dealer C.W.Hawley who has a large range of Gaskell and other 19th century writers. He offers our members a 10% discount. He can be contacted by email [clh@clhawley.co.uk](mailto:clh@clhawley.co.uk) or phone 01756 792380.

## *Garibaldi at Caprera*

Alan Shelston

In 1862 Elizabeth Gaskell wrote a 'Preface' to the English translation of Colonel Candido Augusto Vecchj's memoir of Garibaldi, *Garibaldi at Caprera*. This was a piece of occasional journalism on her part, and presumably a commission by the publisher, Macmillan, for whom she published nothing else. Although she later referred to her 'editing' of the book this exaggerates; there is nothing of hers to the project except her short introduction. The copy of the work held in the Stanton Whitfield collection in Knutsford Public Library, however is a rather special one, since on one of its front end-papers, opposite Whitfield's elegant book plate, there has been fixed a letter from Vecchj himself, protesting about the inadequacy of the translation. The volume itself is a presentation copy, as this letter indicates. As well as Vecchj's letter, it has a few pencilled annotations, probably by Stanton Whitfield, identifying both the anonymous translators of the volume, and perhaps also the person to whom it has been sent. The letter is in Vecchj's Italian and his handwriting makes for some difficulties of transcription. The opening dedication 'Alla signora Roberts' and date, and the closing address, 'Villa Spinola' (Vecchj's house in Genoa) are in a different hand. My suggested transcription and translation are as follows:

Alla signora Roberts  
Ai 12 Marzo 1862

Vi offro la traduzione di un mio povero scritto. La penna inglese maltrattò la

italiana, in modo che io non vi riconosco più i miei pensieri. Interi periodi tolti. Frasi cancellati. Racconti spezzati. Spente le vampe dell'anima mia. Graditilo com' è.

Villa Spinola  
C Aug. Vecchj

[To signora Roberts

I offer you a translation of a poor work of mine. The English pen mistreated the Italian in such a way that I can no longer recognize my thoughts there. Complete sentences removed. Phrases taken out. Stories broken up. The flames of my inspiration extinguished. Be good enough to receive it as it is.

Villa Spinola  
C. Aug. Vecchj]

As I have indicated, the translators were not identified when the volume was published. However a pencilled annotation on the title-page under the words 'Translated from the Italian' identifies them as 'L. and M. Ellis', and this is confirmed by Allibone's *Dictionary of English Literature and British and American Authors* (1891). Vecchj is perhaps less than kind to their efforts, since the narrative reads fluently enough in English. The other significant annotation is on the inside back cover of the volume; it too is in pencil and it draws attention to a reference to a 'Captain Roberts' on page 49 of the volume - could he be the husband of the lady to whom Vecchj sent the volume, perhaps in recognition of his services to his hero?

*Garibaldi at Caprera* gives an account of the time when Garibaldi, exiled from the mainland of Italy during the Risorgimento, established a home on the island of Caprera off the north Sardinian coast. Garibaldi passes over his residence at Caprera in his autobiography saying only that 'during the period between my arrival in Genoa in May 1854 and my departure in February in 1859 for the Italian mainland from the island of Caprera - where I had acquired a small property - there is nothing of interest to relate.'<sup>1</sup> But it was here that he lived the simple life, before returning to conduct his successful campaigns in Sicily and on the mainland, in the struggle for Italian nationhood. Candido Augusto Vecchj (1830-1869) is described by Gaskell at the opening of her account as 'one of Garibaldi's closest companions in arms'.<sup>2</sup> For his part Garibaldi relates in the autobiography that the plans for the great expedition to Sicily, which initiated the final stages of the Italian struggle, were prepared 'in Augusto Vecchj's Villa Spinola [at Genoa]'. ( p.85) Prior to that, like Garibaldi himself, Vecchj had been living in exile in France. Vecchj later wrote two accounts of the Risorgimento, *La Italia: storia di due anni 1848-9 (1851)* and *La vita e le geste*

di Giuseppe Garibaldi, apparently published posthumously in 1910. Incidentally he should not be confused with his long-lived son, Augusto Vittorio Vecchj (1842-1932), who followed in his father's patriotic footsteps, and produced works of maritime strategy and naval history, sometimes under the pseudonym of Jack La Bolina.

Vecchj's account of life at Caprera fills in the gap left by Garibaldi's own account of his life. He tells with some pride of the place that he held in Garibaldi's affections, of the trust placed in him as his leader's secretary and amanuensis, and of the simplicity of life on Garibaldi's small estate. He offers examples of the generosity of his hero's behaviour, and of his affection for his children, and also of the evidence he receives of the admiration for Garibaldi that came from abroad. Amongst the correspondence he had to deal with were 'glowing pages from the fair-haired daughters of Albion, begging for autographs and locks of the hero's hair' (p.56) Gaskell, herself a keen collector of autographs, would not perhaps have gone so far. But the Italian struggle for independence from Austria raised considerable enthusiasm throughout Europe in the 1860s, and this she would seem to have shared. In her Preface she writes of how Garibaldi's 'valour and his patriotism' had 'opened out for [Italy] the prospect of a fresh career of glory' (p.ii), and *Garibaldi in Caprera* appeared contemporaneously in German and in Dutch translations as well as in English. Advertisements in the English translation refer to a number of similar works which celebrate the Italian cause, for example Henry Lushington's *The Italian War*, 1848-9, a work whose title anticipates Vecchj's own study of the same years. Mary Thwaite, who compiled a hand-list of the Stanton Whitfield collection, has associated the project with Gaskell's interest in Italian affairs, initiated by her visit in 1857.<sup>3</sup> This perhaps stretches a point, since in a letter to Henry Morley she would seem to disown her contribution: 'the task of editing the book was imposed on me by force, not adopted of my own free will.' But Vecchj's work, with her help, took its place amongst the many works at that time which promoted the Garibaldi legend and endorsed his place in the drive for Italian nationhood.

Notes:

1. Giuseppe Garibaldi, *My Life*, 1932, trans. Tim Parks (London 2004), p. 53. Further references in the text.
2. 'Preface' to *Garibaldi in Caprera*, 1862, p. i. Further references to this volume in the text.
3. Mary Thwaite, 'Gaskell in Italy (1)', *Gaskell Society Journal* 4, 1991, p. 61. Mary Thwaite was a founder member of the Gaskell Society and a distinguished librarian who took a particular interest in the Stanton Whitfield Collection.

*The collection of A Stanton Whitfield, one of the founders of modern Gaskell scholarship, is housed in Knutsford Public Library. It contains a number of first and early editions of Gaskell's works, together with important secondary material. A*

*handlist, prepared by Mary Thwaite, accompanies the collection, which can be consulted by arrangement with the librarian, Mrs Jackie Heaton. I should like to thank Mrs Heaton for her assistance in the preparation of this article, and on other occasions* AJS.

## The Gaskell Society Visit to Rome 18 September - 24 September 2006

Peter Skrine

It had poured with rain the day before, but the Gaskell party arrived in sunshine which lasted all week. Clearly Elizabeth Gaskell was smiling on our visit and ensuring that we, in 2006, would see the Rome she knew and loved 149 years ago, and where she was so happy. Our visit started on the morning of 18 September. By mid-afternoon we had all settled in at the Hotel Lancelot, a delightful, well-run hotel quietly tucked away in prime position close to the Colosseum; by dinner Anthony Coles, our expert cicerone throughout our visit, had already taken us on our first sight-seeing expedition to the basilica of San Clemente, close by, with a recently discovered temple of Mithras underneath it and splendid mosaics inside it; it has been entrusted to the Irish Dominicans since 1677, and the merry-making in our hotel soon told us that the Irish connection flourishes still; a charming young couple from Cork were getting married there next day and were promised a papal blessing at St. Peter's provided they still had on their wedding clothes. Their happiness and the champagne they kindly shared with us helped take a weight off Rosemary Marshall's mind: her suitcase had failed to arrive, and she had to make elegant do with her husband Tony's shirts until it was traced and returned thanks to the hotel manageress's help. By evening many of the group were ready to take an evening stroll to the Colosseum: for many these moonlit walks were the highlight of the visit.

For others Day 2 turned out to be the day to remember. The morning was spent visiting St Peter's, for which we had the benefit of Father Thomas Wood, a parish priest from Liverpool, as our mentor. His inspirational three-hour guided tour of the great church revealed the extraordinary craftsmanship which went into its construction, and the lessons, divine and human, which its stones can tell us. We didn't experience the pomp and circumstance that Elizabeth Gaskell and Catherine Winkworth witnessed in April 1857, but the sight of a new ambassador to the Holy See and his wife being solemnly escorted down the vast nave by Swiss guards in their blue, yellow and red Renaissance uniforms, gave us, too, something to remember. The afternoon took us even closer the Rome Elizabeth Gaskell knew: the Trevi Fountain and then Via San Isidoro, with its associations with her Roman friends, Emelyn and William Wetmore Story, the American sculptor whose very last



work, an angel weeping over his wife's grave, we were to come across in the Cimitero degli Stranieri along with those of Keats and Shelley on the last day of our visit. Such chance encounters brought home her intense fondness for the friends she made during those Roman holidays.

Nothing we did under Anthony's guidance was a waste of time or energy. On Day 3 many of us went to see the Sistine Chapel, while others chose to walk through Rome's ancient Roman centre, past the Forum of Trajan, to the church of San Pietro in Vincoli and Michelangelo's great statue of Moses. The afternoon added further dimensions to our experience of Elizabeth Gaskell's Rome: the Spanish Steps, the tiny room in which Keats died, and the famous Babington Tearooms close by, survivors from the late Victorian age, then on to the Pincio, the Victorians' favourite promenade, and thence, via the Via Babuino in which Catherine Winkworth stayed, to the Anglican Church, where the Rev. Jonathan Boardman, author of *Rome: A Literary and Cultural Companion* (2000), and his wife entertained us to refreshments in the cool green shade of its secluded garden.

Day 4 gave us the delightful opportunity of seeing two of Rome's finest churches: Bernini's masterly Sant' Andrea al Quirinale and Borromini's delightful San Carlo alle Quattro Fontane, ideal preparation for our visit to the Palazzo Barberini - where the Storeys were living when Elizabeth Gaskell paid her second visit to Rome in 1863 - and where we had the rare delight of being almost the only people admiring its fine collection of paintings. The afternoon brought us to the end of our stay in Rome itself. Via the Protestant cemetery already mentioned, and the vast basilica of St. Paul Outside the Walls, we moved on to the second phase of our stay: Palazzola, a former monastery high up above Lake Albano, now run as a retreat by the venerable English College. No contrast could have been more delightful. The space, the silence, the light, and the views of hill and lake across towards Castel Gandolfo, where Pope Benedict XVI was residing, seemed like a painting. We recovered quickly from our physical and mental Roman exertions and on Friday happily set off for Castel Gandolfo and on to Frascati with its memorial to Cardinal Stuart, brother of Bonnie Prince Charlie, restored with money donated by our late Queen Mother; then followed by an evening enlivened by a lecture on Mrs Gaskell in Rome given by Dr. Enrichetta Soccio, who came all the way from Pescara to be with us, accompanied by her husband Paolo and her pretty baby, Larissa. On Saturday the Appian Way, a descent into the Catacomb of St. Calixtus, discovered in 1849, and a stroll along to the tomb of Cecilia Metella took us vividly back to the more distant past that had also attracted the attention of Elizabeth Gaskell and her Roman friends. Home again to Palazzola, a rest, dinner, and two interesting papers, one by Christine Lingard on the Wetmore Storys, the other a timely reminder by Janet Kennerley that it is in Gaskell's neglected yet fascinating *A Dark Night's Work* that we find her Roman experiences surfacing most vividly.

Sunday, 24 September, brought us to the end of our Roman holiday. It started with an optional Mass in "our" chapel at which Celia, my wife, was prevailed on to play the organ, and at which all present gratefully sang two of Catherine Winkworth's masterly hymn translations: "Praise to the Lord" and "Now thank we all our God" - a truly fitting conclusion to a week during which we had enjoyed so many beautiful and memorable sights sure in the knowledge that Elizabeth Gaskell had seen them too. Appropriately, our stay in Rome, so ably led by Anthony Coles, ended with a visit to the Villa Borghese and its sun-drenched gardens. It was to visit this very spot that she had invited Catherine Winkworth to join her and Mr. Norton for a drive on 4 April 1857. The day after, the heavens opened, the underground was flooded, and more rain fell in Rome than is normal for the entire month of September. Even the Trevi Fountain overflowed. As Madame de Pompadour observed, 'après nous le déluge'.



Charles Elliot Norton had an apartment near here

# Antonio Gallenga

Christine Lingard

With the Gaskell trip to Rome still fresh in our memory I thought I would take the opportunity to discuss another Italian of her acquaintance, the almost forgotten novelist, Antonio Gallenga (1812-1895). Though there is only one recorded meeting in July 1855 (*Letters* 251 and 252), Gaskell certainly knew his Manchester-born wife, Juliet Schunck, whose funeral William conducted in 1855, and they shared many friends and acquaintances.

Gallenga (also known as Luigi Marriotti) was an émigré from Parma, and a controversial character - a journalist (foreign correspondent on *The Times*) and author of lurid melodramatic novels and short stories, such as *The Blackgown Papers* of 1846, full of gothic sentimentality, though they did draw attention to the wretched conditions endured by Italian boys brought to Britain as professional beggars. He was a naturalised British subject. His *The Invasion of Denmark* (1864) is to be republished in June by Helion.

He had spent some time in America, where he knew Longfellow, and in London had courted the company of the intellectual society from the 1830s - the likes of Lord Lytton (who offered him the post of secretary), the Carlyles, Robert Browning (long before he became famous), Lady Byron and Mrs Jameson. He gave Dickens Italian lessons and when the latter went on a tour of Italy he took letters on Gallenga's behalf to his political friends there. In 1842 they were on the same ship crossing the Atlantic for America when they were hit by a hurricane. Dickens was confined to his cabin for four days with seasickness. He wrote:

[I] was long troubled with the idea that he [Gallenga] might be up, and well, and a hundred times a day expecting me to call upon him in his saloon.... I don't think I ever felt such perfect gratification and gratitude of heart, as I did when I heard from the ship's doctor that he had been obliged to put a large mustard poultice on this gentleman's stomach. I date my recovery from the receipt of that intelligence.

Gallenga was involved in the movement for the unification of Italy, having in his youth offered his services to murder the King. He publicly attacked the Italian patriot Joseph Mazzini after the Italian Wars. (Mazzini had been in London for a time in the 1840s, running a school at Hatton Garden). He met his wife when he came to Manchester in 1846, to lecture on Dante on the recommendation of Henry Crabb Robinson. (It is not recorded if Gaskell attended, despite her interest in the author, but possibly not, as in September of that year she was busy giving birth to her

daughter Julia). Juliet Schunck was 16 years her husband's junior when they married in 1847. Mazzini was convinced he had married her for her money (£500 a year with a prospect of £1,000). Gallenga zealously protected his private life and all references to her are tender, but he is not totally reliable - there is no firm evidence either way about their relationship. Juliet was only 39 when she died of scarlet fever. After her death he soon had another lady friend though it was three years before he married again (a different lady but also Protestant - the widow of a grandson of Robert Raikes of Sunday School fame). A lot of people found him untrustworthy, including Robinson: 'I succeeded in getting Gallenga into the Athenaeum Club by great exertion and was made ashamed of my success by the development of his character. Gallenga later secured a lectureship at London University. Juliet's son Romeo returned to Italy and her grandson gave the Palazzo Gallenga in Perugia to the nation to become the Italian University for Foreigners.

Juliet was the daughter of the Frankfurt-born businessman Martin Schunck (1789-1872), a member of the Cross Street congregation. His interests were in shipping and importing textiles. Martin was educated in Switzerland. He came to Manchester from Malta in 1808 after a military career, and opened his first office in George Street. He was a trustee of Cross Street Chapel, a share-holder of the Portico Library to which he regularly brought foreign visitors, chairman of the Schiller Anstalt (a German library), and on the committee of Manchester College, holding more important civic positions than Salis Schwabe (another German to whom he was related by marriage), principally because he was not Jewish.

His ancestors had originally been Dutch. He had travelled widely in Europe and met the foreign correspondent Henry Crabb Robinson, a friend of Wordsworth, whose diaries are full of anecdotes about celebrities of the time. They also appear to have known Geraldine Jewsbury and Tottie Fox well. His son Edward Schunck (1820-1903), who was a talented scientist with an interest in the chemical properties of dyes, was a friend of Jane Carlyle.

Further reading:

Toni Cerutti: *Antonio Gallenga. An Italian writer in Victorian England* (London: Oxford University Press for the University of Hull), 1974.



# *The Sorrows of Young Philip*

Ian M. Emberson

One aspect of literary criticism which has received too little attention in my opinion, is the problem of characters who have got into the wrong novels. Think of poor Philip Hepburn, and his courtship of the wayward Sylvia Robson. He gives her a copy of *The Sorrows of Young Werther*, and how does she respond? He finds out on his next visit to Haytersbank, when he sees it shelved alongside *The Complete Farrier* - unread and upside-down. Now if only Philip could somehow have wriggled out of the pages of *Sylvia's Lovers*, and crept into *Cousin Phillis*. There he would present the book to Phillis Holman. Imagine how her beautiful thoughtful eyes would have devoured every word - prior to translating it into Greek, and reading it to her father at two o'clock in the morning - just before he got round to praying for his enemies.

Come to think of it, young Werther could have done with a bit of help himself. Supposing Emma Woodhouse had wandered into Goethe's novel, and, with more luck at match-making than she ever had in the Jane Austen version, had distracted the hero's gaze from the already-married Lotte, and fixed him up with some cute, bright-eyed, unattached young maiden? They could then have lived happily ever after, and the book renamed *The Joys of Young Werther*.

But there are snags to all this. Just consider what might have happened if Bertha Rochester, during one of Grace Poole's moments of inebriation, had slipped stealthily out of *Jane Eyre*, and slithered into the pages of *Pride and Prejudice*. Poor Elizabeth! Imagine her returning from the honeymoon, and waking up in the middle of the night to a sound of screaming from the room above, and a realization that Mr. Darcy had a mad wife in the attic! It doesn't bear thinking about. Really the characters are best left firmly imprisoned within their original covers. They cause enough trouble as it is.

## *84 Plymouth Grove*

Manchester Historic Buildings Trust, the owners of the building, are working hard towards getting a foot on the lottery ladder. This has meant the commissioning of an Options Appraisal, now nearly complete, which has looked at all possible uses of the building. It will be followed by a Project Planning Grant Application, which will hopefully give us £50,000 towards yet more studies which must be done before the main application is compiled. Meanwhile work continues on the house. At a working day in January, with both Trustees and Friends, the kitchen was reorganised, all the

ground floor windows were cleaned, inside and out, much unwanted material was cleared ready for dumping in a skip, and the partition round the staircase was removed revealing the entrance hall in its proper proportions.

Help is coming from many quarters, and we are specially pleased to have an international team of students from Manchester Business School who are at present masterminding the design of a Gaskell House website.

After a busy autumn the Friends of Plymouth Grove are now preparing for a busy Spring, with regular open days on the first of each month and special events, starting with **Ann O'Brien's talk on Meta Gaskell on 17 March** (£7.50 including an Italian meal), to be followed by a **Crimea Day School on Saturday 28 April** (£15 including lunch).

Hilda Holmes is taking the bookings for these on 0161 487 2593 and as space is limited this must be done in advance. The bookstall flourishes and we have just taken delivery of 10,000 new publicity leaflets! We are to be represented at the International Women's day event at Manchester Town Hall. Later events will include the popular plant sale in May.

## *BOOK NOTES*

Christine Lingard

*Ethics and the English Novel from Austen to Forster* by Valerie Wainwright, Ashgate, £50, due in March.

A study of ethical thought in the novels of Austen, Gaskell, Dickens, Hardy and Forster, and the influence of a number of leading philosophers such as Kant and John Stuart Mill. There is also mention of lesser-known figures such as the Unitarian minister Edward Tagart, who was a friend of the Gaskells.

Some notable reissues: In May, Hesperus are reissuing *Cousin Phillis* with an introduction by Jenny Uglow, at £6.99 (paperback).

The second edition of Patsy Stoneman's *Elizabeth Gaskell* is available from Manchester University Press at £15.99.

The audio publisher CSA world is releasing a four-CD set, *The Best of Elizabeth Gaskell: an abridgement of Mary Barton* read by Maggie Ollerenshaw, and *North and South* read by Jenny Agutter. Approximate running time 5 hours, due in July.

The same company has on its list two of Gaskell's short stories: 'The Half-brothers' on *Classic Women's Short Stories*, vol. 1 and 2, read by Harriet Walter (with stories by Winifred Holtby, Katherine Mansfield, Virginia Woolf, Edith Wharton and others); and 'Right at Last', read on a 4-CD set, *Best of Women's Short Stories*, and also on *Classic Women's Short Stories* vol. 3 (2 CDs).

## Manchester Regional History Review

Joan Leach

*The Manchester Regional History Review*, Volume 17.ii, follows a theme of the literary culture of nineteenth-century Manchester and its region.

This issue has four articles covering periodical publications. Terry Wyke and Michael Powell write of Leary's *History of the Manchester Periodical Press* which has been a major research resource. Leary's record was wide-ranging, from newspapers to magazines, trade publications and directories, beginning with *The Manchester Weekly Journal* of 1719. He also tried to identify proprietors, editors and contributors. This comprehensive work failed to find a publisher so is available only in two MS versions; plans are in hand to publish a complete version. Bradshaw's *Manchester Journal* had high aspirations to produce a quality, well-illustrated weekly magazine covering art, science and literature at a cost of a penny-ha'penny. Bradshaw, better known for his rail timetables, with his partner Blacklock, aimed to celebrate Manchester's achievements as a productive, dynamic town proud of its history. Mary Howitt was a contributor, but like Howitts' *Journal* it was doomed to financial failure. Other articles include *Ben Brierley's Journal*, the most long-lasting of the local magazines; *The Cotton Factory Times 1885-1937*; *Nineteenth-Century Theatre in Manchester* and *William Harrison Ainsworth*. Christine Lingard has contributed a useful account of The Language and Literature Library at Manchester Central Library.

For more details contact: [http:// www.mcrh.mmu.ac.uk/pubs/mrhr.htm](http://www.mcrh.mmu.ac.uk/pubs/mrhr.htm)

AGM Meeting on Saturday March 31st, 2007 at Cross Street Chapel, Manchester.

10.30am Coffee

11.00am AGM

11.45am approx. The Daphne Carrick Lecture by Dr Patsy Stoneman:

The Battle for Gaskell: Elizabeth Gaskell's Literary Reputation

Patsy Stoneman is an Emeritus Reader in English Literature at the University of Hull. The second edition of her critical biography of Gaskell has just been published and her talk will revolve around the afterword that she added to that volume.

1.00pm Buffet Lunch

2.15pm approx. A trans-atlantic friendship: Readings from the letters of Charles Eliot Norton, the Gaskell family and John Ruskin.

## London and South East Group

### Programme for 2007-8

**Saturday May 12th:** Dr Brenda McKay, 'Dramatising Mrs Gaskell: A presentation and discussion with clips from TV adaptations of North and South and Wives and Daughters.

Brenda has given similar presentations to other groups and has found the formula to be popular. We have been treated to adaptations of Gaskell's novels in the past few years and I know everyone has views about the BBC interpretation of her writing. This will be an opportunity to listen, watch the clips and offer opinions!!

**Saturday September 15th:** Jo Pryke

Jo is the immediate past editor of the *Gaskell Society Journal*. She will talk about parallels between Dorothy Whipple's writing and that of Gaskell. She is actively engaged in researching this idea and will present her thoughts at the meeting. The title of the talk is yet to be finalised. Homework will be set!! To read some of Dorothy Whipple's work - several of her novels are published by Persephone Books.

**Saturday November 10th:** Dudley Green, 'Always...at my post'. The letters of Patrick Brontë.

Dudley Green has been an active Gaskell Society Committee member and member of the Brontë Society and recently has edited Patrick Brontë's letters. (Published 2005). He will talk about the letters with particular reference to the relationship between Patrick Brontë and Gaskell over *The Life of Charlotte Brontë*.

**Saturday February 9th:** Dr Patsy Stoneman, 'The Battle for Gaskell': Elizabeth Gaskell's critical reputation'.

Patsy Stoneman is an Emeritus Reader in English Literature at the University of Hull. The second edition of her excellent critical biography of Gaskell has just been published and her talk will revolve around the afterword that she added to that volume.

**Saturday May 10th:** Dr Graham Handley, 'Mrs Gaskell and 'Scenes of Clerical Life'

Graham will talk on George Eliot's *Scenes of Clerical Life*, the warm response of Mrs Gaskell to them, and then go on to consider Gaskell's scenes of clerical life

in her own fiction both before and after George Eliot's were published.]  
Perhaps we should read the book before then.

Dr Fran Twinn, 85 Calton Avenue, Dulwich, London SE21 7DF Tel:020 8693 3238  
Fax: 020 8299 4088. Email [frantwinn@aflex.net](mailto:frantwinn@aflex.net)

## *North West Group*

Knutsford Meetings at St John's Church Rooms, 12.15 for buffet lunch:

**25th March:** Professor Angus Easson on Self Help in Mary Barton

**25th April:** Last session on Mary Barton

**21st May:** Visit to Capesthorpe Hall and Cousin Phillis country. Details to be confirmed.

**9th June:** We are planning a day to visit Samuel Bamford country around Middleton to discover his story. There will be a guided walk of Middleton and a visit to the church with Bamford grave and memorial, and lunch at the Old Boar's Head. Tour escorted by several Bamfordologists.

## *The Yorkshire Branch of the Society*

Future meetings:

**Saturday 23 June 2007:** "The Likeness of a Kingly Crown": John Milton's influence on Charlotte Brontë'.

Speaker: Ian Emberson

**Saturday 27 October:** 'Regionalism in the novels of Mrs Gaskell and Kay-Shuttleworth'.

Speaker: Heather.Sharps

Meetings are held at The Friends Meeting House, Friargate, York YO1 9RL and will commence at 2 p.m. The room will be available from 12.30 p.m. for those who wish to bring a picnic lunch. To cover expenses a contribution of £3 is requested from members of The Gaskell Society and £4 from non-members.

Enquiries to: Dudley J Barlow, 6 Kenlay Close, New Earswick, York YO32 4DW  
Tel: 01904 750366. Email: [dudleybarlow@hotmail.co.uk](mailto:dudleybarlow@hotmail.co.uk)

## *South-West Branch*

Our next meeting will be on March 31st at the home of Mrs. Joan Chandler, 97, Sydney Place, Bath. 3.00p.m. - 5.00 p.m. Celia Skrine and Rosemary Marshall will be showing pictures of the Rome experience and discussing how it furthered our knowledge and understanding of Mrs. Gaskell's love of the city.

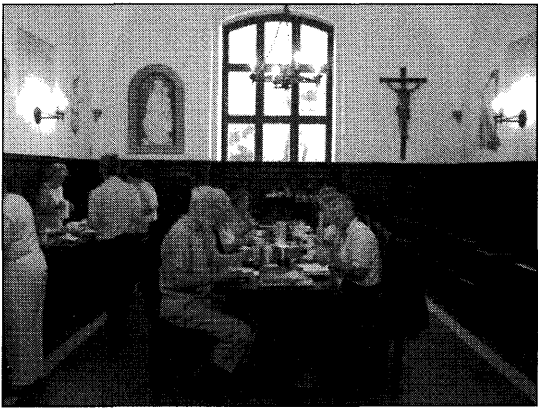
In the pipeline are visits to Tyntesfield and Bowood House where Joseph Priestley's study can be visited. There will again be a Summer Tea in August. Details will be sent to S-W members soon but anyone else is very welcome. Enquiries to Rosemary Marshall 01225 426732  
e-mail [rosemary\\_marshall@yahoo.com](mailto:rosemary_marshall@yahoo.com)

Alliance of Literary Societies AGM meeting is to be hosted by The Tolkien Society at St Hilda's College, Oxford on 19th and 20th May.

### **North Wales Autumn Visit.**

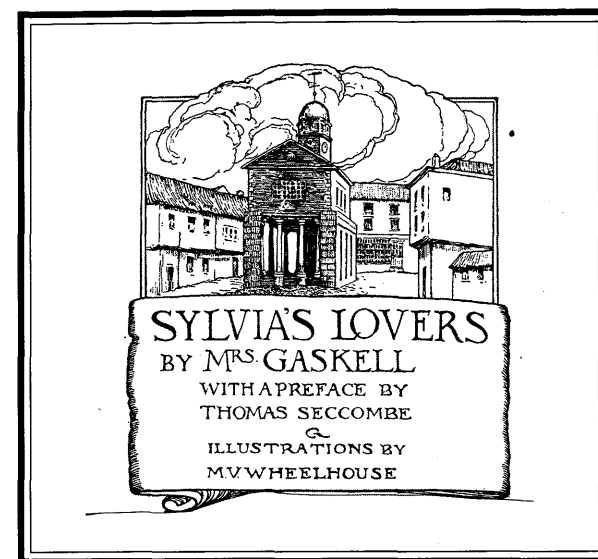
We thought of a day trip to Wales for our North West members but decided that we had so much to see that a two night/three day tour would be best. We plan to stay at Bangor University which has the single en-suite rooms we need. Elizabeth Gaskell spent her honeymoon in North Wales and went to Bangor Cathedral in 1853. We hope to follow the Gaskell's honeymoon route, family connections with the slate industry, Gaskell's Welsh stories etc.

The dates will probably be from 11th-13th September. The plan is for a coach to leave from Macclesfield, Knutsford but other members could be picked up at Chester station. Please let us know if you are interested either by sending an SAE or your email address to [joanleach@aol.com](mailto:joanleach@aol.com).



**The dining room at the Palazzola**

# The Gaskell Society



THE GASKELL SOCIETY HOME PAGE has all the latest information on meetings.  
<http://gaskellsociety.users.btopenworld.com>

If you have any material or suggestions for future Newsletters, please contact Mrs. Joan Leach,  
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**Membership Secretary:** Miss C. Lingard, 5 Moran Crescent, Macclesfield SK11 8JJ

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## NEWSLETTER

Autumn 2007 - Number 44

## Editor's Letter

Joan Leach

The Society's conference at Canterbury at the end of July will be long remembered by all participants as an excellent event, indeed the organising committee, though inspired to start thinking of the next conference, wonder how we can live up to this standard. The programme worked out so well with excellent speakers and we can look forward to reading some of the papers in the next Journal.

We hope members will support the various branches in the forthcoming events. At the autumn meeting in Knutsford on 29th September we will be celebrating the 150th anniversary of the publication of *The Life of Charlotte Brontë* and the Gaskell's year of 1857, the year of the Art Treasures Exhibition. Manchester City Art Gallery has arranged an exhibition: *Art Treasures in Manchester: 150 years on* which will run from October 6th to January 27th. Some of us will make a group visit in November.

Ann O'Brien has researched and written for us in this newsletter the history of the Exhibition and Pat Barnard arranged a fine exhibition at Plymouth Grove showing the artistic links and will talk about this at the autumn meeting. John Rylands Library also has an exhibition until 14th November.

We are grateful to Fran Baker, assistant modern literary archivist at John Rylands Library for writing about Geoffrey Sharps collection which has been added to their archives. Some of our members will have a special tour there in January.

We bring you news of progress at Plymouth Grove and hope some of you will be able to participate in the events. The website [www.thegaskellhouse.org](http://www.thegaskellhouse.org) gives details about these and how to become a Friend of Plymouth Grove.

Our homepage is currently being re-designed: [www.gaskellsociety.co.uk](http://www.gaskellsociety.co.uk).

I think you will all have seen news of BBC's forthcoming production of *Cranford* to be screened in November. Script writer Heidi Thomas has told us about her involvement and she will also speak at Knutsford Literature Festival on 14 October. (Tickets sold out).

We had thought of revisiting HEIDELBERG next year as this was our first overseas visit and was much enjoyed; however we have met with problems in finding a suitable hotel with sufficient single rooms at a reasonable cost. We are sorry to disappoint those who hoped to go with us but the trip will not happen. For any of you who choose to visit that area, at any time in the future, we could supply information on the Gaskell links.

We hope, instead, to plan a visit to Berwick-upon-Tweed and Scotland to follow Gaskell and other literary links.

## The Papers of J.G. Sharps

Fran Baker

As Heather Sharps reported in the Spring issue of the Newsletter, her husband indicated that he wished most of his pre-eminent Gaskell collection to go to the John Rylands University Library (University of Manchester), to be made available to scholars, students, other readers and visitors. We are delighted that Mr Sharps considered the Rylands to be an appropriate home for his collection, and very grateful to Mrs Sharps for arranging the transfer of his papers - and for donating further material to the Library in her own right.

As the custodian of our Gaskell manuscript collections, I had a most enjoyable visit to Scarborough in April 2006, when Heather Sharps allowed me privileged access to her husband's Gaskell collection as well as providing me with lunch and (as a first-time visitor) an informative tour of the sights. The Sharps Gaskell collection has been credited by John Chapple as being perhaps the largest in private hands, and on close examination it became clear that I was looking not just at this extensive Gaskell collection, but at J.G. Sharps's own archive in its entirety - including much correspondence, as well as photocopies of research resources, manuscripts and typescripts of his own writings, papers relating to the Gaskell Society, and more. His archive and collection are inextricably linked; the correspondence, for instance, sheds light on the provenance of the books, manuscripts and other items that Mr Sharps collected over the years. He stored his papers carefully, meticulously labelling envelopes and packages with notes of their content, and my survey of the collection was further assisted by the work of Dr David Iredale and Alyne Slasor, archivist friends of the Sharps family who had already undertaken some appraisal and organisation of the papers. I hope to give some indication here of the archive's content and significance as a resource for Gaskell researchers and enthusiasts.

J.G. Sharps - like Gaskell herself - was well known as a voluminous correspondent, and although exact figures will not become clear until it is fully catalogued, the archive includes at least 2,500 pieces of correspondence, dating from the 1950s to 2005. Correspondents include literary societies, publishers, booksellers, libraries, museums, Gaskell collectors and those with a general interest in her work. Most significant are the Gaskell scholars past and present - whom initially Mr Sharps sought out for information, and who subsequently turned to him as an authority on Gaskell and her work. A cross section of scholars represented in the archive includes: Miriam Allott; Richard D. Altick; Barbara Brill; John Chapple; Dorothy Collin; Annette B. Hopkins; Coral Lansbury; Arthur Pollard; Gerald DeWitt Sanders; Robert L. Selig; Joanne Shattock; Alan Shelston; Walter E. Smith; Kathleen Tillotson; Jane Whitehill (née Coolidge); A. Stanton Whitfield; and Edgar Wright.

Much of the correspondence relates to Mr Sharps's exhaustive research - both his hunt for accurate facts about Gaskell's life and work, and his efforts to track down previously unknown primary sources from all over the world. He was engaged in his Gaskell research and correspondence from as early as 1959, and his findings fed into his Oxford BLitt thesis (awarded in 1964 and converted to an MLitt during the 1970s); this in turn formed the foundation of his encyclopaedic work, *Mrs Gaskell's observation and invention: a study of her non-biographic works*, which remains an indispensable resource for Gaskell scholars. Manuscript and typescript drafts of his thesis are included among his papers, as are drafts and proofs of his book.

Mr Sharps's efforts to track down and acquire important primary sources were highly successful, as reflected in the quality of his Gaskell collection. He became acquainted with the pioneering Gaskell scholar, A. Stanton Whitfield, from whom he acquired important papers, including four holograph Gaskell letters and another letter dictated by Gaskell. From the same source came over 30 holograph letters either sent to, or collected by, Whitfield; the latter category includes letters written by the historian E.A. Freeman, and the literary scholars Ernest de Selincourt and George S. Gordon among others.

Another highly significant group of manuscripts reflects Mr Sharps's interest in Gaskell's early life. These were purchased from Mrs Ethel Smith whose husband, when alive, wrote to the editor of the *Manchester Guardian* about the manuscripts in his possession. These letters, some of which are fragmentary and rather fragile, include: part of a lively letter from Marianne Lumb to her mother, Hannah (Gaskell's aunt and 'more than mother'), which dates from 1811 and gives an insight into their life in Knutsford; another letter to Hannah from Gaskell's brother John, dating from 1825; and a series of four incomplete, and two complete, letters to Gaskell from her brother, dating from 1825-28, shortly before his disappearance from her life forever.

Complementing these manuscripts are five even earlier letters which were given to Mr Sharps by Miss J. Carter. Dating from the 1790s, these include four letters from Gaskell's paternal aunt Dorothy Stevenson (Miss Carter's great-grandmother) to another brother - probably Robert - which make reference to the birth of Gaskell's older brother John, and offer a tantalising glimpse of Gaskell's mother, about whom little is known.

Also closely related are a series of typescript transcripts of letters, purchased by Sharps from the widow of Joseph Torry Lancaster. These include not only over 80 letters by Gaskell - which are thought to have some authority as sources, and were used as copy text for missing holograph letters by the editors of *Gaskell's Letters* - but also further letters to the young Elizabeth Stevenson from her brother, her father, and her former schoolteacher Jane Byerley.

These letters all provided valuable source material for John Chapple when writing *Elizabeth Gaskell: The Early Years* (1997), and were also drawn on by Jenny Uglow in her biography - just two examples of Mr Sharps's well-known generosity in sharing his collection and his discoveries with other scholars. His close association and work with other scholars is evident from his archive, which includes: correspondence relating to, and galley proofs of, *Elizabeth Gaskell: A Portrait in Letters* (1980), on which he collaborated with John Chapple; galley and page proofs of the Chapple and Pollard *Letters* volume; the typescript of an unfinished biography of Gaskell by Jane Whitehill; the typescript of, and notebooks relating to, A. Stanton's Whitfield's 1929 biography; and a typescript of Graham Handley's 2005 publication, *An Elizabeth Gaskell Chronology*.

Some of the gems of the archive can be found among the original manuscripts acquired by Mr Sharps. In addition to the items already discussed, the collection includes: a further 11 holograph Gaskell letters (all of which have been published in either the *Letters* or *Further Letters* volumes); Gaskell's holograph transcription of a ballad by the famous seventeenth-century royalist James Graham, First Marquis of Montrose; a letter to Gaskell from Richard Cobden; three letters written by Ellen Nussey (one to Gaskell, and two to Charlotte Brontë's widower, Arthur Bell Nichols, dating from 1855 when Gaskell was researching her biography of Brontë); a six-line manuscript verse signed by William and Mary Howitt, and dated September 1840 at Heidelberg (where Gaskell met them for the first time); a letter from William Gaskell to Manchester novelist Mrs Linnaeus (Isabella) Banks; and 14 letters (including six from Meta Gaskell) sent to the literary scholar and biographer, Thomas Seccombe, who edited some of Gaskell's novels for the Everyman library in the early twentieth century.

Mr Sharps also acquired some significant publications which he treated as part of his manuscript collection rather than storing them with his library. This material includes two Christmas numbers of Dickens's periodical *All the Year Round*, preserved in perfect condition in their original paper wrappers, rather than the volume format in which we so often encounter them today. There are also a number of copies of *"My diary": the early years of my daughter Marianne* (privately printed by Clement Shorter in 1923), and one of only 25 privately printed copies of Clement Shorter's *Letters on Charlotte Brontë* by Mrs Gaskell (1915).

The scale of J.G. Sharps's research and the breadth of his reading are reflected in a large number of photocopied journal articles, critical works and news cuttings, including some he tracked down from obscure publications - thus creating an invaluable reference resource for future researchers.

Of course Mr Sharps played a prominent role in the Gaskell Society from its foundation onwards, and maintained an active involvement even during his final illness. Naturally, then, the activities of the Gaskell Society are well-represented in his archive, which includes: notes for Society talks he gave; photographs taken at events; copies of the Newsletter and Journal; correspondence with members and officers relating to activities; and copies of agendas and minutes.

As well as Gaskell scholars, students and enthusiasts, J.G. Sharps also numbered other significant individuals among his correspondents - Lord Shuttleworth and Sir Walter Bromley-Davenport, for example - and twentieth-century literary figures as diverse as Valentine Ackland, Michael Horovitz, Daphne Du Maurier and John Lehmann.

The Rylands was also given the privilege of being able to select from Mr Sharps's outstanding library early editions of Gaskell's works not already represented in its collections. Armed with Walter E. Smith's indispensable bibliography, and acting on the advice of Julie Ramwell, our Assistant Keeper of Printed Books, I was able, with Mrs Sharps's permission, to choose volumes which have augmented the Library's holdings of Gaskell first editions from just 14 to 23. A high proportion of these are in their original bindings, whereas most of the Library's existing early editions had been rebound. These volumes will therefore be of some bibliographical interest, and - along with the inclusion of some Tauchnitz and other early editions - will be of considerable value to those researching the textual history of Gaskell's works.

Taken as a whole, the J.G. Sharps archive and book collection provide an invaluable research resource for Gaskell scholars, and have greatly enhanced and augmented the Rylands' existing holdings of Gaskelliana. However, their interest is not limited to those studying the life and work of Elizabeth Gaskell. A recent review of the Rylands' archive and manuscript collecting policy identified the principal subject strengths of the Library's holdings, and the J.G. Sharps papers build on many of these areas, including: Language and literature in English - notably the history of the nineteenth-century novel and belles lettres, biography and life writing, and textual criticism; the history of the book, printing and publishing; the history of collecting; biography and life writing; local history; and Religious Nonconformity, particularly Unitarianism in Manchester.

The book collection has now been accessioned, and is currently with our cataloguing department where it will be added to the Library's online book catalogue. The archive has been accessioned, an overview of it added to our Guide to Collections, and it is now in the process of being box listed. Every effort will be made to ensure that researchers can access material in the archive, within the usual restrictions of Copyright and Data Protection law. One postgraduate student has

already been working on the archive, and I plan to use items from the collection in a forthcoming seminar focusing on the literary history of Manchester, being organized by the University's Centre for Continuing Education, as well as a Cranford study day being run by the Centre next year. The collection will also be featured in a Gaskell-themed event for the public being run by Manchester's Blue Badge Guides later this year.

Finally, I would also like to acknowledge Heather Sharps's generosity to the Library in her own right. When undertaking her important research into the fiction of James Kay-Shuttleworth, Mrs Sharps made extensive use of the Rylands' Kay-Shuttleworth papers, and last year she donated to the Library six published works by or relating to Kay-Shuttleworth, which support and complement the manuscript material.

(Fran Baker, who spoke at the Conference in 2005, is Assistant Modern Literary Archivist at The John Rylands University Library.)

## *Visit to Bamford country 9th June, 2007*

**Adrienne Stennett**

Samuel Bamford (1788-1872) was known to Elizabeth and William Gaskell through his poetry (some in broad Lancashire dialect, a special interest of William's) and through his writings. His autobiography, *Passages in the Life of a Radical*, published in 1842, recorded his experiences in the radical reform movement a generation earlier, particularly the Peterloo Massacre. Elizabeth quotes from Bamford's poem 'God Help the Poor' in *Mary Barton* and, knowing his love of Tennyson's poetry, she begged a signed copy from the poet for him.

Gaskell members gathered at the attractive stone-built Middleton Grammar School where Samuel had been a pupil. We enjoyed two very interesting talks with slides, one by Morris Garratt who gave us a glimpse of old Middleton in Bamford's lifetime, and one by Robert Poole who told us about his activities and achievements.

Born in 1788 to a muslin weaver Bamford knew from a child his father's interest in radical political ideas. He had read Tom Paine and supported the French Revolution. Not only that, his father had started a local radical group and at the same time left the Methodist church. While still a boy Bamford read *The Iliad*. This inspired him and began in him a lifelong love of poetry. He and his wife as silk weavers suffered poverty and he became secretary of the local campaign for parliamentary reform. He assembled the men to attend the Peterloo rally in 1819 but gave strict instructions that there was to be no provocation or bad language, and no one was to take a weapon of any kind, nor any sticks. All turned out in their

Sunday clothes, the men wearing a laurel leaf in their hats, some carrying laurel branches symbolising peace. In spite of these efforts Bamford spent a year in Lincoln Gaol.

A collection of Bamford memorabilia was displayed for us in Middleton Library. We dined in the Sessions Room at the Old Boar's Head Inn where Bamford had delivered lectures, then visited St Leonard's parish church, rebuilt in 1513, which Bamford had written about. We crossed the road to the Old Burying Ground to his grave. The inscription bears testimony to his courage and dedication to his cause, telling that '... for promoting a reformed Commons House of Parliament and repeal of taxes on food he was twice arrested on charges of high treason, was five times taken in custody before the Privy Council, he was on five different occasions escorted in chains or manacles to various and distant parts of the country he stood trial of ten days and conducted his own defence ...' Here Paul Booth recited for us Bamford's dialect poem, 'Tim Bobbin's grave'. We also saw the handsome obelisk memorial with a medallion portrait erected in his memory in 1877.

Local historians Heather Mawhinney and Brian accompanied us to the site in Blackley where Bamford's beloved cottage stood, high on a hill in a beautiful spot with views over Boggart Hole Clough. Here Elizabeth Gaskell had brought her gift of Tennyson's poems. We returned home in sunshine after a very enjoyable and enlightening day.

## *A letter from Bamford, probably to William Gaskell*

**Robert Poole**

The Society's outing to Middleton on 9 June saw copies of a previously unseen letter to William Gaskell from the weaver and writer Samuel Bamford. Written from Bamford's home at Blackley on 26 June 1846, it reads as follows:

Revd Sir

At the request of the committee of the literary section of the Manchester Literary and Philosophical Society I am engaged in copying the glossary of Lancashire words and phrases which I forwarded to the society, and also some words supplied by other parties.

Mr [Vanbergue?] drew my attention to some marks which you had made in the margin of the MS which I sent in and said it was the wish of the Committee that I should consult you as to their meaning. I perceive that the names of places and one or two other words are marked thus ^, that several repetitions are marked thus – , and that certain pencil notes explain themselves. The first seems to indicate what

you suppose to be superfluous words, the second repetitions, and the third corrections in spelling.

As I shall be very happy in attending to any suggestion from you would you oblige by a note saying whether or not I am right in so construing your marks.

I am Revd Sir,

Your Obedt Humble Servant

Samuel Bamford

The identification of the 'Reverend Sir' as William Gaskell is not certain, but the circumstances make it very likely. Bamford was at this time well known in Lancashire as a working man poet and author of the memoir *Passages in the Life of a Radical* (1839-42), dealing with the 'Peterloo' period of the radical reform movement, 1816-21. William Gaskell's interest in vernacular poetry and dialect brought him into contact with Bamford, a practitioner of both, in the late 1830s or early 1840s.

We know from William Gaskell's *Two Lectures on the Lancashire dialect* (1854) that in the 1840s the Manchester Literary and Philosophical Society had begun to compile a glossary of Lancashire dialect, when 'a pretty large collection of words was obtained, chiefly through the aid of Mr Samuel Bamford' Bamford handed a full manuscript glossary to the Society in 1843 (there is a copy in the John Rylands Library) but the project then appeared to lapse.

This new letter shows that the glossary was being prepared for publication in 1846, almost certainly by Gaskell. He seems to have annotated Bamford's manuscript for publication; perhaps it floundered because of the ensuing trade depression. Part of the glossary went into Bamford's own 1850 *Dialect of South Lancashire*, and it was drawn upon in Gaskell's *Two Lectures*. Both these works were published after the success of *Mary Barton*, whose dialect in turn owed much to both men.

How has the letter come to light? After Bamford's death in 1872 some of his papers and effects came into the hands of his friend James Dronsfield of Oldham, a blacksmith turned journalist with good connections to the publishing and newspaper world, including the Lit. and Phil. of which he was a member. Two Bamford letters, including this one, passed through the hands of a manuscript dealer formerly based in Oldham, and have finally been tracked down after years of patient inquiry by Brian Leicester, a Bamfordologist from Middleton. They are now back in Bamford's native Middleton.

**Ed.** Christine Lingard has been able to identify the gentleman mentioned in the Bamford letter ; she writes:

He is listed in Lit and Phil publications as:

F Eugene Vembergue



He was librarian of the Society from 1831, and wrote a couple of articles on ancient languages. He was born in Paris c. 1801.

He is listed in the 1851 directory as Professor of Languages, 55 Cottenham St., Chorlton on Medlock though according to the census he was living in Gloucestershire by then. (Directories are always a bit out of date by the time they get to press).

There are many other renderings of his name. His first name was Francis, Frances or Francois and after he left Manchester all variations of his surname begin with W. Frances Eugene Wembergue died in Cheltenham in 1879. Francois Eugen Wemberque (with Q) was married in London in 1849 to Julia Friclot. He doesn't appear to have had any children, though given his age at the time of marriage this is not surprising.

His wife Julie Friclot (or Frielot) was a teacher in Chorlton in 1841 living near James Herford and his daughters Caroline and Emma. Emma Herford was visiting the Vembergues in 1851 and 1861 was with her sister. They were born in Worcestershire. The Charles Herford who married Mary Robberds and Edward Herford the coroner were from Birmingham.

I think she may have taught the Gaskell girls. *See Further Letters of Mrs Gaskell* page 34 (1847):

'Mondays and Thursday they will have an hour's french lesson here from Mme Frielot; a very good teacher who sets a good deal to be done in her absence; but is so kind and spirited that all her pupils are fond of her.'

**LITERARY EXERCISES.**

**SAMUEL BAMFORD**

Respectfully informs the inhabitants of Middleton and the adjacent townships that, on the Evening of

**WEDNESDAY NEXT,**

At the Assembly Room, Boar's Head Inn, Middleton,

HE PURPOSES

**READING AND RECITING**

Extracts from his own works, and those of other Authors.

He will also, if required, enter into statements as to when he ceased being a handloom weaver; what employment he next adopted, when he ceased that employment, why he ceased it. Why he removed to London, the nature of his employment there, why he ceased to be so employed, with correspondence relative to the same. His present engagements, his future prospects, and various other matters.

The Doors will be open at half past Seven, the Exercises will commence at Eight. TICKETS: Platform One Shilling, Front seats Sixpence, other seats Threepence. Tickets may be had at the above Inn, of Mr. Wm. Jones, Rhoads, and at the Printer's.

7th July, 1850.

T. HILLS, PRINTER AND BOOKBINDER, MIDDLETON.

# The Manchester Art Treasures Exhibition

Ann O'Brien

In his novel, "Coningsby", Disraeli referred to Manchester as "as great a human exploit as Athens". While today such a comparison may elicit a wry smile, in the nineteenth century it did not seem so strange; even Thomas Carlyle called Manchester "as sublime as Niagara, or more so". Unfortunately the more typical descriptions of Manchester which emanated from the writings of commentators such as Engels and Alexis de Tocqueville focused on the appalling living conditions of the poor; they paid little heed to the cultural side of Manchester life. True the slum housing was appalling, but in contrast, many of the public buildings such as the Portico Library, the Exchange and Charles Barry's Royal Manchester Institution were of real architectural merit. Even many of the warehouses were built not simply in utilitarian fashion but in the palazzo style.

Cultural life in Manchester not only manifested itself in its architecture but also in its numerous cultural and philosophic societies; they reflected the growing concern of the middle classes about the lives of the poor. Whilst societies, such as the Provident Society, were formed to alleviate the material distress of the poor the Royal Manchester Institution for the Promotion of Literature, Science and Art from its inception was interested in education. Thus one of the prime motives of the Art Treasures Exhibition was to enrich the lives of the masses.

The story of the Art Treasures exhibition began in early 1856, when Thomas Fairbairn son of the engineer, William Fairbairn received a paper from J.C. Deane, commissioner for the Dublin Great Industrial Exhibition of 1853, and his friend Peter Cunningham. They had read "Treasures of Art in Great Britain", a book written by Gustav Friedrich Waagen, a distinguished art historian: Dr Waagen had remarked that the art treasures in the United Kingdom far surpassed those in all the collections in Europe. Unlike In Europe, however, where there were many art galleries displaying their national treasures, in the U.K. most of these collections were in private hands. Deane and Cunningham "thought of the grand idea of bringing the elite of these works into view under one roof for the edification of their fellow men". They believed that the owners would look favourably on loaning their works of art if such an intention was made known to them and suggested to Fairbairn that Manchester would be a suitable location.

Fairbairn, who had been a commissioner at the Great Exhibition of 1851 enlisted the help of a group of his friends and with their support a meeting was called in the Town Hall on March 28th 1856 with a group of influential merchants and manufacturers, to discuss this suggestion. It was decided to go ahead with the proposal to hold an Exhibition of Art Treasures of the United Kingdom in Manchester

in 1857, Fairbairn and some of his friends organised a guarantee fund and within a month £60,000 had been raised, soon increasing to £74,000. The next step was to obtain royal patronage and this was readily given by the Queen and her consort, Prince Albert. An executive committee was set up and Thomas Fairbairn was elected chairman.

It was decided that the Exhibition should take place away from the grime of the city and a spot was found just two miles away on a piece of land in Old Trafford, adjoining the Botanical Gardens. At that time it was leased to the Manchester Cricket Club and, despite many protests they were swiftly evicted. However, they soon found a suitable alternative just a short distance away and this remains the home of the Lancashire County Cricket Club which was formed from the Manchester club. The railway line to Altrincham ran close by the site so a new station was constructed - now the Trafford Bar station on the Metrolink line.

The actual building was mainly constructed of wrought and cast iron, timber and glass; with a brick entrance façade and a barrel-vaulted roof, which was 104 feet high. There were some critics who compared the exterior to "three steam boilers, side by side but the interior was palatial. The use of so much glass made it light and airy. Dr. Waagen wrote "With the exception of the Palais de Beaux Arts in which the works of art were exhibited in the Paris exhibition of 1855.

Following the support from the royal family many more of the aristocracy and gentry were encouraged to give their support both in lending the "cream of their collections and fortunately there were not many who took the Duke of Devonshire's view; he is reported to have said "What in the world do you want with art in Manchester? Why can't you stick to your cotton spinning?" He was one of the very few members of the nobility who did not lend works to the exhibition. He did not even visit until the last day but so impressed was he that he later gave a banquet and ball at Chatsworth as a tribute to the organisers.

The Exhibition itself was divided into ten major sections ranging from Old Masters to photography, with smaller sections devoted to tapestry, furniture and armour, a section which apparently, was particularly popular with the working classes who visited. Paintings were hung in chronological order, at the suggestion of Prince Albert and Waagen, so that they would show the progression of art from primitive to Old Masters.

Of course promotion of the British school of art was a key component of the exhibition and one of the aisles was filled with modern British art. Visitors were given the opportunity to see the most avant-garde of the British work - the paintings of the Pre Raphaelites - Millais's "Autumn Leaves", now in Manchester City Art Gallery,

was praised as "a perfect miracle of intense colour". There was unanimous admiration for Henry Wallis's "Chatterton" which was so popular that "it needed two policemen for its protection from the crushing crowd".

And, of course one cannot write of the Art Treasures Exhibition without mentioning, one of the highlights of the Exhibition, the Hertford collection. The fourth Marquis of Hertford, sent forty-four paintings from his vast collection to the Exhibition among them works by van Dyck, Gainsborough, Rembrandt, Reynolds, Rubens and Velasquez; this collection entirely filled one gallery.

On 5th May 1857, less than eighteen months after the idea was first mooted, the exhibition was opened by Prince Albert; he was representing the Queen, who was unable to be there as she had just given birth to Princess Beatrice. Thousands turned out to welcome the Prince and in July the Queen herself came to see the Exhibition along with three of her children.

The Exhibition was a huge success, more than 1,300,000 visitors came by road or rail in the five and a half months that it was open. On a single day the show was seen by the Duke of Wellington, the Bishop of Oxford, Florence Nightingale and the painter, David Roberts. Of course Mrs Gaskell made a number of visits, accompanying the guests who filled her house for almost the whole duration of the exhibition. Her daughter, Meta, who was an amateur artist herself, was given special permission to go in one day, before the Exhibition opened, in order that she might make a water colour sketch of "A Woman Drinking" from Murillo's painting, "Moses Striking a Rock" for the Gaskell's friend, Lady Hatherton. It is a mark of how well respected the Gaskell family were for Meta to be allowed to do this, as the making of copies of any of the works in the exhibition was strictly forbidden.

As well as the great and the good who flocked to the Exhibition both from this country and from overseas, the lower classes came along in their thousands and, despite the fears of some, behaved themselves. Admission, normally one shilling, was reduced to 6d on Saturday afternoons to encourage them to come and families were able to picnic on the lawn outside if they did not want or could not afford to use the refreshment tents. Many generous employers in the region brought along their workforce, at their own expense. One such was the firm of Messrs Horrocks, Miller and Company of Preston, who hired two trains to bring 2,500 employees. Thomas Cook ran "Moonlight" trips from Newcastle which left at midnight, arrived in Manchester in time for breakfast and returned in the evening. Fifteen hundred people took advantage of these trips.

It is regarded by some as the most significant event in the history of art in the nineteenth century. Not only did it encourage those who sought to establish an



expanded National Gallery, to look to the Manchester Exhibition for an example of how this should be done; it also paved the way for other galleries to be set up, both in London and in the regions. In Manchester itself the following year saw the inception of the Manchester Academy of Fine Arts but it was to be another twenty-four years before Manchester City Art Gallery was established and, interestingly Julia Gaskell was one of its early supporters.

There was, however, one immediate benefit to the citizens of Manchester, the orchestra which had entertained visitors throughout the exhibition and won such plaudits from all who heard it was due to be disbanded. Its young conductor, decided to take a risk and engage the orchestra at his own expense. It became the Hallé Orchestra which entertains the Manchester audiences today, just as it did in 1857 and that conductor was the friend of the Gaskells, Charles Hallé.

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## *Elizabeth Gaskell's Guests To The Manchester Art Treasures Exhibition*

Pat Barnard has arranged a fine exhibition at Plymouth Grove tracing the various artistic links and the visitors who came to the Gaskells and will speak about this at our Autumn meeting.

Mrs Harriet Beecher Stowe was the first of the Gaskell's visitors at the beginning of June 1857, after Elizabeth and Mrs Stowe had returned from Rome where they had met.

Elizabeth wrote to Charles Eliot Norton on 3rd June 1857:

*'...When will you come to us? I have not yet been to the Exhibition, having had too much to do in other ways, but Meta says it is charming and exceeds her expectations. Mrs Stowe comes to us today for one night and tomorrow I shall go for the first time with her. (GL 349)*

A month later she wrote again to Norton:

*'...However you must come to us as soon as you are well; even if we have to find a night's lodging for you - which I hope won't be the case.*

Ruskin Lectures Here On the 10th and 13th - on our exhibition. It will be worth hearing.(GL 360)

And on Sept 28th:

*'... Meta really did get up this morning to a seven o'clock breakfast, and went, before I was down, to the exhibition to try and make a water-colour sketch of the Murillo study - a woman drinking, for Lady Hatherton . . . There comes a ring - there comes a caller! - Our house has been fuller than full, day and night since you left, and this last fortnight it will be fuller than ever, as everyone will want to see the Exhibition before it closes. I am very fond of all the people who are coming; but so worn out that it is hard work to lash myself up into properly hospitable feelings.'*

*Marianne said yesterday 'Oh! Are you not tired of being agreeable! I do so want leisure to sulk and be silent in; and really after long hard hot days at the Exhibition showing the same great pictures (GL 374)*

Their visitors had included publisher George Smith, M. and Mme. Mohl, Florence Nightingale and her sister, Ellen Nussey and Eliza Fox whom Elizabeth told, on 26 August, that she had nineteen people still due to come to Plymouth Grove.

## *Mary Barton as a school prize*

Anthony Coles, who was our guide to Rome, sent us this from *The Tablet* archive 100 years ago. [The Tablet, 29 June 1907.]

The London County Council has been debating the question whether or not *Mary Barton* is a suitable prize book for school children. In spite of some spirited speeches in defence of Mrs Gaskell's well-known novel, it was eventually decided that it should be struck out of the list of prizes. The speakers who supported this decision were naturally anxious to make it clear that they did not condemn the story as a bad book. For a general censure of this kind would only serve to show their incompetence as moralists or literary critics. But it was justly argued that a book may be excellent in itself and yet treat topics that render it unsuitable for young readers.

It may be observed that this discussion is but a particular phase of the general question of the censorship of books - a subject which has given rise to a voluminous literature and has excited considerable prejudice against ecclesiastical authorities. But however little the modern world may like the censorship exercised by the Church, its underlying principle is tacitly admitted even in unlikely quarters. Only the other day we found an organ of the most liberal form of Nonconformity putting its readers on their guard against the subtle and insidious publication *An Alphabet of Saints*.

*The Tablet*, 29 June 1907.

## *Report from Plymouth Grove*

**Ann O'Brien**

There is an air of optimism at Plymouth Grove these days, as we have learned that in less than 12 months time work will begin on making the building 'safe and sound'. This will be achieved by underpinning the walls at one corner, replacing what Elizabeth Gaskell called 'the pestilential drains', putting on a new roof and doing other essential work. This is, of course, dependent upon having the necessary funds in place. The total cost of all this work will be approximately £650,000. Of this £280,000 is already available, and funding applications for a further £200,000 have been sent off. This means we still have to find another £170,000, so you see we need all the help we can get! Your support in our fund-raising activities at the house

is a vital part of this. Of course if anyone has any other ideas for generating further income or knows of any other sources where we might obtain further funding, do please feel free to contact Janet, Elizabeth or Joan.

So far this year we have had a very successful series of fund-raising events at the house. In March there was a talk on Meta Gaskell, the second of the Gaskell daughters and the last remaining Gaskell to live in the house. She and her younger sister Julia went on to become much loved and respected members of Manchester society. The talk was followed by a delicious Italian buffet provided by the Friends.

This was followed in April by the 'Crimea Day', when we had extremely interesting talks by Alan Shelston on the effect that the war had on the life of the Gaskells, Major Robbins who spoke about various incidents in the war and Therese Meehan who gave us an insight into the little-known role of Irish nurses in the Crimea.

Both these events were over-subscribed (we are only allowed 60 people in the house at any one time, this includes speakers, helpers etc.); the lesson is therefore, do book early for any of our future events, if you want to be sure of a seat!!

The May Open Day included another highly successful Plant Sale when people were able to pick up pre-ordered plants and were also able to buy other plants brought in by members from their own gardens.

There were also a number of visits by private groups, among others, the Birmingham Victorian Society and a Unitarian Group; there are further group visits already booked in for this year but we are always pleased to welcome any other groups if you know of any who may be interested.

Finally I would like to mention our programme of events for the autumn: the Open Days will continue on the first Sunday of each month until December. On the first Sunday, September 2nd, and on the following Saturday 8th and Sunday 9th the Heritage Open Days, there will be a poster presentation, 'Artistic Links - An Artistic Trail', when Pat Barnard will be on hand to explain and discuss any points that may be raised.

We have another of our popular Plant Sales on our October Open Day (7th). Wallflowers, pansies and cyclamen may be ordered in advance for collection on the day. All are good quality plants at reasonable prices. For further details and orders, phone Hilda Holmes on 0161 487 2593. Other plants which members bring in from their own gardens will also be on sale. Contributions of plants always welcome!

On Saturday 20th October there will be a talk by Professor John Pickstone from the University of Manchester, entitled 'Manchester Medicine and Science in the time of the Gaskells'. The talk will not presume any knowledge of science or history - 'it will gently explore a world which was newly constructed, and to which Manchester was

then crucial'. This will be followed by afternoon tea (cost £7.50, pay on the door but please book in advance - phone Hilda Holmes, as above). Talk at 2.30pm, doors open 2pm.

To celebrate the diversity of life in Manchester we are making Sunday 4th November an International Open Day (12 - 4pm). We hope to have some international dishes to sample as well as our usual delicious refreshments, our new exhibitions and ever-popular book shop. If you haven't been before, do come and see us. Gaskell Society members are always especially welcome!

Then in December we have another Christmas entertainment - 'A Christmas Miscellany', with Delia Corrie and Charles Foster, and carol singing. This will be followed by a glass of mulled wine and mince pies (cost: £7.50, pay on the door, but please book in advance - phone Hilda Holmes on 0161 487 2593). Doors open 12pm, entertainment begins at 3pm.

To conclude, as you see, we have a wide range of events and we are always grateful for your support. Many thanks to those who have come to our previous events, we look forward to seeing you at Plymouth Grove again; and to those who haven't been before, you will find a warm welcome there when you do come.

## *The 2007 AGM of The Alliance of Literary Societies*

**Janet Kennerley**

The AGM of the ALS was held in Oxford on 19th May 2007 at St Hilda's College, Cowley Place. There were approximately 45 people attending, including two other members from the Gaskell Society. Quite a large proportion of societies in membership of The ALS were represented. My travelling companion, Lynda Stephens, was also wearing her 'Arnold Bennett Society' hat! (It may be worth reminding Gaskell members that anyone in membership of a society which subscribes to the ALS is entitled to attend this annual event, usually held in May.)

The host this year was The Tolkien Society and the weekend's events were ably co-ordinated by Trevor Reynolds.

The "Vernon Harcourt Room" was well signed as our meeting venue from St Hilda's main gate and a welcome cup of coffee awaited our arrival. The President of the ALS, Aeronwy Thomas, daughter of Dylan Thomas, was also enjoying the weekend with us and chatted to delegates prior to the start of the AGM at 11 am.

The main part of the meeting was taken up with several new appointments. The Chairman for the past 3 years, Nicholas Reed, handed over to Linda Curry, and

Rosemary Cullen stepped down after many years as ALS Secretary but she is willing to continue running the website. Julie Shorland stays on as Treasurer. There are some new members on the ALS Committee, including myself, replacing Joan Leach who has served The Gaskell Society for many years in this role. A hard act to follow!

It was pointed out that ALS Committee Meetings are held twice yearly in the Birmingham area which has proved central for those attending and also less expensive than London. Costs seem to be rising constantly, but it was suggested that the subscription rates are very modest and could be raised slightly from April 2008.

The Richard Jefferies Society will host the 2008 AGM weekend, provisional dates being 17/18th May in the Swindon area.

Looking ahead, it has been suggested that the 2009 AGM will be held in Dublin, possibly during June of that year. The Gaskell Society has already offered to host the 2010 ALS Weekend, this being the bicentenary year of Elizabeth Gaskell's birth.

There was much discussion about the new style Journal of the Alliance of Literary Societies to replace the Newsletter, entitled 'ALSo ....'. Volume 1, 2007, has as its theme 'Censorship and Copyright', edited by Linda Curry and R. Healey. Joan Leach and I both have copies for reference. Further copies may be purchased via the ALS at £7 each. However, it is also available for member societies in electronic format from the ALS website :-[www.allitsoc.org.uk](http://www.allitsoc.org.uk) (notice the triple 'L')

There was a plea for contributions for the 2008 edition of 'ALSo .....' when the theme will be 'Literary Tourism', e.g. acquiring and maintaining a literary heritage site, what to do with a heritage site and how a society has promoted its author. Plymouth Grove may feature in this.

Comments or suggestions may be sent to [l.j.curry@bhamac.uk](mailto:l.j.curry@bhamac.uk)

Once the AGM business was complete, we had two interesting talks. David Doughan spoke about 'Women, Tolkien and Oxford', followed by Mrs Pat Reynolds who was an expert on the 'Publishing History of *The Lord of the Rings*'.

We dispersed to find our own lunch before meeting up again for a leisurely walking tour of Tolkien's Oxford (plus others), enjoying the somewhat unexpectedly beautiful weather.

Dinner was attended by about 24 members at Rewley House, at the Department for Continuing Education in Wellington Square. This concluded with an impromptu poetry and singing session in the lovely inner courtyard - our two friends from Dublin, Desmond and Michael, and Aeronwy's husband, Trevor, showing their expertise in these skills. This was a delightful conclusion to a busy day.

The next day we were invited to visit 'The Oxford Story' in Broad Street where we experienced a "journey" through 900 years of Oxford University's history.

A memorable weekend - do consider attending the ALS event in May 2008!



ALS members at Oxford

## *The BBC and Cranford*

We are looking forward to the BBC's presentation of *Cranford*, to be shown in November. Script-writer Heidi Thomas, who will give a talk at Knutsford Literary Festival on 14 October, explains her involvement:

I was commissioned to write the scripts for *Cranford* in August 2002! Sue Birtwistle, the producer, approached me with her idea to create an entirely original drama based on three novellas by Elizabeth Gaskell - *Cranford*, *'My Lady Ludlow'*, and *'Mr Harrison's Confessions'*. I was familiar with only the first of these three works, but fell completely for the world of Knutsford as depicted there. I am fond of that period of history in any case, but my interest was increased by the fact that (having grown up in Liverpool) I settled after my marriage in the small market town of Saffron Walden, in Essex. I saw many parallels between the two towns and it helped make *'Cranford'* feel very real and vivid.

The series was originally to be 6 one-hour episodes in length, and it took a full 18 months of work to get the scripts to the point where they were ready to be filmed. Shooting was due to take place in the spring of 2005, but at that time the BBC did not have the financial resources to make such a large scale production, and even though we reduced the number of episodes from 6 to 5, we had to wait a while before appropriate funds and casting were in place.

## Book Notes Christine Lingard

Two reprints of *My Lady Ludlow* have been issued in the last year, though copies already seem to be in short supply according to Amazon, the Internet bookseller. Dodo Press at £7.99 and Echo Press at £5.99. These should be particularly welcome as the book will be included in the projected BBC serial *Cranford Chronicles*.

*Round of stories by the Christmas fire*, edited by Charles Dickens. Hesperus Press, £6.99, due November.

A reprint of the original Christmas number of *Household Words* in which Gaskell's ghost story *The Old Nurse's Story* was first published. This modern edition is edited by Melissa Klimasewski.

*Masculinity and the English Working Class: Studies in Victorian Autobiography and Fiction*, by Ying Lee. (Criticism and Cultural Theory Series). Routledge, £60, due July 2007. A treatment of masculine characters in autobiography and in the fiction of Dickens, Gaskell and Kingsley.

*A Brontë Encyclopedia* by Robert Barnard and Louise Barnard. Blackwell, £55, due July 2007. An A-Z review of people, characters, topics and places in the Brontë story, by a former chairman of the Brontë Society, who is also a member of the Gaskell Society. Over 2,000 entries include literary judgements and treatment of the unfinished works and juvenilia.

*Servants and Paternalism in the Works of Maria Edgeworth and Elizabeth Gaskell*, by Julie Nash of University of Massachusetts at Lowell. Ashgate Press, £45, due November, 2007.

Offers a new reading of *Castle Rackrent*, *North and South* and *Cranford* by studying characters who were at the same time expected to be invisible but were privy to the intimate secrets of their employers. The author was a speaker at the 2005 Gaskell Society Conference in Manchester.

## *North West Branch*

Meetings at Cross Street Chapel, Manchester are held on the second Tuesday in the month at 1.00pm. Members may meet at the chapel from 12.15 for a sandwich lunch, (bring your own or buy from Pret-a-manger next door to the Chapel). Meetings cost £2 for members, £3 for non-members.

**Tuesday, 9 October:** 'The Domestic Interior in the Victorian novel', by Dr Jane Hamlett, whose book *Material Relations: middle-class domestic interiors and the family in England, 1850-1910*, will be published by Manchester University Press in 2009.

**Tuesday, 13 November:** 'The Growth of Manchester's Victorian Suburbs' by Professor Alan Kidd of the Manchester Centre for Regional Studies at MMU.



**Tuesday, 11 December:** Christmas Carol Service.

**Tuesday, 12 February 2008:** 'Parks for the People: Municipal Parks in Manchester 1890-1912' by Carole O'Reilly, Senior Lecturer in Media and Culture Studies at Salford University.

**Tuesday, 11 March 2008:** 'Reporting Manchester in 1848: Perspectives on Cottonopolis' by Terry Wyke Lecturer in Economic and Social History at MMU, author of *Public Statues in Greater Manchester*.

**Knutsford meetings are held at St John's Church hall**, on the last Wednesdays in the month. Buffet lunch is from 12.15pm. Cost £7.50.

The course book for the next season is *Cranford and other Stories*, Wordsworth p/b edition.

**October 31:** Joan Leach on the Knutsford background to *Cranford*, *Mr Harrison's Confessions* and *My Lady Ludlow* (to be combined in the BBC series)

**November 28:** Elizabeth Williams on the TV *Cranford* and *Mr Harrison's Confessions*

**January 30:** TV *Cranford* and *My Lady Ludlow*

**February 27:** 'The Doom of the Griffiths'

**March 26:** 'Lois the Witch'

**April 30:** 'Lois the Witch' and 'Curious if True'.

## *London and South East Branch*

**Saturday November 10th 2007:** Dudley Green, 'Always...at my post'. The letters of Patrick Brontë.

Dudley Green has been an active Gaskell Society Committee member and member of the Brontë Society, and recently has edited Patrick Brontë's letters. (Published 2005). He will talk about the letters with particular reference to the relationship between Patrick Brontë and Gaskell over *The Life of Charlotte Brontë*.

**Saturday February 9th 2008:** Dr Patsy Stoneman, 'Wives and Daughters from page to screen: what does it mean to "adapt" a novel?'

The session will involve a close reading of specific passages.

Patsy Stoneman is an Emeritus Reader in English Literature at the University of Hull. The second edition of her excellent critical volume of Gaskell has just been published. She has made an extensive study of the translation of the Brontë works into other media so she is well qualified to look at Gaskell in this way too.

**Saturday May 10th 2008:** Dr Graham Handley, 'Mrs Gaskell and *Scenes of Clerical Life*'.

Graham will talk on George Eliot's *Scenes of Clerical Life*, the warm response of Mrs Gaskell to them, and then go on to consider Gaskell's scenes of clerical life in her own fiction both before and after George Eliot's were published.

Perhaps we should read George Eliot's novel before this meeting!

Dr Fran Twinn, 85 Calton Avenue, Dulwich, London SE21 7DF  
Tel: 020 8693 3238 Email: [frantwinn@aflex.net](mailto:frantwinn@aflex.net)

## *South-West Branch*

**Saturday, November 4th**, at 2 for 2.30 p.m, Bath Royal Literary and Scientific Institution, 16-18 Queen Square, Bath:

Dr and Mrs Boyd Schlenther will be talking about Mrs. Gaskell's American connections, including the importance of Unitarianism in the 19th century.

Mrs Rosemary Marshall, 138 Fairfield Park Road, Bath BA1 6JT; tel: 01225 426732  
Email: [rosemary-marshall@yahoo.com](mailto:rosemary-marshall@yahoo.com).

## *Yorkshire Branch*

**Saturday 27th October:** 'Regionalism in the novels of Mrs Gaskell and Sir James Kay-Shuttleworth' by Heather Sharps

At the Friends Meeting House, Friargate, York

Meetings will commence at 2 p.m. The room will be available from 1.00 pm for those who wish to bring a picnic lunch. To cover expenses a contribution of £3 is requested from members of The Gaskell Society and £4 from non-members.

Enquiries to: Dudley J. Barlow, 6 Kenlay Close, New Earswick, York YO32 4DW  
Tel: 01904 750366 Email: [dudleybarlow@hotmail.co.uk](mailto:dudleybarlow@hotmail.co.uk)

**Visit to the John Rylands Library, Wednesday, 9th January 2008**

Members are invited for a guided tour of the newly redeveloped and extended building with information about its history, the architecture, the redevelopment project etc, and a 'close-up session' - essentially a chance to see and discuss some Gaskell-related items from the collections. The tour lasts an hour and a half. Numbers are limited to 20 but we plan to have one tour at 10.30 and a second about 2.15pm, having lunch for both groups at 12.15pm in the new restaurant. The cost will be £14.50.

Make a note in your diary for 2008 AGM at Cross Street on April 5th.

# The Gaskell Society



*Knutsford, Cheshire  
Looking up King Street from the foot of Adams Hill*

*R.D. White del. 1846*

*Knutsford, Cheshire  
Looking up King Street from the foot of Adams Hill*

## NEWSLETTER

Spring 2008 - Number 45

THE GASKELL SOCIETY HOME PAGE has all the latest information on meetings.  
<http://gaskellsociety.co.uk>

If you have any material or suggestions for future Newsletters, please contact Mrs. Joan Leach,  
Far Yew Tree House, Chester Road, Tabley, Knutsford, Cheshire WA16 0HN.  
Telephone - 01565 634668 E-mail: [joanleach@aol.com](mailto:joanleach@aol.com)

**Hon Treasurer:** Brian Williams, 15 Cawley Avenue, Culcheth, Warrington, Cheshire WA3 4DF

**Membership Secretary:** Miss C. Lingard, 5 Moran Crescent, Macclesfield SK11 8JJ

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## *Editor's Letter*

**Joan Leach**

The last few months have kept Gaskell workers busy following the popularity of BBC's Cranford. Our home page was almost overwhelmed with 'visitors'. Do make sure you have the correct address: [www.gaskellsociety.co.uk](http://www.gaskellsociety.co.uk) so that you can use it to check news, dates and events. Plymouth Grove events were overbooked but helpers coped brilliantly and raised money for funds as Ann O'Brien tells us in her report. Further events are planned.

Groups of visitors are also booking to visit Knutsford as the Cranford original. Some Knutsfordians were disappointed that the town was not used for filming but it would have been logistically impossible. The general opinion of the TV series was that it made good TV, with a brilliant cast, but left those of us who know the works so well, with reservations...My Lady Ludlow was the least known work of the three incorporated, and not easily obtainable until recently. When you read it you will see how little of the story was used. Gaskell's portrayal of the lively, busy-body Miss Galindo, for example, was denied her humourous character on TV. We offer you a few opinions of the series. I noticed the BBC paperback reached second on the best seller' list.

Some members enjoyed a trip to North Wales in September tracing Gaskell links and our forthcoming trip to Scotland in July is almost fully booked.

Looking further ahead we have booked our next conference for 17-19 July 2009 at Penrith, The University of Cumbria. It has a compact campus, en-suite accommodation, friendly, and helpful staff, together with reasonable costs. Its situation offers us many options.

September 29<sup>th</sup>, 2010 will be the bicentenary of Elizabeth Gaskell's birth. Plans are already in hand in Japan to mark the event and we will be hosting the Alliance of Literary Societies AGM together with other celebratory events.

You will see from the reports that our groups enjoy their meetings and events. Please study the calendar.

The 300 year old Brook Street Chapel, Knutsford, so well loved by Elizabeth Gaskell, has plans to improve access, to preserve their historic site and provide better visitor facilities. Our Society helps to maintain the Gaskell grave there and the mulberry tree we planted from a scion in Shakespeare's garden at Stratford-upon-Avon, where Elizabeth went to school, is flourishing.

# Mary Holland and Anne Marsh Caldwell

John Chapple

The family history website of J. J. Heath-Caldwell ([www.jjhc.info](http://www.jjhc.info)) contains a wealth of information about his ancestors, especially the novelist Anne Marsh-Caldwell. Elizabeth Gaskell certainly knew her work, for she listed Anne's name in a letter of mid-March 1853 to Louis Hachette immediately after the names of the Brontë sisters:

Mrs Marsh     Eastbury     Harrow near London

This lady has written about thirty novels, one or two of which are very good, three or four tolerable, and the rest forgotten as soon as read. She writes for money and writes far too quickly. Her first novel was published among [missing text... anonymously] about 20 years ago, and is very fine and dramatic. It is called 'The two Old Men's tales'. 2 vols Seven or eight years afterwards she wrote 'Emilia Windham'.

The tone might seem a little cool, but this is a long, summary letter and Gaskell had promised Hachette that she would be very frank, even about the novels of writers whom she knew personally, trusting to his complete discretion.

Anne Marsh, née Caldwell (1791-1874) was actually a relation of Elizabeth Gaskell through her cousin Dr Henry Holland's marriage to Anne's sister, Margaret Emma Caldwell (1792-1830). Anne's husband, formerly a rich banker, had been ruined in 1824. They moved to Boulogne and Anne later began writing to help support their family. Eight children were born between 1818 and 1828, one dying as an infant in 1824. Her work was popular and much admired by the Wedgwoods. (In later life she estimated that she had gained some £5000 by her novels.) On the death of her father in 1841 Anne inherited enough money to purchase the estate of Eastbury Park in Hertfordshire, but her only son died tragically in 1846 at the age of twenty. Not long after this, in 1849, her husband died and she was left with no less than six surviving daughters to support. However, on the death of Anne's brother in 1860 she inherited the family estate of Linley Wood and changed her name to Marsh-Caldwell.

Mr Heath-Caldwell has been generous enough to send me a disk of Anne Marsh-Caldwell's photograph albums. Amongst a great number of photos there are a few usefully labelled 'Miss Holland Knutsford 1863', 'Mr Holland', 'Rev. F.J. Holland 1865', 'Honble Mrs G. Holland 1869', 'Arthur Holland 1869' and 'Arthur Holland RN 1871'. The photo of Mr Holland is of a drawing or engraving, possibly of Peter Holland (1766-1855) of Knutsford, similar but not identical to the well known portrait reproduced in *Elizabeth Gaskell: The Later Years* (Manchester U.P., 1997). Exact identification of the other photos may be sought through close family connections.

Anne Marsh's sister, known as Emma, had married Elizabeth Gaskell's first cousin, Dr Henry Holland (1788-1873), son of Peter, in Audley Church on 8 October 1822. Henry and Emma had four children, Henry Thurstan (1825-1914), who was to become Viscount Knutsford, Elinor (1826-1829), Francis James (1828-1907), later a canon of Canterbury Cathedral, and Emily (1824-1908). Sadly, little Elinor died in August 1829, and was soon followed by their mother, on 2 February 1830. Emma's other sisters had all died young, apart from Mrs Anne Marsh and Mrs Hannah Eliza Roscoe (1785-1854).

There is a good deal of evidence to show that Henry Holland was close to his sister Mary (1792-1877), especially through the part she played both during Emma's final illness and after her death. The unexpected discovery of a letter from Mary Holland to Mrs Mary Robberds in Manchester evokes the pathos of a dying mother and the three little children. Dated 10 September [1829], it was sent from The Priory [Roehampton].

As far as localities go, I have certainly led an odd life this year; and seem likely enough to go on doing so - last Sunday but one I slept at Hampstead, Monday in Brook St, Friday at Margate, Saturday in London again, and Sunday at this place. Here we are & remain till the 29<sup>th</sup>, and then to seek out another country residence... I was very unhappy, from my anxiety about Emma, who was very unwell with a spasmodic attack during Henry's absence in Ireland.... Emma has been better the last week both in health and spirits; our trip to Margate, which was made by steam, certainly did her much good, was very agreeable indeed. Our party consisted of H & E, Mr & Mrs Marsh & Moi. ...Emma looked very much better for the fine air we breathed for so many hours, & her spirits are much more generally comfortable & composed. Henry has again left us, having set out on Tuesday last for a second excursion, to Bretagne & La Vendée. His former one (to Connemara) did him a great deal of good, and gave him much amusement and pleasure...

Emma and I like being here very much, we are perfectly quiet, but we have plenty of books, & the children. More especially my darling Franky. Then in this showery weather it is a great thing to have a nice garden & grounds to turn into when there is a dry, or sunny gleam: & to conclude, anything is better, to me at least, than being in London...

Somehow or other it does not seem to me that I am writing copper plate: this is owing partly to my being very much tired, & partly to my being very sleepy...

(MS, Manchester College, Oxford)

Brook Street of course was Henry Holland's London residence, whilst The Priory, Roehampton, was the even more splendid villa that had been purchased by Henry's late uncle Swinton Colthurst Holland in 1819, and in early 1828 willed to his son Edward Holland (1806-1875) of Dumbleton. After Emma's death Mary Holland actually took over the care of Henry's family until his second marriage to Saba Smith in early 1834.

We know from a Maria Edgeworth letter of December 1830 that the children were happy. 'Mrs Marsh' is almost certainly the novelist Anne Marsh (née Caldwell), Emma's sister. Mary Holland's nephew, 'darling Franky', is of course Francis James, destined to become a famous London clergyman. He married Mary Sibylla Lyall, to whom we owe the wonderful descriptions of aunts Mary and Lucy Holland in their old age, quoted by A. W. Ward in his introduction to the Knutsford Edition of *Cranford*.

Mr Heath-Caldwell has been kind enough to send me a disk of Anne Marsh Caldwell's photograph albums. Amongst a great number of usefully labelled photos there are a few of particular interest: 'Miss Holland Knutsford 1863', 'Mr Holland', 'Rev. F. J. Holland 1865', 'Honble Mrs G. Holland 1869', 'Arthur Holland 1869' and 'Arthur Holland RN 1871'. The photo of Mr Holland is of a drawing or engraving, very likely of Peter Holland (1766-1855), surgeon of Knutsford, similar but not identical to the well known portrait reproduced in *Elizabeth Gaskell: the Early Years* (Manchester U. P. 1997). The 'Honble Mrs G. Holland 1869' was probably Charlotte Dorothy (c. 1818-1897), daughter of 1 Baron Gifford, who married George Henry Holland (1816-1891), son of Swinton Colthurst Holland. 'Arthur Holland RN 1871' has not yet been identified.

For us, 'Miss Holland Knutsford 1863', taken by R. Wingfield of Worcester in 1863, is of great interest. Could this lady in a splendid dress be the oldest Holland sister of a family at one time 'not intended for an ornamental or pleasure-taking race'? Some forty or more years before, travelling in the Lake District and later to Barmouth in Wales, Mary, Bessy and Lucy had joked about their appearance of shabby gentility in comparison with the fine ladies they met. But in the interval their father Peter had died, leaving Mary a great deal of money and property. Both elegant and inelegant economy were by 1863 well in the past.



Miss Holland, Knutsford 1863

## *The BBC and "Cranford"*

Malcolm Pittock

The BBC adaptation of *Cranford* was a disgrace: that is why I have used inverted commas in the title. I feared the worst when I discovered that "*Cranford*" was actually an adaptation of three quite different stories: *Cranford* itself, *My Lady Ludlow* and *Mr Harrison's Confessions*. Consequently I did not watch the first episode, but curiosity got the better of me and I saw the remaining four. My fears were confirmed. "*Cranford*" did a serious disservice to Elizabeth Gaskell, as the universally favourable reviews unwittingly demonstrated. The adapter took advantage of the fact that *Cranford* is little read today compared to the situation as it was some thirty or forty years ago, and *My Lady Ludlow* and *Mr Harrison's Confessions* are now read only by specialists and Gaskell enthusiasts. So the viewers had no means of knowing what parts were in some sort adaptations of

material found in *Cranford* and what were taken from the other two stories. And to make things worse the three stories have nothing to do with one another: *My Lady Ludlow* has no geographical or temporal relationship with the world of *Cranford*, being set in the late eighteenth century and early nineteenth century, and though the Duncombe of *Mr Harrison's Confessions* is yet another version of Knutsford and the elder Miss Tomkinson is a preliminary sketch for Deborah Jenkyns, the tale is a slight and inferior piece involving farcical misunderstandings of the sort that could never occur in *Cranford*. Only the death of Walter from croup strikes a discordant note. Moreover in *Mr Harrison's Confessions*, marriage is viewed as normal: in *Cranford*, by Miss Pole in particular, marriage is looked on as anti-social.

The adapter then had to keep three distinct story lines going and contrive to make connections between them. But this involved further distortion. To make the connection between *Mr Harrison's Confessions* and *Cranford*, Mary Smith had to become short-sighted so that she could be prescribed spectacles by Jack Marsland, Mr Harrison's friend; and the two Miss Tomkinsons become involved in the plans of Miss Matty's friends to rescue her financially. Similarly Miss Pole and Mrs Forrester are at hand to dye Mrs Rose's hair (though this incident is entirely made up on the basis of a mere hint in *Mr Harrison's Confessions*). The connections made between *Cranford* and *My Lady Ludlow* were even more strained and required even more invented material by the adapter. Thus Lady Ludlow gives garden parties to which everyone from *Cranford* comes (in the novella she merely puts on a meal for her tenants). Further, though Mr Horner the steward does die (even his name was altered by the adapter) he does not die as the result of being mortally wounded in the company of Captain Brown by a blasting explosion involved with the building of a railway, so that even Mr Harrison's surgical skill cannot save him. There is of course no reference to the building of any railway in any of the three stories (and thus no necessity to try to get Lady Ludlow to sell any part of her land to the railway company.) A railway through Cranford has already been built at the commencement of Elizabeth Gaskell's story, for it is a train that kills Captain Brown. But in this adaptation Captain Brown survives and is actually employed by the non-existent railway company. Similarly in true romantic style, Jessie Brown does not get married early on to Major Gordon and have a daughter named Flora, but has to wait until the last episode for such a marriage to be in prospect. But then while in "*Cranford*" Major Gordon comes to claim Jessie when he learns of Captain Brown's death, in "*Cranford*", since Captain Brown does not die, Major Gordon is made to break with Jessie not once but twice.

I've picked out only some of the major distortions involved, but minor distortions were continuous. Thus in "*Cranford*" when Miss Matty meets Holbrook again after so many years, he is still romantically interested in her and proposes marriage, but in *Cranford* Holbrook, whatever he felt in the past, now feels only friendship towards

Miss Matty: Miss Matty's enduring love is one-sided. Similarly interesting and significant episodes (such as those involving Signor and Signora Brunoni, aka Mr and Mrs Brown) were dropped to make way for material interpolated from elsewhere. "*Cranford*" was trite and sentimental and the last episode reminded me of the ending of a Hollywood film of yesteryear. *Cranford* is, however, not sentimental at all and Elizabeth Gaskell makes much of the Cranford ladies' unattractive traits: their ignorance and snobbery. In "*Cranford*" the Honourable Mrs Jamieson was not 'fat and inert', let alone 'dull, pompous and tiresome', as Elizabeth Gaskell describes her. It is perhaps significant that of the three stories, *Mr Harrison's Confessions* was the fiction which suffered the least distortion in adaptation. But then it was the story which was the least worth adapting.

The BBC has made decent recent adaptations of *Wives and Daughters* and *North and South*, as well as *Jane Eyre* and *Bleak House*. But these works are too widely read to make the distortions which marred "*Cranford*" acceptable. But I have noticed before that when a work is no longer familiar, like Sheridan Le Fanu's *Wyvern Mystery* or *Lady Audley's Secret*, TV adapters feel free to distort the text as much as they please (Lady Audley, I seem to remember, emerged as some kind of feminist heroine). Even the role of Marion Halcombe was distorted in an adaptation of *The Woman in White* some years ago - though one would have thought that the novel was well enough known to protect it against such freedoms.

Let us hope that when *Sylvia's Lovers* is adapted, as surely it must be for it is Elizabeth Gaskell's most telegenic novel, the BBC or whoever makes a much better job of it than was made of *Cranford*.

**Editor:** Although the BBC's *North and South* was more faithful to the text there were some infidelities. It was completely out of character for Mr Thornton to strike one off his mill hands, and kissing on a railway station and appearing in shirt sleeves were not consistent with Victorian life-style.

With regard to the railway, in *Cranford* it is described as '*in a neighbouring town and had been vehemently petitioned against by the little town*'. Knutsford did not have one until 1862 and it was not welcome even then.

**Elizabeth Williams** collected opinions from the Knutsford Group after "*Cranford*" was televised and below is a selection of (anonymous) comments:

'I was pleased that many people I knew who had never either heard of or read any Gaskell novels really enjoyed it and had withdrawal symptoms afterwards.'

'The adaptation of *Cranford* was not *Cranford* the book...Judi Dench's Miss Matty is not Elizabeth Gaskell's Miss Matty. However, taken on its own terms this television adaptation was a great success - a quality presentation with high standards of production, setting, costume etc, against which the manufactured drama was played with great sensitivity.'

'My main objection was that it was over-melodramatic. The number of people who have said. "Wasn't it sad?" I don't read *Cranford* for a good cry.'

'The visual aspect was the main concern...Is it possible to convey the nuances via a TV production?'

'This production was remarkable in that many men viewed it enthusiastically.'

'Better not to have read the three books first; just enjoy the TV production.'

'Main disappointment lay in the interior sets, which were pokey and inappropriately humble, or in the case of Lady Ludlow, over-grand.'

'Pity they lost the sixth instalment - we saw hardly anything of Peter.'

'Some of the acting caricatured the characters, especially Miss Pole.'

'Its mass popularity puts it almost beyond criticism. It should be good for getting Gaskell to a wider audience.'

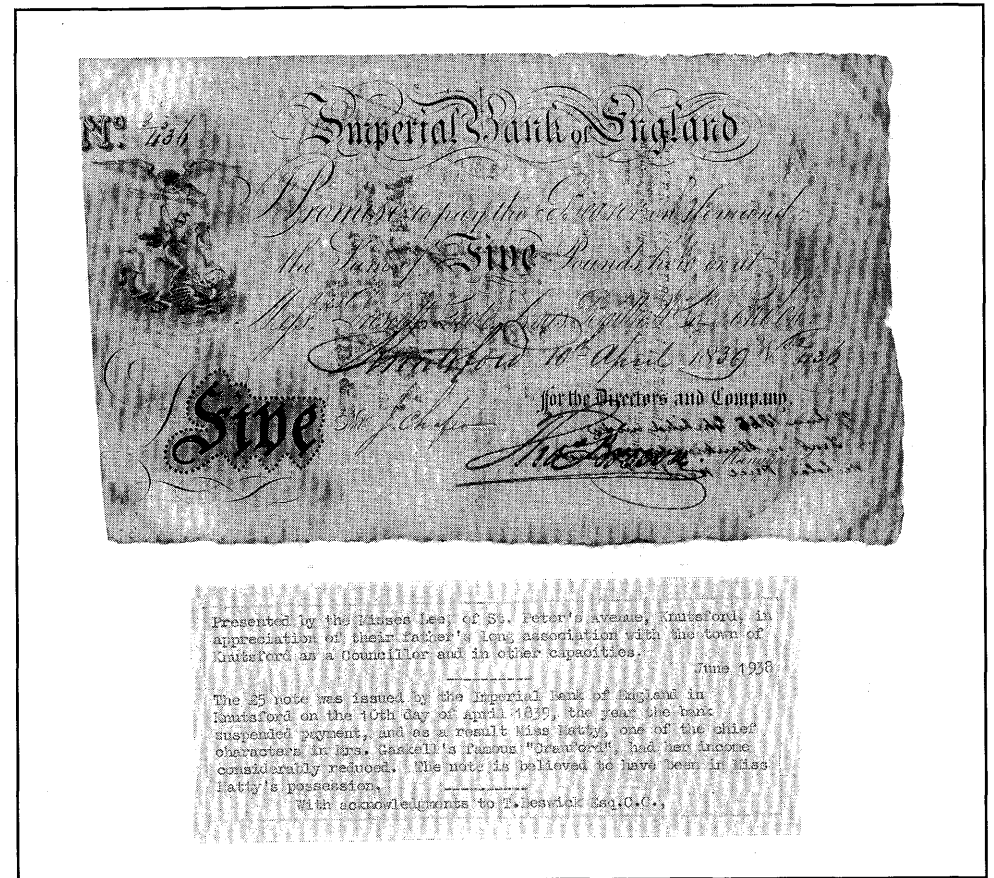
'Judi Dench was excellent as Miss Matty but close-ups revealed plucked eyebrows - not a period feature. The series had pace and variety.'

'My husband and daughter had not read the book and did not notice the joining of different stories.'

'Everyone was far too clean, not a speck of dust on their clothes.'

'*Cranford* and *Mr Harrison's Confessions* went reasonably well together, but *My Lady Ludlow*, set much earlier, seemed out of place.'

'One mustn't carp, for this adaptation brought pleasure to millions of people who knew nothing of Elizabeth Gaskell.'



For many years this bank note was on display in Knutsford Library

## Gaskell and Music

Christine Lingard

The year 2008 sees celebrations in Manchester to mark the 150<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the founding of the Hallé Orchestra, so this gives me the opportunity to discuss Elizabeth Gaskell's concert-going and musical tastes. References to song and music in her writing and letters are too numerous to mention. Her love of music dates back to her schooldays at Avonbank School, Warwickshire. Music and dancing were on the school's curriculum. Both a grand piano and a harp were available for the use of the pupils. Music manuscript books, mostly in her own hand,

dating from this period are preserved in the Manchester Central Library. The earliest is inscribed, June 15 1825, when she was 15 years old, and they continue into the early years of her marriage. They show a love of both the classics - Mozart, Beethoven, Rossini and Haydn are well represented - and traditional folk songs with a particular interest in Scottish and Tyrolean songs. Dance music is also very popular, and there is evidence of familiarity with the most up-to-date dance steps. There are also a few compositions of her own, which, in the opinion of John Chapple, are only moderately competent.

Manchester was a good place to continue her interest. There had been a concert hall there since 1801. Major music festivals were held in the town in 1828 and 1836, and Gaskell is definitely known to have attended the former, when the great Italian soprano, Angelica Catalani performed, alongside such local talent as Jacob Butterworth and Deborah Knyvette. Terry Wyke has pointed out references to these singers in *Mary Barton*, and the influence of the latter on the character of Margaret Jennings. The 1836 Festival was overshadowed by the death of the Spanish-born soprano, Mme Malibran, at the age of 28. Elizabeth was certainly familiar with her work. Her *Retour de la Tyrolienne* is included in the music manuscript books. Gaskell's kinswoman, Emma Wedgwood, future wife of Charles Darwin, attended these concerts and was greatly impressed by the singer. As Emma lived in Staffordshire, we can only speculate whether she stayed with the Gaskells on her visit.

Some of the leading composers of the day came to the city. Felix Mendelssohn played at a concert in 1847. His wife was a relation of one of the Gaskells' German friends, Charles Souchay of Withington Hall, and in August 1848 Frederic Chopin performed at the Concert Hall. He was invited to this country by one of his former pupils, Miss Jane Stirling, niece of the art collector, Sir William Stirling Maxwell, and spent much of his visit in Scotland. An invitation to come to Manchester was afforded by Herman Leo, a German calico printer. He stayed with the Gaskells' good friends, Salis and Julie Schwabe at Crumpsall House, though there is no record as to whether the Gaskells attended the concerts. Ironically both composers died within a short time of their visits to Manchester. Chopin was already very ill at the time and the concert was a great ordeal for him.

It was the Revolution of 1848 that had caused the exodus from France. Chopin had suffered greatly as a result. Herman Leo was also responsible for bringing another French-based musical exile to Manchester - the German-born pianist, Karl Halle, later to be known as Charles Hallé, whom he had heard play in Paris. The Hallé Orchestra itself, as Ann O'Brien shows in the previous issue of this *Newsletter*, evolved from a group of musicians that Hallé gathered to perform at the Manchester Art Treasures Exhibition of 1857. Dickens was very impressed by them.

Hallé enjoyed a great reputation as a performer on the pianoforte, as this review in *The Times* of May 4<sup>th</sup> 1854 testifies:

Another complete and well-deserved success was achieved by Mr Charles Hallé, whose performance of Beethoven's incomparable Concerto in E flat was an exhibition of piano playing of the highest class. M.Hallé's superb reading...and the profound sensation it created...

He was an extremely busy man and it is difficult to appreciate how much he crammed into his schedules - performance, practice and teaching - especially when you realise he had little knowledge of the English language when he first arrived. Many of his early notebooks are written in French.

He was attracted to Manchester by the lucrative income he could acquire from private pupils. There were many wealthy cultured businessmen in the city, with families eager for tuition. He was soon invited to take over conducting the concerts at the Gentleman's Concert Hall (on the site of the Midland Hotel in Peter Street) and consequently revitalised the musical life of the city, with a regular series of concerts. Notebooks, preserved in the Henry Watson Music Library (Manchester Central Library), record, in his own hand, that Mrs Gaskell had two subscriptions every season from 1852 to 1856 (when the records stop), which is confirmed by her letters.

Hallé was regularly accompanied at these events by the violinist, Alfredo Piatti and the cellist, Wilhelm Molique, two of the most distinguished musicians of the day, whose lives are well documented. A typical concert programme consisted of:

Hummel - Quintet in D minor Op 78

Beethoven - Piano sonata

Mozart - Quartet in G minor

Chopin - Nocturne

Mendelssohn - Caprice

Songs by Leopold Spohr and Mendelssohn

It was at a concert in 1850 that the German novelist, Fanny Lewald saw Gaskell and described her as:

a beautiful woman between 30 and 40 years old...Her appearance gives such an impression of ability and completeness, that the vigorous powers of perception and the unity of talent of such a woman are striking.

In 1862 a twenty-year-old composer, Arthur Sullivan, caused a sensation in London with his incidental music for Shakespeare's *Tempest*. In January 1863 he attended an equally successful performance in Manchester, with Hallé at the piano. He wrote:

We went to the - 'Gentlemen's Concert' in the evening: very classical and, ergo very slow - Hallé, Molique, Piatti. Reeves &c. Then I was taken to a ball and shown about like a stuffed gorilla! Mrs Leisler is the name of the hostess... I stood about the room in easy and graceful postures conscious of being gazed upon; walked languidly through the lancers, and then talked a good deal to Mrs

Gaskell the authoress, and at half-past 2 was in bed.

Gaskell came to know Hallé well enough to declare:

Thank you much for your autograph letter, I had no idea you could write - I thought you left that to baser clumsier fingers. [GL 610]

They engaged the services of one of his staff to tune the grand piano that dominated the drawing room of their home at Plymouth Grove.

She records in her letters that her daughter, Marianne, a skilful musician with a fine singing voice, received tuition from Hallé in 1852. (She had begun her music tuition under Emily Winkworth). This is a little puzzling. From the beginning of 1851 to 1854 (when she was twenty years old) she was a pupil at Mrs Lalor's school in Hampstead. It is not impossible that these lessons took place in London. Hallé, though he now had his own house in Greenheys, Manchester, maintained a home in Mansfield Street, London. The Henry Watson archive (which is not complete) includes a record of a Miss Gaskell of Plymouth Grove receiving eight lessons between November 1860 and January 1861, as did such friends as Harriet Schwabe, Miss Scott, Miss Greg of Lancaster and Miss Green of Knutsford. For this they each paid a guinea a lesson (£1 5p). This list also contains many distinguished London clients, such as Princess Mary of Cambridge, Lady Verney (sister of Florence Nightingale) and Miss Wedgwood of Cumberland Terrace (could this be Snow Wedgwood?).

While in London Marianne also received tuition from another future knight, the composer, William Sterndale Bennett, but this was probably in singing. She had apparently found her previous teacher, Signor Pergetti, difficult. Her mother is constantly encouraging her to practice Beethoven and Bach: 'practising ill and carelessly only confirms you in bad habits' [GL 90].

Marianne, whose attraction to Archbishop Manning and the Catholic faith was to cause her parents so much concern in 1861, had shown an interest in High Church music for many years: 'Marianne is practising gorgeous Litanies to the Virgin with Mrs Froude' [GL 55] in 1850, and 'I wish you could here MA sing. It is something really fine; only at present she sings little but Italian and Latin Mass music' [GL 90].

The Schwabes' Crumpsall home was a very musical household. Haydn's pupil, the now elderly, Chevalier Sigismund Neukomm, a composer in his own right, was almost a permanent houseguest. Another artiste Mrs Gaskell met, in consequence, was the Swedish soprano, Jenny Lind, whose husband and accompanist, Otto Goldschmidt, was the son of Mrs Schwabe's cousin. In 1847 and twice in 1848 she performed at sell-out concerts in aid of the Manchester Infirmary (tickets costing a guinea each much to Gaskell's horror). She was a houseguest of the Schwabes at Christmas and, despite a stipulation that there be no music, entertained her fellow

guests around the Christmas tree (still a novel innovation in Britain). Later she visited their home on Anglesey, and was moved to song by the beauty of the scenery. Goldschmidt was also a good friend of the Winkworths and provided musical settings for their book of hymns, *Lyra Germanica*, in collaboration with Marianne's former teacher, Sterndale Bennett. Gaskell heard them perform *Elijah* at the Exeter Hall in 1862:

& meanwhile we almost alone in the waiting room, fell head and ears in love with Mr Otto Goldschmidt, who was waiting for his wife to change her dress: so pleasantly, & goodly, and gentlemanly. [GL, 509b]

A love of music was inherited by all the daughters. Meta, the second daughter, was equally as accomplished as her older sister and there are numerous references to her love of music in her mother's letters. Years later, when still living at Plymouth Grove with her sister Julia, she numbered Elgar amongst the callers, (letters from Meta are preserved at the Elgar Birthplace Museum, Lower Broadheath, near Worcester). They also continued their friendship with Hallé.

It is hoped much of the music that the Gaskells enjoyed will be included in a concert at Alderley Edge, Methodist Church on 26<sup>th</sup> April 2008 in aid of the Plymouth Grove Restoration Appeal.

#### Further Reading

*Letters of Elizabeth Gaskell*, edited by J.A.V. Chapple and Arthur Pollard, Manchester University Press, 1966. [GL]

Brookshaw, S. *Concerning Chopin in Manchester*. Privately printed Manchester, 1951. Chapple, J.A.V. *Elizabeth Gaskell – the early years*. Manchester University Press, 1997. Chapple, J.A.V. 'Elizabeth Gaskell's first music book', Gaskell Society Newsletter, no. 25, March 1998, pp.8-12.

O'Brien, A. 'The Manchester Art Treasures Exhibition', Gaskell Society Newsletter, no. 44 Autumn, 2007, pp. 10-13.

Rigby, C. *Sir Charles Hallé; a portrait for today*. Manchester: Dolphin Press, 1952. Skrine, P. 'Fanny Lewald and Mrs Gaskell', Gaskell Society Journal, no. 4 1900, pp.52-6.

Wyke, T. 'The culture of self improvement: real people in Mary Barton', Gaskell Society Journal, no.13, 1999, pp.85-103.

## *The Green Letters*

**Joan Leach**

Henry Green was the minister of Brook Street Chapel, Knutsford, from 1827 to 1872. Like William Gaskell, he had trained at Glasgow University and the two families were close friends. Descendants of the Green family have kept letters from these days; thirteen from Elizabeth Gaskell to Mrs Mary Green have been printed in



Further Letters of Mrs Gaskell and there are several more discovered lately. The family collection has letters between members of the Green family and also some from Julia and Florence. The Green daughters ran a small school in Knutsford that Florence attended and possibly Julia, too.

Son, Philip Green, caused anguish to his parents by becoming Roman Catholic; this was a problem narrowly averted later by the Gaskell family when Marianne wished to do the same after being influenced by Cardinal Manning while on a visit to Rome. Philip followed a successful career as a judge in India so many of the letters were to and from him.

Isabella Green wrote to her brother Philip, 3<sup>rd</sup> December 1865, just after Elizabeth's Gaskell's sudden death.

Mother and Ellen went on Monday to see the Gaskells. They saw Marianne & Julia who seemed pretty well & to like talking of their dear Mother. They say her death was caused by the breaking of the medulla oblongata which is the upper part of the spinal chord and it becomes very brittle in people who have gout, as you know, she had several times. Meta is very well but she will be the one to feel the loss most I think, she and Mrs Gaskell were so constantly together. Florence came to Manchester with them but went back last week, she is very much upset. She had felt Mr Justice Crompton's death [October 30, 1865; her father-in-law] very much indeed and had not in the least got over that when this greater sorrow came. They had not intended to go to live at Alton now as Mr Gaskell could not leave Manchester for two or three years but they were getting it ready & it was to be let. Mrs Gaskell said to Julia "I don't expect ever to come & live here, but it will be ready for all of you" and early this year she said to Mrs Deane that she did not expect to live thro' the year. But then people often have presentiments like this, which are forgotten when they don't come true. \*

Although moving into the house must have tired Elizabeth she was heard to say that she had never felt better, so her death came as a great shock. William liked the house and at first thought of living there; and though they never did, the house at Alton was still in the family's possession in 1913 and mentioned in Meta's will.

In a letter to his mother, dated March 11<sup>th</sup> 1856, Philip discusses the great acclamation Florence Nightingale received on her return from the Crimea, while the dedicated work of the Catholic Sisters of Mercy had been less widely acknowledged. Mary Stanley, of the Alderley family in Cheshire, who accompanied a group to the Crimea, caused controversy and distress to her family, including her brother Dean Arthur Stanley, by being accepted into the Roman Catholic Church. This was widely discussed in Cheshire.

\*Acknowledgements to Miss Jean Jamison for permission to quote this letter.

# A Transatlantic Friendship: Elizabeth Gaskell and Charlies Eliot Norton

Elizabeth Schlenther with Boyd Schlenther

Elizabeth Schlenther's talk about this book was given in November 2007 at the Bath Royal Literary and Scientific Institution to a very appreciative audience. It covers a wide range of topics from the difference between abolitionists and anti-slavery supporters in America to the attack on the Trent which nearly brought the U.S.A. into armed conflict with Great Britain. Elizabeth Gaskell's many American friends included the artistic Wetmore Storys who looked after her in Rome and Charles Adams, the American Ambassador, and his wife Abigail, and she refers to them frequently in her letters.

It has been published by Peter and Celia Skrine as *The Gaskell Society South-West Occasional Paper No 4*. It can be obtained by sending £2 with an A5 sae (24p 2<sup>nd</sup> class) to Prof. Peter Skrine, Birchwood House, Kempe's Close, Long Ashton BS41 9ER. The booklet will also be available at S-W meetings.

## Book Notes

Christine Lingard

The DVD of the television series of Cranford is due for release on 12.2.2008, recommended price £19.00 from BBC, but shop around, there are special offers. Due on 17.3.2008 is a boxed set of the *Elizabeth Gaskell Collection with Wives and Daughters and North and South* (six discs in all) - recommended price £59.

BBC Bloomsbury have published a paper back with the three stories from the TV series and Penguin have a similar edition. There have been several reprints of other Gaskell paper backs. Nonsuch Press have issued *Cranford* with Hugh Thomson illustrations (£6.99) and *Cousin Phillis* with M.V.Wheelhouse illustrations (£5.99) They plan others in the series including *Round the Sofa*. These are attractive, chunky books.

*The Professional Ideal and the Victorian Novel: the Works of Disraeli, Trollope, Gaskell, and Eliot* by Susan E. Colon (Baylor University, Texas). Palgrave Macmillan, 2007. £40; contains a chapter on 'Professional Frontiers in Elizabeth Gaskell's *My Lady Ludlow*'.

*Virginia Woolf and the nineteenth-century domestic novel* by Emily Blair, Solano Community College, Albany State University of New York. Hardback £40, paperback £12.50; includes a chapter on 'The wrong side of the tapestry: Elizabeth Gaskell's *Wives and Daughters*', which contrasts Gaskell and Oliphant's treatment



of domesticity with that of Virginia Woolf. This is interesting in the light of Woolf's criticism of Gaskell's excessive use of domestic detail.

Recommended by member Doris Ker:

*Recollections of a Sussex parson* by Rev Edward Boys Ellman, 1815-1906, Rector of Berwick, East Sussex. Available from Mrs L Hallums, 2 Roman Close, Bishopstone, Seaford, East Sussex BN25 2SW.

She writes "Although superficially it appears utterly unsuitable, I found it so illuminating in regard to the Victorian Anglican's view of Dissenters. There are several references to Dissenters in the Community, all of which reveal Anglican suspicion and allow one to understand why Meta was keen for her mother to enlighten Charles Bosanquet (GL405), and also the anguish of the young clergymen on discovering the Gaskells were Dissenters." The book has many amusing accounts depicting rural life and the impact of absentee clergy.

## *Friends of Plymouth Grove*

Since the last newsletter there have been some new developments concerning the renovation of the Gaskell house. The Trust has looked again at the original plans for repairing the drains and underpinning the walls and have decided to aim for the complete restoration package of £2.3m - or as much of this as we can raise the money for. To this end, Janet asks that as many people as possible write letters of support\* for the restoration of the house; this will convince the various funders of the demand for use of the house, both as a community resource and a vital part of Manchester's cultural heritage as well as being a fitting memorial to Elizabeth Gaskell and her family.

In November we were delighted to welcome Elizabeth Gaskell's great-great-granddaughter, Rosemary Trevor Dabbs, and her daughter, Sarah Prince, to 84, Plymouth Grove; it was their first visit and they were thrilled to see the house of their famous ancestor. They were in Manchester to present the Elizabeth Gaskell Prize to the Women Asylum Seekers Together, at the Manchester Women of the Year Awards held at Manchester Town Hall.

Fund raising is, of course still of vital importance so I am pleased to report that the various autumn events have raised a considerable amount of money. The Open Days, especially the Heritage Open Days, saw an increasing number of people through the doors and all expressed their delight at seeing the house, which even in its un-restored state is a beautiful building with many original features still intact. The book shop, in the capable hands of Christine Lingard, continues to do great business and has proved to be a major source of income on our open days.

We had a full house again for Professor Pickstone's interesting and informative talk on "Manchester Medicine and Science in the Time of the Gaskells". The Lord Mayor of Manchester and his daughter, the Lady Mayoress, honoured us with their presence at our very successful International Open Day in November. Then our Christmas Event, also a full house, saw the return of those two very good (and talented) friends of the house, Delia Corrie and Charles Foster, who entertained us with a "Christmas Miscellany", interspersed with some audience participation in the form of carol-singing. This was followed by our now traditional mince pies and mulled wine, so a good time was had by all!

I have possibly saved the best till last - our spectacularly successful "Cranford Day". Following on from the recent outstandingly popular B.B.C. production of *Cranford* we felt that we should capitalise on this renewed interest in Gaskell and have a special Open Day to show off the house where she did most of her writing. The day comprised two halves: first a regular open day but with two slide shows - 'Knutsford in Cranford Days', given by Joan Leach of course, and 'Manchester in the Time of Elizabeth Gaskell', given by our own Janet Allan, while Elizabeth Williams took visitors around the upstairs of the house. People were queuing at the door before we opened and it was non-stop all afternoon! Then for the second half of the day, once again Delia and Charles returned, this time to give a performance of "At Home with the Gaskells". Needless to say this was hugely enjoyable - as was the Victorian Tea served afterwards, with "Mrs Gaskell's Fruit Cake" being particularly popular - thank you, Pat!

Around 400 people visited that day - possibly more - and almost £1,300 was raised. "At Home with the Gaskells" was so over-subscribed that we had to put on a repeat performance, with the Victorian Tea, of course - and that too was over-subscribed! A further £400+ was raised at this event. There is going to be yet another performance on May 22<sup>nd</sup>, this time at Altrincham Girls Grammar School - details have yet to be confirmed.

Obviously we are hugely indebted to Delia and Charles for giving their time and talent to the cause of the restoration of 84, Plymouth Grove. Our thanks also to those who support us by their presence at the various events and of course to all who contribute in any way to their success.

Future events:

**Open Days** on the first Sunday of the month beginning Sunday 2<sup>nd</sup> March, 12-4 p.m., which will include the Cranford and Manchester slide shows as given on the Cranford Day, tours of house, book shop, displays and refreshments.

**Saturday 15<sup>th</sup> March** An illustrated talk by Ann Brooks about Villa Gardens, like the one which originally surrounded the house. Talk begins at 2.30 (doors open 2p.m)

Followed by tea/coffee and cakes etc. Cost £7.50. Booking essential. Phone Hilda Holmes (0161) 487 2593 and pay on the door.

**Saturday April 26<sup>th</sup>** at 7.30 p.m.: "Music for the Gaskells" - nineteenth-century music and song performed by the highly-regarded Opus 5 at the Methodist Church, Alderley Edge. Tickets £10. Booking opens March 1<sup>st</sup> - early booking advised. Phone Hilda Holmes, as above, or Judith Rees, 0156 5832 562.

We are indebted to Judith for arranging this fund-raising event through her husband, Rod, who is a member of the group.

Elizabeth Williams adds:

I'm sure that you all know that a group led by Janet Allan has been working hard to try to raise funds to save Elizabeth Gaskell's home in Plymouth Grove, Manchester. It's a lovely house, but needs more than 2.3 million pounds spending on it. The next few months are crucial, and something which would help would be lots of letters of support. Wherever you live you can write - letters from around the world might help to convince the appropriate authorities that Gaskell was a figure of some importance. And if you are in the area, please do come and see the house - it's open on the first Sunday of the month from 12.0 till 4.0, or can be opened up specially in particular cases.

If you are willing to help (and please do) then send a letter saying that you are in favour of the project to Janet Allan, Chairman, Manchester Historic Buildings Trust, c/o 10 Dale Road, New Mills, High Peak, SK22 4NW.

Or email her at [janet@janetbook.fsnet.co.uk](mailto:janet@janetbook.fsnet.co.uk)

We should be very grateful for support.

All information about the house is at present to be found on [www.gaskellsociety.co.uk](http://www.gaskellsociety.co.uk) link 84 Plymouth Grove.

Ann O'Brien

## *The Alliance of Literary Societies*

This year's AGM of the ALS plus a weekend of activities is to be hosted by The Richard Jefferies Society on 17th & 18th May 2008 at Coate near Swindon in Wiltshire. Richard Jefferies (1848-1887) was born at Coate Farm and spent his childhood exploring the local fields, woods and Coate Water, keenly observing nature that formed the inspiration for most of his writing.

The busy programme starts with the Annual General Meeting itself after registration and coffee from 10.30 to 11am, at the Holiday Inn, Marlborough Road, Coate, Swindon. After the lunch break, there is to be a lecture entitled 'The Life and Thoughts of Richard Jefferies', followed by a visit to the local Jefferies Museum to include a short film produced by the Society showing local places associated with this writer,

guided tour, refreshments at the museum and raffle. There is an evening meal at the Holiday Inn which must be ordered and paid for in advance at a cost of £22 per person for 3 courses plus coffee/tea.

From 10am on Sunday 18th May, a literary treasure trail is planned to explore the North Wiltshire countryside which will include visits to places associated with other local writers.

Janet Kennerley has general details on this interesting weekend (telephone 01477 571525 evenings or email [janetkennerley@hotmail.com](mailto:janetkennerley@hotmail.com)). However, firm bookings have to be completed and sent to Linda Curry, Chairman of the ALS by 1st April, at 59 Bryony Road, Selly Oak, Birmingham B29 4BY.

Please note that attendance at the AGM, the talk and film, and participation in the treasure trail are free of charge. The Holiday Inn can offer accommodation at a rate of £60 single and £70 double including breakfast. To secure a room telephone 01793 817082 quoting the booking reference 'Richard Jefferies Society'. There are however other B&Bs in the area bookable via the Swindon Tourist Information Centre.

Janet Kennerley

## *North West Group*

Meetings are held on the **last Wednesday of each month** at St John's Church Rooms, Knutsford. Talks and discussions led by Elizabeth Williams are preceded by buffet lunch at 12.15. Cost £7.50.

**March** - 'The Doom of the Griffiths'.

**April** - 'Lois the Witch' and 'Curious if True'

On **May 22 (or 29)** we plan to visit Tabley House and after a tour of the house and the Chapel, with a short talk about Lord de Tabley as a Cheshire poet, we will have a cream tea. Cost about £7 (to be confirmed).

A trip to Liverpool is planned for **4th or 18th June** to visit Ullet Road Unitarian Church which has Holland family memorials, Sefton Park Palm House and Sudley House which has a fine art collection, with Holland family and other dresses on display.

## *Yorkshire Branch*

**Saturday, 31st May:** a seminar discussion on Sylvia's Lovers will be introduced by Shirley Foster.

At The Quaker Rooms, Friargate, at 2 p.m., but the room will be available from 1 p.m. A £5 contribution is requested towards costs.

**Saturday November** George Smith Prince of Publishers by Joan Leach  
A summer visit to Laurence Sterne's House, Shandy Hall, at Coxwold, is planned.

Enquiries to: Dudley Barlow, 6. Kenlay Close, New Earswick, York YO32 4DW  
Tel 01904 750366 Email: dudleybarlow@hotmail.co.uk

## *The Gaskell Society South-West*

We had a very congenial New Year supper here in January. It was particularly good to see Ian and Trudi Wallace who have moved to Clevedon and to get to know two new Bath members – Ann Thoresby-Parker and Elizabeth Carlson. We also discussed the programme for this year so here it is:

**Saturday April 5<sup>th</sup>:** 'Is there a conflict between Elizabeth Gaskell's "warring members" (GL 69) and the Victorian etiquette book?'

Talk by Mrs Gwen Clarke M.A. (Oxon) at Flat 4, 97, Sydney Place, Bath, by kind invitation of Mrs Joan Chandler. 3.15 – 4.30.

**Wednesday May 7<sup>th</sup>:** Visit to Bowood House and Gardens, home of the 9<sup>th</sup> Marquess of Lansdowne. Elizabeth Gaskell came to visit Bowood while she was staying with the Ewarts in Devizes but, as she says, 'We have been to call at Bowood today, as our friends are acquainted with Lord Lansdowne, and we wanted much to see so famous a house. But unfortunately he is just gone to Brighton to try and ward off an attack of gout.' November 13<sup>th</sup> 1857 (GL 380)

Joseph Priestley, a minister in the 18<sup>th</sup>-century Unitarian church, who was tutor to the sons of the 1<sup>st</sup> Marquess, discovered oxygen gas in the laboratory at Bowood on August 1<sup>st</sup> 1774.

Entry to House and gardens: £7: Entry to Rhododendron Walks £3.75.

There is a very comprehensive guide to the house and gardens £2.50 which I can get for you in advance.

**Sunday August 17<sup>th</sup> Summer:** Tea at the home of Dr. and Mrs Boyd Schlenther, 14, Vellore Lane, Bath BA2 6JQ 01225 331763. 3.00- 5.00 pm. Brief readings on 'summer in the City' (prose or verse).

**Saturday November 8<sup>th</sup>:** 2.00 for 2.30. Crypt of St. Michael's Church, Northgate, Bath. Details later.

Please let me know if you would like to come to any of these events and I will send you more detailed information. *Rosemary*

**Any queries to Mrs. Rosemary Marshall, 138, Fairfield Park Road, Bath BA1 6JT**  
Tel: 01225 426732 E-mail: rosemary\_marshall@yahoo.com

## *The London and South-East Group*

We had an excellent meeting on 9<sup>th</sup> February. Patsy Stoneman spoke about adapting the novel (*WD and Cranford*) for the screen. She made specific points, for instance, costume, showed up a clip of Molly's dress when her father returned from honeymoon and then asked us to describe what we had seen, what we thought about it, and then built on what we contributed to make her point. I think everyone loved this approach. She also looked at *Cranford*. We discussed the portrayal of Miss Matty and Patsy kept coming back to the critical analysis of the text as against the screen. She opened our eyes to the nuances and effects via the medium that manipulated our response without us realising it. The general feeling was that she offered a critical analysis of the screen adaptation in the way that we would normally analyse a text, rather like the critical appreciation of a painting. It was revelatory and intellectually stimulating. Not only that, but the way in which she had put together the DVD meant a seamless movement from one clip to the next.

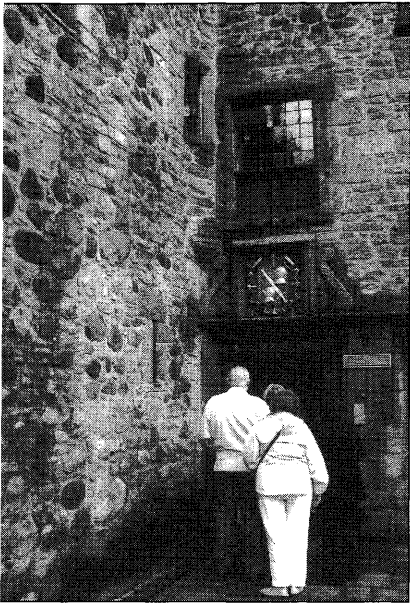
**Our next meeting is May 10<sup>th</sup>:** Dr Graham Handley is due to speak on 'Scenes of Clerical Life' - Gaskell's not George Eliot's! Although I think he is going to start by reference to George Eliot.

Next year's programme seems to be finalised now. It is an autumnal session of two meetings with talks given by members. I am going to repeat the talk I give to the George Eliot Fellowship in May entitled 'From *Monkshaven* to *Middlemarch* the *Provincial Landscapes of Elizabeth Gaskell and George Eliot*'. Gwen Clarke will give the talk in November: title to be announced. Then in February, Fran Baker is coming, and in May 2009, Shirley Foster. Neither of these titles is yet finalised but we have a nice combination of members and visitors.

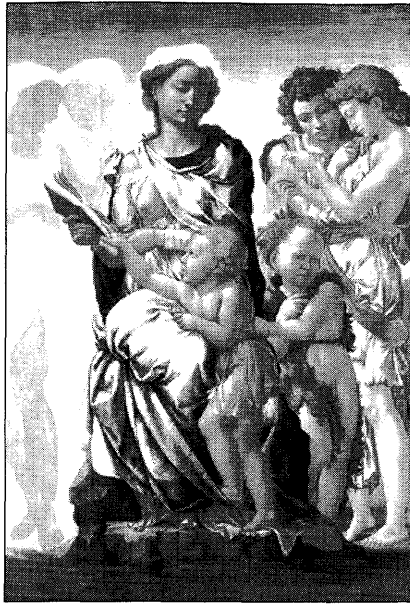
We are flourishing it seems with members coming across the channel from Paris and Brussels, a regular nucleus of loyal members who come every quarter. Also we now have a number of elderly members some of whom are finding the journey into Central London difficult but we seem to have between 20 and 25 on a regular basis.

Dr Fran Twinn, 85 Calton Avenue, Dulwich, London SE21 7DF  
Tel: 020 8693 3238; email: frantwinn@aflex.net

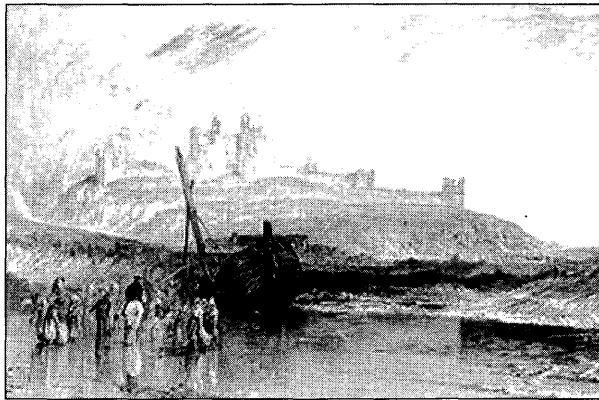
# The Gaskell Society



The Gaskell Society visit to Stenhouse Mansion on 9th July. The inscription over the door reads: Patrick Ellis 1623. *Blest be God for all his gifts.* Photo by Janet Kennerley



The Madonna and Child with Saint John and Angel by Michelangelo.



Dunstanbrough Castle: a favourite Turner painting.

THE GASKELL SOCIETY HOME PAGE has all the latest information on meetings.  
<http://gaskellsociety.co.uk>

If you have any material or suggestions for future Newsletters, please contact Mrs. Joan Leach,  
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Knutsford, Cheshire  
 looking up King Street from the foot of Adams Hill

## NEWSLETTER

Autumn 2008 - Number 46

## Editor's Letter

Joan Leach

We regret that the 2008 Journal is a little late this year but we hope to mail it at the beginning of October.

In this newsletter Fran Baker, Assistant Modern Archivist at the John Rylands University Library, the University of Manchester has written for us a report on the Green and Jamison archive letters, recently acquired by the library. *Recollections of a Victorian gentlewoman* by Marie Moss gives us fascinating links with the Gaskell world and Ann O'Brien reviews The Art Treasures Exhibition: 150 years on. Our trip to Scotland in July is reported by Jean Alston.

The hard working committee of Plymouth Grove Trust and the Friends of Plymouth Grove have held enjoyable and successful fund raising events during this year and hope members will continue to support their efforts. Ann O'Brien in her report has listed future plans.

Our groups in London, Bath and York continue to offer a variety of talks and events. Dudley Barlow, after organising our London group for a number of years, retired to York and helped to launch the York group, however he must now hand over this responsibility and we hope a successor will volunteer. We are grateful to Dudley and his colleague Howard Gregg for all their efforts.

We are working on plans for the bi-centenary year of Elizabeth Gaskell's birth in 2010: both here and in Japan there will be special publications and events. The John Rylands Library is planning an exhibition and events from August to December, 2010. The Alliance of Literary Societies will hold its AGM in Knutsford 15 - 16 May. In 1982 BBC screened *Cousin Phillis*, we would be grateful if anyone can trace a copy of this.

For 2009 we are planning the next conference at the Penrith Campus of The University of Cumbria with a theme of Gaskell in the Lake District with its many literary associations.

### **DATES FOR YOUR DIARY 2009**

**Make sure you have the conference date ringed: 17 - 19th July**

**The AGM meeting at Cross Street Chapel, Manchester will be on 28th March.**

**Autumn meeting in Knutsford 27th September.**

## Papers of the Green & Jamison Families

Fran Baker

In the Spring issue of the *Newsletter*, Joan Leach wrote about the Green Letters, a collection of correspondence generated by members of the Green family of Knutsford, who were contemporaries of the Gaskells. Mary Green was a good friend and correspondent of Elizabeth Gaskell, and her husband Henry was minister of Brook Street Unitarian Chapel in Knutsford. The Greens had four daughters of similar ages to the Gaskell girls, with whom they were great friends; they also had a son, (John) Philip, and their family like the Gaskells suffered the early death of a child - Alice died in 1842 at the age of four or five.

These Green letters form a part of the larger Jamison Family Archive: the youngest Green daughter Isabella (who was a year older than Florence Gaskell) married Dr Arthur Jamison in 1875. Arthur died in 1900 but Isabella lived on until 1937, when she died at the grand age of 96. The family archive passed down to Isabella's descendants, ultimately coming to rest at the home of Miss Jean Jamison in Bristol. In June this year, Miss Jamison sold the archive - on behalf of the Jamison family - to the John Rylands University Library (University of Manchester). We were delighted to be able to purchase this archive with the assistance of generous grant aid from the MLA/V&A Purchase Fund, the Friends of the National Libraries, and our own Friends of the John Rylands. It forms another major addition to our Gaskell collections.

For Gaskellians, the highlight of the archive will be 16 holograph letters written by Elizabeth Gaskell. Thirteen of these, sent to Gaskell's close friend Mary Green, have been published in the updated edition of Chapple and Shelston's *Further Letters*. These substantial letters are full of news about Gaskell's own writing, reflections on the work of other writers, news of her family, references to the Green girls, and reports on her travels, hectic domestic life and the activities of mutual friends. She discusses the difficulties she was experiencing with the composition of *Ruth* in 1852, confides her concern about how people will react to the novel, and expresses her relief when she hears the response of Mary and Henry Green to the novel:

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 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.

She also makes reference to her intense and exhausting work on *The Life of Charlotte Brontë* in 1855; in one brief note she refers to '[u]pwards of 300 letters to read through / copy what is worth in 2 days'. Later she reports on a trip to Birstall to see 'one of dear Miss Brontë's friends' (Ellen Nussey) and to visit locations associated with Brontë's life.

Gaskell also offers solace to her friend when Mary's son Philip decides to move to India in 1860, in order to further his career in the Law. Empathising with Mary's distress at her son's imminent departure, she suggests that Philip, like her own daughter Meta in the past, does not understand 'what the pain of absence *really* is'.

The archive also includes three further letters from Gaskell which have not previously appeared in print. These were sent to Isabella Green, whom Gaskell had referred to as 'a little abomination' in a letter sent to Barbara Fergusson in 1846 (which is also held at the Rylands). Gaskell later revised her opinion of the five-year-old Isabella, who grew up to become a talented amateur artist. One of Gaskell's letters refers to [Edward] Whelan, a stonemason and sculptor who worked with sculptor Thomas Woolner and architect Alfred Waterhouse in the design of the Manchester Assize Courts (constructed during 1859-1864), contributing a series of carved capitals. It seems that Gaskell was acting as an intermediary between Whelan and Isabella Green, who had promised to produce a design for one of the capitals; Gaskell refers to a recent visit from Whelan, who enquired whether Isabella had received some photographs from him, and is very anxious to receive her design.

In addition to the letters from Gaskell herself, there are also 15 letters from Florence Crompton (née Gaskell) and nine letters from Julia Gaskell - all sent to Isabella Green. Florence's letters date from 1864-1874, and are full of family news, details of meetings and exhibitions attended, as well as containing some discussion of politics and reform. In 1864 she mentions a forthcoming breakfast to be held in honour of Garibaldi, with whom her mother and sister Meta had taken tea the previous day; she reports on attending the mass Reform Demonstration in London on 11 February 1867, and on seeing the Queen open Parliament in the same month - commenting that '[a]s the Queen came back there was a distinct hiss and I never saw her so badly received'.

Julia's letters, dating from 1866-1873, are lengthier and fuller than her sister's. They contain lively descriptions of activities and mutual friends, references to her reading matter and travels, as well as much discussion of social and political events in Manchester, London and elsewhere. In 1866 she describes the Social Science lectures she has attended and writes about Barbara Bodichon and female suffrage; in 1867 she discusses the Fenian trials taking place in Manchester, and in the same year refers to her interest in Jamaica (when legal proceedings began against Governor

Edward John Eyre over his role in the suppression of the Jamaican Uprising of 1865).

Some of the letters sent between members of the Green family shed further light on the Gaskells. In the last issue of the *Newsletter*, Joan Leach quoted from Isabella's letter about Elizabeth Gaskell's death, the effect of this on her daughters, and Gaskell's strange presentiment that she would not live through 1865. As friends of the Gaskell daughters, the Green girls and their brother Philip also make references to visits exchanged with the Gaskells over the years and report on their activities; for instance, there are references to two of Marianne Holland (née Gaskell)'s children who were born deaf and dumb, and were to attend the school of William Van Praagh, an early pioneer of lipreading. Philip Green writes to his mother on 30 May 1857 about a letter published in the *Times* on behalf of Elizabeth Gaskell in relation to her biography of Charlotte Brontë. This was, of course, her well-known public retraction over her treatment of Branwell Brontë's dismissal from his post as tutor in the employment of Mrs Lydia Robinson (later Lady Scott) and the allegations she made about their relationship. Lady Scott's solicitors accepted this apology, and Philip concludes '[s]o I hope ends what might have been an extremely awkward affair for Mrs Gaskell', going on to offer his own opinions on the matter.

Even without its Gaskell interest the archive is a goldmine for researchers, and the Greens emerge through their papers as a family worthy of attention and study in their own right. The core of the archive comprises around 450 letters between the Green siblings and their parents spanning a fifty-year period, with the majority of the letters dating from the 1850s-1870s. These letters form a complex web of correspondence, as letters were circulated among the family beyond their direct recipients - for instance, Isabella's accounts of a trip across America in 1872 were forwarded to numerous family members in the UK before being sent on to her brother Philip in India.

The letters touch on a vast wealth of subjects. Travel figures highly, with letters sent home from trips to Paris (including an account of a visit to Madame Mohl's salon), Marseilles, various locations in Belgium and the Netherlands, Rome, Naples, Alexandria and Cairo; also included are Isabella's fascinating accounts of her American visit. There is some discussion of politics, current affairs and world events; Philip, for instance, reports on seeing an exchange between Palmerston and Gladstone in the House of Commons in April 1856, and reference is made to the assassination of Abraham Lincoln in 1865. Religion, art and literature are discussed, and correspondents write about Knutsford acquaintances and society, as well as social events like parties and balls, and customs such as May Day festivities and well-dressings. The whole minutiae of daily life is represented here, from fashions to house decorating to medical treatments. We can also follow major family events

like engagements, marriages, births and deaths. The family suffered a series of losses in the early 1870s: Mary Green died in 1871; Philip's first wife Theresa died the following year; the Rev. Henry Green died in 1873; and Mary Green's elderly mother, who lived with the Greens in Knutsford, died in 1874 - after a long decline and apparently suffering from dementia. Philip's sudden and tragic death in an earthquake in Naples in 1883 (three years after he had suffered a serious stroke) is also documented in the correspondence.

The archive also includes some incoming letters sent to Green family members by other friends and acquaintances - most significantly from Madame Mohl, as well as some letters from John Ruskin relating to attempts to find a drawing master for the school in Knutsford run by the Green daughters. There are some further family papers, including sermons by Henry Green, and correspondence relating to later generations of the family - in particular letters (some dating from as late as the 1920s) sent to Evelyn Jamison, daughter of Isabella, who pursued a successful academic career as a historian at Oxford University.

The Library is indebted to Sarah Tanner, a descendant of the Green family by marriage, who has done an enormous amount of research into the family and produced extremely useful transcripts of much of the correspondence, all of which has been made available to us. We must also thank Joan Leach for initially drawing the archive to our attention, and of course to Jean Jamison for choosing the Rylands as a home for her family papers; the archive will form a valuable resource for researchers both present and future.

Fran Baker is Assistant Modern Literary Archivist at the John Rylands University Library, The University of Manchester.

Editor:

Henry Green, a contemporary of William Gaskell at Glasgow University, was minister of Brook Street Chapel, Knutsford, from 1827 to 1872. The Green and Gaskell families had so much in common that made them close friends: Henry baptised the eldest Gaskell daughter, Marianne, in 1834, and William baptised the eldest Green daughter Emily in 1828.

Henry has an honoured place in the town for his book, *Knutsford: Its Traditions and History, with reminiscences, anecdotes and notices of the neighbourhood* (1857). Elizabeth Gaskell shared his interest and helped in collecting material. Green was a Latin scholar and published an edited facsimile of Whitney's *Emblems* and also a book on Euclid. He ran a night school for a time and frequently gave talks and lectures. At his successful boarding school, amongst the nineteen pupils listed in 1851 was Clement Wedgwood; Sir William Fairbairn's son and Alfred Holt of the Liverpool shipping family also attended. When Henry retired the daughters adapted the school to take girls; Florence and Julia were pupils.

The Green daughters frequently visited the Gaskells at Plymouth Grove, especially for music lessons, concerts and lectures such as Thackeray's, and joined them on holidays at Silverdale, so it is fascinating to learn, from the Green letters, more about them all in later years.

Henry Green subscribed himself in records as 'dissenting minister', and the surviving chapel library books have bookplates for Brook Street 'Presbyterian' Chapel. His was not a narrow faith. He generously lent his slide collection for an entertainment at the opening ceremony of the Wesleyan Chapel in 1865, and Brook Street Chapel was 'lent' for the Congregational Church members to complete their foundation-stone-laying ceremony.

## *Notes from the Exhibition: Art Treasures in Manchester: 150 years on*

**Ann O'Brien**

Earlier this year, Manchester Art Gallery closed its doors for the last time on its hugely successful exhibition, *Art Treasures in Manchester: 150 years On*. In less than four months over 72,000 people visited it - over a third more than originally anticipated - and this figure excludes the many school parties that attended. Of course this contrasts with the 1.3 million who saw the original exhibition, but then this time there were no enterprising travel companies running day trips to see it and no paternalistic factory owners treating their employees to a day out at the exhibition. We are not in any case comparing like with like. In 1857 this was an entirely new venture, supported by Manchester business-men, encouraged by Prince Albert, and with all the pictures and artefacts lent without charge and without insurance. Such expenditure would be far beyond the reach of any gallery today. Even if it were possible to raise the money, logistically the task just would be too great, not least because so many of the major works have by now gone abroad. Whereas nearly all of the earlier exhibits came from private collections, this time there is only one painting lent from such a source

In 1857, 16,000 exhibits were housed in a purpose built, though temporary, building in Old Trafford. Even though no such extravagance was possible this time, the organisers still achieved a superb display. There were echoes of the Old Trafford building in the (imitation) filigree iron-work arches, incorporating the intertwined letters M A T (Manchester Art Treasures), leading into the alcoves of the exhibition rooms. Decorating the walls of the alcoves was wall-paper which was an exact copy of the original. Flanking both sides of a huge mural of the Great Hall were two suits of armour, which cleverly indicated the size of the hall - all very impressive!



The curators gathered together exhibits from art galleries throughout the country - Italian Old Masters, portraits by Reynolds and Lawrence, landscapes by Turner and Constable, Pre-Raphaelite paintings, water-colours and art photography as well as medieval ivories, majolica, Venetian glass and Chinese and Sevres porcelain.

Both the Liverpool galleries were well represented, as well as smaller local galleries such as those in Bury and Preston. It was good to see, too, that the Victoria and Albert Museum had repaid its debt to Manchester, by lending many items from the Soulages Collection (as well as other items) - this was the collection that the 1857 committee had bought. They were planning to keep it for a gallery which they had hoped to establish in Manchester, using the profits from the exhibition. Sadly this amounted to only £304, so Manchester had to wait another twenty years for its own gallery. In the meantime, Henry Cole, director of the Kensington Museum (later to become the Victoria and Albert Museum), managed to persuade the Board of Trade to allow him to purchase the collection at a rate of £2000 a year! This exhibition has also enjoyed royal patronage - a number of exhibits were from the Royal Collection, although I doubt if Prince Philip was quite as enthusiastic a supporter as was Prince Albert!

In all there were 168 works of art in the present day exhibition, ranging from gold pendants from Etruria (800B.C.-500B.C.) to the work of the 'Modern Masters', many of whom were still living - and still painting - in 1857. Taking pride of place was a painting that caused great excitement in 1857, *The Madonna and Child with Saint John and Angel*\*, an unfinished work which had only recently been attributed to Michelangelo; as its first public showing after this attribution was in Manchester, it became known as *The Manchester Madonna*. The most popular painting in 1857 was *Chatterton*, and although it was prominently displayed again, this time there was no need for any policeman to guard it! \*see back cover

A number of paintings were very evocative of the times: *A letter from the Colonies*, painted in 1852, reminds us of the emigration boom of the 1840s, as it shows a concerned family reading a letter from someone close to them, who has moved overseas. It was lent then by James Eden, the proprietor of Bolton Bleach works - a good indication that not all the industrialists of the area were philistines! *Hindoo Temples at Bindrabunder*, painted by Thomas Daniell, would have been particularly poignant for many visitors, as the Indian Mutiny had begun in May 1857 and was to last for over a year: in fact the organisers of the exhibition closed it for the day on 7th October, as this had been declared a day of mourning - *A National Day of Humiliation*.

Adding interest to this exhibition was one display which asked visitors to choose their favourite painting. *April Love*, painted by Arthur Hughes, one of the youngest of

the Pre-Raphaelites, was voted the winner - and indeed it is a beautiful painting; the vibrant blues of the girl's dress and shawl contrast with the muted brown of the tree bark and green tones of the carefully detailed ivy leaves. The second favourite was Turner's *Dunstanborough Castle*\* - Turner was the best represented artist in 1857, and remained so in 2007/8 though the 24 paintings and 80 water colours and 150 engravings were now, reduced to one painting and three watercolours, all belonging to Manchester Art Gallery. Another choice, as befits a nation of dog lovers, was Sir Edwin Landseer's *Dignity and Impudence*, the delightful study of Grafton, the bloodhound, and Scratch, a West Highland terrier, the pet dogs of Landseer's patron Jacob Bell. Landseer had 23 paintings in the 1857 exhibition, the highest number for any living artist. \*see back cover

In the display cases were beautifully decorated china, glass and metal-work from all over Europe and of course, China. Among the more quirky exhibits were a pot-pourri bowl which had once belonged to Madame de Pompadour and Lucrezia Borgia's mirror! A more poignant exhibit was the *Foundling Hospital Vase*, which was lent to the 1857 exhibition by the Foundling Hospital; the hospital provided the first public gallery of British art, as many contemporary artists donated works to decorate the hospital.

Even more poignant in today's exhibition was *Portraits of Insane Women*, in the extremely interesting photographic display. It is difficult to forget the haunting look of bewilderment on the women's faces. On a brighter note, among the other photographs were a number showing the Victorian interest in botany, as well as the more usual portraits and scenic views. The most controversial photograph at the time was *Two Ways of Life*, which, when later exhibited in Scotland, had one half of the picture covered up because many of the models were nude. However, although the photograph was heavily criticised at the time, it managed to attract wealthy buyers of the few prints available, one of those buyers being Queen Victoria!

The more recent exhibition was made all the more enjoyable by some features which did not appear in the 1857 exhibition. Among these were two musical installations: one where visitors could listen to songs that were popular at the time, including *The Manchester Exhibition Polka Gallop* and *The Manchester Art Treasures Polka*, and another where they could hear some of the music which was performed at the first exhibition by (Sir) Charles Hallé and his small orchestra, as well as the words originally spoken by Hallé himself.

Another interesting feature - one of many - was the inter-active display of the many fine Victorian buildings in the Manchester of 1857; on the wall was a street map of Manchester city centre as it is today, numbers marking the positions of the Victorian buildings and by pressing a button on the monitor it was possible to see what any



particular building looked like in 1857. It was interesting to see how many of these buildings survived and though some had had a change of use, they looked virtually the same.

Just as one of the aims of the first exhibition was to educate as well as to entertain, so too there was an educational element to this exhibition. At the entrance there were wall-boards setting the scene, in words and pictures, of Manchester as it was in 1857. It was not only a city of fine Victorian buildings; it was also a city where people lived in the most appalling conditions. The organisers did well to remind us of this.

*Art Treasures in Manchester: 150 years on* was a huge success, not only in the number of visitors it attracted but also in giving Manchester such an enjoyable exhibition and a wonderful taste of that earlier triumph.

#### References

*Art Treasures in Manchester: 150 years on*, Tristram Hunt and Victoria Whitfield, Manchester Art Gallery, 2007.

My thanks to Meg Parnell of the M.A.G. for all her help.

## *The Recollections of a Victorian Gentlewoman*

Marie Moss

A book-title accidentally spotted, *Elizabeth Anne Galton 1808-1906*, above the sub-title *A Well-connected Gentlewoman*, prompted the thought that the connections of this long-lived lady might conceivably extend to a contemporary of her youth, Elizabeth Stevenson. Interestingly, this proved to be the case.

Elizabeth Anne was the eldest of nine children of Samuel Tertius Galton, a prosperous Birmingham banker who, unnerved by the contagious bank failures of the mid-1820s, gradually ran his business down and retired in 1832 to Leamington Spa. Samuel joined the Church of England when he married but came from an old Quaker family prominent in the commercial life of Birmingham for three generations. He was related to a number of influential people, mostly Quakers, including his mother's family, the Barclays, and via a network of marriages, the Lloyds, Frys, Gurneys, Hoares and Hanburys. Elizabeth Anne's grandfather, Samuel Galton Jnr F.R.S. (1753-1832), a man of broad scientific interests, was a member of

the Lunar Society, which often met at his house. It was Galton's butler who nicknamed the group 'the Lunatiks'. Galton was a generous friend to Joseph Priestley, with whom he had been a student at Warrington, and after the Birmingham Riots helped him with gifts of money and demonstrations of his esteem.

Elizabeth Anne's mother was Violetta, the eldest daughter of Dr Erasmus Darwin by his second marriage. Darwin was also a leading spirit in the Lunar Society and, in the biased if loyal view of his granddaughter, it was he who 'originated all the ideas that Charles Darwin had time and talent to work out'. Charles Darwin was of course cousin to Elizabeth Anne and she frequently stayed with his family, Dr Robert Darwin and Aunt Susan (née Wedgwood) at their home in Shrewsbury, with its pretty garden sloping down to the River Severn. She also loved to visit her Grandmother Darwin at Breadsall Priory, near Derby. 'Happiness Hall' Elizabeth called it - 'the most pleasant cheerful house I ever was in'. Here she mixed with many aunts and uncles, including the two natural daughters of Erasmus Darwin, who had set up a school in Ashbourne 'where my Mother and Aunts (the Sitwells) and most of the young girls in Derbyshire were educated'.

Elizabeth's own education started early: 'I could read well at three years old and could write at five'. At six she started to learn French with a tutor, and German and music with her mother. Every morning before breakfast she was taught arithmetic by her father and she was joined in these lessons by the two daughters of their washerwoman, Sarah and Harriet Bromley. 'Harriet Bromley had a marvellous memory for mental arithmetic, and at ten years old she once multiplied a line of thirty figures in her head mentally, I could never do more than three'. Samuel Galton also taught his children Natural Philosophy. He had an orrery, solar microscope, pantograph, camera obscura, magic lantern and a large telescope to spice up their lessons. It is perhaps not surprising that when Elizabeth Anne was sent away to school at the age of ten she found the experience disappointing.

She writes:

In February 1818 I was sent to school at Miss Byerley's, at Barford near Warwick. There were six Miss Byerleys who taught. Their father married a Wedgwood, a sister I think of the great potter. I was at the school for a year, but was often sent home on account of my eyes, which were often inflamed. I did not learn much at the school, because I was too forward for the lower classes and too young for the upper ones. I never learnt arithmetic or geography after my Father taught me, as I knew more than any of the girls, and my parents wished me to spare my eyes. Marianne and Sarah Priestley, granddaughters of Dr Priestley were at Barford with me and were my particular friends.

John Chapple suggests that the Byerleys' school had begun to falter while at Warwick and was not at its best during the early years at Barford, to where it removed in 1817. Its most prosperous days were at Avonbank, Stratford. Elizabeth Anne was quickly withdrawn and spent much of the following year in a darkened room with 'constant leeches round my eyes'. There is evidence that her friends the Priestley sisters remained to become contemporaries of Elizabeth Stevenson when she joined the school in 1821. Sarah Priestley contributed an arrangement of a French song to Elizabeth's music book and in 1826 Jane Byerley sent Elizabeth news of the two girls in the belief that they had all been at the school together.

Elizabeth Anne's account continues:

I was at school with Anne, Susan, and Agatha, the three daughters of Mr Charles Lloyd of Bingley, and through Mrs C Lloyd my third cousins. They were day scholars and lived in Barford with their Grandfather, Mr Whitehead, and I often spent my half-holidays with them. Mr Whitehead had another daughter, Mrs Greaves, mother of the Mr Greaves we knew here of Barford and The Cliff, Warwick.

This happy recollection is in contrast to Mrs Gaskell's light-hearted claim that she was 'five years at Miss Byerley's and never drank tea out of the house *once*', and remarkable in that these hospitable Barford families were well known to the Holland family and were to become connected with them by marriage. Mary Whitehead became the wife of John Greaves of Radford Semele by Warwick, a Quaker banker with investments in stone quarries and lime and cement works. One of their sons, John Whitehead Greaves, developed slate quarries alongside those of Samuel Holland at Ffestiniog, and in 1835 joined Samuel in working an iron-stone quarry near Abersoch. In 1838 another son, Richard, married Samuel's sister. This was Gaskell's cousin Kate, whom Elizabeth recorded as fording the dangerous quicksands of the Tratte to church in 'wedding dress white chip hat, orange flowers pale lavender satin pelisse trimmed with swansdown'. Richard Greaves was living at Shottery at the time of his marriage and it is more than likely that he and Kate were the hosts to Elizabeth Gaskell and her Knutsford cousins when they stayed at Shottery in April 1849 after the hectic London lionising of the author of *Mary Barton*. An account transmitted by Augustus Hare, and quoted by John Chapple, claims that the party went to 'dine at Mr Greaves at Radford, the father of Mr R. Greaves'. Shortly afterwards Kate and Richard moved to The Cliff, Warwick.

Elizabeth Anne didn't return to school until she was fourteen, and then she was sent for two years to Bath, to a school kept by the five Misses Fournier. On 'coming out' at seventeen, her parents took her travelling and in the years which followed she

was embraced by her extended family in the manner of the time, spending long periods in residence with relatives and friends. She was a great favourite of her Aunt Gurney who lived in St James's Square in London, and it was she who insisted on sending for her trusted doctor when Elizabeth Anne was unwell in 1842.

I had been very out of health for some time, and my Aunt Gurney was anxious I should consult Dr Holland which I did. He was a most agreeable man, quite a Courtier in manner, full of anecdotes etc., and a very clever man. He was related to my cousins, the Darwins of Shrewsbury, and called me his cousin. I saw him several times, and if he wished me to continue the same medicine, he would give me a useful prescription for a cough or something else in return for the fee.

The charm of Gaskell's cousin Dr Henry Holland was legendary and it clearly stayed long in the memory of this patient. The following winter Elizabeth Anne was back with her Aunt, helping to nurse her Uncle Hudson Gurney whose death was 'hourly expected'. She recalls that Sir Henry Holland came at least once every day and Mr Young the surgeon slept every night in the house; the prudent housemaid changed his room every few days 'to keep the beds aired'. Aunt Gurney's faith in Henry Holland was amply justified. After several months her husband recovered, to live a further twenty years, dying at the age of ninety-one. The health of Mr Young, who was used to air the damp beds, is not recorded.

Elizabeth Anne also lived well into her nineties and towards the end of her life used her diaries, letters and family papers to augment the memories which she set down in the 'Galton Book', now in the Galton Laboratory at University College, London. She also dictated reminiscences to her daughter. Andrew Moilliet, a direct descendant of her sister Lucy, has skilfully edited these sources to produce a fascinating volume of recollections. They include eye-witness accounts of national events (Elizabeth Anne was present at Queen Victoria's Coronation and watched her Jubilee celebrations in 1897), homely anecdotes of men of outstanding achievement (James Watt, Matthew Boulton, Robert Owen, etc.) and useful, as well as delightful, insights into middle-class family life in the nineteenth century.

#### Sources:

Andrew Moilliet, *Elizabeth Anne Galton (1808-1906). A Well-connected Gentlewoman*. Published by Leonie Press, Hartford, Cheshire, 2003. Copies can be obtained by cheque (£10.99 + £1.75 p&p) to Andrew Moilliet, 27 Maple Rd, Bramhall, Stockport SK7 2DH. I am grateful to Mr Moilliet for permission to quote from his book.

John Chapple, *The Early Years* (Manchester, 1997).

Jenny Uglow, *The Lunar Men* (London, 2002).



Elspeth Smellie entertains the Gaskell Society on Tuesday evening, July 8th 2008 at the Tontine Hall, Peebles, Scotland. Photo by Adrienne Stennett.



At the National Library of Scotland. Joan Leach and Dudley Green read Gaskell letter (GL339) about Haworth. Photo by Katharine Solomon.

## Tour in Scottish Lowlands, 7 - 11 July, 2008

Jean Alston

Forty or so members and friends visited the Scottish Lowlands, once again to follow Elizabeth Gaskell's family history and literary experiences and contacts. The Tontine Hotel, Peebles, proved to be a good location and base for our outings. An early arrival on Monday allowed some to follow the town trail of fine buildings and river side walk; our only opportunity to enjoy Peebles during the tightly packed itinerary. Our after-dinner talk was about Sir Walter Scott and his home Abbotsford, in preparation for the Wednesday visit.

Tuesday's drive was to Berwick-upon-Tweed, where Elizabeth's paternal ancestors had lived and where her father, William, grew up. A tour of the Town Hall introduced us to the nineteenth-century building which had housed meetings of the Freemen; William Stevenson and his son John were both Freemen. The city gaol was situated on the top floor with splendid views, rather than the dungeon situation which is more usual. The bastions of the town were built on the instructions of Elizabeth 1st and remain in good order today. Many of our party enjoyed walking the bastions and thought of young William Stevenson whose mother complained that he played truant to run about the walls. Perhaps like us he appreciated the excellent views of the river and sea, and the coast around Lindisfarne to the south. We gather, from a number of writings, that the Stevenson boys were greatly influenced by Berwick's River Tweed and North Sea location and that two of William's younger brothers were at sea during the wars with France. William, after a successful education, pursued farming, scientific writing and other more sedentary occupations.

Melrose was our location for Wednesday's visit. The tour of Abbotsford was greatly enhanced by our excellent guide Roderich who clearly loved and was well-versed in his subject. Sir Walter Scott was a prolific writer and his publications would have greatly influenced Elizabeth Gaskell and her contemporaries. Abbotsford was located well above the river and several members walked to Abbots Ford itself, discussing the place and its likely function in history. The estate was extensive and included fine walled gardens for our enjoyment. Melrose Abbey, National Trust walled gardens and several tea rooms provided warm relaxation for the afternoon.

Thursday was the day for Edinburgh. A house of partly mediaeval origin known as Stenhouse Mansion was visited by some of the group. Elizabeth Gaskell's parents, may have farmed from this building ( see *The Early Years* by John Chapple) It is now owned by the NT for Scotland and used by Historic Scotland as a conservation centre.

A tour of the National Library of Scotland had been arranged for the afternoon. We were in for a treat! Some of Gaskell's letters were provided for our perusal - and we were actually allowed to handle and read them. I, for example, had letters relating to the Brontë biography which referred to Mary Taylor's involvement in trade after she went out to New Zealand and kept a shop there.

Our day for returning home was Friday but we were not to be denied another important visit. New Lanark was the creation of David Dale and Robert Owen and was coeval with and similar to Quarry Bank Mill, created by Samuel Greg in the eighteenth century. However, the New Lanark river and valley were somewhat grander than those at Quarry Bank and I believe the social structure was organised on more cooperative principles. We were permitted to visit Robert Owen's House, a mill worker's house, the village store and the school. I was interested to learn that no child began work before the age of ten and would have received up to seven years education before that time. Part-time education continued after the age of ten. Restoration of the mill had begun in the early 1970s and seemed to have retained much of the authentic character and atmosphere of its creators.

During all the above visits, the weather was fine and sometimes warm. We are indebted to Ian Campbell for his welcome and introduction to Edinburgh, Joan Leach and Janet Kennerley for arranging the tour and to Elizabeth Williams for her help with planning the journey times. This was, yet again, an informative and enjoyable break for Gaskell members. Indeed, we had a splendid tour.

#### Editor:

Elizabeth had an affection for Scotland which shows in her work: Dr Gibson in *Wives and Daughters*, for example, had a Scottish accent and in *Cranford*, Major Gordon and Jessie Brown marry and live in Scotland. Elizabeth Gaskell had an early experience of Scotland when she stayed in Edinburgh over two winters as a young lady: a portrait and bust of her date from this visit.

After William Stevenson married Elizabeth Holland on 1st of December 1797 they tried farming at Saughton Mills, also known as Stenhouse, near Edinburgh.\* Here they were friendly with James Cleghorn, who as an expert in agriculture, advised them. He was also a friend of Burns who addressed a letter to him, '*Mr Cleghorn, farmer. God bless the trade!*' and later wrote, '*Congratulations to Mrs Cleghorn. I should much like to see the little angel.*' Elizabeth's unusual middle name was a tribute to these friends and perhaps in memory of a child they had lost.

An advert in the *Edinburgh Evening Courant* of 20th January 1797 was for 'two farms to let at Saughton Mills, apply to Mrs Cleghorn' In spite of the Cleghorns help farming yielded little success and the Stevensons moved into Edinburgh where William did some tutoring and they ran a lodging house, moving several times.

Elizabeth Gaskell visited Edinburgh in 1855 and probably stayed at Peebles for a few days, perhaps meeting Robert Chambers there. She wrote to him in March 1859 after reading his *Domestic Annals of Scotland* that it '*warms up all my Scottish blood – and makes me wish heartily that our four girls could see something of Scotland*'; she reminded him of their visit three years before and asked for his help in arranging a holiday on the west coast.

She wrote to Ellen Nussey that '*Edinburgh, compared to London, is like a vivid page of history compared to a dull lecture on political economy*'. (GL 624)

Her final visit to Scotland was in 1864 when she and Meta stayed with Dr. Allman, Professor of Natural History, who was married to Louisa Shaen; and here the last portrait we have of her was taken in an Edinburgh studio.

Reading *Elizabeth Gaskell The Early Years* by John Chapple greatly enhanced our visits to Berwick-upon-Tweed and Edinburgh. \*see back cover

## Friends of Plymouth Grove

Ann O'Brien

The six months since the last report have been full of activity for all involved with Plymouth Grove. The open days on the first Sunday of every month have continued to have a steady flow of visitors, numbers not reaching the dizzy heights of our Cranford Open Days (to the relief of all concerned, I think!) but, nevertheless, providing much needed income, especially from the book-shop sales. We have also had a number of different groups in during the week, including a visit from our good friends at the Brook Street Unitarian Chapel. All our visitors continue to be very impressed with the house itself as well as with the talks, given mainly by Janet, and of course with the refreshments.

In March we had the first of our special events at the house, when Ann Brooks gave an illustrated talk on Villa Gardens and whetted our appetites for what we hope will eventually be created at Plymouth Grove, once the restoration has been completed. Then in June we had a most informative and entertaining talk, 'In the footsteps of William Gaskell', given by our good friend, John Midgley, the recently retired minister at Cross Street Chapel. Mr Midgley linked the work of William Gaskell with the work of Unitarians today, showing how, then as now, Unitarianism is an all-inclusive and non-judgemental religion.

One of our most successful events took place not at the house, but in the Methodist Church Hall in Alderley Edge: this was the immensely enjoyable musical production

'Music for the Gaskells', performed by Opus 5. Everyone present agreed that this was indeed a night to remember. We are hopeful that the performance may be repeated, at a different venue so that many more may enjoy it.

Delia Corry and Charles Foster once more entertained us with their now famous, in Gaskell circles at least, 'At Home with the Gaskells'. This time it was held at Altrincham Grammar School for Girls and it was good to see people not usually at Plymouth Grove events coming along to see what we have to offer! Both these events served as good publicity for the house, as well as generating much needed funds. Our thanks to Opus 5 and, once again, to Delia and Charles.

Here are details of our forthcoming programme, to which all members of the Gaskell Society are, as always, most welcome:

**Autumn Events:** As usual, the house will be open from 12-4 p.m. on the first Sunday of the month; then on

**Saturday, September 13th and Sunday 14th:** Heritage Week-end when the house will be open from 10-4 p.m. On both days there will be displays, Gaskell presentations, memories corner, videos, drop-in children's activities, bookstall, short slide lectures and refreshments. Admission free.

**Sunday 28th September:** 'Mary Barton's Manchester' - an illustrated talk by the eminent architect and architectural historian, John Archer. This talk will focus on the town's streets and buildings which would have been so familiar to Mary and her family. This is sure to appeal to many interested not only in Gaskell but also in the local history of Manchester, so early booking is recommended. This could be a good way to round off the week-end for those attending the Gaskell Autumn meeting in Knutsford on Saturday 27th September. Doors open at 2 p.m for the talk to begin at 2.30. To book, phone Hilda Holmes (0161) 487 2593. £7.50, including afternoon tea in the drawing room where Elizabeth Gaskell wrote *Cranford*.

**Sunday 6th October:** 12-4 p.m. Open Day and Plant Sale: plants may be ordered in advance. All are good quality plants at reasonable prices. Please come and buy, and do bring us plants from your own garden for sale on the day. Further details from Hilda Holmes (0161) 487 2593.

**Sunday 9th November:** 'My Lady Ludlow - a dramatised reading'. This costumed event presents Elizabeth Gaskell's little-known short story (part of which was used in the recent televised 'Cranford'). Delia Corrie will be our Lady Ludlow, with Mary Wright, Vin Tuohy, Chris Burton and Joan Hill. Adaptation by Robin Allan. Again, this event is sure to be popular, following the T.V. adaptation, so book early. Doors open at 2 p.m., performance begins 2.30 p.m. £10, including afternoon tea. Pre-booking essential - phone Hilda Holmes (0161) 487 2593. ( Pay on the door.)

**Sunday 7th December: 12 – 2 p.m.,** Open Day (n.b. early closing on this day). Usual exhibitions, tours, bookstall (free).

**2.30 p.m:** The Grace Darling Singers' Christmas Music & Reading. Enjoy their performance and sing some favourite carols, followed by seasonal refreshments. Pre-booking essential, phone Hilda Holmes (0161) 487 2593. £7.50. Pay on the door.

We would also like to bring to your attention a Day School to be held at the Friends' Meeting House, Mount Street, Manchester (just off Albert Square), on **Saturday February 21st 2009.**

*'An Underrated Victorian: Sir James P Kay-Shuttleworth: Medicine, Cholera, the Poor Law, Education and Fiction'*

Cost £20, including tea and coffee. Lunch available locally. To book ring Hilda Holmes (0161) 487 2593, and send payment to her at 8 Peter Street, Hazel Grove, Stockport, SK7 4BQ. (Cheques payable to Manchester Historic Buildings Trust.)

So you see we have a full and varied programme, with something which we hope will appeal to everyone. We thank Hilda for taking all our bookings - I'm sure you know her phone number off by heart now! We are always pleased to see anyone who wishes to help, either at any of our regular Sunday Open Days and/or any of our other events, either on Sundays or during the week. We have a number of groups visiting in the next few months and we would welcome you with open arms if you could spare the time to help at just one of these events or visits. Please contact Ann Waddington (email [ann@waddington26.fsnet.co.uk](mailto:ann@waddington26.fsnet.co.uk)) and she will give dates when we need help. Of course we continue to be grateful to all those who have helped in the past.

Finally, can I repeat Janet's request that you write to her, stating your support for the restoration of the home of Elizabeth Gaskell? It will be of enormous help when the trustees are seeking funding if they can show that there is a large body of people who want this project to succeed. If you haven't already joined the Friends of Plymouth Grove, please give it some consideration - the minimum donation is only £5 a year and for this you get two newsletters and, of course, Friends' events. I would like to emphasise here that being a friend need not take up any more of your time than filling in the form and writing the cheque or card number. While we welcome help it is by no means obligatory; we need as many friends as possible, so please think about it. Christine Lingard is also Membership Secretary of the Friends of Plymouth Grove so contact her if you would like to join us! (email: [lingardgsms@aol.com](mailto:lingardgsms@aol.com))

\*Janet Allan, Chairman, Manchester Historic Buildings Trust, c/o 10 Dale Road, New Mills, High Peak, SK22 4NW. Email: [janet@janetbook.fsnet.co.uk](mailto:janet@janetbook.fsnet.co.uk)  
The new web-site for Plymouth Grove is at [www.elizabethgaskellhouse.org](http://www.elizabethgaskellhouse.org)

# THE 2008 AGM OF THE ALLIANCE OF LITERARY SOCIETIES

Report by Janet Kennerley

This year's AGM of the ALS was held at the Holiday Inn, Coate, near Swindon in Wiltshire, and was superbly hosted by The Richard Jefferies Society. The hotel was conveniently opposite Coate Farm, birthplace of this author in 1848, which now houses the Jefferies Museum.

Lady Treitel, Vice-President of the Society, gave us a delightful welcome and told us briefly of the life and work of Jefferies and his association with the local rural area, known at "Jefferies Land" which is constantly under pressure from planners and builders due to creeping urbanisation. Despite development however, many of the scenes of his countryside, as yet, still exist and those who wish can experience them – as delegates were invited to do later on during the ALS weekend. During his tragically short life, Jefferies wrote many books about the local people and natural history, particularly fascinating for their chronicles of the last days of a rustic community before mechanisation drove workers off the land. His work has been a major influence on many writers including Edward Thomas, W H Hudson, Henry Williamson, D H Lawrence, Arthur Ransome and John Fowles. He has been described as a many sided genius and major studies of mysticism have anthologised his work and discussed his ideas largely portrayed in "The Story of my Heart". He wrote one of the great novels for boys, "Bevis", as well as several highly original novels for adult readers including "Amaryllis at the Fair" and "After London". Jefferies' writing is heavily influenced by his years spent at Coate and there is a strong autobiographical element to many of his books and essays. However, the author believed that his literary career would be better served living nearer London, so after his marriage in 1874 to a local girl, the young couple and their son moved to Surbiton in 1877, but he died 10 years later at Goring-by-Sea in Sussex.

The AGM was chaired by Linda Curry (John Clare Society) with approximately 40 delegates in attendance, including the President, Aeronwy Thomas. We were told that there are now 99 member societies of the ALS, of which 20 were represented. A new website has been set up at minimum costs and secretarial expenses were low, probably due to the fact that there has been a vacancy since the last AGM. Fortunately this post has now been filled by Anita Fernandez-Young (Dickens Fellowship).

The second volume of the ALS Journal "ALSo..." is now available, with Literary Tourism as the theme. (Joan Leach and Janet Kennerley have limited copies –

please ask if you are interested.) Free electronic copies are available to members – contact Linda Curry at the following email - l.j.curry@bham.ac.uk. In this 2008 edition, Joan Leach's excellent article "Knutsford as Cranford" can be found on page 25 to 30, which I hope will give readers from the member societies of the Alliance of Literary Societies a tempting taste of what we have to offer when The Gaskell Society hosts the AGM weekend during May 2010.

The Arts & Humanities Research Council is planning a project under the title "Beyond Text" researching into Literary Societies and their effect on the enlarging the reading repertoires of members and the function of literary societies in general. The Council is calling for the setting up of workshops to consider pairs of authors, e.g. the representative from the Virginia Woolf Society was keen to match Arnold Bennett with Virginia Woolf. The proposal is not for an academic exercise, but an appeal to ordinary readers and an encouragement to all societies regardless of membership levels to collaborate. Applications for funding can be sent to the Arts & Humanities Research Council. The ALS Journal's theme for 2009 will be "Beyond Text". If any society member is interested in contributing an article, please contact Linda Curry (as above). More detail on this theme is including in the front part of the 2008 Journal. "ALSo .. " is distributed to all member societies and beyond and is an excellent opportunity to highlight a particular writer (required by 1<sup>st</sup> November 2008 please).

A request was granted for £100 from ALS funds towards a plaque for the Croydon home of D H Lawrence where he wrote "Sons and Lovers" in 1908.

After the lunch break, the group were invited to reassemble at the Jefferies Museum across the road from the hotel, where we watched a short film produced by the Richard Jefferies Society showing local places associated with the writer. A walk was then led around the immediate countryside including Coate Water.

About 20 members stayed on for dinner at the Holiday Inn. The evening's entertainment included recitations and impromptu singing while Aeronwy Thomas delighted everyone with some information about her recent American tour including a piece of her own composition and then another one written by her father, Dylan Thomas, which she recited - a most enjoyable close to an interesting day.

For the few who had stayed over until Sunday, the hard working members of the Richard Jefferies Society, under the guidance of John Price and Jean Saunders, had organised a fascinating Literary Treasure Trail, an opportunity to explore the North Wiltshire countryside and places that Jefferies immortalised in his works. We enjoyed Liddington Hill, Chisledon Church, Burderop House & Park, Burderop Downs and Woods, and Gamekeeper's Cottage at Hodson. Welcome refreshments were



available at the Museum until we had completed as much as time would allow – an excellent weekend.

There is uncertainty about next year's AGM venue. It had been hoped that this could take place in Dublin during June 2009, but as yet, this is still to be confirmed. The Gaskell Society looks forward to being the host in Knutsford on 15/16<sup>th</sup> May during Gaskell's special bicentenary year during 2010. It is worth reminding Gaskell members that anyone in membership of a society which subscribes to the ALS is welcome to attend this annual event. I am always pleased to pass on details.

## Book Notes

Christine Lingard

*Patrick Brontë; Father of Genius* by Dudley Green. Nonsuch Press, £20.

Not even the most fervent Gaskell enthusiast would deny that her portrait of Charlotte Brontë's father in her biography of her friend was, to quote the Archbishop of Canterbury in his introduction to this book, 'a vivid but misleading picture'. Dudley Green has attempted to redress the balance in this scholarly biography, which makes full reference to documentary sources. It provides a welcome addition to his recent edition of the letters of Patrick Brontë. Though I might add that despite her unsympathetic account to her last visit to the old man (p. 329) Gaskell wrote, on a flyleaf preserved in the Manchester Central Library:

I visited Haworth in November 1860, and found Mr Brontë, as clear and strong in intellect as ever, although confined to bed by advancing age. He was full of interest in Italian politics, and of admiration of Garibaldi, and spoke to me, and my family with tender and affectionate interest. E.C. Gaskell. May 3rd 1861.

Interestingly there is also a new biography of the other man in Charlotte's life - her husband, Rev. Arthur Bell Nicholls:

*Mr Charlotte Brontë: the Life of Arthur Bell Nicholls* by Alan H. Adamson. McGill-Queen's University Press (Canada), £15.

Also published this year:

*Private Sphere to World Stage: from Austen to Eliot* by Elizabeth Sabiston. Ashgate, £50.

Including an essay - 'The iron of slavery in her heart: the literary relationship of Elizabeth Gaskell and Harriet Beecher Stowe'.

*Reading the nineteenth-century novel: Austen to Eliot* by Alison Case and Harry E. Shaw. Blackwell, £50; also available in paperback, £5.90.

A useful analysis of novels that are uniquely representative of the time period, including the work of Austen, Eliot, Scott, Thackeray, Gaskell, Dickens, Trollope, Braddon, and the Brontë sisters. For students and teachers.

*Romantic Echoes in the Victorian Era*, edited by Andrew Radford and Mark Sandy. Ashgate 2008, £55.

A collection of essays with extensive coverage ranging from Byron, Keats and the romantic poets to Swinburne, Hopkins and Oscar Wilde.

It includes an essay, 'Mr. Osborne's secret: Elizabeth Gaskell, *Wives and Daughters*, and the gender of Romanticism' by Vincent Newey.

Due later this year:

*The Lure of Illustration in the Nineteenth Century: Picture and Press* by Laurel Brake and Marysa Demoor. Palgrave Macmillan, £45, due December.

A history of periodical literature and illustration in the nineteenth century with 56 illustrations, including a discussion of Dickens' periodical editing. It also includes an essay by Joanne Shattock, 'Elizabeth Gaskell - journalism and letters'.

*Family Likeness: Sex, Marriage, and Incest from Jane Austen to Virginia Woolf* by Mary Jean Corbett of Miami University. Cornell University Press, £45, due November.

Shows how Victorian attitudes to marriages between relations differed from today, and why such marriages were more attractive to Victorian women than those to a stranger. The Brontës, George Eliot, and Elizabeth Gaskell are also discussed.

*Mr. Langshaw's Square Piano* by Madeline Gould. Corvo Books; 64 Duncan Terrace, London N1 8AG £13.99 Reviewed by Helen Smith.

This book is much more than the biography of one Broadwood serial no. 10651, made in 1807 which the author acquired at auction in 2004 and subsequently had restored. This volume covers social history in Britain and its colonies in the 18th and 19th centuries, the development of the piano from the harpsichord onwards in London and on the continent, the Langshaw family in Lancaster and elsewhere, as an adjunct to the author's meticulous researches into the history and provenance of her own square piano.

The book covers such a wide spectrum that it could have formed a more condensed volume on the Langshaw family: their background, education and music-making; and also a sequel on Broadwoods in Britain and abroad, combined with the author's theories on social history as reflected through piano ownership in the 18th and 19th centuries.

Madeline Goold writes very fluently although with occasional repetition. She uses humour and imagination now and again to enliven rather dry letters. On occasion the content can be turgid. However it is written with feeling and compassion and at times is deeply moving. The book is well illustrated, has an extensive bibliography but no index. This recent book will entertain anyone with interests in archives, pianos and in particular, Broadwoods. Of special interest to the Gaskell Society are references to Francis Sharpe, "organist and society music teacher of Knutsford, Cheshire", Emily Sharpe, née Langshaw, and also to Mrs. Gaskell and her beloved Cranford."

Footnote: Readers who enjoy this book may also like "The Piano Tuner", a novel by Daniel Mason (Picador, 2003).

## *Autumn General Meeting*

At the Methodist Church, Princess Street, Knutsford  
**Saturday 27th September 2008**

Meet at 10.30 a.m. for Coffee.

11.00 a.m. **Patsy Stoneman:** 'Adapting novels for TV : the BBC's production of Cranford', illustrated with film-clips on DVD.

Patsy lectures in English at Hull University and specialises in the adaptation of Victorian novels for stage and screen. She is author of *Jane Eyre on Stage 1838-1882*.

Lunch 12.30 - 2.00 p.m. approx. £10 (pay on the day)

2.15 p.m. approx. 'Gaskells, Langshaws and family networks', an illustrated talk by **Tim Austin**.

'I do think Mr and Mrs Langshaw are charming', wrote Elizabeth in 1854.

'New' Gaskell letters from her to Emily Langshaw and between their daughters reveal their friendships.

Tim Austin, a descendant of the Sharpe, Whittaker and Langshaw families, all known to Elizabeth, will give a talk exploring these families and their links with Knutsford.

Book with Joan Leach, on 01565 634668, or at joanleach@aol.com

**Sunday 28 September**, 10.45 am At Brook Street Chapel, Knutsford, flowers will be laid on the Gaskell grave.

11.00am Harvest Festival service

After the service a ploughman's lunch will be served in the schoolroom at a cost of £5 2 p.m. for 2.30 p.m. at 84 Plymouth Grove:

'Mary Barton's Manchester': an illustrated lecture by John Archer, architect and architectural historian.

Pre-booking essential: phone Hilda Holmes (0161) 487 2593. £7.50. Pay on the door.

## *London and South East Group*

**Saturday November 8 2008: Gwen Clarke:** 'Elizabeth Gaskell and the Victorian Conduct Book - Respect or Rebellion?'

In the nineteenth-century girls & young women - especially young wives - were bombarded with literature concerned with what was perceived to be the correct way to behave, hence the conduct or etiquette book. Did these publications influence Gaskell at all - either in her life or in her work? Gwen will seek to discover the answer by examining some of the conduct books, together with examples from Gaskell's letters & fiction.

**Saturday February 14 2009: Fran Baker:** 'Intimate and Trusted correspondents: the Gaskells and the Greens'.

Fran, who is an archivist and in charge of the Gaskell Collection at the John Rylands Library, University of Manchester, will consider the correspondence of the Green family - Mary Green was a friend of Gaskell and their daughters were good friends too.

**Saturday May 9 2009: Shirley Foster:** 'Character and Environment: Freedom and Enclosure'.

Shirley will lead a discussion on Sylvia's Lovers.

She will talk for about 25 minutes and then there will be a discussion based on some selected passages which she will indicate in advance. More homework!!

**Saturday June 6 2009**

**3 - 5.30 pm or thereabouts**

A Tea party in the garden (weather permitting!!) at 85 Calton Avenue Dulwich London SE21 7DF.

Bring your favourite reading about the summer or gardens or any seasonally appropriate reading. It does not have to be Gaskell! Weather permitting we shall have tea first followed by our readings in the garden. You don't have to read but your reading would be welcome.



## Yorkshire Group

**September 20th 2008**, 2.00 p.m., at the Friends Meeting House, Friargate:

**Joan Leach:** 'George Smith, prince of publishers'.

Details from Dudley Barlow on 01904 750366 or at [dudleybarlow@hotmail.co.uk](mailto:dudleybarlow@hotmail.co.uk)

Dudley is retiring as group secretary so we hope another member will take on this role which is not too arduous, mainly arranging 2 or 3 meetings a year.

## North West Group

**Cross Street Chapel. Manchester**

Held on the second Tuesdays in the month at 1.00pm. The chapel will be open from 12.15 with tea and coffee for those who bring sandwiches

October 14	Manchester to Liverpool by train in 1834 by Bernard Champness
November 11	A Matter of Wonder: travelling by train in the Victorian novel by Alan Shelston
December 9	Christmas carol service conducted by the minister Revd Jane Barraclough
February 10	Stolen Childhoods: Victorian child workers in cotton and other trades by Sue Wilkes
March 10	Robert Owen in Manchester by Alan Kidd

**Knutsford, St John's Church Hall**

Meetings are usually held on the last Wednesday of each month:

29th October, 3rd December (the room is not available for 26th November), 28th

January, 25th February, 25th March, and 29th April

Talks and discussions led by Elizabeth Williams are preceded by

buffet lunch at 12.15. Cost, £7.50

Alan Shelston will give an introductory talk on *Cousin Phillis* at the October meeting.

Followed by discussion on the novella at the meeting on 3rd December.

We are using the Wordsworth edition of *Cranford and Other stories*. Knutsford Heritage Centre and Plymouth Grove have copies for sale.

A New Year event will be held at the Leicester Warren Hall in Knutsford on Wednesday, 7th January. Gillian Stapleton of The History Wardrobe will present *Jane Eyre: The well-dressed governess*. Tea will be served. Booking details later.

## The Gaskell Society South-West

**Programme for November 2008 - August 2009**

**Saturday November 8th 2.00 for 2.30pm.** St Michael's Church Crypt (opposite Waitrose.) Members £2, Visitors £3.00 including coffee etc before the meeting begins

"Did Elizabeth Gaskell read Jane Austen?"

This will take the form of a debate comparing the attitudes of both authors to marriage, family life, religion and the place of women in society. There will be plenty of opportunity for the audience to participate. Visitors very welcome.

**Monday January 14th 7.00pm.** New Year Supper "Bring and Share" 138, Fairfield Park Road, Bath BA1 6JT Rosemary and Tony Marshall  
Tel. 01225 426732

**Saturday April 5th. 3.00 pm.** Flat 4, 97, Sydney Place. Bathwick, Bath BA2 6NE by kind invitation of Mrs. Joan Chandler. Visitors very welcome.

"Dramatising Elizabeth Gaskell" by Gaskell scholar Dr. Brenda McKay followed by tea and biscuits. Members £2 Visitors £3.00

**Sunday August 16th** The Summer Tea - 3.00 for 3.30  
(The topic for brief readings of poetry and prose will be "Children in literature")

**Any queries to Mrs. Rosemary Marshall**

**138, Fairfield Park Road, Bath BA1 6JT**

**Tel: 01225 426732 E-mail: [rosemary\\_marshall@yahoo.com](mailto:rosemary_marshall@yahoo.com)**

Linda Curry, Chair, Alliance of Literary Societies

You might be interested to learn that the Winston Churchill Memorial Trust offers opportunities for British Citizens to travel overseas to undertake study projects related to their trade, profession or particular interest. These fellowships are open to applicants of any age and from all walks of life, irrespective of academic or professional qualifications. In 2008, the average grant was £5,300 to cover an overseas visit of 4 - 8 weeks (a minimum of 4).

Applications must be in by 14 October 2008. More detail is available from their website at [www.wcmt.org.uk](http://www.wcmt.org.uk), or you can email them at [office@wcmt.org.uk](mailto:office@wcmt.org.uk) or phone them on 020 7584 9315.

# The Gaskell Society



*Knutsford, Cheshire  
looking up King Street from the foot of Adams Hill*

## NEWSLETTER

Spring 2009 - Number 47

THE GASKELL SOCIETY HOME PAGE has all the latest information on meetings.  
<http://gaskellsociety.co.uk>

If you have any material or suggestions for future Newsletters, please contact Mrs. Joan Leach,  
Far Yew Tree House, Chester Road, Tabley, Knutsford, Cheshire WA16 0HN.  
Telephone - 01565 634668 E-mail: [joanleach@aol.com](mailto:joanleach@aol.com)

**Hon Treasurer:** Brian Williams, 15 Cawley Avenue, Culcheth, Warrington, Cheshire WA3 4DF

**Membership Secretary:** Miss C. Lingard, 5 Moran Crescent, Macclesfield SK11 8JJ

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## *Editor's Letter*

**Joan Leach**

2010 will be the bicentenary of Elizabeth Gaskell's birth and we are making plans accordingly. The Charles Darwin bicentenary has aroused a lot of interest and we hope to use the year to increase our own profile.

We are delighted to tell you that The Dean of Westminster has agreed to our request for a memorial to her, in the commemorative window near Poets' Corner. We hope to hold a dedication ceremony at Westminster Abbey near to her birth date at the end of September 2010. We will keep you informed of plans and hope you will support an appeal for donations later.

As I write this we are preparing for the conference at Penrith in July and look forward to having some seventy of you with us.

You will read in Ann O'Brien's report about Plymouth Grove that the house is now closed for building work but the programme of events continues and helps to raise money.

We are grateful to Christine Lingard for sharing with us in this issue her researches into Elizabeth Gaskell and the Theatre, following her previous paper on Gaskell and Music. Nancy Weyant, ever alert to Gaskell items through her work as librarian at Bloomsburg University, Pennsylvania, tells us about a newly found Gaskell letter. The Brontë Society too has recently acquired a letter relating to Elizabeth's hobby of autograph hunting.

In the Spring Newsletter Fran Baker wrote about the Jamison/Green letters bought by The John Rylands University of Manchester Library. Remaining in the Green family archives are watercolour pictures and family albums. In one of the albums there are carte de visite photos of Julia, Florence and her husband Charlie Crompton but of great interest to us is one labelled 'Mrs Gaskell. You can study it in this newsletter.

The 300 year old Brook Street Chapel, burial place of Elizabeth and William Gaskell, Julia and Meta, Aunt Hannal Lumb and many of the Holland family now has a web page: [www.brookstreetchapel.org](http://www.brookstreetchapel.org)

Several enjoyable events have helped in raising funds but more is still needed before work can begin on improving access, providing a lift and exhibition space.

Please remember that our home page has details of meetings, events and the latest news: [www.gaskellsociety.co.uk](http://www.gaskellsociety.co.uk)

# *Gaskell And The Theatre*

Christine Lingard

My recent article on Gaskell and music received a lot of interest, so it seems appropriate to follow on with a survey of Gaskell and the theatre. A study of her books and letters indicates a good knowledge of drama, but how much of this was acquired from patronage of the theatre? It dates from an early age. Her family did not share the puritan disapproval of the theatre. In 1836 she wrote:

We have been a very large party this summer, and amongst other spirited actions of our lives, got up a play; I say 'we' though I did not take any part in it, but I was present at all the planning &c. it was the 'Rivals'; and was admirably performed really; considering that with one exception, it was the first appearance of any one on the theatre. Most of the performers kept up their characters during the 'drawing room' part of the evening and Lucy Holland for some days was 'great' as Mrs Malaprop, making some really capital travesties of words. [FL, pp. 19-20]

A perusal of the catalogue of books in Plymouth Grove sale (1913) does not reveal a great interest in the theatre. It includes editions of Shakespeare, Nathaniel Lee, and Philip Massinger, the French authors (Marivaux and Molière-), the Germans (Goethe and Schiller) and the Greeks - Aristophanes, Sophocles, and Euripides. Surprisingly, considering there is little biography in the entire collection, there was an 1826 book of biographical anecdotes, *Reminiscences of Michael Kelly of the King's Theatre and the Theatre Royal Drury Lane*. Michael Kelly (1762-1862) was an author, singer, musician and friend of Sheridan, Kemble and Siddons; he also owned a wine shop.

On a number of occasions when Gaskell refers to going to the theatre we cannot be certain that she was going to a dramatic performance. On her visits to Oxford, she probably went to lectures. There is little evidence of an interest in theatre-going before 1850. This may not be entirely due to the lack of evidence surviving from this period. As a young mother she may have been too busy. In the 1840s the theatre was at a low ebb in Manchester. There were fewer theatres then than there had been a generation earlier. Apart from a couple of music halls the only two theatres were the Theatre Royal, in Spring Gardens, and the Queen's Theatre, round the corner in Fountain St. The former burnt down in 1844 and a new building was opened by the celebrated director, James Sheridan Knowles, situated between the Free Trade Hall and the Gentleman's Concert Hall in Peter St. A wide variety of productions were presented but the staple diet was melodrama.

Many leading actors of the day came to Manchester. William Macready is discussed below; Henry Irving made his first appearance as Hamlet at the Theatre Royal in 1864. Helen Faucit, one of the greatest actresses of her day, was another who first appeared at the Queen's in 1845. She continued her career after she married the judge, Sir Theodore Martin. There is passing mention of Gaskell having missed her in November 1854; but that was a social occasion. Interestingly, she was appearing as Imogen in *Cymbeline*, which is the Shakespeare play most frequently quoted by Gaskell in her novels.

Once her identity as an author became known, Gaskell went to London and was lionized. She dined with Dickens; the guests included the former actor and contributor to *Punch*, Douglas Jerrold:

a very little almost deformed man with grey flowing hair, and very fine eyes. He made so many bon-mots, that at the time I thought I could remember; but which now have quite slipped out of my head.... [Jane Carlyle told her stories about her Scottish servant.] Miss Fanny Kemble called in a hat & a habit, and when Mrs C., spoke to the servant about bringing Miss K. in, unannounced, the servant said 'I did not know if it was a Mr or Mrs.' - [GL, 45a, pp. 827-9]

She met Kemble on a few occasions, including a performance of Mendelssohn's *Overture to A Midsummer Night's Dream* to which Kemble added the vocal readings.

Dickens himself was fascinated by the theatre. As a young man he regularly attended playhouses of all kinds and watched plays irrespective of quality. He seriously considered a career as an actor. In 1847 he played the part of Captain Bobadil in Jonson's *Every man in his humour*. The cast included John Forster, George Cruikshank (the illustrator), Clarkson Stanfield (the artist) and several of Dickens' friends from *Punch* - Mark Lemon, John Leech, Henry Mayhew and Mayhew's father-in-law, Douglas Jerrold. The play came to the Theatre Royal in Manchester in July 1847. Macready saw the play in London although he normally hated amateur productions. He was impressed by some of the performances, with the exception of Jerrold, but found it tedious.

Another literary figure, who also fancied his chances as an actor, appeared in the play - George Henry Lewes. He came again to Manchester in February 1849 to lecture on philosophy at the Athenaeum - to very small audiences, according to one attendee, Elizabeth Gaskell. Within the month he was back, having persuaded a professional company to give him the part of Shylock in *The Merchant of Venice*, a character he tried to play with sympathy. Gaskell confirms she was unable to attend. There is no mention of his own play, *The Noble Heart*, which he brought to the theatre later that year.

In the meantime the company led by Dickens was engaged to stage three performances of Jonson's play at Knebworth House, home of Lord Lytton (Edward Bulwer-Lytton, one of Gaskell's favourite novelists). Lytton was very impressed. With Dickens, he was inspired to form the 'Guild of Literature and Art', an ambitious project designed to help authors in need. Lytton agreed to write a play for them, to tour the provinces with to raise money for its enterprises. This play was *Not So Bad As We Seem*, and it was performed before the Queen at the London home of the Duke of Devonshire with great success. The sets were designed by Joseph Paxton. The Queen wrote in her Journal:

All acted on the whole well...Dickens (the celebrated author) admirably, and Dr Jerrold a funny little man who writes in *Punch*, extremely well... The dresses and scenery were beautiful.

The Duke of Wellington, who was also in the audience, was not so impressed. He left after the second act. It toured to the Free Trade Hall, on 11 February 1852 and this time Gaskell was in the audience:

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 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, and 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. [FL, p. 64]

Later that year, she had another opportunity to see them. Catherine Winkworth records:

The next day Charles and Catherine Dickens and Georgina Hogarth called very early, and invited the Gaskells down to watch the 'Amateurs', who were performing Boucicault's farce *Used Up*, J.R. Planché's *Charles XII* and Dickens' own *Mr Nightingale's Diary*.

This time Elizabeth avoided a crick in the neck, telling Marianne: 'Papa & I went behind the scenes to see the play and had tea there, which was a very luxurious way of seeing it' [GL, No.131, p.197]. There was an audience of four thousand at the Free Trade Hall on 4th September. The *Manchester Guardian* called Mr Nightingale the most perfect of the night. The cast also included Wilkie Collins and John Tenniel.

In 1857 the Guild made another tour to Manchester. The date coincided with the opening of the Art Treasures Exhibition and so Dickens was able to give favourable reports of newly formed Hallé Orchestra. The play presented was Wilkie Collins' *Frozen Deep* - a dramatization of the fate of the explorer, John Franklin, who disappeared in the 1840s trying to find a route to the East via the Northwest Passage. This play is famous today because Dickens employed professional actresses. These included Ellen Ternan, who was to become his mistress. The cast included Wilkie Collins, Mark Lemon and the artist Augustus Egg. The sets were designed by Clarkson Stanfield. It was presented at the Free Trade Hall on 21st and 22nd August. There is no record that any of the Gaskells attended. Her house was full of guests attending the Exhibition.

A later visit to the theatre was in May 1860: 'instead about 4 Anne B came to say ...& after that wd call for us & take us to the play ' [GL, No.465, p.614]. This was *Dead Heart* by Watts Phillips (1825-74). It starred the great actor manager Ben Webster & Sarah Woolgar (Mrs Alfred Mellon) in one of her finest performance. The play had been written in 1857. It concerned a tale of self-sacrifice in the French Revolution leading to substitution at the foot of the guillotine. Ben Webster showed it to Dickens and it must have made an impression. Two years later *A Tale of Two Cities* appeared.

Theatre-going at this time had been given respectability by the patronage of the Queen. Gaskell saw her on a number of occasions - the first time at a gala presentation at St James' Theatre of the comic opera *Fra Diavolo* by Daniel Auber in 1849 [FL, p. 42]. She also records seeing her in February 1851. This letter to Marianne is a little confusing. One would be mistaken in thinking that it was at a performance starring Macready:

I do not suppose you can get to see Mr Macready for 10s. I heard before I left London that all the tickets were to be a guinea; and I don't think it is worth more than 10s at any rate. I did not see the Queen. Our box was right over her head. She is to be 'in state' at the benefit. No notice was taken of her that night any farther than that all eyes were directed towards the royal box, because she did not come in state. [GL, No.90, p.143]

But a perusal of newspapers reveals that on Saturday 15 February 1851 the Queen was present at the Princess's Theatre, at the farewell performance of George Bartley, as Falstaff in *Henry IV*. Bartley (1782-1858) was a celebrated comic actor, who had worked with Charles Kean and Sheridan.

We do not know what she saw. There was a lot to choose from. Stanford's Paris Guide (1858) lists 22 theatres, music halls and opera houses. Perhaps she saw one by Molière, whose *Le médecin malgré lui* is referred to in *Curious, if true*. [1860]. He was a favourite of Mme Mohl who loved the theatre. It offered her welcome release in times of stress. She also watched much lighter offerings: 'There's a new play, *Montjoie*, by Octave Feuillet, much talked of. I must find out whether there are any scènes scandaleuses before I can take my niece of sixteen, just out of her village...'.

That year Dickens records being enchanted by Mme Jeanne Sylvania Arnould-Plessy, who had frequently appeared in the French plays in London and he also saw *Demi Monde* by Alexandre Dumas Fils in 1855.

The leading Paris theatre was the Théâtre Français, which at the time of Gaskell's visit in 1855 was presenting *La Czarine* by Eugène Scribe, a story of Peter the Great and his wife, Catherine. Scribe was one of the most popular and entertaining of French playwrights of the time, penning over 200 plays - as well as librettos and musical pieces. The play starred Rachel, in the last new role she undertook. It was described as a colourless and pointless role and soon closed. The experience was all the more bitter because her greatest rival, the Italian actress Adelaide Ristori (1826-1906), triumphed later in season.

In 1860, following an appearance in *Phèdre* in front of the Racine family in Paris, Ristori embarked on a tour of the Rhineland including Hanover and Wiesbaden. Gaskell got an opportunity to see her while staying in Heidelberg:

& then we went to the 4 o'clock train to Mannheim; meeting all the world at the station... Performance did not begin till 6 so we wandered about in the Park... Well! we went to see Ristori at last! and anything more magnificent I never saw. But I am not going to bore you by raptures. Miss Kell kept wishing to see her 'in repose' - 'in a quieter character'... [GL, No.475, p.626]

I cannot trace what the play was. She was accompanied on the tour by the French playwright Ernest Legouvé, (1807-1903), who was working on his play *Beatrice* for her. Her greatest German role was in Schiller's *Maria Stuart*.

Gaskell had always shown an interest in German drama though she did not read the language:

Yes! I have read Carlyle's *W[ilhelm] M[eister]* once or twice, - & thought it wonderfully clever & suggestive, & disagreeable & I remember the Hamlet criticism particularly; the oak in the vase &c but surely Hamlet 'fat & scant o' breath' is in Hamlet's self, & that style of fat suggests fairness [FL, p.117] (dated 27 October 1854)

And also the Passion plays staged every ten years at Oberammergau, which Mme Mohl had seen: 'I read them an account of the Ammergau Play, out of the London Guardian that Mr Maltby lent me; & I think they will both go to one of the Sept'r Representations' [GL, No.475, p.627].

And there were also amateur performances: '...but I find that Miss Brontë [sic] would rather enjoy going to the Amateur Performance' [FL, p. 85]. The Manchester Shakespearean Society staged *Twelfth Night* in the Theatre Royal in aid of the Manchester Free Library on Monday 25 April 1853, a production which was panned by the critics. Many of the performances were inaudible.

Gaskell's works soon attracted attention from dramatists themselves. In 1866 the prolific Irish playwright Dion Boucicault (possibly the only English playwright of the 1850s whose work is still performed today) wrote *The Long Strike*, a version of *Mary Barton* and *Lizzie Leigh*. It concentrates on the strike, the murder, and the trial. His wife played the part of Mary, renamed Jane, and the author himself appeared in the comparatively small role of the sea captain. It was staged at the Lyceum in London and in New York. Angus Easson considers it a feeble piece. However it was a success. The *Times* (2 December) noted John Barton, played by Ben Webster, as 'one of those strongly marked characters in the delineation of which he is almost without a rival'. The play was reduced from four acts to three for later productions. It was staged at the Grand Opera House in Toronto in 1878. The comedian John (Jolly Jack) Langrishe included it in his repertoire at Deadwood, South Dakota, the same year.

GL = The Letters of Mrs Gaskell, edited by J.A.V. Chapple and Arthur Pollard, 1966  
FL = Further Letters of Mrs Gaskell, edited by John Chapple and Alan Shelston, 2000

### Gaskell Portrait Gallery

This portrait (overleaf) is taken from the Green family photograph album and has 'Mrs Gaskell' written on the back together with a studio photographer's details: *Faedo and Temporal, Plainpalais, Geneve*.

Member Tim Austin has traced other carte-de-visite by this photographer to a collection in Penn State Library, USA, where they are dated from 1860 onwards.

Jean Jamison, who has kindly given us permission to reproduce the photo, tells me that the album was annotated by her Aunt Evie, who lived into her 90s, and was a clever lady who had been librarian of Lady Margaret Hall, Oxford, so would not be likely to put names to pictures unless she was certain.



The album also has pictures of Meta, Florence and her husband, Charlie Crompton. Perhaps the foreign studio setting accounts for this rather odd pose with Elizabeth knitting. She was holidaying with family in Switzerland in 1864 (GL 558) at 'Pontresina and Glion (up above the Lake of Geneva). . ' working hard on Wives and Daughters.



For comparison of Gaskell portraits there are two by Samuel Laurence. The dating of these was considered in Gaskell Newsletter no.33.

In GL 555 Elizabeth wrote:

Sept 12 1864

My Dear Mr Lawrence(sic)

I should have not the least objection to Mr Smith [her publisher] becoming the possessor of your likeness of me...When I am next in London I hope that I and my cap) may be able to give you another sitting...

This must be that portrait which cannot now be traced. A.B. Hopkins reproduced it in her biography of 1952.

But did Laurence also make the better known drawing at that time? This is now in the possession of Mrs Trevor Dabbs, and came to her via Marianne, but the reproduction used here comes from Smith and Elders' Knutsford Edition of 1906 Vol. V and seems to have then been in the possession of the Smith family. A. B Hopkins did not know its whereabouts when she wrote in 1952.





Mrs. Gaskell by Samuel Laurence, said to have been painted about 1864.



This picture is of the bronze medallion plaque that is on The Gaskell Memorial Tower in Knutsford, made by Cavaliere Achille D'Orsi, Professor of Fine Arts in the Royal Academy at Naples, according to Ellis Chadwick,\* who added that it was designed from one of the last photographs of her, taken in Edinburgh..

\* Mrs Gaskell: Homes, Haunts and Stories (1913 edition)

## *A newly-discovered letter of introduction returns to England*

**Nancy S. Weyant**

In March, 2008, my weekly review of literary treasures offered for sale on eBay revealed a letter addressed to "My Dear Mrs. Arnold" penned by "E. C. Gaskell". While I had read both volumes of Elizabeth Gaskell's letters as well as letters subsequently published in assorted periodicals, all of my reading of her correspondence had been of letters neatly typeset in very readable form or exceedingly limited samples of her handwriting reproduced in books I own. I had no real first-hand experience of examining original examples of her handwriting. Fortuitously, the Massachusetts seller had included a photograph of the entire letter in his posting. I immediately sent the link of those images to both John Chapple and Alan Shelston, asking if it seemed authentic to them. Following multiple e-mails with them and with Fran Baker, I submitted an unchallenged bid and acquired the following letter<sup>1</sup> which is now archived in the Gaskell Collection of the John Rylands Library of the University of Manchester:

Plymouth Grove  
Manchester  
Friday, May 25

My dear Mrs Arnold,

The bearer of this note is a very dear and kind friend of ours, who is going to stay with her husband for a few days at Low-wood, and is most anxious to see you, and to visit the home of Dr Arnold. I have ventured to give her this note of introduction at her request, because I know you would be gratified, could you [have\] heard her, as I have done, express her reverence for your husband. I was so sorry to miss the call you paid me, while I was away; and Mr Gaskell tells me he met the Bishop's carriage, close to our house; but he had no idea that you were in it, or he would gladly have turned back.

In great haste, believe me dear Mrs Arnold to remain  
Yours affectionately

E. C. Gaskell.



This previously unknown letter contributes in a small way to extending our understanding of the relationship between its author and its recipient. Even though the original envelope is missing, the references to Low-wood and to Dr. Arnold within the text leave no doubt that the recipient is Mary Penrose Arnold, widow of Thomas Arnold (historian, education reformer and headmaster of Rugby School). While there are multiple references to Mrs. Arnold within Gaskell's letters to others, there is only one letter to Mrs. Arnold in either of the two published collections of those letters.<sup>2</sup> That 1859 letter is one expressing stunned sorrow upon reading in the Times about the death of the Arnolds' son William. The details in that communication speak to the nature of their relationship as women and the quality of the interactions with other members of their families. In the above letter, the reference to what appears to be an unscheduled visit by Mrs. Arnold substantiates that which is documented more explicitly by the 1859 letter and the multiple references to the Arnolds in other correspondence. These two women seem to interact with some regularity, though not great frequency. Certainly Gaskell was comfortable enough with Mrs. Arnold to introduce others to her and the 1859 letter documents that their children interacted as well. That said, my research (greatly augmented by help from John Chapple, Graham Handley and Alan Shelston) has allowed me to make the following comments on this brief letter of introduction.

The first thing of note is that two basic details are missing in the text itself. No year is provided and the "bearer of this note" is not identified by name. In fact, there is absolutely nothing factual that suggests anything about the identity of the "bearer of this note" beyond her marital status and her admiration of Dr. Arnold. It may be that the emergence of the letter in the United States reflects the nationality of the bearer but suggesting so would be undocumented speculation. It is possible that a reference to or an enumeration of guests at either the Gaskell home or the Arnold home might point to the bearer's identity but for now, the bearer's name will remain unknown. As for the missing year, lacking a full date within the letter, one must turn to clues in the text to determine exactly when the letter was written. Though the letter cites no specific year, by identifying May 25th as a Friday, Gaskell herself narrows the possibilities. My perpetual calendar identifies only three years after Gaskell became an established author and a regular visitor to the Lake District that have May 25th on a Friday: 1849, 1855 and 1860. Because she references Plymouth Grove as her address and because the Gaskells did not move to Plymouth Grove until June in 1850, 1849 is simply not a possibility. To determine which of the remaining two years is the most likely, I again turned to the text. Gaskell refers to her absence when Mrs. Arnold made a call at Plymouth Grove, though she fails to provide any reason for that absence. A review of Gaskell's activities during the first five months of 1855 and the first five months of 1860 as recorded in Graham Handley's Chronology,<sup>3</sup> document, respectively, an extended planned absence (about a week in London followed by about six weeks in Paris followed by more than a

week in London again) and a protracted absence that kept her in Winchester in February and March. It was while she was in Paris in 1855 that Charlotte Brontë Nicholls died, though she did not learn of that passing until she returned to London. Given that Gaskell and Brontë had visited Mrs. Arnold at Low-wood when the two of them first met, it seems a little unusual to me that if the letter was written in 1855 Gaskell would make absolutely no reference to her friend's death even though the primary purpose of the letter was to introduce "a dear and kind friend". Doing so would have opened a second connection for discussion - an opportunity for Mrs. Arnold and the bearer of the letter to discuss Dr. Arnold AND an opportunity to discuss Charlotte Brontë. Gaskell does not do this. Her absence from home in 1860 was unexpectedly longer than planned because she was ill and remained in Winchester until well enough to travel. This absence occurred in February and March, some two months before Gaskell penned her letter. Although Gaskell makes no reference to suggest that Mrs. Arnold's visit had been paid while she was in Winchester, an illness does not seem a topic likely to be addressed in detail or even as an aside in a letter of introduction. For that reason, I think 1860 is the more likely year.

The letter closes with what I find to be a rather curious statement about William Gaskell and the bishop. I have been told by both John Chapple and Alan Shelston that the "bishop" in question was James Prince Lee, the first Bishop of Manchester. Lee's relationship with the Arnolds went back decades. Volume 11 of the Dictionary of National Biography notes that Lee had served as a master at Rugby from 1830-1838 when Thomas Arnold was headmaster. Interestingly, both the DNB entry and most of the thumbnail biographies of Lee I have located in print or in electronic format comment on the fact that he was despotic and his pedagogical or schoolmasterly manner was an irritation to his clergy. As a Unitarian minister, William Gaskell was not one of "Bishop Lee's clergy". Furthermore, I could find nothing that directly addressed William Gaskell's opinion of Bishop Lee. I recognize that I am participating in some "reading between the lines" and a little speculation as I explore the closing sentence but I do find myself wondering if William Gaskell's choice not to return to the house reflects his opinion of the Bishop and if this closing sentence constitutes a subtle, second-hand apology to a woman who was a respected and dear friend of the family. Certainly such speculation is irrelevant to the primary purpose of the letter but I find the issue an interesting one to contemplate. I should note, however, that though I mention this, I must leave it to others more versed on the character of and relationship between these two religious leaders of Manchester and with better access to primary documents than I to properly explore this topic.

## Acknowledgements

I would like to thank Mrs. R. Trevor Dabbs for granting me permission to publish this letter.

I continue to appreciate the gracious assistance of John Chapple, Graham Handley and Alan Shelston. Their commanding knowledge of Elizabeth Gaskell's life and works, as well as Victorian England in general, is a constant wonder to me.

### Notes:

1. I wish to thank John and Kate Chapple for their assistance in interpreting the punctuation and the case of individual letters for this transcription.
2. John Chapple and Alan Shelston, *Further Letters of Mrs. Gaskell* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2000), p. 196.
3. Graham Handley, *An Elizabeth Gaskell Chronology* (Houndsmill, Basingstoke and NY: Palgrave Macmillan, 2005).

Editor's note: William and Elizabeth Gaskell both knew Bishop James Prince Lee. Elizabeths' opinion of him and Mrs Lee can be found in GL 70.

## *Skelwith*

**Christine Lingard**

The Preston family provided the Gaskells with several servants. Elizabeth lodged at their home, Mill Brow, at Skelwith, Loughrigg, near Grasmere, on several occasions including 1849, and 1857. The family had been recommended to her by Wordsworth and the Arnolds. Wordsworth described Mrs Preston as a stateswoman. Gaskell was very fond of the house and describes its 'dear charming' farm-kitchen with warming pans on the wall and spurs hanging beside the crockery on the dresser.

She recommended the Prestons to friends who were visiting the area, among them Charles Bosanquet:

...she is worth knowing, as a fine true friendly sensible woman; if you liked to lodge there and she would take you in I am sure you would be comfortable, & well cared for - N.B. She would make you change your stockings if you got your feet wet, and such like motherly and imperative cares...

Wordsworth said once of the Prestons that they were a 'Homeric family'. I am sorry to say the father sometimes drinks. I say it because you perhaps ought to be told or else when sober he is a fine simple fellow. Mrs Preston's family have lived in that house and on that land for more than 200 years, as I have heard. They have no ambition but much dignity....

Mrs Preston came to visit the Gaskells in Manchester in December 1851:

Who do you think we have staying with us? Mrs Preston from Skelwith; who has never been in a town larger than Kendal before. Kendal reminds me of Lancaster [a town which ECG was very fond of]

One of her daughters, Eleanor was very headstrong and had taken a job in London. The family had heard very little of her for several months, and there was great fear of her being seduced. Gaskell was fully aware of the dangers, as she demonstrated in her novel *Ruth*, and this was confirmed in her letters to Miss Hannah Kay, sister of Sir James Kay Shuttleworth. Eleanor's sister, Margaret, was sent to London to fetch her home. The full details of Eleanor's story are not known but as you will see her life was very short.

Margaret Preston (Mrs Knowles) looked after them in Silverdale. She was employed as a maid at Plymouth Grove but by 1854 she had taken over as cook. She was described as 'sensible and spirited, not a very good temper'. Will Preston, her brother, was an outdoor man - 'easy temper easily persuaded'. He joined them in 1852 and lived over the stable: 'passionate usefulness', 'imperious temper'.

They are buried in Grasmere churchyard under the following inscription:

In memory of Thomas Preston of Mill Brow, Loughrigg, died March 17th 1878 aged 78 years. Jane His wife, died Oct. 23rd 1868 aged 69 years. William their son d. December 17th 1861 aged 37 years. Eleanor their daughter died April 25th 1860 aged 29 y[ears].

Margaret Knowles and her husband Roger Knowles moved to Newby Bridge with their family.

See Gaskell Letters (Chapple and Pollard, editors) 92, 111, 182, 184, 362a, 439a.

## *A Model for Lady Ludlow*

**Joan Leach**

The BBC's production of *Cranford* incorporated parts of Elizabeth Gaskell's novella *My Lady Ludlow*, picturing her as autocratic but basically benevolent, her prejudices reinforced by the horrors of the French revolution with its agitation for social change. It is to be hoped that the BBC production has encouraged members and others to go back to the original story as so much of it did not fit into the *Cranford* frame. For example, Lady Ludlow had a fraught relationship with the newly appointed evangelical vicar as she was high church Tory but this part of her story could not be included in the BBC script because there was the Vicar from Mr Harrison's *Confessions*: Sophie's Hutton's father.

As a local historian I have a special interest in the character of Lady Ludlow as it seems to me that Elizabeth Gaskell was drawing on local sources. Lady Jane Stanley is still a legend in the town although she died in 1803, so Elizabeth would only have heard the stories about her from the family. The sedan chair carried annually in the May Day procession is believed to have been hers. She was the great aristocrat, daughter of the 11th Earl of Derby, and, like Lady Ludlow, she carried a gold-knobbed walking stick, chiefly as a status symbol. She made use of it if her stately progress along the street was impeded and would rap the erring pedestrian on the shoulder to remind him to give way to a lady; Henry Green relates this story in his history of Knutsford. She had pavements made in Knutsford to protect the ladies' dresses from dirt and mud, and left money in her will to have them maintained. She also left money to maintain the flag pole on the church and provide flags to be 'hoisted upon particular occasions upon the steeple of the parish church'. The flag was a demonstration of loyalty. Lady Jane Stanley's fund is still administered as a charity.

Lady Ludlow took into her household young ladies of gentle birth but impoverished circumstances. Lady Jane Stanley may have done the same as in her lengthy will she left legacies of between £50 and £500 to twenty- one ladies, mostly spinsters. This will, dated 1800, is the longest I have ever seen, on five sheets measuring 21" x 16" and six more sheets of 16" by 12" written in her own hand, and several more pages of codicils. Many small items of family memorabilia -pictures, rings, cameos and coins - are all carefully labelled. Niece Harriet Legh, for example, received a 'double guinea piece, also a smaller piece of gold which my late father carried above sixty years in his pocket it will be found folded up and wrote upon to that effect . . a mourning ring with her aunt Mary Stanley's hair under a crystal.' Lady Ludlow asked Margaret Dawson to help her sort items saved in the 'curious old drawers of her bureau ... locks of hair carefully ticketed . . and locketts and bracelets with miniatures in them'. There was also £7,500 shared between eight hospitals.

Lady Ludlow scorned the dissenting Baptist baker. There is a story told in the Knutsford Methodist church history, of an old silk weaver who had become too old to walk to and from Macclesfield, 11 miles from Knutsford. When he asked Lady Jane for aid she told him firmly that she was a church lady and could not help him, a Methodist. When he replied that he had been converted by them and could not leave them she relented, finding he was true to his faith.

The Vicar, Mr Gray, in My Lady Ludlow is a puzzle because the vicar of Knutsford from 1809-24 was Rev. Harry Grey, who was of aristocratic birth but evangelical and not popular; he did not join the gentry in their hunting or card games and was strict enough to have the church bell rung at 9 p.m. and go round the inns to turn out the drinkers. He certainly instituted a Sunday school and trained girls to sing in the choir but he arrived after Lady Jane's death. It seems odd that Elizabeth Gaskell did not give her character another name.

Lady Jane was firmly against Sunday Schools. These had been promoted by Robert Raikes since 1780, so that children could read their Bibles and catechism, but doubts arose in the reaction to the French Revolution; the workman might also read Tom Paine's Rights of Man instead. Lady Jane did include the Sunday School in her will, sharing £100 with four other charities. Her less wealthy successor at Brook House, Mrs Legh of a local gentry family also left money to the Sunday School and girls' choir.

Lady Ludlow sent six bottles of malmsey wine to the ailing Mr Gray. The last item in final bequest in Lady Jane's long will was:

Whatsoever quantites of spruce beer may be remaining in my cellars at my death may be sent to Mrs Catherine Naylor who will, as I have requested her, distribute it occasionally in the manner I have done for the relief of such poor neighbours whose case may require that fine restorative'.

I have a hand-written recipe for spruce beer from a herbalist's book but it needs essence of spruce, so can anyone can direct me to a supply?

## *Friends of Plymouth Grove*

Ann O'Brien

Autumn was, as usual, a busy time for the Gaskell House. We had the Heritage week-end in September and the regular open days on the first Sunday of each month, all introducing more people to Manchester's neglected treasure. The first talk of the season, Mary Barton's Manchester, was given by John Archer and proved so popular that it had to be repeated in January.

Another successful plant sale in October was followed in November by a dramatised reading of My Lady Ludlow, splendidly adapted by our own Robin Allan. The ever-popular Delia Corrie, playing Lady Ludlow, was joined by Mary Wright, Vin Tuohy, Chris Burton and Joan Hill, taking a variety of other roles. This was such a success that plans are already well in hand for a repeat performance (see 'Future Events').

The final, extremely successful, Open Day at the house took place on December 7th, and was followed by a very enjoyable Carol Concert given by the Grace Darling Singers. The festivities over, the house closed its doors to the general public for the last time in its present unrestored form. When we open the doors again we hope to have the rooms on the ground floor re-created, as much as possible, as they were in the time of the Gaskells. The lower ground floor will be refurbished for community use, and on the first floor there will be conference rooms.

The first stage of the restoration has already begun, with the removal of the dry rot; this rather mundane work has, however, resulted in some exciting finds. When the book-shelves in William Gaskell's study were removed, six layers of wallpaper were revealed. Also revealed, in the outer hall, was a stone- flagged floor. As work progresses we hope many more clues may emerge to help in the task of restoring the rooms as authentically as possible. Of course all this depends on continued success in fundraising.

A good start to the new phase of holding events 'off-site' took place on Saturday, 17th January, when a repeat of John Archer's talk on Mary Barton's Manchester again attracted a capacity audience, this time at the Y.H.A. This was followed, on Saturday 21st February, by an enormously successful Study Day on An Underrated Victorian: Sir James P. Kay Shuttleworth. As one member of the audience wrote afterwards, "The speakers were varied and their topics interesting; I certainly know more about Kay-Shuttleworth than I expected to learn." They were all enthusiastic and engaging and it was an enjoyable day. It also proved financially very rewarding and, although final figures are not yet available, it has raised well in excess of £1000. And, perhaps just as importantly, it brought the plight of the house to the attention of many of Manchester's and the North's intellectual élite, many of whom joined the Friends of Plymouth Grove at the end of the day.

#### Future Events:

There are two other events on our calendar, before our next major fund-raiser. The first of these is the Manchester Histories Festival at Manchester Town Hall on Saturday, March 21st. The Gaskell Society and the Friends of Plymouth Grove will each have a stall in the Banqueting Hall, so do come along and see us. Help on both stalls would also be appreciated.

Saturday, 18th April is the date of the Manchester Heritage Buildings Trust/ Friends of Plymouth Grove A.G.M. It will begin at 2.30p.m. at the Community Space, Guide Post Square, Devonshire Street, Ardwick. Tea/coffee and our usual, delicious home-made cakes will follow. Cost £2.50; pay on the door.

On Saturday 9th May, at 2.30p.m. in Manchester Cathedral Visitor Centre, Cateaton Street, M3 1SQ, The Travel Journals of Robert Hyde Greg. A talk by Allan and Beryl Freer about Robert Hyde Greg's extensive travels in Scotland, Spain and Portugal, France, Italy and even as far as the Ottoman Empire. He was the second son of Samuel Greg, founder of Quarry Bank Mill, Styal, and became one of Manchester's leading textile manufacturers; he also played a prominent part in the intellectual life of the city. This has proved a very popular talk when given elsewhere, so early booking is recommended.

Tickets £7.50 including tea and cake, may be obtained from Mrs Hilda Holmes, 8, Peter Street, Hazel Grove Stockport SK7 4BQ (Phone in the first instance, tel. 0161 487 2593). Cheques to be made payable to The Manchester Historic Buildings Trust. Please enclose an S.A.E.

Two more treats in store:

Saturday 13th June: A coach trip to Silverdale, calling on the way at Gawthorpe Hall, where we will have lunch. Then on to Silverdale where there may be an opportunity to visit places connected with the Gaskells, if time allows. Then, in the Gaskell Memorial Hall, afternoon tea at will be followed by a repeat performance of the highly successful dramatised reading from *My Lady Ludlow* which had its premiere performance at Plymouth Grove (see above). Not to be missed!

There will be more details on this when we have finalised our plans and they will be on the Plymouth Grove website: [elizabethgaskellhouse.org](http://elizabethgaskellhouse.org) and in the next Friends' newsletter.

Saturday 5th September: Music for the Gaskells in St. John's Parish Church, Buxton. A repeat performance, by Opus 5, of their acclaimed concert first given in Alderley Edge last April. If you missed this the first time round, be sure to come to this performance, you won't be disappointed! More details to follow, as above.

So, you see, despite the fact that the house is closed, we are continuing to run as varied a programme as possible, with a number of events we feel sure will appeal to our valued supporters. We still have a substantial amount of money to raise, to fund the restoration, and the sooner we have those funds, the sooner we will be able to re-open the house and show it off in a manner befitting both its literary and historical importance.

## *Book Notes*

**Christine Lingard**

Penguin books are reissuing a number of editions of Gaskell novels at £6.99 - Cranford, edited by Patricia Ingham; Mary Barton, edited by Macdonald Daly, and Wives and Daughters, edited by Pam Morris. Amberley Press are bringing out an uncritical edition of *The Life of Charlotte Brontë* in March.

Also due to be published this Spring:

*Literary Tourism and Nineteenth-century Culture*, edited by Nicola J. Watson, Senior Lecturer at the Open University. Palgrave Macmillan, £45.

It aims to provide 'fascinating insights into the reception of, amongst others, Petrarch, Shakespeare, Burns, Byron, Wordsworth, Scott, Letitia Landon, Hawthorne, Dickens, Gaskell, Hardy, Stowe, Haggard and Kipling by British and American tourists'.

The Social Problem Novels of Frances Trollope, general editor Brenda Ayres. Pickering and Chatto are issuing a critical annotated edition of the four novels of one of Elizabeth Gaskell's forerunners in the genre of the social problem novel - The Life and Adventures of Jonathan Jefferson Whitlaw; The Vicar of Wrexhill; The Life and Adventures of Michael Armstrong, the Factory Boy; and Jessie Phillips. Michael Armstrong (edited by Christine Sutphin, Professor of English at Central Washington University), published in 1840, makes an interesting comparison with Mary Barton.

In a correction to my preview of Romantic Echoes in the Victorian Era, edited by Andrew Radford and Mark Sandy, (Ashgate Press) in the Autumn 2008 issue of the Newsletter, the chapter on 'Mr. Osborne's secret: Elizabeth Gaskell, Wives and Daughters, and the gender of Romanticism' is by James Narjarian.

### **Brontë-related poems**

Ian Emberson has just published a collection of nine poems relating to the Brontës - their lives, writings and the landscapes associated with them. Entitled 'Mourning Ring', it is illustrated on every page by the author. It is available from the Brontë Parsonage Museum gift shop, or from Angria Press, 1, Highcroft Road, Todmorden, OL14 5LZ at a cost of £3, plus £1 postage and packing (£2 overseas). Ian can also be contacted by telephone at 01706 812716, or by Email at [ianemberson@aol.com](mailto:ianemberson@aol.com)

### **HELP REQUIRED WITH STORAGE**

Is there anyone who could help with the storage of back copies of the Journal and a few other bits and pieces? These have accumulated over the years and are overflowing from the various cupboards, spare rooms etc, which various members of the committee have offered in the past. If anyone is fortunate enough to have space to spare, we should be so grateful to move some boxes into it. This would ideally be in the North West, near to Knutsford or Manchester, but if we get desperate enough, perhaps we could share things around!

If you can help, please contact Elizabeth Williams at [BDandEMW@aol.com](mailto:BDandEMW@aol.com) or on 01925 764271.

## *AGM Meeting*

**will be held at Cross Street Chapel, Manchester  
on Saturday 28th March 2009**

10.30am: Assemble for coffee    11.00am: AGM  
followed by The Daphne Carrick Lecture, given by Fran Baker (archivist at the John Rylands Library, working on the Gaskell Collection):  
Intimate and Trusted correspondents: The Gaskells and the Greens  
Henry Green and William Gaskell were colleagues and had both taken degrees at Glasgow University. Henry was minister at Knutsford's Brook Street Chapel for some 45 years. He, his wife and four daughters were close friends of the Gaskells.

2.15pm: Alan Shelston on: 'The problems and rewards of editing Cranford and North and South'.

Finish about 3.30pm

## *North West Group*

Meetings are held on the last Wednesday of each month from October to April at St John's Church Rooms, Knutsford.  
Talks and discussions led by Elizabeth Williams are preceded by buffet lunch at 12.15. Cost, £7.50  
March 25 Six weeks at Heppenheim and Cousin Phillis  
April 29 Elizabeth Gaskell's Cheshire: an illustrated talk by Joan Leach

May 20th

There will be a visit to Shrewsbury for a guided tour of Darwin links. Later in the year we will also visit Maer village where Emma Wedgwood, Charles Darwins' wife, grew up and where they were married. If you are not a member of the North West group and would like to join us on either of these trips please let Joan Leach know.

## *London and South East Group*

Saturday May 9 2009: Shirley Foster: 'Character and Environment: Freedom and Enclosure'

Shirley will lead a discussion on Sylvia's Lovers.  
She will talk for about 25 minutes and then there will be a discussion based on some selected passages which she will indicate in advance. More homework!!

Saturday June 6 2009, 3 - 5.30 p.m. or thereabouts: A Tea party in the garden (weather permitting!!) at 85 Calton Avenue, Dulwich, London SE21 7DF. Bring your favourite reading about the summer or gardens or any seasonally appropriate reading. It does not have to be Gaskell! Weather permitting we shall have tea first followed by our readings in the garden. You don't have to read but your reading would be welcome.

### *South West Group*

Our next meeting is on 4th April, 3.00 p.m. at Flat 4, Sydney place by kind invitation of Mrs Joan Chandler:

Brenda McKay will speak on "Dramatising Mrs. Gaskell"

### *Yorkshire Branch Group*

19 September at York. Shirley Foster will lead a discussion on Cousin Phillis.

### *Alliance of Literary Societies News*

Web page: [www.allianceofliterarysocieties.org.uk](http://www.allianceofliterarysocieties.org.uk)

### *New Member Societies*

We are delighted to welcome the Kenneth Grahame Society, the Thackeray Society, the Francis W H Newman Society, the T S Eliot Society, the Thomas Traherne Society, the Joseph Conrad Society and the Reade of Ryedale Society. We hope to welcome their representatives at the AGM next year, which will be held in Knutsford, marking the bicentenary of Elizabeth Gaskell's birth.

### *AGM and Literary Weekend*

The Alliance of Literary Societies' AGM 2009 will be held in Dublin on Saturday 13th June. The formal meeting will be held that morning, and will be accompanied by speaker(s) on Dublin's literary heritage. We look forward to meeting the Dubliners Literary Circle on their home turf and enjoying the famous Irish hospitality. Consult the web page or send SAE to Joan Leach.

# The Gaskell Society



*Knutsford - Cheshire  
New Super-Holland print c.1945*

*R.N. Thorne del. 1906*

*Knutsford, Cheshire  
looking up King's Street from the foot of Adams Hill*

THE GASKELL SOCIETY HOME PAGE has all the latest information on meetings.  
<http://gaskellsociety.co.uk>

If you have any material or suggestions for future Newsletters, please contact Mrs. Joan Leach,  
Far Yew Tree House, Chester Road, Tabley, Knutsford, Cheshire WA16 0HN.  
Telephone - 01565 634668 E-mail: [joanleach@aol.com](mailto:joanleach@aol.com)

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**Membership Secretary:** Miss C. Lingard, 5 Moran Crescent, Macclesfield SK11 8JJ

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## NEWSLETTER

Autumn 2009 - Number 48



**Elizabeth Sharpe**  
(See Photos In Geneva page 11)

## *Editor's letter*

The weekend conference at Penrith held in July is now a happy memory for the delegates who enjoyed the excellent papers, and excursions that continued the literary Lake District theme. BBC's *Cranford* will be in the news again with repeats of the first series leading up to two new episodes around Christmas. Ruskin would have been pleased to find Captain Brown is playing a fuller part than he did in the original version of *Cranford*: as Gaskell explained to him, she had only meant to write a short story and it was only Dickens' pleading with his 'dear Scheherazade' that more chapters were added. Parts of *The Moorland Cottage* have been incorporated in the latest episodes. There will also be a half hour documentary showing Knutsford and Plymouth Grove.

In the Spring Newsletter we printed a picture thought to be of Elizabeth Gaskell: this caused some controversy; now Tim Austin has solved the mystery and shares with us pictures from family archives - sadly none of Elizabeth Gaskell.

At the end of this Newsletter we have included a diary for 2010 but please note that there may be later changes and updates which will be posted on our home page [www.gaskellsociety.co.uk](http://www.gaskellsociety.co.uk).

## *Elizabeth Gaskell 2010*

**Alan Shelston**

2010 will mark the bicentenary of the birth of Elizabeth Gaskell, and there will be a number of events at various venues in Manchester, Knutsford and elsewhere. The year will open with a one woman show by the well-known actress, Gabrielle Drake, on the 8th January: this will take place in the theatre of MMU. The Portico library will hold an exhibition of Gaskell books and materials beginning on 31st March. On the evening of April 8th there will be an informal talk by Alan Shelston on issues of Gaskell biography, arising from the publication (scheduled for February) of a condensed biography he has written for Hesperus Press to mark the bicentenary year. Also in April at the Portico there will be a reading in costume of Elizabeth Gaskell and Charlotte Bronte by Intertheatre.

The John Rylands University Library is similarly planning an exhibition of books, manuscripts, and other Gaskelliana: this will begin on 15th July and continue until 28th November. Also at the Rylands there will be formal lectures by Professor Pamela Corpron Parker, from the United States (5th August), Jenny Uglow, whose *Elizabeth Gaskell: a Habit of Stories* is one of the great modern biographies, (16th September) and by Alan Shelston on Gaskell and her Publishers (14th



October). On a different note the Rylands are also planning two history workshops, and musical events relating to the folk songs of the Gaskell period.

The Gaskell Society will be heavily involved in all of these celebrations, with lectures, seminars, working days and outings. Details will be advertised later, but two events in their programme stand out. First, it is anticipated that the exterior renovation of the Gaskell house at Plymouth Grove will have been completed.

Secondly, on 25th September, Elizabeth Gaskell's name is to be added to a stained glass window in Poet's Corner in Westminster Abbey. This reflects the efforts of a group of members of the Gaskell Society.

Full details of these and other events will be publicised nearer the time.

## *Elizabeth Gaskell's Paternal Grandparents*

John Chapple

I

It is always a pleasure when new information becomes available. A posting by Karen Bell on the gaskell-I mailing list drew attention not only to Joseph Stevenson of Berwick's will dated 28 September 1795 (Prob 11/1325) but also to the will of his wife Isabel, née Thomson (Prob 11/1439), both significant enough to be proved in the Prerogative Court of Canterbury and now available online in the National Archives. Isabel's older brother was John Thomson, an ancestor of Karen Bell, to whom I am grateful for assistance in the preparation of this article. I must also thank Linda Bankier of the Berwick Record Office, and my wife.

We know that far from being a splendid post-captain in the Royal Navy, Joseph had only been made lieutenant at his last promotion in 1757. It is perhaps unexpected to discover how much real and personal estate he had been able to gain and invest. To his first son William, father of Elizabeth Gaskell, he left £400 stock in the three percent consolidated bank annuities and £100 in the four percent. (According to Boyd Hilton in the *New Oxford History of England 1783-1846*, the yield on three percent consols trading at £83.75 was 3.6 percent in 1791; in 1799, it was 5.1 percent trading at £59.17). Moreover, Joseph's daughter Dorothy and the three younger sons, Joseph Thomson, Robert, and John Thomson [sometimes Cansfield sic] Turner, were each to receive the same. Joseph Thomson Stevenson, who became a Ship Master, was also to have his father's silver hilted sword and steel pocket pistols.

To his wife Isabel he left the interest on the sum of £350 for the term of her life; the money was then to revert to the five children, 'share and share alike'. Isabel also

received a life interest in property in Palace Street, Berwick, occupied by Margaret and Esther Stevenson (TS21/140, lease dated 25 May 1795). On Isabel's death this property would revert to the five children as tenants-in-common, together with Joseph's library. Finally, 'all the Rest Residue and Remainder of my Estate and Effects whatsoever and wheresoever I do give and bequeath unto my said dear wife Isabel Stevenson...'. The executors were Isabel, his first son William, and John Constable. The will was proved in London on 31 May 1799, after Joseph Stevenson's death on 14 February 1799.

To give some idea of the value of money at that time, in 1798 Coleridge was generously allowed an annuity of £150 per year by Thomas and Josiah Wedgwood. He had been thinking of accepting a post as Unitarian minister at Shrewsbury in order to provide a home and regular income for his family.

Manuscript letters preserved by Geoffrey Sharps show that Dorothy, who had recently married a George Landles or Landells of Berwick, wrote to a brother in London (probably Robert) on 29 December 1798, criticising William for plaguing their mother Isabel Stevenson about money. This was at a time when Joseph Stevenson was evidently in failing health. Though William could not have begun farming at Saughton Mills before late 1797, just before his marriage to Elizabeth Holland on 1 December in that year, he was presumably already in financial difficulties. News of Joseph Stevenson's death, 'an event that has long been daily to be looked for', was announced in a letter from a family friend dated 15 February 1799. The children would have received a substantial inheritance, though John Thomson Turner Stevenson (b. 21 February 1780) would have to wait till he was twenty-one. The money does not seem to have been enough to save William's farm, if we may judge from the fact that he was teaching in Edinburgh by 1801.

Dorothy Landles died in February 1805, aged thirty-one. The will of her mother Isabel, made on 21 January 1806, the day before her death, and proved on 27 February 1806, takes account of this but has some surprises. Isabel devised to trustees, William Wilson and John Miller Dixon, all her 'Messuages Burgages or Tenements Garden Tan Yard and Skinnery with the appertenances situate on the East side of Rotten Row' and all her other real and personal estate. She wished them to sell and then 'pay off and discharge the sum of seven hundred pounds now due and owing to Beatrix White and others Tutors of Alexander Cleghorn'. These names connect this debt with the farm at Saughton Mills that had been advertised for sale by the widow of Robert Cleghorn (see GSJ 8, 1994, pp. 51-52) on 28 January 1797.

William's name does not appear elsewhere in Isabel's will, nor does that of his youngest brother, John Thomson Turner Stevenson. The latter was not involved in a lease to Thomas Hall made by Isabel and her children on 10 May 1799 (TS21/142),

so perhaps he was the brother that descendants believed had died in a French prison during the war. Otherwise, the trustees were to see that Joseph Thomson Stevenson, Robert Stevenson and the three children of Dorothy, Mrs Landles, should receive equal legacies.

## II

By 1820 William Stevenson's son John, on a visit to Berwick, had been presented with his grandfather's sword and dagger and his late Uncle Robert's pistols. He and his father seem to have kept up the connection with the remaining Stevensons, with interchange of letters and visits, until Elizabeth was in her late teens, but then the curtain falls. During the 1820s her sea-going brother John had written to her and Aunt Lumb letters amounting to some 13000 words, full of news and gossip about his cousins and the election at Berwick, his father and the second family at Chelsea, but mainly exotic details of his own voyages to Calcutta and Rangoon. The letters must have been the subject of exceptional interest at Knutsford and no doubt at Elizabeth's school. But the failure of Smith and Elder to accept John's book ensured that by the summer of 1828 he had decided to stay in India. He disappeared completely from her life — and from our knowledge, too, unless he was the free merchant listed in Calcutta in 1831. Then after the impoverished death of her father on 22 March 1829, there came a rupture with her stepmother ('perfectly destitute' in 1833) and half-siblings. It lasted for about twenty five-years, and even afterwards contact was minimal.

When Elizabeth Gaskell had achieved an assured maturity and national fame, she made slight connections about 1853-54 with Stevenson descendants who had moved south (*Elizabeth Gaskell: Early Years*, pp 222-3). They include that chameleon archivist and historian, her first cousin Joseph Stevenson (1806-1895). A man important enough to be recorded, like her, in the *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography*, he was in succession a Presbyterian minister, librarian and keeper of records to the dean and chapter at Durham, a married Church of England clergyman at Leighton Buzzard (when she was in contact with him), an editor of the Rolls Series, a Roman Catholic priest and ultimately, for many years, a Jesuit.

Elizabeth obviously put well behind her the tragedies of her youth and the connections with the family on her father's side still living in Berwick. She immersed herself in the easy life at Knutsford, London and Dumbleton led by Aunt Lumb and the prosperous Hollands before committing herself fully to marriage and her own family. But Graham Handley notes in his *Chronology* how often in her fiction a lost character returns. Dreams like those of Mrs Hale for the absent Frederick (*North and South*, I. 14), surely betray Elizabeth Gaskell's own the painful, suppressed memories of her brother John.

## Charles Allen Du Val / C A Duval

Artist & Photographer

1803 -1872

Nicky Clark

Some years ago I was reading a biography of Elizabeth Gaskell, when I came across an illustration — a reproduction of a portrait of the three oldest Gaskell daughters, Marianne, Meta and Julia, done in Manchester in 1845. My eye was caught by the name of the artist: 'C A Duval'. It so happens that my maiden name was Duval. I did not know much about my father's family, except that they came from Manchester, my grandfather's and great-grandfather's first names were Charles, and my great-grandfather was a photographer. I wondered therefore whether 'C A Duval' could be related to me.

Over the next year or so I occasionally did a little internet research on C A Duval and found that he seemed to have taken photographs of many well-known people in the Manchester area. I also took the opportunity to button-hole any Gaskell experts I met at meetings, to ask whether Elizabeth Gaskell was known to have commented on the experience of getting the portrait done, or any mention of the name Duval in her correspondence. I acquired the Chapple & Pollard collection of Gaskell's letters — but there was little from 1845 and no mention of Duval in the letters, and no-one seemed to know anything about him.

Earlier this year I was contacted by a cousin, Alan Duval, who told me that he had been doing some research into various branches of his family and was about to start on the Duvals. I told him about the portrait, and sent him a photocopy and he promised to keep me informed.

A few weeks later he rang me in some excitement, having been contacted through a genealogy web-site by someone called Tom Askey, the husband of a Duval half-aunt of Alan's and mine, whose existence we had not known about previously. Tom had told Alan that he had prepared for his wife, children and grand-children a 'little book' about the family history of the Duval family, which he would be happy to send to Alan. In the meantime he gave Alan quite a lot of information.

It appeared that 'C A Duval' was the professional name of Charles Allen Du Val, who was our great-great-grandfather, and who in his day was a very successful artist and photographer. He had done portraits of the leaders of the Anti-Corn-Law League, the Manchester MPs Cobden and Bright, Daniel O'Connell, and Joseph Burch, the inventor, and had exhibited at the Liverpool Academy and the Royal Academy.

Tom also told Alan about Charles Allen Du Val's nephew, another Charles (or Charley) Du Val, who became a very successful music-hall entertainer and had taken his one-man show on tour in a number of other countries, including South Africa, where he had become caught up in the Boer War and ran a newspaper for the local citizens during the siege of Pretoria. And — Alan mentioned casually — one of Charles Allen Du Val's sons, Edward James, another artist, had married someone called Emma Gaskell in 1864. He gave me the details of when and where the marriage had taken place and I ordered a copy of the marriage certificate from Manchester Register Office.

I then treated myself to a day at the National Portrait Gallery, where the archivist showed me the 'cartes-de-visite' photographs in which C A Duval had specialised, and also photocopies they had on file of many of his portraits in oils and pastels.

Back on the computer, I found an obituary of a famous chemist (well, famous to those who know about chemists): Frederic Kipping, in which it was stated that not only was Mr Kipping a grandson of the artist Charles Allen Du Val but that he had married his cousin who was herself a grand-daughter of Charles Allen Du Val, and her name was Lily Holland. Of course, when I saw the name Holland, I wondered whether there could possibly be a connection between Lily Holland and therefore the Du Val/Duval family and Elizabeth Gaskell, whose mother's maiden name had been Holland.

At this stage I e-mailed Joan Leach and asked her three things: (1) Did she or any of the Knutsford or Manchester Gaskell Society members know anything about C A Duval, the painter of the Gaskell girls' portrait? (2) Did she know who Emma Gaskell was and whether she was connected to William Gaskell? And (3) — bit of a long shot — might Lily Holland be connected to Elizabeth Gaskell's Holland relations?

Joan came back to me very quickly. (1) She knew the portrait well, the original of which hangs in the Portico Library, but knew nothing about C A Duval other than what she had found in the *National Dictionary of Biography*. (2) She thought Emma Gaskell was very unlikely to be related to William Gaskell; and (3) the Holland connection was interesting.

The marriage certificate arrived and it was clear that Joan was right — Emma's father was a 'warp-sizer' — no doubt the author of *North and South* would have known exactly what that was — I only know it's a job in a cotton mill. More convincingly, her name on the certificate was spelled GASKILL not Gaskell. So my hopes of finding a link between my family and that of Elizabeth Gaskell were dashed there.

However, Joan soon contacted me again — Yes, she said, your family is connected with Elizabeth Gaskell. 'Lily Holland was the daughter of Florence Du Val who

married William Thomas Holland in 1861'. That was very exciting, but I wasn't actually much the wiser — who was Florence Du Val? And who was William Thomas Holland?

Back to Alan, who told me that Florence was the 5th child of Charles Allen Du Val — and back to Joan, who sent me a family tree and more information about the Hollands — and now I think I can say with confidence that **Elizabeth Gaskell's great-great-uncle was the great-great-grandfather of the man who married my great-great-aunt Florence**. A fact about which I am quite ridiculously delighted.

As a postscript, I would mention that not long after this I was in touch with Tom Askey, who very kindly sent me his 'little book' on the Duval Family (which turned out to be anything but 'little', having 148 pages and numerous illustrations). I emailed him to thank him of course, and was delighted to find that he much admires Elizabeth Gaskell, and considers that *Cousin Phillis* is a much better book than *Cranford* (which happens to be my own opinion too).

The two final paragraphs of Tom's e-mail to me on 7 April read:

*I was archivist at Chatsworth for many years, and while there I often exhibited a treasured letter from Charlotte Brontë to Elizabeth Gaskell. The 6th Duke of Devonshire (1790-1858) knew many literary figures of his day — there are Dickens letters, one from Leigh Hunt, and a lovely one from Thackeray with an account of what happened afterwards to Becky Sharp and a pencil drawing of her in old age.*

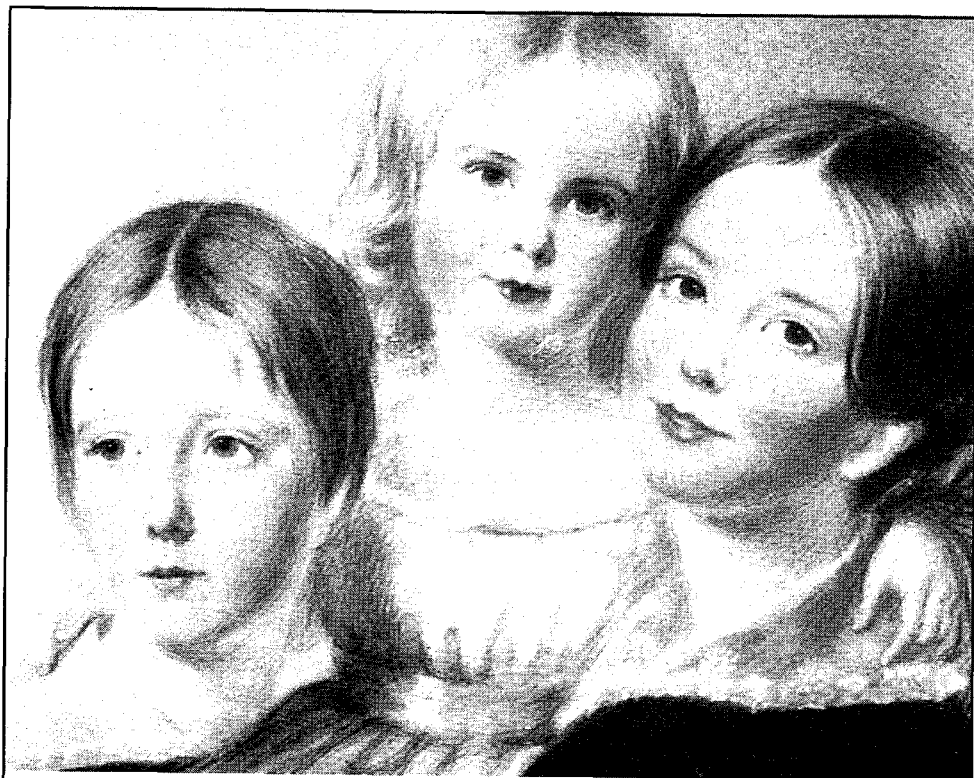
*The Duke never met Charlotte Brontë. He knew Elizabeth Gaskell and she gave him the letter. Although it's many years now since I saw it, I recall it describing a delightful family scene at teatime in Haworth parsonage. I don't think it's ever appeared in print.*

*There's an amusing story about how the duke met Elizabeth Gaskell. (I've never seen it in any document, but it's traditional in the Cavendish family). Elizabeth Gaskell was staying with friends at Rowsley and she decided to visit Chatsworth. Now Chatsworth has always been open to visitors. Anyone having the temerity to knock on the door would be shown around by the housekeeper, and if you went on a Thursday you were given dinner. When Elizabeth Gaskell arrived the Duke himself was in residence (a rare event, as he much preferred Hardwick) and he was delighted to meet her. She was invited to stay for several days as his guest. Which was wonderful, but alas she had only the clothes she was wearing. So secretly she sent a message down to Rowsley to have some more clothes sent up so that she wouldn't constantly appear in the same dress.*

I do not know whether the letter from Charlotte Brontë to Elizabeth Gaskell has in fact appeared in print, but there is a letter from Elizabeth to daughter Marianne, written from Chatsworth, that certainly bears out her anxiety about clothes on the visit.

One question still remains in my mind: how well did the Gaskells know the Du Vals? William and Charles Allen were both members of the Portico Library and the Manchester Literary & Philosophical Society, but was there anything more than a slight acquaintance? I do not suppose I will ever find out, but would love to hear if anyone comes across any possible clues.

Nicky Clark's email address: [nickyclark100@hotmail.com](mailto:nickyclark100@hotmail.com)



**Meta, Florence and Marianne**  
1845. Pastel by Duval

## *The Death of Elizabeth Gaskell*

**Dr John Ross**

Jenny Uglow, in her biography, relates how well Elizabeth Gaskell had been looking in church on the afternoon of Sunday, November 12th 1865 and that she had a happy early evening with her family when she suddenly stopped speaking and fell forward with a slight gasp into the arms of her daughter Meta and did not recover. There was no post-mortem. Her death certificate recorded the cause of death as 'disease of the heart'.

This diagnosis could certainly be correct as there is no mention of any feature which could suggest an alternative. There is no mention of any pain. Pain usually accompanies occlusion of blood vessels (coronary arteries) in the wall of the heart, a common cause of sudden collapse and death, but not always. Sudden change in the rhythm of the heart can cause collapse and death without pain.

There are a number of recorded comments and observations which make speculation about her health and alternative causes of death of interest.

Three weeks after Elizabeth's death, Isabella Green, daughter of a close friend of Elizabeth, in a letter to her brother Philip, dated December 3rd 1865, wrote that Elizabeth's daughters had said that 'her death was caused by the breaking of the medulla oblongata [sic] which is the upper part of the spinal cord [sic] and it becomes very brittle in people who have gout, as you know [sic], she had several times'. This is a remarkable and impossible diagnosis – the medulla oblongata is an important soft hind part of the brain continuous with the spinal cord and can be damaged by severe trauma but is certainly never brittle or breakable. It has no connection with gout and there is nothing in Elizabeth's history to suggest that she ever had gout. True gout is usually easily recognised and arthritis and aches and pains of all sorts were often called gout in those days. It is unbelievable however that, even 130 years ago, any doctor would have given relatives such a bizarre diagnosis. Who gave it to the daughters?

In the same letter Isabella Green wrote '...early this year she [Elizabeth Gaskell] said to Mrs Deane [a cousin] that she did not expect to live thro' the year.' What caused her to say this? Had someone made a diagnosis and given her a poor prognosis or had she herself noted an abnormality which she associated with a poor prognosis? There is no mention, in Jenny Uglow's biography, of any symptoms which could result from a physical disorder with a poor outlook. She does once mention Elizabeth having a 'weak heart' but gives no symptoms or evidence for this and no record of anyone mentioning it. There are accounts, throughout her adult life, of 'oft unwell', 'unwell on and off all the year', 'often ill', 'deadly feelings of fatigue', 'depression', 'weakness helped by medicinal brandy', 'low and convalescent

and there were episodes of back pain, dizziness, headaches and fainting and chest infection. Most of these upsets could have been related to exhaustion, overwork or worry to which she admitted. None of these troubles could have led her to speak of a limited life when she was aged fifth-four. A cousin who heard about her sudden and unexpected death wrote that 'she had always wished and spoken of her wish to die a sudden painless death like this'; but this does not indicate that she had any knowledge of any disorder which might allow this wish.

Elizabeth had been writing, for the last eighteen months of her life, *Wives and Daughters*, which was published serially in the *Cornhill Magazine* from August 1864 to January 1866. It is very interesting that, in this great novel she relates that Osborne Hamley, the young son of the squire, was diagnosed as having an aneurysm of the aorta by the conscientious and talented Doctor Gibson. Dr Nicholls, the much respected county physician, did not agree but Osborne did die rather suddenly and presumably Elizabeth meant this to be considered due to rupture of the aneurysm, a recognised result of the disorder. In a letter dated 3 May 1864 she had outlined her plan for the novel and mentioned that Osborne 'breaks a blood vessel and dies'.

It is surprising that Elizabeth used this disorder as a cause of Osborne's death; one would not expect many lay people in the mid-nineteenth century to have known about it. She may indeed have been hinting at its uncommon and little known occurrence when she wrote that Gibson was asked by his daughter what Osborne died of and he replied 'Something wrong about the heart. You would not understand if I told you'.

Did Elizabeth learn about aortic aneurysms from Sir Astley Cooper (1768-1841) the famous surgeon who was the world authority on these abnormalities in the early nineteenth century? He is the only actual doctor mentioned by her in *Wives and Daughters*. She relates that Gibson had once been invited to dine at the Towers, the seat of the local aristocracy, and to meet Sir Astley Cooper 'the head of the profession'. Why did Elizabeth choose *him* to appear in her book? She did have several doctors in her family, some 'well connected' (Sir Henry Holland, a cousin of hers, was Physician-in-Ordinary to Queen Victoria) and she possibly met Sir Astley, who impressed her by talking about his work and aortic aneurysms.

Aneurysms are dilatations, swellings, in blood vessels caused by deterioration in their wall structure and less commonly by disease. Aneurysms of the aorta are most commonly found in people over sixty years of age and would be most unlikely in someone of Osborne Hamley's age. Nowadays they may be found on X-ray or scanning before any symptoms occur; in Sir Astley Cooper's time abdominal aneurysms could only be diagnosed when they were large enough to be felt. Half of all persons with an untreated abdominal aneurysm die of rupture within five years. There may be no symptoms until the aneurysm is large enough to cause pain.

If Sir Astley did tell Elizabeth about aneurysms, he would certainly have told her about the inevitability of rupture and death. This would have led to her writing that Mrs Gibson told Gibson that she had heard Dr Nicholls saying 'If he had got an aneurism of the aorta his days are numbered', when she overheard the two doctors discussing Osborne.

Is it possible that Elizabeth thought that her days were numbered because she had an abdominal swelling that was an aneurysm, and that she was correct — as it ruptured and caused her sudden death? I do not think so; there is no mention of pain at the time of her death and this is almost always present with a rupture, and severe.

The most likely cause of sudden death without pain or other significant symptoms is a severe change in heart rhythm, so we can accept the death certificate; but why did Elizabeth expect to die that year?

I am most grateful to Joan Leach and Fran Baker of the John Rylands University Library Manchester for their help and information, and to Dr Henry Connor for comment.

## PHOTOS IN GENEVA

Tim Austin [1]

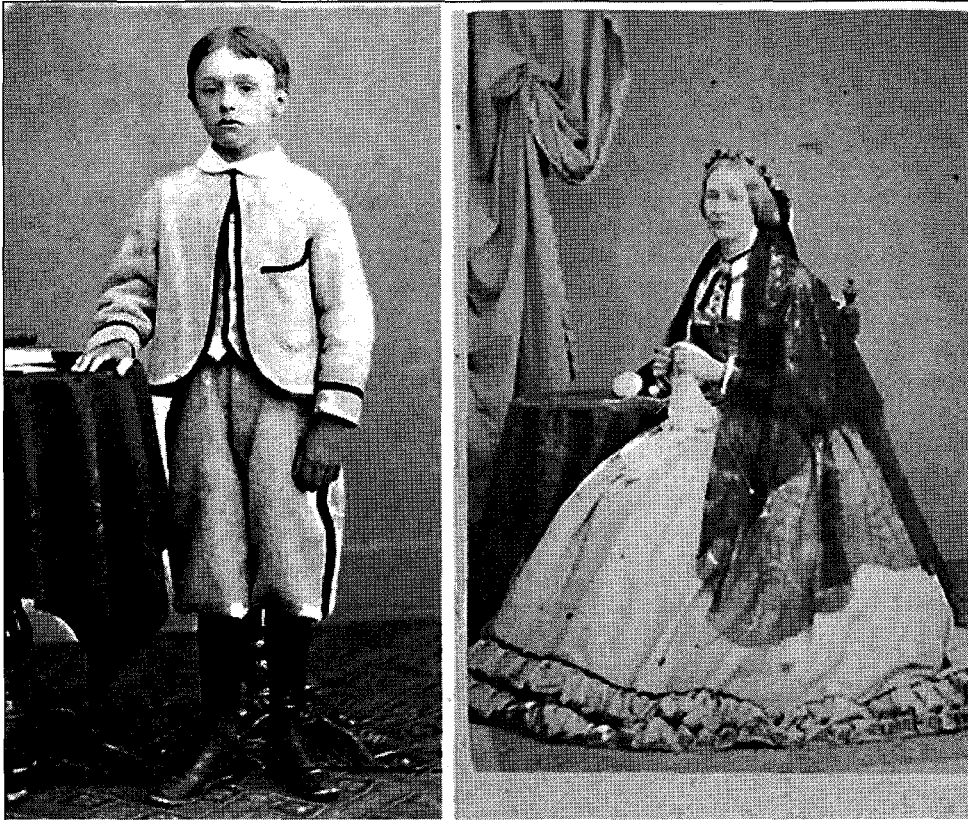
In the Spring Newsletter of the Gaskell Society attention was focused on a carte-de-visite image from the Jamison Archive [2] which was thought to be of Elizabeth Gaskell.

In the family photograph albums of the descendants of Emily Sharpe and James Pearson Langshaw [3], the same image has been found and is clearly identified on the back, in Emily's hand, as Susan Deane, taken in 1863 in the studio of the photographer Faedo at Plainpalais Geneva. In the same albums there are also to be found photographs of Elizabeth Sharpe and her third and youngest son Alfred [4] taken in the same studio in the same year. These two photographs and that of Susan are attached to this article.

Susan Deane was the second wife of Richard Deane, Knutsford doctor and partner of Peter Holland (Susan's father and the uncle of Elizabeth Gaskell), and his second wife Mary Whittaker.

Emily Sharpe was the third child (of four) and second daughter of Francis Sharpe, organist at Knutsford Parish Church, and his wife Martha Whittaker, younger sister of Mary. Emily's older sister was Marianne Sharpe, the first wife of Richard Deane. Their elder brother was Edmund Sharpe, husband of Elizabeth and the father of Alfred.





**Alfred Sharpe & Susan Deane**  
The same pattern can be seen in all three photos

Thus the two wives of Richard Deane were first cousins, and of course Susan was a first cousin of Elizabeth Gaskell. Elizabeth regarded herself as a half-cousin of the Sharpe children [5], not quite genealogically accurate but they did have an uncle and aunt in common.

These are but the barest of facts of a long story. Many elements of this story were presented to the 2008 Autumn Meeting of the Gaskell Society at Knutsford. For this article it seems worth recounting some information on the life and origins of Richard Deane, which may provide pointers as to how he came to know and then to marry his two wives.

Richard Timothy Deane was born in Northwich in 1805, the son of Samuel Deane and his wife Jane Hancock [6]. Samuel was a doctor then practising at Northwich,

where his doctor brother James was also in practice. James had at one time been House Surgeon at the Manchester Workhouse and also surgeon to the Altrincham (Poor Law) Union [7]. We already know that Samuel had been apprenticed in 1796 to Peter Holland. Peter Holland himself had been apprenticed to Dr Charles White of Manchester in 1783, whose family had long been friends of the Whittaker family in Manchester. Going back three generations it is possible that the Deane and Holland families were distantly related.



**Elizabeth Sharpe**  
1863

In May 1871 Elizabeth Sharpe wrote a letter to her first cousin Mary Green, a month before Mary's death in June at Knutsford [8]. This letter shows that the two cousins were in contact.

Edmund Sharpe and his family left Lancaster in 1856 to go to Wales for a few years until 1863, when they moved to Geneva until 1866. Susan Deane and her family were probably visiting the Sharpes in Geneva when her photograph was taken there in 1863. She visited Switzerland again in 1866 — as evidenced in a letter of Isabella Green, youngest daughter of Henry and Mary, to her brother John Philip in India written on June 3 1866: 'the Deanes...are going to Switzerland in a week or two'. This visit may again have been to the Sharpes; but during the year they had gradually returned to Lancaster, and were probably all home there by the late summer.

#### Acknowledgements:

Particular thanks for help with this research, over many years, go to John Hughes, author of the historical study of Edmund Sharpe shortly to be published privately, in the bicentenary year of his birth on 31 October 1809. Thanks also are due to Sarah Tanner and Jean Jamison, and to Fran Baker, Gaskell Archivist at the John Rylands Library, for their great generosity and help in allowing me early and easy access to the material of the Jamison Archive; and not least to Joan Leach for first telling me about it.

#### Notes:

- [1] Great-great-grandson of Emily Sharpe and Pearson Langshaw.
- [2] Jamison Archive: Family history material descended from Isabella Jamison née Green, youngest daughter of Rev. Henry Green and Mary Brandreth. Now in the John Rylands Library, Manchester.
- [3] Family History material collected by Emily and Pearson Langshaw, preserved and enhanced by their descendants and now in various places. Significant collections are: on gift in the Austin Paley Archive ms. LM 86/129 in Lancaster Museum, mainly images; and on deposit in the Austin Langshaw Archive, Rare Books and Archives, Lancaster University, mainly written material, including 'new' letters of Elizabeth and Florence Gaskell. The photograph albums are currently retained by the family.
- [4] He became Sir Alfred Sharpe in 1903; after serving as a British colonial administrator he became Commissioner of the British Central Africa Protectorate in 1896, and then in 1907 the first Governor of Nyasaland, the two countries now known as Malawi.
- [5] *Elizabeth Gaskell, The Early Years*, John Chapple, MUP, 1997; page 196 and note 3, page 212; written by Elizabeth Stevenson, ES Oct 1831, in last MS music book; "...[manuscript duet quadrilles]....they are written by a half-cousin of mine..." — refers to Edmund Sharpe.
- [6] The Knutsford Hancock family was related by marriage to the Knutsford Wright family.
- [7] Guildhall Library London: London and Provincial Medical Directory; 1847.
- [8] Jamison Archive: Letter of Elizabeth Sharpe to Mary Green, May 19 1871. Letter has black border on the front page in memory of Jane Langshaw née Fletcher, Elizabeth's older sister, and wife of Pearson's older brother John, who had died in April.

## Progress at 84 Plymouth Grove

Janet Allan

On 7 September our builders started work on restoring the outside of the Gaskells' home in Manchester, at the cost of three quarters of a million pounds. This includes stripping off the old roof, dealing with dry rot, repairing all the windows, shutters and exterior doors, replacing stonework, replacing the cement render with lime render all over the outside of the building, and making sure that what Elizabeth called the 'pestilential drains' are replaced. It will be March before all this work is done, and after that we hope very much that the ground floor can be made habitable again. We hope to welcome many people there during the bi-centenary year.

Many of you have helped in this first phase by sponsoring restoration of features of the house. A very grateful thank you!

The next stage of the project is our application to the Heritage Lottery Fund for the money to restore the interior and convert the building to its new uses - Gaskell heritage rooms, community spaces, conference and educational activities and hopefully a Gaskell archive.

Our application will hopefully go in at the end of November and the entire cost will be about two million pounds, of which we are asking the Lottery for one million. We hope that we will be successful in restoring 'Manchester's neglected treasure' to full life once more.

## THE 2009 AGM/WEEKEND OF THE ALLIANCE OF LITERARY SOCIETIES ACADEMY PLAZA HOTEL, DUBLIN

13/14th June 2009

Report by Janet Kennerley

This year's AGM and Weekend of the ALS was held in Dublin, organised by members of the ALS Committee, assisted at the event by members of the Dubliners Literary Circle, who had organised a most interesting set of talks and play readings prior to the start of the AGM about famous Irish writers — Joyce, Yeats, Beckett and George Bernard Shaw, to name just a few.

The Chairman of the ALS, Linda Curry, welcomed delegates to Dublin, announcing that sadly, the ALS President, Aeronwy Thomas, was unable to attend due to illness and that she would be stepping down. We were all asked to think about who might be asked to replace her.

The Chairman had represented the ALS at a European meeting of literary organisations in Berlin in February 2009, organised by the German equivalent of the ALS (ALG). Attendees came from a mixture of literary societies, museums and houses. She explained that it had been an excellent opportunity to see how literary organisations operate in Europe and to establish a network of mutual benefit, perhaps opening up opportunities for funding in the future.

The new Secretary of the ALS, Anita Fernandez-Young, was congratulated on her work. After a year of operating without a Secretary, Anita volunteered to fill the role at the 2009 AGM and has so far produced two Newsletters which have been well received by member societies. Whenever possible, these are to be sent out electronically to save expense.

We were asked to think of ways in which we could raise the profile of the ALS with a view to obtaining funding. At present the only income is by annual subscriptions and the raffle at the Annual Meeting. The ALS did not want to raise subscriptions at the moment as it was hoping to encourage new membership but prompt payment would be helpful. We were asked to think about what the ALS could do for your society.

The Treasurer reported that she had been successful in obtaining payment of some outstanding subscriptions but the overall profit was slightly down with a balance of around £3,000 in the bank. Expenses are always kept to the minimum with increased use of email whenever possible. It was agreed to set up a special fund of £100 annually for Chairman's expenses following the meeting in Germany.

The ALS Journal "ALSo" had been delayed this year due to lack of suitable articles but it was reported that this should be available shortly.

The Election of Officers and Committee 2009-2010 took place en bloc as follows:-

Chairman	Linda Curry ( <i>John Clare Society</i> )
Secretary	Anita Fernandez Young ( <i>Dickens Fellowship</i> )
Treasurer	Julie Shorland ( <i>Jane Austen Society</i> )
Editors	Linda Curry and Robin Healey ( <i>Charles Lamb, Wyndham Lewis</i> )

Committee:

Frieda Barker (*Marlowe Society*), Angela Crow Woods (*Brontë Society*)  
Helen Newman (*Richard Jefferies Society*), Don Lee (*Philip Larkin Society*)  
Kenn Oultram (*Daresbury Lewis Carroll Society*)  
Thelma Thompson (*Shropshire Literary Society*)  
Janet Kennerley (*Gaskell Society*), Marty Smith (*Johnson Society, Lichfield*)

It was decided that no changes were necessary at present to the ALS Constitution but that it would be useful if this could be available on the website.

It was an ideal opportunity to promote next year's AGM/weekend which will be held in Knutsford on 15/16th May 2010. Please make a note in your diary. The Gaskell Society looks forward to hosting this event during our special year celebrating 200 years since Elizabeth Gaskell's birth.

Looking further ahead, it was mentioned that it may be possible to hold the 2011 event in Edinburgh. The Johnson Society of Lichfield offered to host the 2012 AGM.

At the close of the AGM, there was a raffle of prizes kindly donated by those attending which in some way represented their own society.

After the lunch break, we reassembled for a pleasant trip to the National Library of Ireland to visit an exhibition of W B Yeats. We were also shown the Reading Room.

In the evening, 47 people, many representing the Dubliners Literary Circle, enjoyed a Formal Dinner in the hotel. Once again, we entertained ourselves with favourite readings, quotations and poetry, even a song – an enjoyable close to a very busy day.

For those staying over the weekend, Desmond O'Malley, Chairman of the Dubliners Literary Circle, lead a historic walk around the Georgian buildings and other significant literary landmarks of the city, which ended at the Dublin Writers' Museum.

Finally, before catching our flight back to Manchester in the early evening, a small group of us walked to the National Gallery to view the paintings by the brother of W B Yeats, said to have inspired his friend, Samuel Beckett to write "Waiting for Godot".

## BOOK NOTES

Christine Lingard

Romanticism, revolution, and language. *The Fate of the Word from Samuel Johnson to George Eliot* by John Beer, Emeritus Professor of English at the University of Cambridge (whom many will remember from the 2007 Canterbury conference). Cambridge University Press, May 2009. Traces how the French Revolution influenced the English language and challenged the basic philosophy of many English writers, leading to the establishment of the Romantic Movement. This is illustrated in the works of authors ranging from William Blake to George Eliot. Other authors discussed include Samuel Taylor Coleridge, William Wordsworth, William Hazlitt, and Jane Austen. Chapter 10 is entitled *Languages of memory and passion: Tennyson, Gaskell and the Brontës*.

*Mobility and modernity in women's novels, 1850s-1930s: women moving dangerously*, by Wendy Parkins, Senior Lecturer in the English Department at the University of Otago, New Zealand. Palgrave Macmillan, 2009.



A discussion of women's mobility in a wide range of novels from 1850 to 1930, dealing with urban as well as rural settings. It includes some twentieth-century authors not often discussed in comparison to their nineteenth-century forebears, including Elizabeth Bowen, Vernon Lee and Stella Gibbons. In particular it discusses *Adam Bede* and *North and South*.

*Literary remains: representation of death and burial in Victorian England*, by Mary Elizabeth Hotz, State University of New York Press.

Places the treatment of death and burial in nineteenth century fiction in its historical context, with an introduction on Edwin Chadwick and burial reform. As well as Thomas Hardy and Charles Dickens, the book discusses representations of death in Elizabeth Gaskell's *Mary Barton* and *North and South*, with concluding remarks on *Dracula*.

## BRUSSELS BRONTË GROUP ANNUAL BRONTË WEEKEND

Friday 23 April to Sunday 25 April 2010

**Provisional programme- updated information will be posted on our website.**

2010 is the bicentenary year of the birth of Charlotte Brontë's first and most famous biographer, Elizabeth Gaskell. We have organised a talk on her by Gaskell expert Angus Easson and, in complete contrast, a meeting with writer Jude Morgan whose fictional biography of the Brontës, *The Taste of Sorrow*, came out in 2009. Jude Morgan is the author of many works of historical fiction including *Passion*, inspired by the lives of the Romantic poets Byron, Shelley and Keats.

### Saturday 24 April

*On the Brussels trail: Elizabeth Gaskell and The Life of Charlotte Brontë*. A talk by Prof. Angus Easson

Meeting with writer Jude Morgan, author of the fictional biography of the Brontës *The Taste of Sorrow* (2009). Jude will talk about the researching and writing of the novel and answer questions.

**Sunday 25 April** 10.00: A guided walk around Brontë places in Brussels.

Updated information on <http://www.thebrusselsbrontegroup.org>

Non-members are welcome. Registration is essential for all events. Contact person for information and registrations: Helen MacEwan at [helen.macewan@ec.europa.eu](mailto:helen.macewan@ec.europa.eu)

### Weekend Course

At Burton Manor, Cheshire, March 19-21

Jackie Wilkin will lead a course on *The Knutsford Novels: Cranford and Wives and Daughters*. Contact for details: [j.wilkin@talktalk.net](mailto:j.wilkin@talktalk.net)

## North West Group

KNUTSFORD MEETINGS are held at St John's Church hall, on the last Wednesday in the month, studying Gaskell short stories. Buffet lunch is from 12.15pm. Cost £8.

MEETINGS AT CROSS STREET CHAPEL are held on the second Tuesday in the month at 1.00pm. Members may meet at the chapel from 12.15 for a sandwich lunch. Meetings cost £2 for members, £3 for non-members.

### 8th December

Christmas Carol service conducted by the minister, Jane Barraclough

### 9th February

Elizabeth Gaskell and the 19th Century Jewish cultural scene by Susan Fox

### 9th March

The Irish in Manchester by Mervyn Busteed

## London and South East Group

### Saturday 13th February 2010

*The Life of Charlotte Brontë reconsidered*

*With Alan Shelston*

Alan Shelston is President of the Gaskell Society and although now retired from Manchester University is busier than ever with Gaskell interests and is currently writing a biography of Gaskell for the centenary year in 2010.

**Meetings continue at Francis Holland School at 2pm with a sandwich lunch from 12.45pm.**

Further information from

**Dr Fran Twinn**, 85 Carlton Avenue, Dulwich, London SE21 7DF

Telephone: 020 8693 3238

E-mail: [frantwinn@aflex.net](mailto:frantwinn@aflex.net)

## Yorkshire Group

At the Friends Meeting House, Friar Gate, York

Meetings will commence at 2 p.m. The room will be available from 12.30 p.m. for those who wish to bring a picnic lunch. To cover expenses a contribution of £5 is requested. Contact : [shepleysmiths@tiscali.co.uk](mailto:shepleysmiths@tiscali.co.uk)

## South-West Group

### Programme for November 2009 - August 2010

**Saturday, November 21st, 2009, 2.30pm at BRLSI, 16-18 Queen Square, Bath:** Dr Gillian Ballinger of the University of the West of England will speak on *North and South* and the 'condition-of-England novel'.

Tea/Coffee will be served after the talk, £2.00 to members; £4.00 to non-members

**Monday, January 11th, 2010, 7.00pm:** New Year Supper 'Bring and Share', at 138 Fairfield Park Road, Bath BA1 6JT by the kind invitation of Rosemary and Tony Marshall. Tel: 01225 426732.

**Saturday, February 13th, 2.30pm:** Discussion group at Elizabeth Schlenther's, 14 Vellore Lane, Bath, BA2 6JQ, on Mary Barton. (Tel: 01225 331763)

**Saturday, March 13th, 2.30pm:** Discussion group at Bren Abercrombie's, 12 Mount Road, Lansdown, BA1, to continue the discussion on Mary Barton. (Tel: 01225 471241)

Any queries to Mrs Elizabeth Schlenther, 14 Vellore Lane, Bath, BA2 6JQ  
Tel: 01225 331763

**This diary for the GASKELL BICENTENARY YEAR 2010  
may have additions or alterations and will be updated as necessary.**

JAN. 8	Gabrielle Drake one woman show 'My dear Scheherazade' at Manchester Metropolitan University Theatre
MARCH 31	Opening of the Portico Library Exhibition (runs until 29 April)
APRIL 8	Launch of Alan Shelston's new Gaskell Biography, Portico Library
13	Evening performance of <i>Elizabeth Gaskell</i> and <i>Charlotte Brontë</i> , Portico Library
17	Gaskell Society AGM at Cross St. Chapel, Manchester
23-25	Brussels Brontë Weekend
MAY 14-17	Brook St. Chapel Flower and Costume Festival with Victorian high tea in the garden

MAY 15-16 Alliance of Literary Societies AGM in Knutsford with optional trip to the Gaskell's House, 84 Plymouth Grove on the afternoon of the 16th

JUNE 9 Sheffield University study day

JULY 15 Exhibition on Elizabeth Gaskell opens at John Rylands University Library of Manchester

22 Special viewing of the exhibition for the Gaskell Society with a talk by Fran Baker

AUGUST 5 at JRL: Professor Pamela Corpron Parker on *Gaskell* and autographs

14 at JRL: History Wardrobe performance: *Elegant Economy*

SEPTEMBER Tatton Park: exhibition on Elizabeth Gaskell's Cheshire, costumed readings and talks

5 Penny Farthing race round Knutsford Moor

14 Knutsford Library: Talk about the Whitfield Collection

16 at JRL: Talk by Jenny Uglow *Country and City*

18 at JRL: by History Wardrobe: *Clothes of Cranford*

24-26 WESTMINSTER ABBEY dedication of window in Poets' Corner and related events

29 Talk by Elizabeth Williams at Brook Street Chapel: *The life and works of Elizabeth Gaskell*, followed by lunch and walk around Knutsford

OCTOBER 3 Commemorative service at Brook Street Chapel and wreath laying. Refreshments

5-9 Victorian Music hall Knutsford Little Theatre (to include *Old Poz*) Knutsford Literature Festival approx two weeks

14 at JRL: *Gaskell and her publishers* by Alan Shelston

NOVEMBER 28 John Rylands exhibition closes

# The Gaskell Society



Brook Street Chapel

*THE GASKELL SOCIETY HOME PAGE* has all the latest information on meetings.  
<http://gaskellsociety.co.uk>

If you have any material or suggestions for future Newsletters, please contact Mrs. Joan Leach,  
Far Yew Tree House, Chester Road, Tabley, Knutsford, Cheshire WA16 0HN.  
Telephone - 01565 634668 E-mail: [joanleach@aol.com](mailto:joanleach@aol.com)

**Hon Treasurer:** Brian Williams, 15 Cawley Avenue, Culcheth, Warrington, Cheshire WA3 4DF

**Membership Secretary:** Miss C. Lingard, 5 Moran Crescent, Macclesfield SK11 8JJ

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## NEWSLETTER

Spring 2010 - Number 49

## Editor's Letter

Joan Leach

We hope you are all ready to celebrate the Gaskell bicentenary. Many of the events are in the Manchester and Cheshire areas but there are others elsewhere and we hope members will stimulate interest their own areas. For up-to-date information please consult our home page [www.gaskellsociety.co.uk](http://www.gaskellsociety.co.uk); there is also a web page at [www.elizabethgaskell.co.uk](http://www.elizabethgaskell.co.uk) and a leaflet will soon be available for the North West programme: all these will give booking details. The Portico Library exhibition: Elizabeth Gaskell- *A Writer's Life* will be shown in April (excluding 2nd and 5th). The library, where William was Chairman for 30 years is well worth a visit and the exhibition will feature some rarely seen items.

Tabley Old Hall where Elizabeth enjoyed picnics as described in *Mr Harrison's Confessions*, is now a ruin on an island in Tabley Park. I hope to conduct a guided walk on 10th April. Booking information is on [www.tableyhouse.com](http://www.tableyhouse.com) or contact me on [joanleach@aol.com](mailto:joanleach@aol.com).

We hope members will support us, and act as hostesses too, for the AGM of The Alliance of Literary Societies in the 15th and 16th of May. Our representative on the committee, Janet Kennerley, has organised an excellent programme. Brook Street Chapel will be a colourful attraction as a flower festival will coincide with the ALS event. It is a great pleasure to meet members of other literary societies and they are looking forward to coming to Knutsford and Plymouth Grove.

Our groups in London, Bath and York continue with their programmes and hope members will support them. If you live near an area with Gaskell connections that has not yet organised a bicentenary event you might consider taking some action.

In this issue there are details of a Gaskell Study Day at Sheffield University on 9th June: early registration is recommended. A garden Party at Heathwaite, Elizabeth's childhood home, on 12th June from 2pm to 4pm will also need early booking (Email: [patbarnard@live.co.uk](mailto:patbarnard@live.co.uk)) to avoid disappointment.

You will have received information about the AGM on 17th April at Cross Street Chapel and our Westminster Abbey window dedication ceremony on 25th September and watch out for many other events to be held in the autumn. We hope to see many of you at these events.

Christine Lingard has written for us about the Gaskell's London connections from her extensive researches. Some of us will visit Chelsea and other places she knew, in September.

You may be interested in an obituary of Elizabeth from The Manchester Guardian of 14th November 1865 and a copy of her death certificate.

Akiko Suzue, retiring President of the Gaskell Society of Japan sends us this information: The Society of Japan has three plans to commemorate Gaskell's 200th anniversary. The first one, publication of an Elizabeth Gaskell Study, is already launched. Many members of our society contributed to it, so that it should come to be one of the best Gaskell Study of the world to commemorate her bicentenary. The book will be published on Gaskell's birthday.

Another plan is The Gaskell Exhibition under the auspices of Jissen Women's University. Versions of Gaskell books, translations and studies will be exhibited in late September to early October around our AGM period. Now we are considering to borrow a dress and hats of mid Victorian period from Bunka University Museum. But it requires some money. I wonder if any of you has your great great grandmother's dress in your closet!

Our third plan is to make our AGM a commemorative one. It is most welcome if someone would take DVD or video of the ceremony at the Poet's Corner, and show it at the meeting Prof. Suzue will conclude the meeting with the lecture "On the topos of Elizabeth Gaskell."

## Elizabeth Gaskell's London

Christine Lingard

During this special bi-centenary year members may well be visiting London and may want to find some of the places that Elizabeth Gaskell visited. She was born at Lindsey Row, now known as no. 93 Cheyne Walk, Chelsea, near Battersea Bridge, in 1810 — a plaque marks the house; but within a few weeks the family moved round the corner to no.3 Beaufort Row [1] before being taken to Knutsford to spend the rest of her childhood in the care of her beloved Aunt Lumb. This house is no longer standing. Elizabeth's two half-siblings were baptised, not in a Dissenting chapel, but at nearby St Luke's, often referred to as Chelsea Old Church, where her mother had been buried in October, 1811. This church is still in use but has been extensively rebuilt after war damage. Elizabeth returned to Chelsea during the last years of her father's life (he died in 1829) and recorded the time in a famous letter to Mary Howitt in 1838:

*Long ago I lived in Chelsea occasionally with my father and stepmother, and very, very unhappy I used to be; and if it had not been for the beautiful, grand river, which was an inexplicable comfort to me, and a family of the name of Kennett, I think my child's heart would have broken. [GL, 616]*

However she must have retained some affection for the area, for in May 1849 she wrote 'And then to Chelsea to see the old place once more'; seven years later she stayed at Parham Place, off the King's Road, when introducing her two younger daughters to the capital. Other visits in the years before her marriage were to family. Her mother's brother, Swinton Holland, a banker, lived at Norfolk St, Park Lane. This street has been renamed Dunraven St, and substantially rebuilt. Here she got to know several of his Wedgwood and Darwin relations. It remained the home of his widow Anne and two of her daughters, Charlotte & Louisa. Susan Darwin preferred Charlotte to Louisa. Another cousin, Sir Henry Holland, son of her Uncle Peter, had an even more prestigious address: no. 25 Lower Brook St, Mayfair, in keeping with his role as doctor to the royal family. His wife Emma died of cancer in 1831 leaving a young family. His sisters, Lucy and Bessy, moved in to help until he remarried.

Once her identity as an author was revealed Elizabeth's visits to the city became frequent; sometimes she stayed in inadequate lodgings, such as the little, dusty, noisy rooming-house in Panton Square (off Haymarket), especially for longer trips when she did not wish to inconvenience people. But she had numerous friends who were always willing to entertain her. Her first hostess was a former Manchester friend, the infamous Mrs Tayler (who had the 'impromptu baby' in Blackpool). They had moved to no. 27 Woburn Square. Another early visit was a pleasurable Christmas (1850) spent at the home of her literary mentors, William and Mary Howitt, then living at no. 28 Avenue Rd, St. John's Wood, where they sat around a roaring fire telling ghost stories. [2]. Their neighbours included an associate of William's, Edward Tagart, minister of Little Portland St. Chapel, who numbered Dickens among his congregation. There are numerous references to this family in her letters around this time, though she found the atmosphere in their home cold. It was on a visit to the Tagarts that she met the Shakespearean editor, Mary Cowden Clarke:

*We found a charming, brilliant-complexioned, but quiet-mannered woman; thoroughly unaffected, thoroughly attractive-so modest that blushed like a girl when we hazarded some expression of our ardent admiration of her "Mary Barton"* [3]

Many of her friends lived in grand Georgian houses in the vicinity of Hyde Park or Regent's Park. These elegant terraces, designed by John Nash, were named after the ducal titles of the Prince Regent's brothers. Hensleigh Wedgwood, brother of

Mrs Charles Darwin, and Hensleigh's daughter Snow, lived at no. 17 Cumberland Place (since renumbered), her new friend Tottie Fox lived at no. 3 Sussex Place, and further along at no. 13 lived Alfred Austin, a civil servant, who did much to alleviate the effects of the cholera epidemic in Manchester. His daughter Annie spent some time at Plymouth Grove and met her future husband, Fleeming Jenkin, an engineering apprentice, there. He became a Professor at Edinburgh University and is known for his friendship with Robert Louis Stevenson.

Cousin Louisa was married at the age of 47 to Robert Croft, Vicar of Hillingdon, and lived at no. 18 Clifford St, Regent St, which is now Buck's Club, the haunt of P.G. Wodehouse and the like; at no. 8 Hyde Park Gardens was another Manchester friend, Lady Coltman, and the judge Sir Charles Crompton lived at no. 89 Oxford Terrace, Hyde Park. Lady Caroline Crompton was the daughter of a Liverpool merchant and a member of one of those bewildering inter-connected Unitarian families. Several of her sisters or their families are mentioned in Elizabeth's letters - Mrs Noble of Silverdale, Mrs John Shuttleworth (wife of the radical Manchester newspaper owner), and Mrs Charles Booth among them. Mrs James Booth (née Jane Noble), the latter's cousin and sister-in-law, and wife of a future Secretary of the Board of Trade, was eager to play host at no. 39 Hyde Park Square in 1853 - 'such a charming person'.

Other regular hosts included William Ewart, the radical politician, at no. 6 Cambridge Square, Hyde Park; he also entertained her at Broadleas, his home near Devizes. Her great friend, Mrs Davenport of Capesthorpe, re-married to Lord Hatherston, had her London home at no. 42 Berkeley Square; William Shaen, her solicitor, who was married to Emily, one of the Winkworth sisters, at no. 8 Bedford Row, Holbein; and Maria James, the wife of the judge, William Milbourne James, a student with William at Glasgow University, at no. 47 Wimpole St.

*MA. & I agree that yours is one of the 3 houses we like best to stay at [FL, p.123]*

Her newly found fame brought Elizabeth many invitations from the literary circuit, especially the celebrity breakfast; in particular the poet, Samuel Rogers at St. James Place, who entertained her in May 1849:

*... poor old man; he looks so very old, and feeble ... though he again showed us some beautiful things - ornaments for the head, ears, neck dug out of Etruscan, Pompeian, & Egyptian tombs; some were as elegant as anything that is made now. [GL, 47]*

There was also the politician, Richard Monckton Milnes (Lord Houghton), in Pall Mall;

*... we cabbed it to Mr Monckton Milnes' ... There were the House of Lords there, Miss Holland says; but independently of the Lords, there was Guizot, and Whewell, and Archdeacon Hare. .... We were very merry, and it was a very short two hours which every one had said was the proper number of hours to stay at breakfast. [GL, 45a]*

This was followed by her first visit to Dickens' home, for dinner, 'making ... a rich day'. This would be in Tavistock Square, though this house is no longer standing:

*We were shown into Mr Dickens' study... It is the study where he writes all his works; and has a bow-window, about the size of Uncle Holland's drawing room. There are books all round, up to the ceiling, and down to the ground; a standing-desk at which he writes; and all manner of comfortable easy chairs. .... Anne [her cousin] sat between Carlyle & [Samuel] Rogers, — I between Dickens & Douglas Jerrold. Anne heard the most sense, and I the most wit... [GL, 45a]*

Her first meeting with Carlyle was disappointing, especially as he had spoken so appreciatively of Mary Barton. The invitation had come from Jane Carlyle, without consulting him. Emily Winkworth, who accompanied her, was disgusted that she was kept waiting for an hour in the drawing-room with Mrs Carlyle looking out at the garden, where 'her great rude husband was walking backwards & forwards in a dirty Scotch plaid smoking', and where he was sent out to four times, and wouldn't come in. At last Mrs C. went out to him herself, — 'but it was no use, and she came back looking so mortified'. [4] Carlyle lived in Cheyne Row, Chelsea, very near to her birthplace. The house is open to the public.

Years later she visited William Makepeace Thackeray at no. 2 Palace Green Rd, opposite Kensington Gardens (now the Israeli embassy). His daughter Anne Ritchie described the occasion:

*Once, only a year before, Mrs. Gaskell had come with one of her daughters to see us in my father's house, and I can just remember her talking to him in the big dining-room at Palace Green; looking up laughing, inquiring, responding, gay, yet definite, such is the impression I have of her presence. Nor do I forget the motherly letter, full of truest warmth and expression of feeling, in which, after our father's death, she invited us to stay at Manchester, to come to that home in Plymouth Grove in which, for years, and years to be, such true hospitality, such life-long friendship, awaited me and mine. [5]*

There numerous other people for social occasions — too many to name. Among them, the geologist Sir Charles Lyell in Harley St, Leigh Hunt (formerly a neighbour of Carlyle in Chelsea) at no. 16 Rowan Rd, Hammersmith, Dante Gabriel Rossetti,

then living near Blackfriars Bridge (his later home was at the other end of Cheyne Walk); Charles Kingsley at Chelsea Rectory, and John & Effie Ruskin at no. 163 Denmark Hill, Herne Hill (April 1855). She went to hear Frederick Maurice preach at Lincoln's Inn.

Some visits were just for business — her publishers Chapman & Hall had offices in Park Lane, and George Smith in Corn Hill. There were plenty of occasions to become a tourist, often using Peter Cunningham's Handbook of London past & present, as a guide. The energetic Lady Anna Coltman (née Duckworth) was very keen to keep her busy.

*... Ly Coltman plans to take me to the Zoological Gardens ... and Kensal Green Cemetery. At 4 we are to go with the Dean of Hereford, and the Dean of Salisbury (for a good Unitarian Ly Coltman knows a mighty number of Deans) .... (GL, 156a)*

She visited Hampton Court in 1856 (her guidebook is preserved in Manchester Central Library), and Kew. William Ewart offered to show her the Houses of Parliament, though it is not clear whether she took him up on the offer, and there was always time for art galleries, theatres, shopping (Baker St Bazaar) and tea (Chapter Coffee House).

Elizabeth was just as keen to see the other side of life and made several visits to charitable institutions, though most of these are no longer to be seen. In 1851 she went to the Convent of the Sisters of Mercy at Bermondsey:

*Bermondsey is a very bad part of London; and these Sisters have been established about 11 years, and have done a good deal of good and established a great large school. [GL, 100]*

She went to see her friend, James Pillans Wilson, at Mr Price's candle factory, a benevolently run company which provided a Christian Society, and rewarded the boy employees with games of cricket & outings; and to see Mr Nash's reformatory schools, or ragged schools, at Westminster:

*[he] was a clerk and has given up his life and his time to reforming criminals for some years past. Sending out as many as 100 every year to the Colonies; [GL156a]*

And she even went to Tothill Fields Prison (near Westminster Cathedral) in May 1849 to see 'the silent associated system of which our dear Mr Wright thinks so highly'. [GL, 47]

She ventured into the suburbs, evidently being familiar with Putney & Wimbledon, where she spent a lot of time trailing round looking for lodgings. Friends to visit there were the Christian Socialists — Thomas Hughes & J.M.F. Ludlow and their families, who shared a house at The Firs, Ridgway, William Rathbone Greg, and her rarely mentioned cousin, George Holland, at Gayton Lodge. Hampstead was also in reach even if it proved difficult. She once wrote to the critic, Henry Morley:

*Did you ever hear how Mrs Wedgwood & I toiled & broiled in search of the very mysterious place where you live...and just as we must have been in sight of the New Hampstead Road, had to turn back for our time was up... [GL 278]*

She was more successful visiting George Smith, Clarkson Stanfield the artist, and the Tagarts, who had moved there. Marianne Gaskell went to school at Holly Lodge.

Her two married daughters later had homes in London. Marianne lived at Lansdowne Rd, Wimbledon. A memorial was dedicated to her husband Edward Thurstan Holland in All Saints Church. Florence started her married life with her in-laws but later lived at no.13 Cromwell Place, South Kensington. She continued the family tradition of hospitality. Henry James was a guest on more than one occasion:

*and also [dined] with Mrs Crompton again, and took out her sister Miss Meta Gaskell (the Nortons' friend), a most pleasing, amiable, sympathetic woman. [6]*

Further reading:

[GL] Chapple, J.A.V. & Pollard, Arthur. The letters of Mrs Gaskell, [new ed], 1997.

[FL] Chapple, J.A.V. & Shelston, Alan. Further letters of Mrs Gaskell, 2000.

[1] Chapple, J.A.V. Elizabeth Gaskell: the early years, 1997.

[2] Lee, Amice. Laurels and rosemary: the life of William and Mary Howitt, 1955.

[3] Clarke, Mary & Charles Cowden. Recollections of writers, 1878.

[4] Uglow, Jenny. Elizabeth Gaskell; a habit of stories, 1993.

[5] Ritchie, Anne Thackeray. Blackstick papers, 1908.

[6] Edel, Leon (editor). Henry James: letters, volume II, 1875-1883, 1975.

## *A Tale of Two Centenaries: Elizabeth Gaskell and Lev Tolstoy*

**Dr Katherine Jane Briggs**

A literary centenary stimulates new interest in the life and works of a famous author; and prompts us to consider the significance of their novels for the present day, as

well as their influence on other writers. This year marks the bicentenary of the birth of Elizabeth Gaskell; and also the centenary of the death of Tolstoy, one of the most significant Russian writers of all time. The links between these two events may appear tenuous at first sight, but a chain of reference may be established within the context of world literature.

Much of my research has been centred on the influence of one writer on another, and the ways in which writers in England and Russia promoted the Christian social gospel of compassion for the poor and oppressed. Writers such as Elizabeth Gaskell, George Eliot, Charlotte Bronte and Charles Dickens all drew attention in their novels to the lives of poor people in their own country, as did Tolstoy, Turgenev and Dostoevsky in theirs – at a time when modes of communication were very different from what they are today.

My work explores the relationship between public work and influence, and private faith and spiritual development, through female characters created by all these 19th-century authors, in which they portray the experience of women in terms of their relationships and work, and conflict with personal and institutional evil. A modern novelist, Howard Jacobson, says: 'Novels matter, in my view, because they show how each individual life feels to the person living it.' To enter into another person's understanding of self, we need what writers and teachers call the 'sympathetic imagination' – the attempt to stand and walk in the shoes of another person.

In the context of cross-cultural understanding, it is also essential to consider questions of translation from one language to another – and to consider how a Russian lady in St Petersburg came to be offered a novel by an English lady from Cheshire as a suitable subject for translation by a marginally disreputable journalist like Dostoevsky – and why she agreed to do it.

**Ed. Dr K J Briggs will speak on this topic in the afternoon of the AGM meeting to be held at Cross Street on 17th April.**

## *Vernon Lushington: Mrs Gaskell's 'Cousin V'*

In the 1860s Elizabeth Gaskell was concerned about the plight of the Manchester cotton operatives who were suffering from lack of work because of the blockade of imported cotton which resulted from the American Civil War. She arranged for an assistance fund to be set up and sought help in collecting funds in London. One of those who came to her assistance was the lawyer Vernon Lushington. Mrs Gaskell and Lushington became good friends, with Lushington often visiting the family at their home in Plymouth Grove where a room was kept for him when he was in

Manchester on legal business. In one of her letters Mrs Gaskell referred to Lushington as 'Cousin V'.

Little has been known about Lushington until the recent emergence of an important but little-known archive of Lushington correspondence and diaries. These were made available to historian David Taylor whose interest in the Lushingtons stretches back many years. David Taylor has been helping to catalogue the archive and is currently researching for a thesis on Lushington for a PhD at Roehampton University.

Lushington moved in a remarkable circle of friends, which included the Pre-Raphaelite painters, Charles Darwin, George Eliot, William Morris, Thomas Hardy, George Gissing and many more household names from the second half of the nineteenth century. Through his friendship with Leslie and Julia Stephen, Lushington's three daughters became friends of Virginia Stephen (better known as Virginia Woolf), who used Kitty Lushington as the model for her 'Mrs Dalloway'.

\* David Taylor will give the Daphne Carrick Lecture after the AGM on 17th April at Cross Street. He is a local historian living in Cobham, Surrey, which is where the Lushington family had their summer residence. He is an archivist for the Cobham Park estate and has written many books and articles on various aspects of local history. He is well known as both writer and speaker and was, last year, invited to give a short lecture tour in the USA based on his work on the Lushingtons.

### **A Brontë letter: Correction**

In the Autumn Newsletter no. 48, a letter from Charlotte Brontë to Elizabeth Gaskell about a visit to Chatsworth, is mentioned, suggesting that it may never have appeared in print. Margaret Smith, editor of *The Letters of Charlotte Brontë*, points out that the letter has in fact been published. Dated 27 August 1850, it appears in *The Letters of Charlotte Brontë*, Vol. II (OUP 2000), pp. 456-8, and also as early as 1908 in Clement Shorter's *The Brontës: Life and Letters*, London 1908 Vol. II, pp. 163-4.

Also in the previous Newsletter, Dr John Ross considered the cause of Elizabeth Gaskell's death. This inspired Christine Lingard to send for a copy of the official death certificates for Elizabeth Gaskell and for her daughter, Florence, who died at the early age of 38. Elizabeth's death is recorded as 'Heart Failure'.

But Florence's, dated October 5th 1881, gives the cause of death as: '*Found dead. Poisoned by an overdose of chloral hydrate accidentally*'.

This sedative drug, often taken as a sleeping draught, was addictive but as it had an unpleasant taste it seems unlikely that an overdose could be taken 'accidentally'.

## *The Death of Mrs Gaskell reported*

A member kindly sent me a clipping from *The Guardian* which was a reprinting of the paper's report of Elizabeth Gaskell's death, dated 14 November 1865:

*Last evening the melancholy intelligence reached the city of the death of Mrs Gaskell, the wife of the respected minister of the Unitarian Chapel, Cross Street . . .*

*Her death was very sudden, and that there could have been no expectation of so speedy a termination of her life work, nor even a thought of danger, is shown by the fact that Mr Gaskell preached in his own chapel on Sunday, and was at home when the news of her decease reached him . . . ( a few details of her life are given) With the modesty of no doubt in her own gift she issued her first work, May Barton, anonymously in 1848. It attracted great interest from the fact that its scene was laid in this neighbourhood. Another of her popular novels was North and South, in which the painful details of a strike in the manufacturing districts were narrated with great vigour). But the greatest work, and that by which she will be longest known, is her 'Life of Charlotte Brontë', of which it has been said that no biography has equalled it since Boswell's Johnson. In the earlier editions of this now standard work some personal references were made which created much discussion, and which were omitted from subsequent editions. A similar feeling had been occasioned at an earlier period of Mrs Gaskell's literary career, for in sketches entitled Cranford, which appeared in Household Words, she had drawn portraits rather too accurately of some living personages . . . ( then follows a mention of the Art Treasures Exhibition of 1857 and her distinguished visitors) Her conversational powers were of no mean order, and she was at all times an important acquisition to the social order. Of late years she has travelled much abroad but her inspiration was always found in English life and character. Her death leaves a blank that will not easily be filled*

## *Exciting times ahead at Brook Street Chapel*

The Chapel and the Gaskell Grave are places of pilgrimage for Gaskell enthusiasts from all over the U.K. and the world. The popularity of the B.B.C. filming of "Cranford" and the subsequent programmes has vastly increased interest in Gaskell.

The Chapel itself is reached by steep stone steps and cobbled paths which elderly and disabled people find impossible to manage and so, more than five years ago, the committee decided to improve the access to the Chapel, the Gaskell grave and to the tranquil garden at the rear of the Chapel.



Columns:-	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9
No.	When and where died	Name and surname	Sex	Age	Occupation	Cause of death	Signature, description and residence of informant	When registered	Signature of registrar
216	Twelfth November 1865 Hollybourn	Elizabeth Cleghorn Gaskell	Female	55 Years	Wife of William Gaskell Unitarian minister	Disease of the Heart Certified	Ann Hewitt Present at the death Hollybourn	Fifteenth November 1865	W. Gaskell Registrar

Columns:-	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9
No.	When and where died	Name and surname	Sex	Age	Occupation	Cause of death	Signature, description and residence of informant	When registered	Signature of registrar
192	5 <sup>th</sup> October 1881 13 Cromwell Place Wensington	Florence Elizabeth Crompton	Female	38 Years	Wife of Charles Crompton Barrister	Found dead Poisoned by an overdose of Chloral Hydrate Accidentally	Certificate received from Thomas Bramah, Medical Coroner for Middlesex Inquest held October 1881	Fourteenth October 1881	S. A. Hume Registrar

The project sounded simple enough but the Chapel's Grade 1 status and the ancient yew trees meant that there were many restrictions to overcome. The architect came up with an ingenious plan that solved the access problem but left us with another problem — how to pay for it! For the last few years the Chapel members have fund raised themselves, applied for grants and been blessed by generous donations from benefactors until finally, in January, the work began.

So what is happening?

- 1 A lift is being installed in the schoolroom to enable disabled people to reach the newly installed first floor.
- 2 The new room will exit to a level wheelchair-friendly path which leads to the Chapel.
- 3 The gravestones by the Chapel are being levelled and a viewing platform is being built which will overlook the Gaskell grave.
- 4 The garden will be reached via slightly stepped gravestones.
- 5 New toilets and other facilities will be installed.

What next?

- 1 The new room will be developed into an exhibition centre dedicated to Elizabeth Gaskell.
- 2 There will be other temporary displays, eg. important Knutsford characters etc
- 3 The Chapel will be open regularly for visitors and tourists.
- 4 Interpretation of the history of the Chapel will be introduced in the gallery.
- 5 Work closely and co-operatively with Knutsford Heritage Centre.

What does this mean for Brook Street Chapel and Knutsford?

- 1 Everyone will be able to reach the Chapel.
- 2 The overall facilities including the main hall will be good and so other local organisations can use the premises for meetings, workshops, readings, rehearsals, concerts etc.
- 3 It will be open for people wishing to find out about the Chapel and its history
- 4 It will be a focal point for Gaskell enthusiasts.
- 5 We hope that local people will be encouraged to come to Brook Street Chapel and find out for themselves what a wonderful friendly place it is and to enjoy its unique beauty
- 6 It will be a tourist attraction.

## *Emily White 1925-2010*

Her many friends in the north-west were very sorry to learn of the sudden death, on January 31st, of Emily White, a long-standing member of The Gaskell Society.

Emily was born in Macclesfield on 17th March 1925, the only child of a Manchester manufacturer of water-proofed cloth. She lived for most of her life in Prestbury and was educated locally before becoming a pupil at Manchester High School, where Meta Gaskell was still celebrated as a benefactor on Founder's Day. Aged seventeen, Emily gained a place to read P.P.E. at Lady Margaret Hall and was fortunate in being able to stay at Oxford for 3 years to complete her Honours Degree. At this time women had to leave their studies on reaching the age of twenty to be called up for war service. Even so, like all students, Emily had to contribute five hours a week 'war-work', scrubbing floors and picking potatoes on the College hockey field, sacrificed for the duration to the 'Dig for Victory' campaign. Emily played in goal for the second varsity hockey team and in her final year was awarded a tennis blue, contributing to a celebrated away win against Cambridge.

After Oxford Emily trained as a Housing Manager, a career which, before the welfare state, embraced many elements of social care. She worked in Chester, London and Manchester before leaving to join the Manchester and Salford Council of Social Service, as assistant secretary, in 1955. Her job there was to promote co-operation with and between voluntary organisations and to identify gaps in social provision and innovate projects to meet these needs. The many-faceted voluntary social scene gave Emily full scope for her ideas and administrative skills, and her valuable work led to her appointment as the first woman General Secretary to the Council in 1964, and the award of OBE in 1976. In the 1970s Emily joined the social development department of the recently created Warrington New Town as a principal officer and was promoted to Head of Community development before her retirement in 1982.

On retirement, Emily enrolled immediately for a local history diploma at Manchester Polytechnic and for her dissertation subject chose 'Women in public service in early 20th-century Macclesfield'. Her favourite research tool was her tape-recorder, with which she interviewed the daughters and granddaughters of the leading 'platform people' of that time. One such pioneer of women's causes was Susan Elizabeth Gaskell, always known as Lily, a niece of the Gaskells and friend of Meta and Julia, who came to live in Prestbury on her marriage to Walter Greg. Emily presented a paper on the work of this public-spirited heir to the Gaskell tradition at a meeting of the Manchester Lit. and Phil. Society, which was later published in their Transactions. She also published a number of short histories of local churches and historic church schools and a biography of Joan Gaddum OBE. Emily's concern for others did not cease with retirement. Some twenty years ago she helped to form Age Concern in Cheshire and was still president of Age Concern Cheshire and a trustee of Age Concern East Cheshire at the time of her death.

Emily gained great pleasure from her love of music and after her move to Kerridge played the organ for the local church and sang with the Bollington Festival choir, but

at the end of a working life spent largely in committees, she was now most happy out of doors. She was Lady Captain, and later Lady President of Prestbury Golf Club, as her mother had been, and won more than her share of trophies. She loved her garden and rambling the hills with her dog or local walking groups. In old age she continued to take strenuous walking holidays in the mountain ranges of Europe and on a recent African safari holiday took over the controls of a light aircraft to fly over Victoria Falls. She valued the company of the friends she made in the Gaskell Society at our Knutsford meetings, and particularly enjoyed the conferences, holidays and day trips which offered that wonderful mixture of learning and outdoor activities for which her appetite never diminished. Some will remember her striding the Lakes in the footsteps of Shirley Foster at our last conference.

A Service of Thanksgiving held for Emily at St Peter's Church, Prestbury, on 17th February, brought together a large congregation, expressive of the affection of her many friends and the respect earned by her lifetime's work making things better for others, wherever she saw the need.

## *The Alliance of Literary Societies*

**Kenn Oultram**

Following a phone call from Joan Leach I agreed to accompany her, on 30 April, 1988, to the Birmingham and Midland Institute to support the setting up of an Alliance of Literary Societies (ALS). The inspiration came from Kathleen Adams, who retired as secretary of the George Eliot Fellowship in 2008 after forty years in office. Her husband Bill was later to become secretary of the ALS, and the Coventry-based couple are today vice-presidents of the Alliance.

A follow-up meeting in Birmingham on 8 October 1988, attracted a capacity audience to the BMI lecture theatre, and the appointed officers were: Joseph Hunt, Chairman (Francis Brett Young Society), Herbert Woodward, Secretary, and John Bates, Treasurer (both of The Dickens Fellowship, Birmingham branch). I volunteered and was appointed newsletter editor (a position I held for 10 years) and Joan was elected as a committee member; a position presently held by Janet Kennerley.

Annual meetings at the BMI, in those early years, featured presentations by member societies with readings, including some from the relevant author's work by the actor Gabriel Woolf, the ALS's first President. The Alliance is currently set to appoint a new president, following the death last year of Aeronwy Thomas, the daughter of Dylan Thomas, who supported the ALS with enthusiasm and charm.

Latterly ALS annual general meetings have been hosted by various societies in locations as diverse as London, Oxford, Stoke-on-Trent, Swindon, Bath, Swansea, Ledbury, Berkhamsted and (last year) Dublin. The 2011 event will be hosted by The Johnson Society in Lichfield, with a provisional date of 14/15 May; while the following year the honour falls to the Dickens Fellowship on the occasion the bicentenary of the great man's birth.

Finally, the progressive ALS has achieved international recognition by affiliating to the ALG, a Berlin-based organisation funded by the German government, which embraces European literary societies and related museums. Annual conferences have been held in Berlin and Budapest, when the ALS delegate has been its Chairperson, Linda Curry (The John Clare Society). She hopes that the ALS will ultimately be hosts.

Ed. Kenn Oultram, is one of our founder members and served on the committee for sixteen years. He recently completed forty years as secretary to the Lewis Carroll Society (Daresbury).

## *The Alliance of Literary Societies*

**The Gaskell Society welcomes the  
ALLIANCE OF LITERARY SOCIETIES  
to the AGM and Weekend Event  
Saturday 15th May – Sunday 16th May 2010**

**PROGRAMME** (may be subject to change)

**Saturday 15th May** – The Methodist Church, Princess Street, Knutsford

- 10.30 am **Registration and Coffee** – (£2 if not staying for lunch)
- 11.00 am **Welcome & Introduction** by The Gaskell Society  
followed by **Annual General Meeting of the ALS**
- 12.15pm approx. **Buffet Lunch** (optional) - £10 including tea/coffee
- 1.45pm **"Elizabeth Gaskell – Her Life and Works"**  
- talk by Elizabeth Williams, Chairman of The Gaskell Society
- 2.30pm **"Mrs Gaskell & Knutsford"**  
- talk by Joan Leach MBE, Hon. Secretary, introducing:-
- 3.00pm **"A Cranford Walk around Knutsford"**  
(lasting approximately 1.5 hours)

7.00/7.30pm **Dinner** – The Cottons Hotel, Manchester Road, Knutsford  
(must be pre-booked – 3 courses plus coffee £27)

**Sunday 16th May** – Brook Street Unitarian Chapel, Knutsford

10.00am Coffee followed by illustrated talk by Joan Leach MBE:-  
“Mrs Gaskell’s Cheshire”

10.45am Laying of wreath on Elizabeth Gaskell’s grave

Various options – possibly:-

11am-12 noon Morning Worship at Brook Street Unitarian Chapel

Visit to 84 Plymouth Grove in Manchester – subject to building works  
(former home of Rev & Mrs Gaskell and family)

Opportunity to explore ECG’s Cheshire – e.g. Tabley House and/or  
Tatton Park (halls open 2pm) Capesthorpe Hall, Peover Hall, Styal  
Mill.

Please note this weekend is open to any member of a society affiliated to the ALS,  
but only one delegate from each society can vote, if necessary, at the AGM. This  
annual event, held over a weekend at a venue associated with one of our member  
societies, is an opportunity to learn about a particular author, whilst socialising with  
members of a wide range of literary societies.

This year’s venue will be Knutsford in Cheshire. Mentioned in the Domesday Book  
of 1086, Knutsford has a long, rich and varied history. The town is known as being  
the childhood home of author, Elizabeth Gaskell, born in London during 1810 as  
Elizabeth Cleghorn Stevenson, an outstanding novelist of the early Victorian era.  
Following her mother’s death a year after her birth, the young Elizabeth was brought  
to Cheshire to live with her late mother’s sister, “Aunt Lumb” at “Heathwaite House”  
in what is now known as Gaskell Avenue, Knutsford. She married the Unitarian  
Minister, Reverend William Gaskell, in 1832 at Knutsford Parish Church, and then  
lived in Manchester. From 1850, the Gaskell family home was at 84 Plymouth Grove  
in the Manchester suburbs, currently undergoing a major restoration project to  
return this literary house to its former glory. However, Elizabeth Gaskell was fond of  
her childhood home town and immortalised Knutsford in many of her works,  
especially “Cranford” which is considered a charming portrayal of the town in  
Victorian times and of its mainly female population.

Today, Knutsford is a popular tourist destination, with its eclectic mix of unique  
Italianate architecture, quaint cobbled streets and grand buildings. It is also a  
bustling commuter town with a lively shopping centre full of specialist shops,  
boutiques to antiques, interior design centres and art galleries. From “Top Street”

(Princess Street) to “Bottom Street” (King Street) there are many delightful  
attractions for visitors to explore, along with numerous restaurants, cafes and pubs.  
There is access to open heathland and the attractive parkland surrounding the  
mansion at Tatton Park is at the end of King Street.

Knutsford is justly regarded as one of the most attractive towns of its size in  
Cheshire – with a story to tell around every corner!

**Janet Kennerley**

## BOOKING FORM

To secure your place at the above event, complete this form and return with your  
remittance payable to “The Gaskell Society” by **31st MARCH 2010** please to:-

Mrs Joan Leach MBE, Honorary Secretary, The Gaskell Society,  
Far Yew Tree House, Chester Road, Tabley, Knutsford, Cheshire. WA16 0HN

Name(s): .....

Address: .....

Telephone: ..... Email: .....

I/We wish to attend the ALS Annual General Meeting on 15th May 2010.

£10 per person – for the day, inclusive of 2 course buffet style lunch  
and coffee/tea

**OR** £2 per person – for the day without lunch but including morning coffee/tea  
(This may be paid on the day)

£27 per person – Formal Dinner at The Cottons Hotel, Manchester Road,  
Knutsford (3 course set meal incl. coffee, vegetarian option)

I/We enclose remittance – please make cheques payable to The Gaskell Society  
as follows:-

Total: £ .....

If you would like to visit Plymouth Grove on Sunday 16th please ask Joan for  
details.

## *Gaskell Study Day at Sheffield*

As part of the Bicentenary celebrations, the University of Sheffield's School of English is holding a Study Day on the topic of 'Gaskell's Longer Short Fiction', on 9th of June 2010. The main speaker will be Professor Joanne Shattock, who will deliver a paper on 'Elizabeth Gaskell and her Readers: from Howitt's Journal to the Cornhill'. There will also be postgraduate speakers, and Alan Shelston and Shirley Foster will lead a round-table discussion.

### **Draft Programme:**

11.30 a.m.	Coffee and Registration
12.00	Main speaker
1.00-1.45 p.m.	Buffet lunch
2.00-4.00 p.m.	Postgraduate papers and round-table discussion
4.00 p.m.	Tea and departure

The cost of the day will be £7.50, to be paid in advance.

**Please indicate by 31 March if you would like to attend.** There is no official booking form; replies and cheques (made out to the University of Sheffield) should be sent to Dr Shirley Foster at either The School of English, University of Sheffield, Jessop West, 1 Upper Hanover Street, Sheffield S3 7RA, or reply to: s.foster1@sheffield.ac.uk. Please be sure to include a contact address.

## *BOOK NOTES*

**Christine Lingard**

*Elizabeth Gaskell* by Alan Shelston. Hesperus Press Ltd £7.99. This concise biography by the President of the Gaskell Society is a welcome addition to the acclaimed Brief Lives series. This book will be launched at the Portico Library, Manchester on 8th April.

*Victorian servants, class, and the politics of literacy*, by Jean Fernandez, (University of Maryland, Baltimore County). Routledge Studies in Nineteenth-century Literature, £70.

Discusses the development of mass literacy, and the class structure, illustrated in particular by the role of the servant in Victorian literature. It includes a chapter on 'Oral Pleasures: Repression and Desire in Emily Brontë's *Wuthering Heights* (1847) and Elizabeth Gaskell's "*The Old Nurse's Story*" (1862)'. Mary Wollstonecraft, Catherine Crowe, Wilkie Collins and Robert Louis Stevenson are also discussed, as well as some unfamiliar diary writers.

Also due for publication this Spring:

*Cousin Phillis and Other Stories*, ed. Heather Glen (Oxford World's Classics) OUP, £8.99.

Contents: Lizzie Leigh; Morton Hall; My French Master; Half a Life-Time Ago; The Manchester Marriage; Cousin Phillis – a group of stories that have been out of print for some time.

*The Moorland Cottage*. Hesperus Classics, £7.99. This novella, which was a special Christmas publication in 1850, provided some of the material for the 2009 television adaptation of Cranford.

*The Penguin Book of Ghost Stories*: from Elizabeth Gaskell to Ambrose Bierce, edited by Michael Newton, Penguin Classics, contains The old nurse's story, £10.99

Two new audio productions are also due to be released:

*Wives and Daughters* by Elizabeth Gaskell (Audio CD) Naxos AudioBooks; Unabridged edition read by Patience Tomlinson, £75 (available on Amazon for £37.50) Abridged edition, £15.

*Cousin Phillis* by Elizabeth Gaskell (Audio CD) Naxos AudioBooks; Unabridged edition read by Joe Marsh, £14.

## *A Report on progress at Plymouth Grove*

**Janet Allan**

Work on the exterior of the house should be completed in April, later than expected due to the unexpectedly bad winter. It will be a transformation from the dingy 'Pink House' we have known for so long with beautiful covering of lime plaster, restored windows and doors, new handrails and front steps, and a lot of interior structural work as well. We are very grateful to our major funders, who together contributed three quarters of a million pounds for this. They include English Heritage, the Bowland Trust, Biffa and the Oglesby Trust, but also to so many individuals who have sent us donations totally over nine thousand pounds.

Our application to the Heritage Lottery Fund for the work on the interior is going to their regional committee on 11 March. By the time this reaches you we hope that we will have been awarded the first stage of a million pound grant.

If you are a member of the Friends of Plymouth Grove, you can have your preview at our AGM on 8 May at 2pm. The house will be open for the ALS on Sunday 16 and our first public open day is on Sunday 6 June, 12-4pm.

Our forthcoming events include:

Wednesday 31 March- Friday 30 April, 9.30-4.30, Monday-Friday excluding Easter.  
Portico Library, 57 Mosley Street, M2 3HY *Elizabeth Gaskell Exhibition*

On Thursday 8 April, 6.30pm Alan Shelston will talk about writing his new biography of Elizabeth Gaskell, when we hope that three generations of Elizabeth's descendents (including the Trust's Patron Mrs Rosemary Dabbs) will be with us and on Tuesday 13 April there will be an InterTheatre performance of Elizabeth Gaskell and Charlotte Bronte. Book with the Library for these events, 0161 236 6785

Tuesday 25 May starting at 9.00 *Visit to St Deiniol's Library,*

The Library was founded by Gladstone in the picturesque village of Hawarden, It has an outstanding collection of over 250,000 items, specialising in Theology and Victorian Studies. Travel by coach (starting opposite Chorlton Street bus station). This tour is shared with the Portico Library. Cost £20 includes travel, coffee or tea and cake on arrival and tour of the library. You can order lunch individually in the library cafe. Please book with Hilda Holmes on 0161 487 2593.

Wednesday 16 June, 7 for 7.30 *Dear Scheherazade,*

Gabrielle Drake's one-woman show on Elizabeth Gaskell, postponed from January because of the bad weather, will be performed at MMU's Capitol Theatre in the Mabel Tylecote Building, All Saints, M15 6BH. Tickets are £15 including refreshments. Book via the Box Office on 0161 247 1306. Space is limited so book

#### North West Group

Knutsford meetings are held at St John's Church hall, on the last Wednesday in the month from October to April. Buffet lunch is from 12.15pm. Cost £8

A selection of Gaskell stories from *Tales of Mystery and the Macabre* (Wordsworth edition) will be studied and discussed with Elizabeth Williams. The Crooked Branch, The Grey Woman etc.

#### London and South East Group

Saturday, 8 May 2010: Professor Marion Shaw: 'Neither beginning, middle, nor end': a discussion on *My Lady Ludlow*.

This will follow the pattern of this year's May meeting. Marion Shaw will introduce Gaskell's work and then a discussion will ensue.

Professor Shaw is Emeritus Professor of English Literature at Loughborough University, with special interests in Tennyson and Elizabeth Gaskell.

Homework!! It might be advisable to read or re-read the work before the meeting!!

Meetings continue at Francis Holland School at 2pm with a sandwich lunch from 12.45pm.

#### South- West Group

**Saturday, 13th March, 2.30 p.m:** Discussion group at Bren Abercrombie's, 12 Mount Road, Lansdown, BA1. To continue the discussion on *Mary Barton*.  
(Tel: 01225 471241)

**Saturday, 24th April, 2.30 p.m:** at BRLSI, Dr Frances Twinn, editor of the Gaskell Journal, will speak on: 'From Monkshaven to *Middlemarch* - the Provincial Landscapes of Elizabeth Gaskell and George Eliot'.

Tea/Coffee will be served after the talk. £2.00 to members; £4.00 to non-members.

**August, date to be announced:** Summer tea at Kate and Alec Crawford's, Norton St Philip. Tel: 01225 331763.

**Any queries to Mrs Elizabeth Schlenther, 14 Vellore Lane, Bath, BA2 6JQ.**

#### Yorkshire Group

**Saturday, 1st May** at the Friends Meeting House, York, 2.00p.m.

**David Taylor** will give a talk on "**Vernon Lushington, Mrs Gaskell's Cousin V**". Lushington was a lawyer who helped Mrs Gaskell when she set up an Assistance fund for the Cotton Workers during the Cotton Blockade. He became a firm friend, so much so that a room at Plymouth Grove was put aside for his work whenever he was in Manchester. The talk will cover their friendship and also Lushington's friendship with other famous names of the time such as George Eliot, Thomas Hardy and the Pre-Raphaelite Brotherhood.

**Saturday, 9th October** at the Friends Meeting House, 2.00p.m.

**Janet Allen** will give a talk on "**Plymouth Grove**". Janet's talk will cover the time the Gaskells lived in the house, and also the progress of the work being carried out on the house today.

In addition to the above, in this bicentenary year the Group has established links with the **Unitarian Church in York** and several events are planned to take place in the Church:

**22nd May:** a talk on "**Unitarianism**" by **Adrian Lovett** (Chairperson of the Church).

**10th September:** "**Elizabeth Gaskell**", a talk by **Elizabeth Williams** (Chairman of the Gaskell Society).

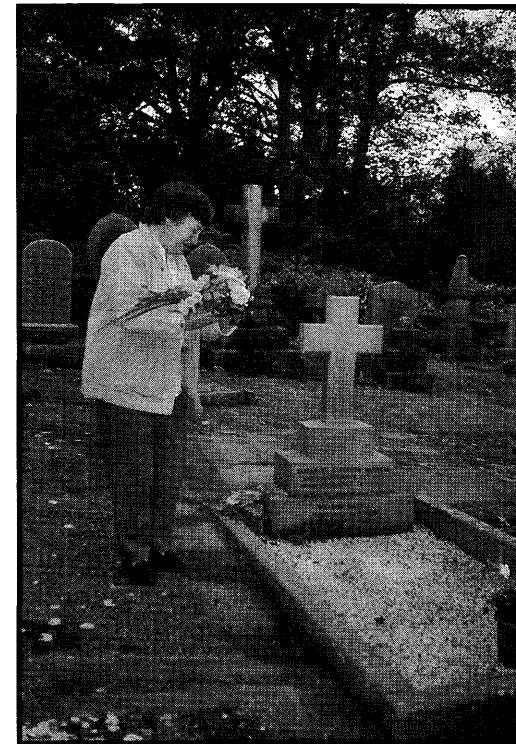
**Date to be arranged:** "**Manchester New College in York**", a talk by **Adrian Lovett**.

For further details of all the above, contact Kate Smith at [shepleysmiths@tiscali.co.uk](mailto:shepleysmiths@tiscali.co.uk).

Meetings will commence at 2 p.m. The room will be available from 12.30 p.m. for those who wish to bring a picnic lunch. To cover expenses a contribution of £3 is requested from members of The Gaskell Society and £4 from non-members.



# The Gaskell Society



25th September 2004

Joan Leach puts flowers on Elizabeth Gaskell's grave, Brook Street Chapel

THE GASKELL SOCIETY HOME PAGE has all the latest information on meetings.  
<http://gaskellsociety.co.uk>

If you have any material or suggestions for future Newsletters, please contact Mrs. Helen Smith,  
11 Lowland Way, Knutsford, Cheshire, WA16 9AG.  
Telephone - 01565 632615 E-mail: [helenisabel@ntlworld.com](mailto:helenisabel@ntlworld.com)

**Hon Treasurer:** Brian Williams, 15 Cawley Avenue, Culcheth, Warrington, Cheshire WA3 4DF

**Membership Secretary:** Miss C. Lingard, 5 Moran Crescent, Macclesfield SK11 8JJ

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## NEWSLETTER

Autumn 2010 - Number 50

## *Joan Leach*

**Janet Allan**

After most of this Newsletter had been compiled Joan was taken ill and is now undergoing radio-therapy, before she had a chance to complete her Editor's Letter. I know that on hearing this sad news everyone will be sending their very best wishes to her. We hope very much that she will be with us on 25 September at Westminster Abbey, when Elizabeth Gaskell will be installed in Poets' Corner.

As usual the newsletter has been typed by Mary Syner and I have just finished off the 'tops and tails'.



## *"Such happy days as my schooldays were": Elizabeth Gaskell and Warwickshire*

Dr Elizabeth M. Cox

Elizabeth Gaskell's enthusiasm for the places and history of Warwickshire, where she attended school for five years, is conveyed most effectively in her own words. On August 18, 1838 she opened a long letter to Mary Howitt, primarily about Cheshire customs, with the following paragraphs about Warwickshire:

*I am very glad indeed Mr Howitt thinks of going to Clopton; and one of my reasons for wishing to write soon is that I may beg him thoroughly to explore the neighbourhood (that of Stratford-on-Avon). As a schoolgirl I could not see much, but I heard of many places that I longed to know more about; and yet I can only give you glimpses of what those places were. I know there was a mysterious old farmhouse near Clifford, which had been the family mansion of the Grevilles, and where Sir Fulke Greville, the servant of Queen Elizabeth, the counsellor of King James, and the friend of Sir Philip Sidney, was born and bred. [...].*

*Then there is an old curious seat of the Marquis of Northampton, who married Miss Clephane, Sir W. Scott's friend, Compton Winyates, near Edgehill, and someway connected with the history of the battle. Shottery, too, where Ann Hathaway (she hath a way) lived, is only a mile from Stratford. Charlecote, of course, is worthy of a visit, though it was not out of that park that Shakespeare stole the deer. I am giving but vague directions, but I am unwilling to leave even in thought the haunts of such happy days as my schooldays were.*

Gaskell's interest in Warwickshire and her recollection of details are remarkable given that, by the time she wrote this letter, she had left school and the county twelve years earlier. The letter also provides an unmistakable indication of her fascination with historical incident, family lineage and mystery which were to become such important themes in her published fiction, particularly her short stories and tales.

Gaskell's memories of her time in Warwickshire, where she spent some of her formative years, are clearly happy ones. In the autumn of 1821, when she was just eleven years old, she left Knutsford to attend a girls' boarding school in the village of Barford, a couple of miles south of Warwick. The school was run by the Byerley sisters (relations of Josiah Wedgwood) and provided Gaskell with 'one of the best educations available to girls' in the nineteenth century. Indeed the school educated a number of women who became well known in their day, and in 1830 when she was

aged ten, Florence Nightingale visited the school. In May 1824 the sisters moved their school from Barford to Avonbank, an eighteenth-century mansion situated near the River Avon and Holy Trinity Church in Stratford-upon-Avon. Gaskell remained a pupil at the school until sometime in the first half of 1826. Sadly most of the school was demolished in 1866, but two original buildings still stand in the Avonbank public gardens, one of which may have been the schoolroom.

William Stevenson, Gaskell's father, selected the Byerleys' school in Warwickshire for his daughter despite existing family associations with schools in Bath and Liverpool. The choice may have been influenced by a connection between Gaskell's stepmother, Catherine and her sister-in-law, Katharine Thomson (formerly Byerley), who had taught at the school before her marriage. The education provided by the sisters supported, whilst it also gently challenged, the social expectation that their pupils' future lives would be confined to the domestic sphere, as wives and mothers. Indeed, Katharine Thomson, who married the brother of Gaskell's stepmother, was a prolific published author whilst also bringing up their many children. Gaskell may have found a role model in Katharine. Many years after she had left school, Gaskell is believed to have received literary advice from her regarding her first full-length novel *Mary Barton* (1848).

Readers of The Gaskell Society Newsletter will know that the connection between Gaskell and her time at school in Shakespeare's Stratford-upon-Avon has been commemorated by both the Society and the Shakespeare Birthplace Trust. In March 2002 Professor John Chapple, then President of the Gaskell Society, planted a mulberry tree in the garden of Brook Street Chapel. The tree is marked by a plaque that reads:

### *The Gaskell Mulberry*

*This tree is a scion of the mulberry tree growing in Shakespeare's garden in New Place, Stratford upon Avon; it was planted by Professor John Chapple, President of the Gaskell Society, on 20 March 2002 in memory of Elizabeth Gaskell's two years at school in Stratford upon Avon.*

Interestingly Gaskell sought out family connections and the peacefulness of rural Warwickshire in May 1849. *Mary Barton* had been published anonymously in the previous October and had been met with a mixed reception and, indeed, a degree of anger by some Manchester manufacturers. Gaskell's identity as the author was quickly exposed and in mid-April 1849 she escaped to London, where she was treated as a celebrity, being invited to dinners with writers such as Charles Dickens, William Makepeace Thackeray and Thomas Carlyle. On leaving the social whirl of London she stayed in Shottery for just under a week, rather than returning directly to

Manchester. It is thought that she may have stayed in the home of one of her cousins, Kate Greaves (née Holland) and her husband Richard, the latter being from a Warwickshire Quaker family. She wrote two letters recounting her visit, one of which was to her daughters, Marianne and Margaret Emily (Meta), dated May 17, 1849, written when she had just arrived in Shotton. According to this letter Gaskell did visit the 'old curious seat' of Compton Wynnyates this time, as well as Warwick Castle. Her second letter, sent to Eliza (or Tottie) Fox later that month (dated May 29, 1849), contains a vivid and evocative description of the sensory impact of the surroundings on her:

*... a very pretty, really old fashioned cottage, at Shotton ... near S. on Avon; a cottage where one's head was literally in danger of being bumped by the low doors, and where the windows were casements: where the rooms were all entered by a step up, or a step down: where the scents through the open hall door were all of sweet briar and lilac and lilies of the valley: where we slept with our windows open to hear the nightingales' jug-jug, and where the very shadows in the drawing room had a green tinge from the leafy trees which over hung the windows.*

Gaskell's prose captures the essence of Shotton as it still is today and has echoes of the significance she later bestowed on the image of houses adorned with the 'mother's flowers' in her fictional works, such as *Ruth* (1853) and 'Lois the Witch' (1859). In *Elizabeth Gaskell: The Early Years*, John Chapple quite rightly concludes a discussion of Gaskell's family and social connections in Warwickshire and North Wales with a comment that highlights the importance of these two regions for her in both her life and her art:

*Exact identities are doubtful, and more research needs to be done, but the links between Warwickshire and North Wales compose a kind of delicate web in which people and incidents were caught up from a very early stage in Elizabeth's writing career.*

Gaskell drew upon her Warwickshire experiences in a number of her fictional works. Critics believe that her first published story, a Gothic tale entitled 'Clopton Hall' (1840), was based on an essay she had written while at Avonbank following a visit to a fellow pupil's nearby home. This piece was published by William Howitt in the third chapter of his *Visits to Remarkable Places*, entitled 'Visit to Stratford-on-Avon, and the Haunts of Shakespeare'. Gaskell's later novella 'My Lady Ludlow' (1858) is a meditation on Lady Ludlow's sense of personal loss arising from social change, and is set in the Barford countryside. The village of Barford also provides an important

setting for her Gothic short story 'Lois the Witch', a disturbing account of the fate of Lois Barclay in the witch trials in Salem, Massachusetts in 1692. Lois moves from Barford to Salem following the death of her parents. Her memories of her former life in Barford and her hopes of a future marriage to Hugh Lucy, the Barford miller, ensure that the village remains an important presence throughout the story. Her recollections of 'peaceful Barford' provide her with emotional comfort whilst she suffers the hostility of her adopted family and the wider Salem community. Gaskell represents Barford as a morally better place than Salem and so it acts as an important counterpoint to the hysteria and horror that takes place there.

A further Warwickshire connection is to be found in the letters exchanged between Gaskell and George Eliot (1819-1880), although they were never to meet in person. Gaskell's admiration for *Scenes of Clerical Life* (1858) and *Adam Bede* (1859) was so great that on June 3, 1859 she initiated correspondence with the woman who has become Warwickshire's most revered nineteenth-century female novelist. In her first letter to Eliot, Gaskell clearly believes that the unknown author she admires is a man, and she playfully claims that the generally held belief in London that she (Gaskell) is the author of *Adam Bede* is correct. A number of Gaskell's subsequent letters to friends and acquaintances show her gradually overcoming her resistance to the fact that not only was the author of these fine works a woman, but she was also Mary Anne (Marian) Evans, who was living with (but not married to) George Henry Lewes, a man whose morals Gaskell evidently mistrusts. Gaskell's justified admiration for Eliot's work spread ultimately to admiration for the woman, and this feeling was clearly reciprocated, as demonstrated by Eliot's replies. Gaskell wrote a letter to Eliot's publisher, John Blackwood, telling him that she enjoyed the depictions of the Warwickshire countryside in *Adam Bede*. However, most gratifying for Gaskell must surely have been that Eliot told her that she had read Cranford whilst writing *Scenes of Clerical Life* and *Mary Barton* when writing *Adam Bede*.

Gaskell's connections with Warwickshire spanned her entire life, encompassing her schooldays in Barford and Stratford-upon-Avon in the 1820s, her spirited letter to Mary Howitt in 1838, her visit to Shotton as an established author in 1849, and her relationship with George Eliot in 1859. Her experiences in Warwickshire are known to have influenced her fictional work, and more research may uncover further treasures.

1 Letter to Mary Howitt, August 18, 1838, *The Letters of Mrs Gaskell*, edited by J.A.V. Chapple and Arthur Pollard (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1966), no.12, pp.28-33, at p.28.

2 John Chapple, *Elizabeth Gaskell: The Early Years* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1997), p.238.

- 3 Chapple, *Elizabeth Gaskell: The Early Years*, 236-246; Jenny Uglow, *Elizabeth Gaskell: A Habit of Stories* (London: Faber and Faber, 1993), pp.34-39, 44-46. A watercolour painting of Avonbank, The Byerleys' School for Young Ladies is included in both Chapple, *Elizabeth Gaskell: The Early Years* and Uglow.
- 4 The Literary Warwickshire website, [www.literarywarwickshire.com](http://www.literarywarwickshire.com), includes some information about the school as well as photographs of the preserved buildings.
- 5 Chapple, *Elizabeth Gaskell: The Early Years*, Chapter 13; Uglow, pp.34-39, p.182.
- 6 'Here we go round the mulberry bush,' *The Gaskell Society Newsletter* 36 (Autumn 2003), pp.16-17.
- 7 Uglow, pp.214-228.
- 8 Chapple, *Elizabeth Gaskell: The Early Years*, pp.322-23.
- 9 Letter to Marianne and Margaret Emily Gaskell, May 17, 1849, *The Letters of Mrs Gaskell*, no.47, pp.79-80.
- 10 Letter to Eliza Fox, May 29, 1849, *The Letters of Mrs Gaskell*, no.48, pp.80-82, pp. 80-81.
- 11 Uglow, p.476.
- 12 Chapple, *Elizabeth Gaskell: The Early Years*, p.324.
- 13 Laura Kranzler, introduction to *Gothic Tales* by Elizabeth Gaskell (London: Penguin Classics, 2000), p.xi; Uglow, p.37; Chapple, *Elizabeth Gaskell: The Early Years*, p.243.
- 14 'Clopton Hall', (1840) in *The Works of Elizabeth Gaskell*, edited by Joanne Shattock, Volume 1 (Pickering and Chatto, 2005), pp.37-41.
- 15 Gaskell, 'My Lady Ludlow' (1858), in *My Lady Ludlow and Other Stories*, edited by Edgar Wright (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1989), pp.1-210.
- 16 Gaskell, 'Lois the Witch' (1859), in *Gothic Tales*, edited by Laura Kranzler (London: Penguin Classics, 2000), pp.139-226.
- 17 Gaskell, 'Lois the Witch', p.223.
- 18 Uglow, pp.462-67; J.A.V. Chapple, assisted by John Geoffrey Sharps, *Elizabeth Gaskell: A Portrait in Letters* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2007), pp.135-38.

Dr Elizabeth Cox is planning to run a series of courses on the works of Elizabeth Gaskell in the Stratford-upon-Avon, Leamington and Warwick areas. The courses will be open to anyone who would enjoy exploring Gaskell's life and works in a relaxed atmosphere. **If you would like further information about the courses please send an expression of interest to her at [blaina@tiscali.co.uk](mailto:blaina@tiscali.co.uk)**

## Archibald Stanton Whitfield 1899-1974

Philip Ray

Archie was born on 5th January, 1899, in Walsall, Staffordshire, the only child of Thomas and Tilley Whitfield. Thomas owned a tobacconist and stationer's shop. Archie was educated at a private school called Willow House before transferring to Queen Mary's Grammar School for the full four-year course from January 1911 to December 1914; he was regarded as a bright boy though not physically strong. He therefore did not seek employment immediately after leaving the Grammar School, but occupied himself in private study. This included enquiries to the Bodleian Library and the Salt Society relating to various families he found interesting. He also wrote to the British Museum about coins and Roman soldiers, and to Lady Petrie, the Honorary Secretary of the British School of Archaeology in Egypt. In May 1915, the local paper published a short article in which he pointed out that Oak Apple Day, 29th May, celebrated King Charles II's birthday, not his escape after the battle of Worcester, which happened later, in September.

An improvement in his health enabled him, in the Michaelmas Term of 1915, to take up an appointment as a library assistant at Birmingham University, which he held for one year. Here he met Professor Raymond Beazley, who was impressed by his scholarly interests and proposed his election to the Royal Historical Society in May 1916, at the age of seventeen. He was rejected for military service in November 1916, on health grounds, but worked for the South Staffordshire Regiment in the recruitment office until February 1919. In October 1919 he entered Exeter College, Oxford, to read History, but transferred to English after one term. During the Easter vacation of 1921 he gave a public lecture on 'Thomas Hardy: the artist, man and disciple of destiny'. This was well received and he decided to try to get it published. Grant Richardson of Leicester Square agreed to publish it for fifty pounds. He then went on holiday to Portugal and Madeira, coming back at Christmas to find his forty-eight-page book on sale in the shops, price five shillings.

In 1922 he transferred to the B.Litt. research degree at Oxford, and in January 1923 he visited Professor Charles Herford in Manchester: it is clear that he was researching the life and work of Mrs Gaskell. Further visits to the Rylands Library and to Dorothy Holland, a descendant of Mrs Gaskell, confirm this. In November 1923, in London, he gave a lecture on Mrs Gaskell. He had meetings in 1925 with Professor Herford and Bryan Holland, grandson of Mrs Gaskell, to whom he lent a copy of his lecture. He went to a party given by the Hollands in December, according to his diary. This may have been a celebration on the completion of his thesis, as he was examined on it in February and awarded the degree of B.Litt on 13th February 1926. He sought to publish his thesis, which had been complimented

by the examiners, as a book. Professor Herford accepted Archie's dedication to him, as he was 'probably one of the few who remember Mrs Gaskell'.

Archie failed to get a fellowship at St John's in 1927, and failed to land posts in the Colonial Service for which he applied, but his book, *Mrs Gaskell: her Life and Work*, was accepted by Routledge for publication just as he was offered a post teaching English in Japan. This meant that he had to rely on two friends to read the proofs and see the book through the press in 1929, and they are thanked in the Preface.

Archie stayed for three years at the Niigata High School for Girls, teaching English; during this time he contributed to the *Cambridge Bibliography of English Literature*, and published '*The Sexton's Hero and other tales*', with his introduction. This brought Mrs Gaskell to the attention of Japanese students of English. He travelled back to England overland through Russia in the summer of 1931, after he had accepted an appointment as Lecturer in English Literature at the Imperial University in Tokyo. In September he returned to Japan via Canada. On this second visit, he lived in Tokyo and contributed to the following publications: *A History of English Literature*, published by the Hokuseido Press in 1934, *The Complete Lafcadio Hearn Lectures*, and in 1932, '*Malachi's Cove*' and *other tales* by Anthony Trollope. Unfortunately he had an attack of pleurisy in the spring of 1932, and further ill-health in winter 1933-4 led him to decide to return home for the English summer. He did not return to Japan.

Until the war in 1939 he did no academic work but built himself a house, which he engagingly named 'Wuthering Depths', on the estate in Wales where his family used to holiday; he enjoyed entertaining his friends there, among his Japanese treasures and memories. When war broke out, he was found unfit for a commission in the RAF, but accepted a commission in the Royal Artillery, then moved into the Education Corps. After an accident in the black-out, he was invalided out of the army in March 1942; he had injured his back and was subsequently in much pain. He spent the remainder of the war working for the Ministry of Information (1943-4) and the Central Council for Adult Education in H.M.Forces (1944-5), lecturing on Japanese life and culture.

After several spells in hospital he was saved from academic inertia by the appearance of an Oxford student, Geoffrey Sharps, who was researching Elizabeth Gaskell in 1959, just in time to celebrate the 150th anniversary of her birth. When the minister at Knutsford, the Rev. Albert Smith, appealed to Archie for some contribution to an exhibition, he sent a collection of works and a letter signed by Mrs Gaskell. Because of his ill-health, Geoffrey Sharps transferred the books for him. This was the beginning of the Stanton Whitfield collection now housed in the Public Library in Knutsford. He also made a contribution to the upkeep of the Unitarian Chapel.

In 1970 Archie gifted to the Merioneth County Council an area of sixty-one acres of sand dunes, including access to a mile of beach, for public use: this now forms part of a nature reserve in the care of Snowdonia National Park. In his will, four years later, he gave a thousand pounds to his old school and his oil painting, 'The Virtues' after Correggio, to Walsall Art Gallery; and £8,000 to the Royal Historical Society which funds an annual prize for an author's first book on history. His collection of books, later sold at Christie's for £1,290, included first editions of Burke's *Reflections on the French Revolution* (1790) and Henry Fielding's *Amelia*. The books were shared by Geoffrey Sharps and one other. Two thousand pounds were left to his former college, together with his papers on Thomas Hardy. Other bequests were made to charity and the residue was to be divided between Exeter College and Jesus College, Oxford. He may well be regarded as benefactor, booklover, collector and scholar.

\*\*\*\*\*

**Papers related to his life and work are available at the John Rylands Library, Manchester, and the County Record Office, Dolgellau.**

**Philip Ray is the great nephew of Archibald Stanton Whitfield.**

## *Alliance of Literary Societies*

**The Gaskell Society host the  
Annual General Meeting at Knutsford, 15-16 May 2010**

This being the bi-centenary of Elizabeth Gaskell's birth, it was only appropriate that the Gaskell Society should be our hosts for this year's AGM at Knutsford, the town where Elizabeth Gaskell grew up and which she made known to thousands of readers as 'Cranford'. A lovely spring morning, the kind that Mrs Gaskell was so good at describing, saw representatives of the following societies meet for registration and coffee at the Methodist Church Hall: Jane Austen; Arnold Bennett; John Betjeman; William Blake; the Brontës; Lewis Carroll; John Clare; Charles Dickens; Dubliners' Literary Circle; Elizabeth Gaskell; Kenneth Grahame; Richard Jefferies; Samuel Johnson (Lichfield); Charles Lamb; Leamington Spa Literary Society; Wyndham Lewis; Christopher Marlowe; Edith Nesbit; Anthony Powell; Barbara Pym; Arthur Ransome; Romany Society; Siegfried Sassoon; Shropshire Literary Society; Edward Thomas; Leo Walmsley; Mary Webb; Virginia Woolf. We then assembled in the main body of the church where we were warmly greeted by Alan Shelston, President, and Janet Kennerley, on behalf of the Gaskell Society.

At the conclusion of the business side of things we were more than ready for the delicious buffet waiting for us; the opportunity to chat to friends, swap notes on our respective authors and browse through the bookstall. Books were also provided for the raffle which raised welcome funds for the ALS. There then followed a most interesting and entertaining talk on Elizabeth Gaskell's life and works by Elizabeth Williams, Chairman of the Gaskell Society; it was the kind of talk that certainly made one want to find out more about the somewhat contradictory personality of Elizabeth Gaskell.

After this excellent talk, Joan Leach, MBE and Hon. Sec., spoke about Mrs Gaskell and Knutsford — another very entertaining talk serving as a prelude to her taking us on a 'Cranford Walk around Knutsford'. We began at Heathwaite, the attractive Regency home of Aunt Lumb, where the young Elizabeth was brought up; the wonderful deodar cedar at the back of the house would probably have sheltered Elizabeth while she was sketching or writing. The tour ended appropriately at Brook Street Chapel, the Unitarian chapel where William and Elizabeth are buried along with other members of their family. It was especially loved by Elizabeth and serves as the model for the chapel described in *Ruth*. Courtesy of the Knutsford and District Flower Club, the church was holding a flower festival in honour of its famous author, each lovely arrangement sensitively illustrating one of her novels. In the gallery we were also able to read of the chapel's history and its ministers. Outside, a lovely memorial wreath had been laid on the Gaskell grave; later this year there will be another wreath-laying ceremony at Westminster Abbey, when the name of Mrs Gaskell will be recorded in Poets' Corner, a proud moment for all members of the Society.

The tradition of after-dinner readings took place at Cottons Hotel, and there was no shortage of readers. Julie Shorland read from Jane Austen, Janet Kennerley from Mrs Gaskell, Deborah Fisher from Barbara Pym and Siegfried Sassoon; Michael Murray of the Dubliners' Literary Society recited by heart from the writings of James Joyce and W B Yeats, while Julian Barnard read some of his own poems on William Blake.

And last, but certainly not least, our Secretary, Anita Fernandez Young, dressed as Queen Victoria, gave her usual bravura performance with readings from *Pickwick Papers*; it will be interesting to see how she tops this performance next year!

On Sunday we heard another informal and light-hearted talk by Joan Leach on Mrs Gaskell's Cheshire, after which we split into two groups, one attending Morning Service at Brook Street Chapel and another going to visit the former home of the Gaskells at Plymouth Grove.

A Grade II listed building, 84 Plymouth Grove is literally under wraps, being encased in a cocoon of corrugated iron as it undergoes major renovation. The house has been acquired by Manchester Historic Buildings Trust, who are hoping to raise over £2m to complete the project. Even in its somewhat dilapidated state, we could see the tremendous potential for bringing the house back to the condition it was in when the Gaskells lived there. It really must have been the most wonderful place to live in. Structurally, it has been found to be in better condition than many modern houses; the pitch-pine woodwork is mainly intact, as is the elaborate cornice decoration, and the large and airy sash windows are now working smoothly. We gathered in the Gaskells' former drawing-room, where Janet Allan, Chairman of the MHBT, gave us a lively and interesting account of the history of the house, both in the time of the Gaskells and in subsequent years. Like many old houses that have survived the years, its history is somewhat chequered, its last tenants being university students. It was built in 1838, the Gaskells took up residence in 1850, and, to quote Mrs Gaskell, 'It certainly is a beauty'. Janet showed us slides of the house as it was in the Gaskells' time; a photograph of the drawing-room in 1897 will serve as a valuable guide when it comes to restoring the room to how it once was. The last Gaskell to live in the house was Meta, one of the Gaskells' two unmarried daughters, who died in 1913. Meta was an artist of considerable talent judging by the sensitive profile of her mother. What times and people the house must have seen; the Gaskells were excellent hosts and entertained on a regular basis. William Makepeace Thackeray, Harriet Beecher Stowe, John Ruskin, Charles Dickens and Charlotte Brontë were just some of their guests. In keeping with their Unitarian ethos of service and education the Gaskells were instrumental in the building of a new library, and their daughters in founding the Manchester High School for Girls.

We wish the MHBT well in this tremendous undertaking and look forward to seeing 84 Plymouth Grove returned to the magnificent house it must have been when Elizabeth and William were in residence.

It had been a most enjoyable weekend. The weather had been kind, our hosts even more so; if only William and Elizabeth could have joined us.... but who knows, perhaps they did. Special thanks to Alan Shelston, Joan Leach and Janet Kennerley for making all the arrangements and for ensuring that our visit was a happy one. Thanks also to Elizabeth Williams and Janet Allan, and indeed to all those who worked very hard behind the scenes.

On a personal note, I would like to thank Ann O'Brien and Ann Waddington for making arrangements to get me to Piccadilly in time to get my train.

**HELEN D NEWMAN**

**ALS Committee member and member of the Richard Jeffries Society.**

## CONFERENCE, 2011

Among all the excitement of 2010, we are planning the conference for 2011. Please put the date in your diaries - 22 - 25 July. We will be staying at Norton Park, Sutton Scotney, a few miles outside Winchester and a more luxurious venue than we have enjoyed in the past. It is part of the Q Hotel Group and stands in 54 acres of grounds. However, we have managed to negotiate a good rate, and expect that the cost for those of you wanting single rooms will be in the region of £325, and for those of you prepared to share twin rooms will be about £280.

We have yet to work out the details, but we shall be sending out more information and booking forms later in the year. The theme of the conference will be Elizabeth Gaskell and other women writers, and we shall be only a few miles away from Alton, which of course is near to both the house where Elizabeth Gaskell died and to Jane Austen's house. We look forward to seeing many of you there.

### *An Italian Bicentenary Event*

Elizabeth Gaskell has always had her enthusiasts in Italy; Francesco Marroni, Professor of English Literature at the Victorian and Edwardian Research centre at Pescara University has long been one of our vice-presidents, and Gaskell studies feature prominently at his institution. They too will celebrate the bicentenary with a two-day 'Convegno', to be held on 30th September and 1st October, with the title 'Elizabeth Gaskell and the Art of the Short Story'. Our president, Alan Shelston, will be giving a paper and chairing a session. Some papers will be in English, but the majority are likely to be in Italian. Should any Society members wish to attend they should **contact Alan (alan@shelston.freemove.co.uk)** who can provide more information. It will be an agreeable occasion but it should be said at this point that funding cannot be provided.

### *Brief Lives: Elizabeth Gaskell*

Alan Shelston's biography of Elizabeth Gaskell in the 'Brief Lives' series, published by Hesperus Press, is now expected later in the year. There have been many delays since the acceptance of the manuscript, but the book has been advertised for advance orders on Amazon, and should soon be available via the Society and local bookshops, at its price of £7.99. It focuses on Gaskell's life as much as on her work, as is the priority of the series, which already includes excellent 'brief lives' of Jane Austen and Charles Dickens. It was anticipated that the book would be available in time for the earlier events of the bicentenary year, but Alan hopes that we are now coming to the end of what has been a very protracted publishing process.

## *Gaskell Collection, Manchester Central Library*

The Central Library, Manchester is to undergo a major refit and development, along with the neighbouring extension to the Town Hall. The work is expected to take at least three years. In the meantime temporary premises are operating at Elliot House, Deansgate, where lending services will be maintained. Unfortunately most of the reference stock will not be available during this period. However arrangements have been made for the Library's Gaskell Collection (formerly in the Language and Literature Library) to be housed at the Greater Manchester County Record Office. This includes MS items, books belonging to the Gaskells, editions of William & Elizabeth Gaskell's works, monograph biographies, criticism, and newspaper cuttings. It does not include general criticism dealing only partly with Gaskell, nor the vast collection of Victorian periodicals. Though I no longer work for Manchester Public Libraries I have retained indexes and may be available to give some general advice on what might be available. **(Christine Lingard lingardgms@aol.com)**.

The Local Studies library however is operating on the second floor of the building and is offering a considerable increase in the amount of the material available on the open shelves.

**City Library, Elliot House, 151 Deansgate, Manchester M3 3WD (at the junction with Lloyd Street). Disabled access from Jackson Row. Telephone number 0161 234 1983, E-mail libraries@manchester.gov.uk Please consult the website for up to date information [www.manchester.gov.uk/libraries](http://www.manchester.gov.uk/libraries).**

**Greater Manchester County Record Office, 6 Marshall St., New Cross, Manchester M4 5FU; tel: 0161 832 5284; email: [archives@gmcro.co.uk](mailto:archives@gmcro.co.uk); web page: [www.gmcro.co.uk](http://www.gmcro.co.uk).**

Christine Lingard

## BOOK NOTES

Christine Lingard

*The American slave narrative and the Victorian novel* by Julia Sun-Joo Lee, Oxford University Press, £40. This work argues that Charlotte Brontë's *Jane Eyre*, Thackeray's *Pendennis*, two of Gaskell's works, Dickens' *Great Expectations* and works by Stevenson integrated into their text generic elements of the slave narrative. It devotes two chapters to Gaskell — female slave narratives in *The Grey Woman & My Lady Ludlow*, and the return of the 'unnative' in *North and South*.

*Performing masculinity*, edited by Rainer Emig (Leibniz University in Hanover), and Antony Rowland (University of Salford). Palgrave Macmillan, £55. This work discusses where the twentieth-century phenomenon - the male heart throb typified by David Beckham - originated, using a variety of media such as ballet and cricket as illustration. Examples in literature range from Byron and Oscar Wilde to Martin McDonagh's play, *The Lieutenant of Inishmore*, and the novels of Michael Ondaatje. It contains a chapter by Gerald Siegmund on 'Industrial heroes: Elizabeth Gaskell and Charlotte Brontë's constructions of the masculine'.

*Reading for the law: British literary history and gender advocacy* by Christine L. Krueger, in the Victorian Literature and Culture Series, University of Virginia Press, £35. This work uses examples of witchcraft to demonstrate the relevance of literary history to feminist jurisprudence, discussing realism, evidence, and historical justice in Elizabeth Gaskell's *Lois the Witch*. Other authors discussed are Sir Matthew Hale, Francis Hutchinson, Mary Wollstonecraft and Charles Reade.

## *Beyond the Bonnets!*

**Sunday, 12 September at 12.30pm at  
Cross Street Chapel, Cross Street, Manchester.**

A talk and a celebration of Elizabeth Gaskell's life in words and images, exploring her connections and networks with Unitarians nationally, her own religious views, and her opinions on the various Unitarian developments and tensions of her day.

It will be presented by the **Rev Dr Ann Peart**, Vice-President of the Unitarian General Assembly and recently retired principal of Unitarian College Manchester, who has researched the lives of Unitarian women.

## *Autumn Bicentennial Events*

Here is a reminder of the many events in the calendar from September onwards:

- |             |   |
|-------------|---|
| September   | <i>Exhibition on 'Elizabeth Gaskell's Cheshire' at Tatton Park, Knutsford.</i>  |
| September 1 | <i>Delia Corrie performs 'An Afternoon with Mrs Gaskell' at the Harris Museum, Preston, as part of their 'Industrial Revolutionaries' exhibition programme.</i> |

- |              |   |
|--------------|---|
| September 4  | <i>The Grace Darling Singers perform hymns and songs of the Gaskells' time at the John Rylands Library.</i>   |
| September 14 | <i>Talk about the Whitfield collection at Knutsford Library.</i>  |
| September 16 | <i>6.00 pm Jenny Uglow talks on 'Country and City' at the John Rylands Library.</i>   |
| September 18 | <i>11.00 History Wardrobe perform 'The Clothes of Cranford' at the John Rylands Library.</i>  |
| September 25 | <i>Dedication of window in Poets' Corner, Westminster Abbey.</i>  |
| September 29 | <i>11.00 am Elizabeth Williams talks on 'The Life and Works of Elizabeth Gaskell' at Brook Street Chapel, followed by optional lunch at 'La Belle Epoque' and Knutsford walk.</i> |
| October 2    | <i>2.00 pm History Wardrobe perform 'The Clothes of Cranford' at the Harris Museum, Preston</i>   |
| October 3    | <i>Commemorative service at Brook Street Chapel with wreath-laying, refreshments and walk.</i>  |
| October 6    | <i>Marie Moss gives talk on 'Elizabeth Gaskell and Cheshire' at Tatton Hall.</i>  |
| October 5-9  | <i>Victorian music hall at Knutsford Little Theatre (to include Old Poz).</i>   |
| October 8    | <i>Talk at Tatton Hall by Fran Baker and Ed Potten of the John Rylands Library.</i>   |
| October 11   | <i>Elizabeth Williams talks on 'The Life and Works of Elizabeth Gaskell' as part of the Wellington Literary Festival, Shropshire.</i>   |
| October 14   | <i>6.00 pm Alan Shelston talks on 'Gaskell and her Publishers' at the John Rylands Library - BOOKING ESSENTIAL.</i>   |
| October 17   | <i>Gaskell tour around Manchester as part of Manchester Literary Festival.</i>  |
| November 28  | <i>John Rylands exhibition closes.</i>  |



**Contact details:****Portico Library** - 0161 247 1306**John Rylands Library** - 0161 306 0555**Harris Museum, Preston** - 01772 906874Events at **Brook Street Chapel**, Knutsford, contact Beulah Cornes, 01565 632673

## *A Report from Plymouth Grove*

**Janet Allan**

We have now completed the structural repair of the house and the outside of the house has been transformed from a crumbling pink wreck to an elegant villa. We also have a new roof and new drains, and all the exterior woodwork restored or replaced. It is truly a triumph of our builders Mather & Ellis and our architect, Peter Hadfield of the Bernard Taylor Partnership.

## *Lottery development grant awarded*

Our application to Heritage Lottery Fund for one million pounds has passed its first stage and we have received £148,200 for working up the detailed plans for the big two million-pounds worth of work which will enable us to open up the whole house to the public, with a multiplicity of uses. We have already selected our team to do this.

There was a celebration at the house of our achievements and an announcement of the HLF grant on 23 July, when the speakers were Jennifer Latto, Chair of the Heritage Lottery Fund's North West Regional Committee, our Patron Sir Neil Cossons, and Henry Owen-John North West Regional Director of English Heritage.

## *Improvements to the Ground Floor*

Besides the new heating system and kitchen which have already been installed we are working to brighten up the ground floor. The exhibition from the Portico has now been installed. Some rooms have already been redecorated by the Probation Service, and the William Gaskell bookshelves have been replaced so that our bookstall will return to its proper home. There is a lot of new stock so it is well worth paying a visit.

## *2010 events*

Amidst scaffolding and skips, a packed AGM of the Trust was held in the Dining Room on Saturday 8 May.

Our first Open Day on 6 June had 100 visitors plus enchanting harp music played by the professional musician and Gaskell enthusiast Anna Christensen.

Our **Open Days** continue for the rest of the year on the first Sunday of the month from 12-4pm. As before we only have access to the ground floor.

### **Sunday 3 October Open Day and Plant Sale**

Anna Christensen will be with us again with her harp, plus our traditional bring and buy plant sale. Please bring cuttings or plants from your own gardens for sale and buy some winter bedding from us. **Details from Hilda Holmes, on Sunday 5 September Open Day or on 0161 487 2593 or [hilda.ibrahim@hotmail.co.uk](mailto:hilda.ibrahim@hotmail.co.uk).**

**Sunday 5 December Open Day 12-4pm followed by Christmas Entertainment** led by Delia Corrie and Charles Foster. Price £7.50 including seasonal refreshments. Cheques to Friends of Plymouth Grove. Please book with Margery Schofield, 202 Moston Lane East, New Moston, M40 3QH 0161 681 1439. No tickets will be issued.

## *Meetings at Cross Street Chapel, Manchester*

Meetings are held on the second Tuesday in the month at 1.00pm. Members may meet at the chapel from 12.15 for a sandwich lunch. Meetings cost £2 for members, £3 for non-members.

**Tuesday 12 October** Ann O'Brien on Meta Gaskell. Ann O'Brien, Chair of the Friends of Plymouth Grove, worked on Meta Gaskell's life at the University of Manchester.

**Tuesday 9 November** Ed Glinert on **Mary Barton's Manchester** Ed is a Blue Badge Guide who has a detailed knowledge of the city in Elizabeth Gaskell's time.

**Tuesday 14 December** Ann Peart on **Unitarian networks of William and Elizabeth Gaskell** plus some Christmas Cheer.

**Tuesday 8 February** **Manchester Lit & Phil** Peter Barnes, an Honorary Secretary of the Lit & Phil. Peter has been making a special study of the early years of the society and its influence on education.



**Tuesday 8 March Emma Marigliano on Portico People.** The Portico's Librarian will tell us about some of William Gaskell's contemporaries and others.

### **North West Group**

Knutsford meetings are held at St John's Church hall, on the last Wednesday in the month, starting on October 27th. Buffet lunch is from 12.15pm. Cost £8.

**Studying on October 27th - *The Grey Woman*.**

Subsequently, a selection of short stories from 'Cousin Phillis and other stories', ed. Heather Glen (Oxford's World Classics) will be studied: Lizzie Leigh, Morton Hall, My French Master, Half A Lifetime Ago, The Manchester Marriage.

**AGM 9 April 2011** - At Cross Street Chapel (to be confirmed).

### **London and South East Group Programme for The Bicentenary Year 2010-2011**

As usual there will be four hugely varied meetings in the coming academic year one of which will be a meeting with a difference. Our September meeting will be the Bicentenary celebrations in Westminster Abbey. Otherwise we shall have our usual three speaker/discussion meetings at Francis Holland School. In November we are privileged and honoured to be able to welcome the Rev Dr Ann Peart to speak to us. She is currently the Vice-President of the Unitarian General Assembly in Great Britain and will become the President next year. In February Ann Brooks, who is an expert on Victorian gardens, is coming to tell us what she has in mind when she takes on the task of restoring the garden at the Gaskell House in Plymouth Grove.

Next May, Professor Barbara Hardy, Emeritus Professor of English at London University has agreed to share her original ideas about *North and South*.

I feel we are very fortunate that we have such an interesting programme and that each one of these speakers is happy to give up her time to come to London to meet and speak to us.

**Saturday September 25 2010 - 3pm**

***Westminster Abbey celebration and dedication of the Gaskell window in Poets' Corner.***

Tickets will be sent well in advance of the event which is preceded by the afternoon service and followed by drinks at Westminster School. Booking is essential and members already know about this via mailings. Please check the Society website or contact the membership secretary, Christine Lingard for further details.

**Saturday November 13th 2010**

***Rev Dr Ann Peart will speak about Gaskell and Unitarianism***

Ann Peart is a Unitarian Minister, Vice President of the Unitarian General Assembly of Great Britain and was previously Principal of the Unitarian College in Manchester. As yet I do not have a title for her talk but the theme was requested by a number of members who expressed an interest in learning more about the religion with which the Gaskells were involved.

**Saturday February 12th 2011**

Dr Ann Brooks will speak about the plans for the restoration of the garden at the Gaskell House, Plymouth Grove, Manchester. Ann's doctorate was about the Manchester Botanic Garden so she is an expert in the field.

Ann writes of the restoration project:

*An examination of the 1848 ordnance survey map of Longsight, Manchester shows that the garden at Gaskell house and its neighbours exhibited many features of the villa gardens and give a basic outline we can use. I am also examining Elizabeth Gaskell's novels and letters for references to plants that would be suitable to include in the planting and design of the garden. This will be a fascinating insight into both the genre of Victorian gardens and a chance to share in Ann's plans for the future garden at the Gaskell House, as it is now known!*

**Saturday May 14th 2011**

***Professor Barbara Hardy will lead a discussion on 'Elizabeth Gaskell: Dreams and Visions'.***

Barbara Hardy is Emeritus Professor of English Literature at the University of London. She will certainly refer to *North and South* and *Sylvia's Lovers* and will let me know nearer the time which other stories we need to have read!

The form of this meeting will continue the pattern of the last couple of years when the speaker gives an introduction to texts and a topic/theme of their choice and we have the opportunity to discuss as well as listen.

The meetings will follow the pattern of previous years. A sandwich lunch will be provided from 12.45pm onwards and tea and cake is available after the meeting that begins at 2pm and usually lasts in the region of an hour or so.

A bring and buy bookstall is available so please bring and buy. Proceeds go to the restoration of the Gaskell House.

We meet at Francis Holland School for Girls, a two-minute walk from Sloane Square. The Tube station is served by the District and Circle lines, or it is not a long walk

from Victoria Station. Access is via a doorbell in Graham Terrace please press the bell that is marked 'Reception' and someone will open the door for you. There are security reasons for this type of access. Please feel free to bring friends who might be interested, membership of the society is not a prerequisite for attendance at meetings. We charge £4.00 in these days of austerity and endeavour to provide lunch, tea and some intellectual stimulation for the afternoon!

Fran Twinn, 85 Calton Avenue, Dulwich, London SE217DF. Tel: 020 8693 3238.  
E-mail: [frantwinn@aflex.net](mailto:frantwinn@aflex.net)

### **South- West Group**

**Sunday, 1st August.** Summer lunch at Kate and Alec Crawford's home, Norton St Philip, 1.00 pm.

**13th November 2010.** The Gaskell Society South West will hold a Study Day in celebration of the Bicentenary at the BRLSI, Queen's Square, Bath. Speakers will include Alan Shelston on Gaskell's biography of Charlotte Brontë; Boyd Schlenther on '*Lois the Witch*' and the Salem witch crisis; and Janet Allan and Ann Brooks on Plymouth Grove house and garden. The day will begin at 10:00 am and finish about 4:30 pm. The cost will be £6 for the full day for members of the Gaskell Society and BRLSI, £8 for non-members. Coffee and tea will be included.

**February/March 2011.** Discussions on *Ruth* to be held at members' homes.

**Any queries about the programme to Mrs Elizabeth Schlenther, 14 Vellore Lane, Bath, BA2 6JQ (Tel: 01225 331763).**

### **Yorkshire Branch**

**11th September.** Elizabeth Williams will give a talk entitled 'Cranford and Beyond, the divided life of Elizabeth Gaskell', at The Unitarian Chapel, St Saviourgate, York YO1 8NQ, beginning at 12 noon. **(Please note new time, date and venue.) For further details and directions see [www.ukunitarians@hotmail.co.uk](http://www.ukunitarians@hotmail.co.uk)**

**9th October, at The Friends Meeting House, York, at 2.00 p.m.** Janet Allan will give a talk on 'Plymouth Grove - Then and Now'.

**For further details contact Kate Smith at [shepleysmiths@tiscali.co.uk](mailto:shepleysmiths@tiscali.co.uk).**

# The Gaskell Society



Miniature portrait of Elizabeth in 1832,  
by William John Thomson of Edinburgh

THE GASKELL SOCIETY HOME PAGE has all the latest information on meetings.  
<http://gaskellsociety.co.uk>

If you have any material or suggestions for future Newsletters, please contact Mrs. Helen Smith,  
11 Lowland Way, Knutsford, Cheshire, WA16 9AG.  
Telephone - 01565 632615 E-mail: [helenisabel@ntlworld.com](mailto:helenisabel@ntlworld.com)

**Hon Treasurer:** Brian Williams, 15 Cawley Avenue, Culcheth, Warrington, Cheshire WA3 4DF

**Membership Secretary:** Miss C. Lingard, 5 Moran Crescent, Macclesfield SK11 8JJ

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## NEWSLETTER

Spring 2011 - Number 51

## Editor's Letter

Helen Smith

2010 has been an exciting and eventful year for the Gaskell Society. Exhibitions, entertainments, feasts and festivals have all contributed to the junketings throughout the year. Elizabeth Gaskell entered Poets' Corner in time for her 200<sup>th</sup> birthday.

Knutsford celebrated 29th September with traditional sanding, bell-ringing, lecture at Brook Street Chapel followed by lunch at the Belle Epoque Brasserie beneath the Gaskell Memorial Tower and then a Gaskell walk.

On the following morning, Joan Leach died. Tributes appear in this Newsletter and have been published elsewhere. Our founder, Joan, has been the galvanising force behind the Gaskell Society for 25 years. In November 1865 The Manchester Guardian ended its obituary of Elizabeth Gaskell with the sentence: "Her death leaves a blank that will not easily be filled." In some respects these simple words could be applied to our dear friend Joan.

To end on a more positive note, 84 Plymouth Grove has now replaced the "pestilential drains" and continues to improve. The biography of Elizabeth Gaskell (in Hesperus Brief Lives series) by our President Alan Shelston was published in late November: ECG in a delightful nutshell, a fitting grand finale to the bicentenary year.

And so now, in this year of 2011, it's back to "pairritch and auld claes" as they say in Scotland. (Ask ed. for translation if required).

Many thanks are due to all who have contributed to the Newsletter. I personally should especially like to thank Mary Syner for her helpful advice and encouragement as well as her most useful and expert keyboard skills.

## Joan Leach

*Our Honorary Secretary from 1985 - 2010*

Joan Leach founded the Gaskell Society in 1985, following celebrations for the 175th anniversary of Elizabeth Gaskell's birth. Many people had thought that Elizabeth Gaskell deserved to be better known as a writer, but typically Joan acted on this thought, and called a meeting. From that first Knutsford meeting with thirty-three people present, she built the society up into an worldwide organisation with almost six hundred members.

The success of the Society was to a large extent down to Joan's knowledge, energy and hard work. Newsletters were produced, then a journal, and the first conference was held in conjunction with the Brontë Society in Ambleside in 1990. Fired with



her usual ambition, Joan organised a conference exclusively for Gaskell Society members the following year. This was in Scarborough, and it was so successful that more were arranged, and now conferences happen every two years, attracting members from all over the British Isles, as well as from overseas. Typically, Joan knew them all, and was concerned for their welfare, and generally they responded to her concern and took care of each other. An eminent academic once described the society as 'The very *niciest* of literary societies', and if that was the case, it was largely due to Joan. But as well as some highly respected academics, Gaskell Society members include ordinary readers who simply enjoy the books, and some who have just enjoyed *Cranford* on the television. Joan managed to cater for them all.

Her knowledge of local history was unrivalled, and she was always quick to pick up interesting links between the books and the area, to do the necessary research and to lead walks and trips around places with Gaskell associations. As the Society grew in numbers, and branches were established in London, Bath and York, the scope for trips grew. Joan, like Mrs Gaskell herself, was an intrepid traveller, and eventually led groups who followed their writer not just to locations all over Britain but also overseas, to Heidelberg, Paris and Rome. On her return she would instantly start planning the next event. Her energy made some of her younger committee members feel tired, but it was impossible not to respond to her enthusiasm.

In 1987 she went to Kansas, to participate in a conference in commemoration of Queen Victoria's jubilee, promoting the Society in the process. In 1988 the Gaskell Society of Japan was inaugurated, following a visit to Knutsford by Professor Yamawaki, and in 2006 Joan travelled to Japan as a guest of this society, giving talks and enjoying wonderful hospitality. Links were also established with Italy. Jenny Uglow's excellent biography of Elizabeth Gaskell, published in 1993, is dedicated in part to the Gaskell Society. In the *Cambridge Companion to English Literature*, published in 2007, Susan Hamilton describes the success of the Gaskell Society as 'staggering'. She adds, 'The society initiated the BBC's 1999 production of *Wives and Daughters*, the success of which led to the BBC's production of *North and South* in 2004'. Since then, of course, we've had the major success of *Cranford*. And this all happened because of Joan's determination, persistence and perceptiveness. In 2005 her hard work was acknowledged by her being awarded the MBE, in recognition of her services to literature and to Knutsford.

It was a great sadness that she was unable to get to Westminster Abbey, to join two hundred other members of the Society in the dedication of the window in Poets' Corner on September 25th. A member from overseas who was there wrote: 'How beloved Joan was was very clear to me when so many of those I met expressed their concern about her and sadness that she was not able to be present... I heard of the Gaskell Society in 1987 and visited Manchester and Knutsford where she met and showed me round with all the warm friendliness and enthusiasm which obviously characterised her life. I joined the Society there and then, and have ever

since enjoyed the journal and newsletter, often with more than a touch of envy that I was not able to participate in the astonishing array of activities recorded therein.'

Amazingly, Joan's determination enabled her to share in some of the celebrations in her beloved Knutsford on the actual bicentenary of Elizabeth Gaskell's birth — 29th September. With the aid of a wheelchair and the new lift at Brook Street Chapel she was able to attend a talk in the morning. She entered to a round of applause and left to a standing ovation. As she drove away, she was able to hear the bells of the Parish Church ringing in celebration of the bicentenary, something which she herself had arranged. She died early the next morning. She will be desperately missed.

Elizabeth Williams

\* \* \* \*

*From the Rev Jean Bradley, minister at Brook Street Chapel:*

#### **Joan Leach, her final weeks.**

I have only recently moved back to Knutsford, for I was born and bred in what then seemed to be an unassuming market town with its family bakers, butchers and clock repairers. I can remember the local characters and the feeling that we all knew everyone else in the town. When I cast my mind backwards and forwards over the years, thinking first of my childhood and then of the occasional visits to see family, I realise how many changes have taken place in the town. There have been changes in property, in the ownership of shops or businesses and a great increase in the number of people living in Knutsford. However, one thing never seemed to change — and that was the sight of Joan Leach on her bicycle. In the early days the traffic cannot have been too bad but almost to the end of her life Joan determinedly continued to cycle through the dreadful traffic of the twenty-first century. She was as much a part of the Knutsford scene in her day as any of the characters in *Cranford* were in theirs.

Joan had contacted me through her sister to say that she wasn't well and would like to see me. As Minister of Brook Street Unitarian Chapel, I was aware of Joan's passion for Knutsford in general and Elizabeth Gaskell in particular and I knew she was very fond of our 'ancient chapel'. So when I visited Joan at her home, I was very saddened to hear that she had been diagnosed with a terminal illness. Joan was incredibly brave and logical. She didn't know how long she would retain her mental faculties and asked me if I would help her in planning her funeral.

Although this was a rather distressing experience for Joan in some ways, I think it also gave her peace and helped her to accept her situation. So for eight weeks (with the exception of one week when I had a cold) I visited her every week, firstly at her home and then at Tabley House where she was so wonderfully cared for. We planned both the crematorium service and the Service of Appreciation of her life, the latter of which was held at her beloved Brook Street Chapel. She chose seven

people whom she wished to speak, as well as the hymns and music. She was a truly courageous woman.

While Joan was so poorly, all the celebrations for the two hundredth anniversary of Elizabeth Gaskell's birth were taking place, many of which Joan herself had helped to organise. Unfortunately she was too weak to attend many events but she managed to come to the celebration of Elizabeth Gaskell's birthday at the Chapel. I believe that somehow she found strength for that occasion, for only hours later she died, recalling what a happy day she had had.

Joan wished to have the crematorium service first, which gave her son Martin and the family some privacy for their own personal mourning. Joan was so well known through the Gaskell Society and elsewhere that the family might have felt overwhelmed if they had entered the Chapel first, to find so very many people who loved Joan and yet were unknown to the immediate family.

As one would expect, the Chapel was full when we gathered to celebrate her life. It was a time of sadness but also of sincere appreciation of all that Joan meant to us. She was a good wife and mother, a loving sister, an enthusiast for all things to do with the Gaskells, who encouraged and created new enthusiasts, and a dear friend to so many people throughout the world. For my own part, I was privileged to help Joan at a very difficult time and to be able to facilitate all the kind offers of help towards the preparation of her funeral. For this I feel truly blessed.

Rev Jean Bradley

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*Happy Memories of Joan from Katharine Solomon of Wimbledon:*

Durham Conference, 2003: Joan keeping her audience spellbound with the story of the four little robins, part of a presentation about conduct-books.

Manchester Conference, 2005: Joan proudly showing us Tabley House Chapel; later, remaining cheerful when the coach broke down on the return journey.

Canterbury Conference, 2007: Joan masterminding a complex dramatic presentation about the Holland family.

Scottish trip to Peebles, 2008: at Altrincham bus garage, Joan telling a bus-driver to move his bus so that the Gaskell Society coach could get through. In Edinburgh, studying Elizabeth Gaskell's original manuscript letters in the Scottish National Library.

Penrith Conference, 2009: Joan bringing to life the beautiful church of St Kentigern at Crosthwaite; the next day, at Lake Coniston, coping seamlessly with the non-appearance of our chartered boat to Ruskin's house, and enjoying the Brantwood hillside garden.

*From George Hauton*, a former member of the Society from Lincolnshire, author of *Where the Wild Wind Blows*: he expressed his 'sadness and shock at the death of Joan', adding: 'Joan was always so kind to me on my visits to Knutsford, and even though I was an "outsider" to your unique society, she always found the time to chat to me, no matter how busy her schedule'.

\* \* \* \*

*From Janie Briggs of Heathwaite* (Aunt Lumb's house and childhood home of ECG), recalling Joan:

"What a gracious lady — whom we had the pleasure of seeing conducting tours round our garden."

The Gaskell Garden Party was held in this fairytale garden on 5 June 2010. Our thanks to Janie and her family for sharing the magic of the garden with us on such a happy sunny day.

\* \* \* \*

*From Pam Griffiths: Knutsford Memories*

Joan on her bicycle or conducting her Cranford walks was a common sight in Knutsford over the past 25 years. Her enthusiasm for her subject was infectious and her knowledge on all things Knutsford was unsurpassed. Her determination to achieve her goal, whether by enlisting the assistance of a passing policeman or, in the early days, by striding out into the main A50 Toft Road, to halt the traffic herself, for the safe passage of her walkers, was so typical of Joan. It was so very Cranford and so very Joan. She will be sorely missed.

\* \* \* \*

*From Dudley Green:*

It was through my interest in Mrs Gaskell's *Life of Charlotte Brontë* that I first came to the Gaskell Society. At that time Joan Leach was virtually the only member whom I knew. She was very kind to me and would ensure that I was not left on my own. This was one of her great traits and she did it for every newcomer. When, on my retirement from teaching in 1995, I decided to take advantage of my new-found freedom and come to the Knutsford lunch meetings, she told me that there was a gentleman from Liverpool who was thinking of attending, who would be very glad to see another man! On my arrival she introduced me to Brian Hechle and we became inseparable friends until Brian's sudden death at Easter 2004.

As I got to know more about the Society my admiration for Joan's qualities increased. The time she devoted to its activities seemed unbounded. If one wished to go on any event the instructions invariably were: 'write to the Hon Secretary, Joan Leach, Far Yew Tree House, Over Tabley, Knutsford, Cheshire WA 16 OHN.' I got to know that address better than my own! How richly Joan deserved her MBE! But, although she was the chief organiser of most events, she never appeared dictatorial and seemed to me to be a born leader. She had the gift of creating

a friendly atmosphere at any meeting, making all feel welcome. Her sweet personality, however, concealed a firm determination that everything should be done in the best way possible. If she felt that some course of action was right, she would quietly but determinedly ensure that that was what was done.

I have many happy memories of the foreign tours which she arranged. My first trip was to Paris in 1998, where she ensured that we marked the opening stage of our pilgrimage by visiting the grave of Madame Mohl in the remarkable Père Lachaise Cemetery. Later I recall a small group of us enjoying a delightful outdoor lunch with Joan in a quiet corner of a Paris square. I also remember the Italian restaurant just round the corner from the hotel, which we visited on more than one occasion, where the waiter showed his appreciation of our custom by his extravagantly amorous advances to Joan — all of which she took in good part! Other trips were to follow — Brussels, Brittany, Rome — these I look back on as some of the happiest holidays of my life. Joan was always great company and such fun to be with. Other members helped in the organisation of these trips but I think all would agree that Joan was the centralising force, who made the experience so enjoyable. On any visit Joan always shouldered responsibility for all the party. I well remember her waiting at Manchester Airport until almost the last minute before departure for a member who had been unavoidably delayed.

In all her activities Joan was motivated by a deep love of Mrs Gaskell and her works. She was a keen researcher and determined in her approach. When I wrote my biography of Patrick Brontë I was concerned whether she might be upset by my critical account of the rather unfavourable letter which Mrs Gaskell wrote after her last meeting with Mr. Brontë. Joan did not say much at the time, but later she came back to me and drew my attention to a subsequent letter Mrs Gaskell had written which showed considerable sympathy for Mr Brontë, one which I had missed in the *Further Letters of Mrs Gaskell*. I am very glad that I was able to put the record straight by inserting a reference to this letter in the notes of the paperback edition of my biography.

It was always good to get a phone call from Joan. She occasionally rang me up to get a Brontë perspective on some matter. Although I mainly saw her at Society events, I was delighted when she accompanied my brother and myself to a recording of *Mastermind* at the BBC Studios in Manchester. I also felt very honoured when she inscribed my copy of her history of Knutsford: 'For Dudley, from a fellow historian, Joan Leach'. That was an accolade which gave me a feeling of great pride. I treasure the last card I received from her, discussing the dramatic presentation which she had written for the Westminster Abbey ceremony. She had asked me to read the part of A.E. Housman. She told me to feel free to alter it in any way and ended: 'See you at the Abbey. Love, Joan'. Sadly that was not to be.

Joan devoted many years of her life to the founding and running of the Gaskell Society and she was integral to its success. She meant so much to all of us that since her death I find that, whenever I attend a Society function, I instinctively look out for her and then come sadly to the realisation that she will not be there. Others

are now carrying on the work which she began and it is a great tribute to her that she has left the Society in such good shape. Her greatest memorial is surely the Gaskell Society itself. I think that it can be said of Joan Leach, as of Sir Christopher Wren and St Paul's Cathedral, '*si monumentum requies, circumspice!*' — 'If you are looking for her memorial, look around you!'

\* \* \* \*

*From Shirley Foster, reminiscences of Joan:*

Writing about Joan is difficult, if only because it is almost impossible to say anything that others have not already said. Joan, as we all know, was not only the instigator of the Society, but its life-blood, producing the Newsletter, arranging events and outings, liaising with other organisations, contributing to meetings. The list is endless, as is our debt of gratitude to her.

But I'd like here to mention a couple of things which have a more personal resonance for me. Joan's willingness to help in all kinds of ways was notable, and I myself experienced this on two particular occasions. The first was when I participated in the 'culture' portion of the TV antiques show, *Flog It*. I was interviewed on Gaskell, in the garden of her Knutsford residence and in the Unitarian chapel, and spoke about her experiences connected with the town. Joan took the trouble to come over on her (battery-operated!) bicycle — which impressed me greatly — to fill in details about Knutsford, little known to me, for the BBC producers. She took no credit for this and was not mentioned in the programme, but her unobtrusive help and support was typical of her self-effacing generosity.

The other instance of this — rather more trivial, but still characteristic — concerns a question I raised at one of our Gaskell meetings. I commented on how many characters in Victorian novels died of 'brain-fever' and remarked that I'd never really known what this mysterious ailment was. A few days later Joan sent me an e-mail attaching a Wikipedia entry on the disease (apparently an inflammation of the brain). Again, her readiness to assist, unasked, was typical of her. It is these small personal touches, as well as the more obvious achievements, that we will all miss so much.

\* \* \* \*

*From Christine Bhatt, former committee member who organised the trip to Brittany in 2002, fond and lasting memories of Joan:*

A year or so after moving to Knutsford in 1984, I joined the Gaskell Society, on the basis of a vague memory of having read *Cranford* in my school days. My leisure reading in the intervening years had mainly comprised French, or occasionally German, literature. I began to take my mother to the Gaskell meetings. Her interests were not literary, but rather more practical: she loved visiting stately homes and gardens, flower arranging and painting. We were two unlikely members of the Gaskell Society and may well have dropped out, but for one thing, or rather, one person: Joan. Everyone knows what a phenomenal memory was hers and how

generously she shared her knowledge, but I shall always remember how she used her gift to give a warm, personal welcome to every member of or visitor to the Gaskell Society.

\* \* \* \*

*From Pat Heath:*

I first met Joan over 30 years ago through our love of local history. For a long time we worked together at Knutsford Heritage Centre (Joan was involved with my appointment as Manager in the late 1990's) and then as volunteers at Tabley House Museum. Joan loved Tabley — both she and her husband Chris had taught there when it was a school. She also chose to spend her last days at Tabley House Nursing Home.

Contacts with Joan have been many and varied; she involved me in numerous activities over the years, including sanding and helping with her local history walks and talks. Several members of Knutsford Lions, myself included, worked with Joan on the development of the "Lions Museum in the Street" project — her knowledge of local history as always was invaluable.

Involvement with Joan also led to my membership of the Gaskell Society and the Literature Festival. She will be greatly missed by numerous Knutsford organisations and the local community as well as her many friends.

(Ed: We should like to thank Pat Heath, who has been tending and adorning the Gaskell grave with flowers and plants supplied by her daughter Meryl, who is a florist.)

\* \* \* \*

*From Masuko Adachi, of the Gaskell Society of Japan:*

On the morning of 29th September 2010, it was raining in Knutsford. In rain I left the hotel for Brook Street Unitarian Chapel to listen to the memorial talk by Elizabeth Williams, Chairwoman of the Gaskell Society, on 'The Life and Works of Elizabeth Gaskell'. On the way I dropped into a bookshop, and bought a book by Mrs Joan Leach, Honorary Secretary of the Gaskell Society, entitled *Knutsford: A History*. I had really wanted to get one during my stay in the UK this time.

The pews were full on the ground floor of the Chapel. I took a seat on a pew close to the Communion Rail. Just before the talk began, Joan came into the Chapel in a wheelchair, accompanied by her son and her nurse. All the members and I, too, welcomed her with great applause. Joan's wheelchair reached the pew in the inner part of the centre of the Chapel, looking up to the high pulpit. Involuntarily I stood up and went up to her. Fifteen years had passed since I had seen her last. "Masuko!" she said in a low voice. She recognized me! I put my hands on hers. The old strength had gone but was replaced by a gentle softness.

At the beginning of her talk, Elizabeth, turning her eyes upon Joan, praised and

thanked her for her amazing achievements in founding and developing the Gaskell Society, calling her, like Gaskell, 'a remarkable woman'. I, seeing Joan replying to it with a tender smile during a second round of applause from the attendees, had an impression that she, in ill health, looked pretty well.

Listening to Elizabeth's talk, I returned in my reflections to the summer of 1995, fifteen years before. During that summer vacation, I visited places noted in connection with Gaskell. Five years had passed since I had begun to work on her and her literature seriously. I had come to feel like confirming with my own eyes the places where she had lived and walked, and the places which she had used for models in her novels. In addition, I had wanted to join the Oxford Conference at St Hilda's College for the celebration of the tenth anniversary of the Gaskell Society, which was to be held on 25-28th August that year. I wrote Joan a letter, explaining my plan. She sent me back a very kind reply immediately.

Joan gave me so much generous advice by letter, fax and telephone: "Stay with Mr Barlow and Howard in London, with Mr and Mrs Pleydell in Knutsford, with Mr and Mrs Sharps in Scarborough, and at the Silverdale Hotel in Silverdale. This member will guide you around in Wales, another in Manchester. . . ." She mentioned so many names of helpful members of the Gaskell Society.

Thanks to Joan and the other members, I could visit all the places that I had wanted. In truth, I went to more places than I could have imagined! In Knutsford, Joan herself guided me to 'Heathwaite' where Gaskell had been reared by her aunt Lumb, and its backyard, where as a child she had read and played under the big cedar in summer. Joan also took me to Tatton Park, the model of the huge garden owned by the family of the Earl of Cumnor in *Wives and Daughters*, then to Sandlebridge, where Gaskell's grandfather had run a farm, and lastly to Dunham Park, one of the scenes in "Libbie Marsh's Three Eras." I also joined the Sunday Outing led by Joan, and saw Over Peover Hall, which is thought to have been the model of Squire Hamley's family Manor House in *Wives and Daughters*. I used some of the photos that I had taken at that time for the sixth volume of *The Complete Works of Elizabeth Gaskell, Wives and Daughters*, which (then) Professor Hidemitsu Togo, of Keiogijuku University, Tokyo, and I co-translated into Japanese.

In Scarborough, Heather Sharps guided me to the grave of Anne Brontë and to Whitby, the model of Monkshaven in *Sylvia's Lovers*. I could understand well the situations of the three main locations featured in the novel, namely, the fishing harbour, the shopping streets and the farming land. In Windermere, I entered Briery Close with its front gate unbolted by chance at that time, and was enjoying a walk alone in the beautiful spacious garden overlooking Lake Windermere, when I was suddenly talked to by an elderly woman. She turned out to live in the part of the mansion where Gaskell and Charlotte Brontë had met for the first time. The drawing room she invited me to enter had an air of Victorian substance but a warm atmosphere around, too. Here Elizabeth welcomed Charlotte with the kind of fondness one might show a younger sister. Charlotte took to Elizabeth immediately,



not influenced by the world's view of her. Picturing to myself the two women feeling thus for each other, my heart filled with deep emotion.

In Silverdale, the mistress of Gibraltar Farm happened to be at home, and I was allowed to enter Lindeth Tower, and climbed the steep narrow staircase to the second floor. There I imagined Gaskell writing *Ruth*, sometimes looking out of the window, now hidden from the sight of Morecambe Bay by tall trees, but which used to overlook the shining, silver sea. I felt a mysterious connection between this woman farmer and Ruth when I heard from a neighbour that she was rearing her daughters by herself, in a sense, in a situation partly resembling Ruth's. On the way back to the hotel, I happened to ask a couple whether they knew anything about Gaskell. They responded, "Actually, friends of ours live in 'The Sheiling.' Do you want to see it?" Immediately I answered, "Yes, of course", because I had learned that Meta and Julia, Gaskell's unmarried daughters, had had the house built for friends of their mother to stay and enjoy their holidays. The couple drove me there. The resident couple showed me all around the inside, including the drawing room with a fireplace surrounded with William Morris ceramic tiles, and served me tea and cookies in the Victorian-styled, old-fashioned kitchen. When I shared these experiences with Joan, she said in great surprise, "Such lucky things rarely happen to us in the UK. But you, from Japan, have seldom come here, and were blessed with such luck!"

The last part of my tour in the UK was to attend the Oxford Conference at St Hilda's College. On the final day, I participated in the Cotswold tour visiting Dumbleton House near Evesham. This house which was owned by Gaskell's cousin, Edward Holland, is now used as a hotel. We saw the inside of this gorgeous house, and took a walk in the huge garden, then enjoyed afternoon tea in the tea room.

After coming back from my trip to the UK, I decided to write a biography of Gaskell from my Japanese perspective and in the Japanese language. At that time Gaskell was not so well-known in Japan as she is now. The famous book written by (then) Professor Yuriko Yamawaki at Jissen Women's University, Tokyo, had become difficult to obtain. It was also hard for me to present orally about Gaskell in all her glory, from birth to death, during my class of English Literature at Notre Dame Seishin University, where I work as professor. How often I wished there were a biography of Gaskell which could help students know her with pleasure and ease!

However, it did not take me much time to realize that writing a biography was not an easy task. Every day I fought with voluminous materials, nearly giving up many a time! It was Joan's great help offered to me at that time and the unforgettable remembrances of the members I had met during my trip that supported me, and kept me from the depths of despair. It took me six years to complete the book, and finally it was published in April 2001, after the change of centuries. I gave my book the title *Elizabeth Gaskell: Her Life and Work*. In this book I used many photos I had taken during my trip so as to have it understood visually as well. Professor Toyohiko Tatsumi formerly of Sophia University, Tokyo, to whom I owe much in the study of English literature, commented, "You have taken rare photos, haven't you? Especially, the ones of The Sheiling and Dumbleton House."

Listening to Elizabeth's talk, I was also reflecting on those things, when her talk came to the end. Elizabeth, having finished her paper, came up to Joan, held her hands and sat down beside her. I took a photo of Joan, Elizabeth and the other members sitting on the pew, never dreaming that it would be Joan's last portrait on earth.

Afterwards, I joined the dinner at La Belle Epoque, and then the 'Knutsford Walk'. When I paid my first visit to Knutsford 15 years ago, I was given a booklet Joan had written called *Sanding: a Knutsford Custom*. The booklet states: "It was only in Knutsford that sanding was part of the wedding celebrations and other special occasions." It also mentions that people in Knutsford celebrated the marriage of the young couple, William and Elizabeth Gaskell, by strewing coloured sand on the ground before the houses on their wedding day in 1832. One of my purposes for my trip this time was to witness the sanding custom. Joan was going to lead the 'Knutsford Walk', but she was replaced by another member. We came to 'Heathwaite', and saw sanding done on the road all along the hedge of the front yard. You could read "HOME OF ELIZABETH GASKELL" drawn in white sand, and see six big lilies drawn in red, white, blue and yellow sand round the white letters. The rain had stopped and I stood there for some time, flipping the pages of Joan's booklet in my mind, and thinking that it had also been Joan who had led me to the good fortune of my encountering the phenomenon of 'sanding' on Gaskell's 200th birthday.

It was on the next day, 30th September, that I received the sad news of Joan's passing. On this day Ann Waddington and Ann O'Brien showed me around Manchester. In the evening Ann O'Brien invited me to supper at her house. After supper we relaxed on the sofa. She opened her personal computer on her lap and checked emails. One of them communicated Joan's sad news. I repeated the question "why, why, why?" in my mind, remembering her figure in the Chapel.

Joan had written to me in her email dated 22nd May, 2010, "The events on 29th September will be popular. We hope to have sanding done in the town as it was for the Gaskells wedding and the church bells will ring out at midday." (sic) Her spelling perhaps expressed how tired she was. Nevertheless, she sent me many emails, and saw to it that I contacted Janet Kennerley and Helen Smith in Knutsford, and the two Anns in Manchester.

In spite of her illness Joan realized her resolution to share the talk in Brook Street Chapel on the actual bicentenary of Gaskell's birth. In this Chapel, Gaskell had worshipped in her childhood, and learned a firm belief in God, then practised love by modelling after Jesus, and the lessons of service and hope. Joan went on a journey to heaven where Gaskell is in peace, after seeing the sanding and hearing the church bells ringing for Gaskell's bicentenary celebration.

Mrs Joan Leach loved Gaskell very much, and Knutsford so much as to be called "Mrs Knutsford". What do you suppose Joan and Elizabeth, those two "remarkable women", are talking about now, resting in the same graveyard?



**Joan Leach and Elizabeth Williams with Society members, enjoying the Garden Party at Heathwaite on 5 June 2010**



**Gaskell Society members congregate outside Westminster Abbey on 25 September**



**Time for tea at Plymouth Grove, July 2010.  
Front row (l. to r.): Sarah Prince (née Dabbs), Mrs. Dabbs, Janet Allen  
Back row: Andrew Prince, Christine Lingard, Gloria Gaffney, Joss Hill**



**Before the Dedication at Westminster Abbey.  
Vivienne Young, Pam Griffiths, Janet Kennerley, Lynda Stephens**

2010 was the year in which everything happened: the celebration of Elizabeth Gaskell's bicentenary; the completion of the restoration of the exterior of 84 Plymouth Grove, and then, desperately sadly, the death first of Mrs Rosemary Dabbs, a lady in direct line of descent from Elizabeth Gaskell's daughter Marianne, and whom many of us had the pleasure of meeting at the exhibitions at the Portico and John Rylands Libraries, and then of Joan Leach, co-founder and inspirational member of our Society for the quarter-century of its existence.

Rosemary Dabbs had always taken an interest in the Society's activities. I first knew her through her generous response to the requests John Chapple and I needed to make from time to time to publish material of which she held the copyright. I used to be concerned about troubling her, but her replies were always kind and positive. In 2010 she readily provided precious family mementoes for display. That she should make the long journey from Devon to Manchester twice during the year was remarkable, but when you met her, anxieties on that score disappeared. To lose her was a great sadness: we send our sympathy to Sarah Prince and her family. Sarah stood in for her mother at the Westminster Abbey ceremony, thus carrying on the family tradition of working with the Society.

Joan Leach did so much to ensure the success of the bicentenary year that it was a double tragedy that her illness meant she could not be at Westminster for the crowning moment. Joan died on the day following the annual Knutsford celebrations of Mrs Gaskell's birthday. She had made what can only be described as a triumphant appearance in the town on that day and her death in a room that overlooked the Cheshire landscape at Tabley somehow sealed a life given in large part to Gaskell and to Knutsford. Of Joan it is really very difficult to say more, but mention of Tabley brings back a personal memory. Some years ago I was invited to speak there about the estate's associations with Elizabeth Gaskell. Apart from an extended chapter in *Mr Harrison's Confessions* these are fairly slight, but I remember Joan's taking me to see the site of the old hall at Tabley, just visible as we peered through the trees. It was a history lesson, as walks in Cheshire with Joan invariably were, and I remember so well both the range of her knowledge, and her affection for an environment that she had known since childhood. Joan's great achievement lay in the Society that she created: a society held together by friendship and by knowledge.

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It was of course both a demanding and a rewarding year: events after all do not organize themselves and it was remarkable to see how it all came together. As well as the Society's own programmes we had the Exhibitions, already mentioned, lectures at the Rylands, and events at Plymouth Grove where the work done by Janet Allan and her team might in itself have seemed tribute enough. There were day schools and garden parties, and Gabrielle Drake's one-woman show and then, attracting members world wide, the dedication of the memorial window at Westminster Abbey on the 25th September. The week-end devoted to this allowed

us to renew our friendships from overseas, notably from the United States and Japan.

Elizabeth was taken to Chelsea, to Sheffield, to Huddersfield, to Bath, and to Brussels, and to Pescara, where Professor Marroni, our vice-president, devoted a research conference to her work which will result in a collection of essays on the tales and stories (all in English); well, she was always an enthusiastic traveller. Meanwhile I was urging my publisher to bring out my long-delayed 'Brief Life' before the year ended. If as a man I sometimes felt, as Joan's favourite Gaskell quotation puts it, 'so much in the way', I can only pay tribute to the commitment of all of our members: I can think of no other similar group that could have achieved so much. I have some experience of literary societies, all of them testimonies to the fact that literary scholarship and indeed the love of books, does not lie only in the domain of the universities. But I have to say that I know of no other society quite like our own.

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A propitious year then, despite our sadness. And the date of the bicentenary year reminds us that Elizabeth Gaskell, invariably referred to as a Victorian, was born under the reign of George III in the year when Jane Austen was completing her first published novels, and grew up during the period of their publication. The connection is to the point since our summer conference this year is to be held at Winchester, a city with many Jane Austen associations, and in whose cathedral she lies buried. The subject of the conference is 'Elizabeth Gaskell and women writers', and Jane Austen is just one of the writers who will come under discussion. So no sooner had we said good-bye to 2010 than we realized that 2011 would need to be organised. And with a number of new appointments to our various posts, the AGM promises to be an active one. We shall be breaking new ground by holding it in the public rooms of Manchester Cathedral: we shall hope to see you there.

Alan Shelston

## Una Box, who died 14 November, 2010, aged 71 years

Una was born and grew up in Childwall, Liverpool. She trained as a nurse at the Liverpool Royal Hospital, qualifying in 1961. She came to work in Manchester and to reside in Hazel Grove in 1964, where she lived for the next 46 years. She spent her working life devoted to patient care and was still registered with the RCN and was an NHS employee when she died. She had four sons and fourteen grandchildren.

I came to know Una when she joined a U3A walking group in 1999. She loved the great outdoors and the bonhomie that walking together engenders.

When Una realised in 2005, or so, that she was affected by Rheumatoid Arthritis,

knowing that walking was going to become difficult and that she was a reader, I suggested that she should join the Gaskell Society. Little did I know that she would become so committed to the Gaskell Society. She attended Manchester meetings whenever possible and became an active worker for the Plymouth Grove house, being described, on occasion, as "always in the kitchen".

Una went to Rome with the Gaskell Society and particularly appreciated the friendship of Ann O'Brien and Joan Leach. She was devastated to hear of Joan Leach's illness, only to have the same diagnosis for herself a few weeks later. By September, when we travelled to Westminster Abbey, Una's cancer was very advanced. However, with great tenacity, she participated in all activities and was delighted to be sitting with Hilda Holmes in seats at the front of proceedings during the dedication. When Ann, Hilda and myself visited her in St Ann's Hospice, Una's almost final words were "Didn't we have a great time in London". She made her mark but her contribution is also a tribute to members of the Gaskell Society who made her so welcome.

Jean Alston

## A glimpse into the preparations for the memorialisation of Elizabeth Gaskell in Poets' Corner, Westminster Abbey on 25 September 2010.

In 2002 an approach was made to the then Dean of Westminster by the Gaskell Society requesting a place in Poets' Corner to coincide with the bicentenary of the author's birth. Unfortunately, due to the illness of the Dean, this approach did not get beyond the initial application. In 2008 Elizabeth Williams, Chairman of the Society, asked the Committee to consider another application and following the formation of a sub-group of fellow Committee members — Ann, Christine, Elizabeth, Janet (Allan), Joan and Pam — I telephoned the Personal Assistant to the 38th Dean of Westminster, The Very Reverend Dr John Hall.

I could not have received a warmer response, which resulted in exactly the expert advice and guidance we needed. The honour of a place in Poets' Corner is the gift of the Dean and each Dean has his own requirements. A letter providing the reasons for the request was required. I was advised that there was no need to name supporters of the application and it was confirmed that Dr Hall would carry out all his own research. The letter was needed as soon as possible to ensure that if the Dean agreed to consider the request it was important not to miss the next meeting of the Abbey's Fabric Committee which oversees all additions to the magnificent building and only meets twice a year.

The letter — which included an appeal for Elizabeth Gaskell to join her great friend Charlotte Brontë, her editor Charles Dickens and her contemporary George Eliot

— was sent in August 2008, and a reply from the Dean was received the following month from which we were delighted to learn that our request would be carefully considered. The Dean stated that '*I feel it incumbent on me to be absolutely sure, in view of the length of the history of the Abbey and the hopes we all have for its continuing existence over many hundreds of years, that the people who are memorialized will continue to invoke positive reaction from our visitors*'. There was also an offer that should the outcome not be a positive one the Dean would allow a celebration in the Abbey to mark the bicentenary.

The sub-group concentrated its activities during the waiting time on making tentative plans regarding a suitable hotel in London which could meet the needs of the estimated number of members of the Society who would want to attend. An application was made to the BBC about their programme, *Songs of Praise*, as it seemed an appropriate opportunity for it to visit Knutsford and Manchester. Another member of the Society — Pat Barnard — agreed to approach the National Portrait Gallery regarding the Gallery marking the bicentenary by mounting a special display. On 28 February 2009 a reply was received from the Dean in which he confirmed his agreement to the addition of Elizabeth Gaskell's name to the window overlooking Poets' Corner. The preparations, including those for hotel accommodation, were able to be stepped up following the wonderful news and the date of Saturday 25 September 2010 agreed by the Dean. An approach was made to have a link from the Abbey's website to the Gaskell Society's website. This was agreed and also permission given to use the image of the window. Within the Abbey, further details of the actual Service moved to become the responsibility of the Receiver General under whose authority the Minor Canons oversee the details. An example of a previous Ceremony was provided and based on this, the sub-group considered commissioning a piece of music for the occasion. Unfortunately we were later informed that no music would be allowed on 25 September 2010 and we concentrated on approaching those who could be available to take part in the Ceremony. We were particularly delighted that Mrs Rosemary Dabbs\*, the author's great-great-granddaughter, agreed to lay the wreath.

During this time we were informed that the BBC had not agreed to the inclusion of Elizabeth Gaskell's bicentenary in a *Songs of Praise* programme and the National Portrait Gallery declined to mount a special display. However, Pat Barnard continued her efforts to persuade the Gallery to mark the bicentenary in time for the memorialisation in Poets' Corner. She was rewarded by the Gallery's confirmation that from 6 September 2010 the delicate 1851 chalk drawing of Elizabeth Gaskell by George Richmond would be returned to display alongside Richmond's 1850 portrait of Charlotte Brontë.

As the length of the Service was now known to be approximately thirty minutes, consideration was given as to how the special occasion could be extended either before or after. From the wonderful response from the Members it was clear that a location would be needed for over 100 people. In this connection an approach was made to Westminster School to see if there was any remote possibility they could

agree to hire out a room where we could meet after the Ceremony. I happened to telephone with the unusual request during their half-term but instead of being rejected it was suggested that I telephone the Secretary to the Bursar in the following week. Once again the request was received with great interest by the Secretary who told me that she had just finished reading one of the author's novels. It was agreed that the Bursar would be approached and on behalf of the Head Master gave his agreement. The wonderful outcome allowed almost 200 of the Society's members to meet after the Ceremony in another historic location and enjoy refreshments and readings from Elizabeth Gaskell's letters given by Miriam Margolyes.

During the preparations it was clear that Elizabeth Gaskell's name acted like a passport which allowed entry to uncharted areas. I am confident that the Dean's condition will be met and that her place in the window in Poets' Corner will continue to "invoke positive reaction" from visitors to Westminster Abbey.

Ann Waddington

*\* Editor's note: Mrs. Dabbs was in hospital on 25th September and her daughter Sarah (now Mrs. Prince) laid the wreath.*

## London Weekend, 24-26 September 2010

On the morning of Friday 24 September, we left a very blustery and overcast Knutsford. We were expertly driven through rain on the motorway to reach the recently refurbished (for its centenary in 2009) Strand Palace Hotel in an even chillier London.

Before dinner we were able to visit the National Portrait Gallery to view Elizabeth Gaskell and Charlotte Brontë in the George Richmond portraits (thanks to Pat Barnard for arranging this), and also many oil paintings of their literary and artistic friends in the same gallery.

Saturday dawned, much as Wordsworth had viewed it eight years before ECG was born:

"The beauty of the morning...

All bright and glittering in the smokeless air."

After breakfast our coach drove us round Regency London (the area where Florence Gaskell lived after her marriage to Charles Crompton). Christine Lingard pointed out many sights of architectural and literary interest.

We returned to our hotel for lunch and re-assembled at 2 p.m. to be driven to Westminster Abbey. Gaskellians were seated in the South Transept within sight of the Window. Choral Evensong was an uplifting and moving experience with afternoon sunshine flooding the Abbey. Elizabeth Gaskell was mentioned in the course of the service.

The Dedication of Elizabeth Gaskell's window in Poets' Corner was immediately

after Evensong. The Dean spoke of Elizabeth Gaskell; Elizabeth Williams read from the New Testament and Jenny Uglow, biographer of ECG, made pertinent remarks with light touches of humour. Sarah Prince, great-great-great-granddaughter of ECG laid a wreath of carnations and, appropriately, lilies.

After the brief ceremony we tripped through the cloisters to Westminster School for refreshments and chatter. Alan Shelston introduced Miriam Margolyes who very entertainingly read from *The Letters of ECG*. We left the Abbey with the West Front basking in the evening sun.

About one hundred and forty people gathered for an excellent dinner at the Strand Palace Hotel. Afterwards, in an entertainment devised and largely written by Joan Leach, ECG's companions, Kit Marlowe, Robert Herrick, Oscar Wilde, A E Housman and Fanny Burney came to life to welcome ECG (Sarah Prince sporting her great-great-great-grannie's shawl) to her new lozenge-shaped home in the window.

Sunday was again rather damp, chilly and blustery as we set off for Chelsea. Christine Lingard pointed out ECG's birthplace, formerly Lindsey Row, now 93 Cheyne Walk, with its memorial plaque obscured by a fig tree and vine leaves. We sauntered through blue plaque-land and visited 24 Cheyne Row, the home of Thomas and Jane Carlyle, (now National Trust) with original furniture, very early photographs and remarkably fertile garden. Some of us lunched on the King's Road and observed yet more blue plaques en route back to our coach and long return journey to the North.

Our sincere thanks are due to the very many society members who were able to step in and take over when Joan was no longer able to continue her preparations for our celebratory visit to London. Special thanks to Christine Lingard, Pam Griffiths, Ann Waddington and Ann O'Brien for their unstinting efforts for the success of this week-end.

We very much appreciated that so many of our distant members from as far afield as Tokyo and San Francisco were able to join us for the London celebrations of the ECG bicentenary: "a real doings" as they say out West, according to our Californian member. Our grateful thanks to all.

(A north-westerly perspective on the week-end's proceedings by country cousin, Helen Smith of Knutsford.)

## CAN YOU HELP?

### 1. Our Treasurer wishes to stand down at the end of 2011.

Brian Williams has held the Society's purse strings since 1994 for which we are eternally grateful.

Would someone be willing to undertake this role?



**2. We are looking for space to store several boxes of Society literature (comprising back numbers of The Journal, Newsletter, books).** Does anyone (preferably living in the North-West) have spare space and willingness to accommodate these boxes?

Please contact a member of the Committee if you are able to help with either or both of these problems.

**3. We are looking for a Web Manager to maintain and develop the Society's website and to provide information for the technical consultant to keep the site updated.** Anyone interested in this role should be computer literate, as well as having good administrative skills and a keen interest in developing the website with a view to widening the appeal of the Gaskell Society.

If you feel that you can help, please contact Judith Rees on juditharees@yahoo.co.uk or by telephone 0161 941 3001 for more information.

**Thank you.**

## Corrigenda to Autumn Newsletter 2010

### **1. "Such happy days as my schooldays were": Elizabeth Gaskell and Warwickshire'**

Our sincere apologies to Dr. Elizabeth M. Cox. The numbers linking the text to references at the end of the article (pp.5-6) were inadvertently omitted.

If any readers who cannot work this out would like to see the correct version, Dr. Cox will be happy to supply this in a Word document. Contact blaina@tiscali.co.uk

### **2. 'Archibald Stanton Whitfield 1899-1974'**

Philip Ray is the fourth cousin of Archibald Stanton Whitfield and not the great-nephew, as we stated. Philip Ray was Academic Registrar at King Alfred's College, Winchester (now the University of Winchester) until he retired in 1987.

Our apologies for incorrectly relating these two gentlemen.

## Friends of Plymouth Grove: Update

**Janet Allan**

Work is continuing on our application to the Heritage Lottery and we have received the detailed reports and budgets which help us to envisage the house as it will be when opened to the public, with a recreated garden, restored interior, and all modern facilities. It is a wonderful, but expensive, vision, and we now need to turn it into reality with some serious fundraising.

Open Days continue on the first Sunday in the month, from 12-4; those on 3 April and 1 May will include a special exhibition on William Gaskell presented by

students from Manchester Metropolitan University. Knutsford Library has now kindly presented us with their excellent exhibition on Gaskell's illustrators (prepared by Cheshire Record Office) which is also on show. We have many other group visits at other times and the Friends are extremely busy. The AGM of the Trust will be held at the house on Sunday 10th April at 2 p.m., the day after the Gaskell Society's AGM. A Summer Soirée will be held on Wednesday 25th May at 7p.m., when our excellent presenters Delia Corrie and Charles Foster will be joined by the harpist Anna Christensen with her golden harp. Cost £12 including refreshments. Do please join us! Bookings through Margery Schofield, 202 Moston Lane East, M40 3QH, cheques payable to Friends of Plymouth Grove.

## Book Notes

**Christine Lingard**

*The Moorland Cottage*, London: Hesperus, 2010. £7.99

One of Gaskell's earliest but lesser known novellas, originally published as a Christmas book in 1850. The publisher describes it as 'The precursor to and arguably the template for George Eliot's *The Mill on the Floss*'.

*The Penguin book of ghost stories: from Elizabeth Gaskell to Ambrose Bierce*, edited by Michael Newton. Penguin Classics, 2010. £10.99

A new selection including the most popular of Gaskell's short stories, 'The Old Nurse's Story'. This book also includes stories by some very unfamiliar authors such as Fitz-James O'Brien, Mary Wilks Freeman and Lafcadio Hearn, as well as more familiar names such as Dickens, Stevenson, Kipling, Edith Wharton, Amelia Edwards, Margaret Oliphant and W.W. Jacobs.

*The Cranford Companion*, by Sue Birtwistle and Susie Conklin. Bloomsbury, £20.

An account of the making of the recent BBC television series, lavishly illustrated with photographs from the programme. It includes pictures of all cast members, some taken informally behind the scenes. Jenny Uglow has written a chapter placing the book in its historical setting, and Heidi Thomas, the screen-writer, contributes a chapter entitled 'Miss Pole's Advice to a Lady Living Abroad'. Posy Simmonds has provided an illustrated map of the village.

*Tuberculosis and the Victorian literary imagination*, by Katherine Byrne, lecturer in English at the University of Ulster. Cambridge Studies in Nineteenth-century Literature & Culture, no 74. Cambridge University Press. £55.

A discussion of the depiction of one of most deadly and devastating diseases in a number of nineteenth-century literary works, especially *North and South*, Charles Dickens's *Dombey and Son*, and Henry James's *The Portrait of a Lady*, as well as some neglected works by Charles Reade and Mrs Humphry Ward. Another chapter suggests that the vampire myth of Bram Stoker may have had its origins in consumption. There are appendices quoting contemporary factual publications on the disease and its gender distribution.

Two new translations of 'Mr Harrison's Confessions' are now available - in French: 'Les confessions de Mr Harrison', translated by Béatrice Vierende. L'Herne [Paris], 2010, and in German: 'Mr Harrison's Bekenntnisse: Erzählungen'. Manesse Bibliothek [Zurich], 2010. Alice Reinhard-Stocker (Afterword), Andrea Ott (translator).

For those of you interested in the international reputation of Elizabeth Gaskell there is a notable following in Poland, especially since the screening of the TV serialization of North and South. There are two sites: <http://forum.northandsouth.info/index.php> which contains translated extracts, and <http://gaskellnorthsouth.blogspot.com/>, which includes an article on some nineteenth-century magazine translations.

## THE ALLIANCE OF LITERARY SOCIETIES

Janet Kennerley

The 2010 AGM and Literary Weekend of The Alliance of Literary Societies (ALS) was hosted by The Gaskell Society last May in Knutsford; it included a trip to Plymouth Grove. It was good that so many representatives from other societies were able to attend and that there was plenty of support from our own members – grateful thanks to all those who were willing to lend a helping hand. There was an excellent report by Helen Newman, a member of the Richard Jefferies Society, who also serves on the ALS Committee, which appeared in the Gaskell Newsletter No. 50 – Autumn 2010. I am pleased that the ALS Committee members recorded that they thought the Gaskellians had done a wonderful job of making the weekend a success.

This year it is another Society's turn to organise the annual event. The 2011 AGM and Literary Weekend will be held on 21st and 22nd May and will be hosted by the Johnson Society of Lichfield. This beautiful cathedral city in Staffordshire was the birthplace in 1709 of the great lexicographer, author and wit, Dr Samuel Johnson. The Johnson Society was established in 1910, but he is far from the only literary highlight that Lichfield has to offer. The city also has links with Erasmus Darwin (grandfather of Charles), David Garrick and Philip Larkin, to name but a few.

The Alliance of Literary Societies Newsletter of Winter 2010-11 contains further details of the weekend's programme, accommodation list and a booking form. In addition to the annual meeting and lunch on Saturday 21st May, there is to be an afternoon tour of Philip Larkin's Lichfield, or free time to explore the city, followed by an evening reception at the Johnson Birthplace Museum prior to Dinner at a local restaurant, then a short talk by the new ALS President, Jenny Uglov. The next day, Sunday 22nd May, further tours in Lichfield have been organised for those members who are able to stay for the weekend. If you have not already received an electronic copy of the ALS Newsletter and would like to have this information, please contact Janet Kennerley who will send it to you – [janetkennerley@hotmail.com](mailto:janetkennerley@hotmail.com)

You may also like to visit the ALS website as follows:  
[www.allianceofliterarysocieties.org.uk](http://www.allianceofliterarysocieties.org.uk)

## The Annual General Meeting 2011

The Gaskell Society AGM will be held on Saturday, 9th April from 10.30 a.m., in the Manchester Cathedral Visitor Centre (10 Cateaton Street, Manchester M3 1SQ). All members are welcome.

### North-West Group

Knutsford meetings are held at St. John's Church Rooms on the last Wednesday in the month. Buffet lunch (cost £8) is available from 12.15pm. The short stories continue to be the focus of our studies:

30 March, 2011: 'Morton Hall'

27 April, 2011: 'My French Master'

### Yorkshire Group 2011

I am sorry to announce that there will be no further meetings of the Yorkshire Group. Support for the group has fallen to such a degree that meetings were running at a financial loss. Reluctantly therefore it was decided that there was no choice other than to close the group.

On behalf of Dudley Barlow, Howard Gregg, Teresa Smith and myself I would like to thank those members who have attended meetings in the past and also to thank the members of the National Committee who were a constant support to us.

Thank you and Best Wishes,  
Kate Smith, [shepleysmiths@tiscali.co.uk](mailto:shepleysmiths@tiscali.co.uk)

## The Gaskell Society South-West

**Saturday, 19 February 2011, 2.30 p.m.:** Discussion group on *Ruth*, at Elizabeth Schlenker's, 14 Vellore Lane, Bath, BA2 6J (Tel: 01225 331763). £3 per person. Tea and Coffee to be provided.

**Saturday, 19 March 2011, 2.30 p.m.:** Discussion on *Ruth* to continue at Bren Abercrombie's, 12 Mount Road, Lansdown, Bath, BA1 5PW (Tel: 01225 471241). £3 per person. Tea and Coffee to be provided.

**Saturday, 9 April, 2011, 2.30 p.m.:** at BRLSI, Queen Square, Bath. Prof. Peter Skrine, Chairman of the Gaskell Society South-West, will speak on: "We are so comfortable and the place is so lovely": Elizabeth Gaskell in Germany". £2 to members of BRLSI and the Gaskell Society South-West. £4 to all others. Refreshments will be available at an additional cost of £1.

**Sunday, 4 September 2011.** Gaskell Summer Social event. Place and time to be announced.

Any queries to Elizabeth Schlenther, 14 Vellore Lane, Bath, BA2 6JQ,  
Tel: 01225 331763.

## The London and South-East Group

Saturday May 14th 2011: Professor Barbara Hardy will lead a discussion on 'Elizabeth Gaskell: Dreams and Visions'. Barbara Hardy is Emeritus Professor of English Literature at the University of London.

A sandwich lunch will be provided from 12.45pm onwards and tea and cake is available after the meeting that begins at 2pm and usually lasts in the region of an hour or so. A bring and buy bookstall is available so please bring and buy. Proceeds go to the restoration of the Gaskell House. We meet at Francis Holland School for Girls a two-minute walk from Sloane Square. The Tube station is served by the District and Circle lines or it is not a long walk from Victoria Station. Access is via a doorbell in Graham Terrace please press the bell that is marked 'Reception' and someone will open the door for you. There are security reasons for this type of access.

Please come feel free to bring friends who might be interested, membership of the society is not a prerequisite for attendance at meetings. We charge £4.00 in these days of austerity and endeavour to provide lunch, tea and some intellectual stimulation for the afternoon!

Any enquiries to Dr Fran Twinn, 85 Calton Ave, Dulwich, London SE21 7DF;  
phone: 0208693 3238; fax 0208299 4088.

## Autumn Meeting

The Autumn Meeting will be held in Knutsford, at the Methodist Church, on Saturday 24 September 2011. Further details to be announced.

## A Notice from the President of the Gaskell Society of Japan

"Dear our Gaskell members

Thank you so much for your deep sympathy and concern over to our disaster; earthquake, tsunami and the explosion of nuclear reactor which might have bereaved over ten thousand lives. Pandemonium was reigning over Japan for a while as we have never experienced such a huge disaster before. But it is very lucky to tell you all Japanese Gaskell members are safe and some members, living at the disaster area, could escape safely.

We are regaining our calmness little by little, however, we are facing difficult situation...aftershocks, the explosion of nuclear reactors, or power cut, in a disaster area and the northern part of Japan and Tokyo area, as you might know by news report. However, we will help one another and accept every difficult situation calmly as Cranford ladies did. I do believe we will surmount this hard situation soon.

We appreciate your encouragement by various ways- on internet or mail soon after this earthquake. We could have much comfort by your warm encouragement.

Again I'd like to express my gratitude to your deep sympathy to Japanese members for our disaster.

President of the Gaskell Society of Japan

Mrs Mariko Tahira"

***We thank Mariko for this message.***

***We are continuing to think of our friends and their compatriots in Japan, and send our condolences and sympathy at this tragic time.***

***Ed.***



# The Gaskell Society



THE YOUNG  
MRS GASKELL

THE GASKELL SOCIETY HOME PAGE has all the latest information on meetings.  
<http://gaskellsociety.co.uk>

If you have any material or suggestions for future Newsletters, please contact Mrs. Helen Smith,  
11 Lowland Way, Knutsford, Cheshire, WA16 9AG.  
Telephone - 01565 632615 E-mail: [helenisabel@ntlworld.com](mailto:helenisabel@ntlworld.com)

**Hon Treasurer:** Brian Williams, 15 Cawley Avenue, Culcheth, Warrington, Cheshire WA3 4DF

**Membership Secretary:** Miss C. Lingard, 5 Moran Crescent, Macclesfield SK11 8JJ

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NEWSLETTER  
Autumn 2011 - Number 52



## GASKELL 20 QUESTIONS QUIZ

1. What was the address of Elizabeth Stevenson's London birthplace?
2. **In which month and year did she die?**
3. What was the second name of ECG's daughter, Julia?
4. **Who was the music teacher to the Gaskell family at Plymouth Grove?**
5. Name 4 other names which appear with ECG in the window of Poets' Corner.
6. **What was the cause of death of ECG's son, William?**
7. Which of ECG's novels finish with these words – "That woman!" ?
8. **In "North & South", where is Captain Lennox's regiment stationed?**
9. What was the name of Aunt Lumb's daughter?
10. **Which continental city is featured in "Dark Night's Work" ?**
11. Which publication was Mr Davis reading in "The Squire's Story" ?
12. **Which word did ECG use to describe the drains at Plymouth Grove?**
13. By what name did William Gaskell call his wife?
14. **Where was ECG when she wished she had a book to write instead of just a letter?**
15. What did Lizzie Leigh want her baby to be called?
16. **Which ECG novel has a link with Winchester?**
17. Name 3 doctors who appear in ECG's fiction.
18. **Which surname does ECG use in both "Wives and Daughters" and "The Half Brothers" ?**
19. Which short story by ECG begins with this line – "Mr & Mrs Openshaw came from Manchester to settle in London."
20. **Which ECG biographer has recently become the President of The Alliance of Literary Societies?**

Janet Kennerley prepared this quiz for our New Year lunch held at The Cottons Hotel near Knutsford on 12 January 2011. Members who were unable to join us on that occasion may like to pit their wits against this quiz now. No prizes. Answers will appear in the Spring Newsletter 2012.

"The centenary of Mrs Gaskell falls on this 29th of this month, and should not be passed unnoted. "Cranford" and in lesser degree "Mary Barton" still have their admiring readers, though the author is far less powerfully imaginative than her friend Charlotte Brontë, and even in quiet realism is never rated with the incomparable Miss Austen. But she did produce one piece of work that grips the reader with a sense of unmistakable and, in passages, tragic reality, - her biography of Charlotte Brontë. If ever living word fell from writer's pen, such may be found in that remarkable life of a remarkable woman". Found in The Dial - Chicago - Sept 16th, 1910 - page 172.

## Editor's Letter

Helen Smith

Welcome to this, our 52nd Newsletter and a very warm welcome to our new Chairman, Ann O'Brien and to our new Secretary, Pam Griffiths, who were elected at the AGM in April.

The Winchester Conference brought together almost 90 members from home and overseas to share in our love of Mrs. Gaskell and to explore the surrounding countryside. (We now also understand Mrs. Gaskell's desire to live in rural Hampshire!) Janet Cunliffe-Jones has written an excellent summary of the conference so that the many members who could not join us can see what they have missed.

We have decided to instigate a Joan Leach Memorial Lecture to be presented annually at the autumn meeting in Knutsford. The inaugural lecture will be given by Professor James Drife on 24 September 2011.

To all who have contributed to this Newsletter, I offer my grateful thanks. Very special thanks to Neil Morrison, the Scottish artist now living in Manosque, Provence, for creating the new young Mrs. Gaskell for our front cover. Many thanks are also due to my brother, David Robinson who lives in Alberta, Canada for his drawing of Winchester Cathedral on the conference brochure.

And for the finished product, we thank Rebecca Stuart at Lithotech Print.

## Thoughts of Chairman Ann

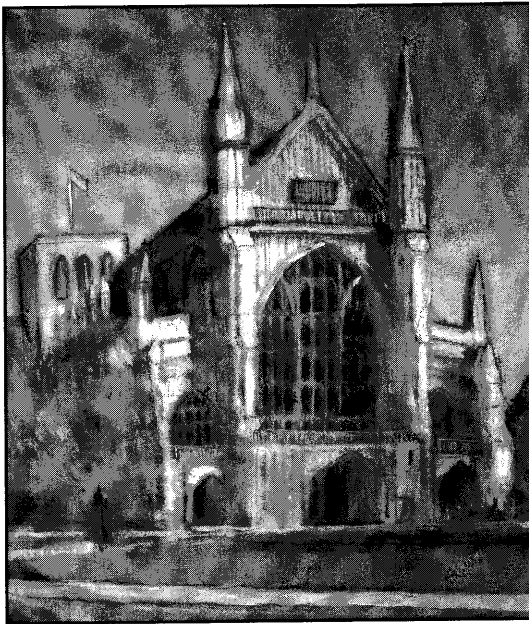
Ann O'Brien

It was lovely to meet so many of you at the recent conference - and what a successful conference it was - one of the best ever, as a conference veteran told me. Certainly the quality of the speakers and the unaccustomed luxury of the accommodation were highlights of the week-end and the visits added to our enjoyment. It was a fitting tribute to all who worked so hard over the last two years.

I don't know if this last figure surprises you - it really does take that long to organise such an event, and so, very soon we shall have to start planning the next conference! We would therefore like to ask for your help: if you have any suggestions for the venue, topics or speakers, we would like to hear them. Indeed any ideas are always welcome, not only for conferences but also for meetings.

As you will no doubt have realised, if this conference took two years to organise, Joan Leach must have played a major role in the early stages. During my opening remarks at the conference, I mentioned that although, sadly, this was the first conference without Joan, I was sure she was with us in spirit. Well, I like to think this was proved to be the case. Let me tell you why: while visiting Winchester Cathedral, our new secretary, Pam (Griffiths), a close friend of Joan's, found herself in the second-hand bookshop there. Browsing among the books on the shelf, she espied a book called "The Great Book Raid" .... By a certain Christopher Leach, the book dedicated to his wife, Joan and their two sons. (With apologies to Elizabeth Gaskell) Curious but true!!





## Gaskell Society Conference 2011

Janet Cunliffe-Jones

The first thing to say is how very enjoyable the Conference was, with excellent talks, a pleasant venue, well-organised outings, and interesting and friendly people to meet.

An introduction to Winchester, and its literary associations was given by **Elizabeth Proudman**, Winchester blue badge guide and vice-chair of the Jane Austen society.

Winchester, a Roman town, is set on the Itchen, a clear chalk stream. It was once the capital of England, under King Alfred - who had parts of the Bible translated into Anglo-Saxon. Much later, Isaac Walton fished in the Itchen, and Elizabeth Montague, the "Queen of the Blue-stockings" lived in the town - but the two most famous literary events came in the early 19th Century. Jane Austen came to Winchester when her illness became severe, and died there in 1817. Two years later, John Keats spent some autumn weeks in the town, enjoying a brief respite of beautiful autumn weather, and wrote there his ode To Autumn. Later visitors or residents included Charlotte Yonge and Trollope, who based *The Warden* on the hospital of St Cross.

**Alan Shelston**, President of the Society, spoke after supper the first night, on *The Letters of Jane Austen* and Elizabeth Gaskell.

Gaskell, a Victorian novelist, grew up under the Regency, and George IV. Austen's

novels were published during the first decade of Gaskell's life, but though she read them later, there is no evidence that she did so in her youth.

Shelston referred mainly to the letters Gaskell wrote as a young, unmarried woman - often to her friend, Harriet Carr. The tone is gossipy, and often flirtatious. Both her letters and Austen's show how little such young women had to do, often opening with an elaborate way of saying - "I'm writing because I've nothing else to do." In *Emma* the heroine's troubles stem largely from her not having enough to occupy her bright and eager mind. Writing these letters, however, gave Austen and Gaskell practice in narrative technique, and character description.

Saturday, July 23rd

**Dr. Bill Hutchings**, spoke about Eighteenth Century Fiction by Women Writers.

Early novelists were creating a new form, which expresses what it is to be an individual. They explored the relation between the world of outer reality, and other people, and the interior world of thought and feeling. Women writers were central to this development, where realistic fiction intersects with readers' own experience.

A useful hand-out gave well-selected quotations to illustrate Dr Hutchings' argument.

"[The novel] is, or ought to be, a picture of supposed but natural and probable human existence," and again, "the hero and heroine are neither plunged in the depths of misery nor exalted to *UNhuman* happiness," wrote Fanny Burney, who blended good and bad in her characters.

These writers reflected the concern of eighteenth century philosophy with the relation of body and mind, and led on to the modern - and even modernist - novel.

*The Female Quixote* (1752) by Charlotte Lennox provides often hilarious examples of characters who cannot connect their self-image with the real world.

In *Evelina* (1778), *A Young Lady's Entrance into the World*, Burney opposes country and city, innocence and experience. She illustrates different social levels in London with subtle differences of dialogue.

The novel developed the device of soliloquy. Burney merged soliloquies with the voice of the narrator, a technique known as "free indirect style".

"Left now to herself, sensations unfelt before filled the heart of Cecilia. All that had passed for a while appeared a dream; her faculties all seemed out of order . . . But when at length her recollection more clearly returned, and her situation appeared to her such as it really was, divested alike of false terrors or delusive expectations, she found herself still further removed from tranquillity."

Burney, said Hutchings, was central to the map of the development of the novel.

Of all the excellent talks in the conference, this one by Dr Hutchings was, for me, the very best - showing how writers, mainly women, developed the novel in the eighteenth century to be the dominant literary form it became in the nineteenth.

The next talk, on Domestic Comedy in Austen and Gaskell was by **Emma Karin Brandin**, and delivered in impeccable English by this Swedish lecturer.

Domestic comedy has been seen as gentler and more subtle than that of male writers such as Dickens, and therefore sometimes dismissed as inferior - or at least weaker. But women lived in a world of limitations, and comedy was a vehicle for their "thinly disguised rage" (Regina Barreca Untamed and Unabashed). Comedy was a means of exploring the complex stories of women. Women writers were sensitive to subtleties of speech. Brandin gave examples of Austen's use of dialogue, from the notorious pun of Mary Crawford (a character drawn, perhaps, from the earlier tradition of restoration comedy) about "rears and vices" to Mr Elton's gushing admiration of Emma's portrait of Harriet, in a scene in which every person's speech reflects their character and preoccupations.

In *Cranford*, the apparently naïve narrator, Mary Smith, tells us her father says Miss Matty's ways in her shop "would not do" in the world, and adds, "I fancy the world must be very bad, for . . . in spite of [my father's] many precautions, he lost upwards of a thousand pound by roguery only last year."

Molly Gibson develops irony as a defence against her stepmother, Mrs Gibson: "I was always of such an affectionate, sensitive nature. I remember a little poem of Mr. Kirkpatrick's in which he compared my heart to a harp-string, vibrating to the slightest breeze."

"I thought harp-strings required a pretty strong finger to make them sound," said Molly."

#### **Professor Avril Horner: Women writers and the Gothic tradition.**

Professor Horner made it entertainingly clear that the Gothic is NOT realistic fiction.

In 1764 of *The Castle of Otranto* by Horace Walpole, with its wildly unrealistic plot, won instant fame. A cartoon showed a group of women open-mouthed at a late night reading - but library records show that men read gothic too - as Henry Tilney has done in *Northanger Abbey*.

Characteristics of the genre include: a young and vulnerable heroine; pursuit by an older man; issues of property and inheritance; an exotic setting - usually in Southern Europe; a building, usually old; pictures; extremes of feeling. Anti-Catholic prejudice is shown in the settings in southern, Catholic countries.

Supernatural events occur or are suggested. Some writers, "Monk" Lewis, or Harrison Ainsworth, appear to believe in such events; others, such as Ann Radcliffe,

offer realistic explanations. Radcliffe also ensures that virtue is preserved.

The genre is extremely open to parody - *Nightmare Abbey*, *Castle Rackrent*, and, above all, *Northanger Abbey*.

Does Austen's famous defence of the novel here include the Gothic? It does not appear the Isabella Thorpe's reading has improved her mind or moral judgement.

*Northanger Abbey* shows darker elements in 'real life' - General Tilney is not a villain, but his behaviour is really unpleasant. Some gothic characteristics, we see, can and do appear in realistic novels, up to the present.

#### **Sunday July 24th**

##### **Dr Catherine Spooner: The Northern Gothic**

Early gothic writers set their novels in southern Europe (Catherine Morland reflects that events she has read of would not happen in England), but Henry James noted that Victorian writers brought gothic elements closer to home.

Dr Spooner talked of a specifically Northern - or even Lancashire - Gothic, and argued that Gaskell's biography of Charlotte Brontë represents Haworth as a gothic location. The Brontë's servant, Tabby, was a source of folk tales. The term 'folklore' had been coined in 1846 and interest in local legends linked to interest in the supernatural. Rural areas were seen to be backward, and were sometimes presented by a more sophisticated narrator, such as Lockwood.

Gaskell's *The Poor Clare* (1856) is complementary to the Biography. It is set in the Trough of Bowland, and the action takes place in 1718, when witchcraft was still officially believed. Yet Gaskell's treatment is nuanced. The Catholic priest is shown as kinder than the Protestant - and the Poor Clares in Antwerp are seen sympathetically. Gaskell always shows realism in presentation of place.

##### **Dr Shirley Foster:**

The family was idealised in Victorian England - with Victoria and Albert and their many children as a central image. The English liked to believe their country was especially distinguished for its family life, the home a haven from the world of business. Some contemporaries, however, were aware that the image was flawed - that the home could be a place of confinement and oppression.

Novels both reinforce and question the image.

##### **Barbara Dennis:**

Charlotte Yonge (1823 - 1901) has been credited with creating this idealised image; she had only one brother, and never married, but saw family life with uncles and aunts, and many cousins. She came early under the influence of Keble, of the Oxford Movement, and religion was central to her views.

She is more traditional in her many articles, preaching duty, obedience to lawful authority, and self-sacrifice, than in her novels which often show families without parents; sibling relationships become the most important; the sanctity of the family must be preserved, dissidents expelled.

Gaskell is one of the few novelists who was also a wife and mother, but her own upbringing was not orthodox and her novels show few orthodox families. She portrays dysfunctional families, questions the importance of lineage, and criticises paternal authority, yet she also shows alternatives, and that nurturing love does not come only from blood parents. In *Ruth*, and many short stories, she portrays different groupings. This openness may have come in part from her Unitarian background.

#### **Margaret Lesser: Gaskell and the translators.**

This was a specialised subject - but the talk was given with much wit and verve. Elizabeth Gaskell knew French well, and dealt directly with the French publisher Hachette; English writing was popular in 19th century France.

It was interesting to know that while George Eliot wrote, of translation, that it was "treason to literature to encourage incompetence", Gaskell recommended people - women - who she thought needed work.

Because of pressure of time, the Conference Review Panel was called off, and the Conference ended in style on Sunday night with a brilliant dramatic - and Gothic - reading of *The Grey Woman*, devised by Robin Allan and performed by Delia Corrie.

Each afternoon there was a choice of outings:

On Saturday we went to Jane Austen's home at Chawton, and on to Holybourne, where we were able to peer at The Lawn, the house Elizabeth Gaskell bought at the end of her life, the scene of her sudden death, and to visit the parish church.

On Sunday we visited Winchester, and the beautiful hospital of St Cross - a probable model for St Sepulchre's in *Sylvia's Lovers*. On a lovely summer afternoon, the Abbot's Garden was very beautiful indeed, and the walk back into Winchester along the Itchen was that which Keats often took when staying in the town in 1819.

"There are the most beautiful streams about I ever saw", he wrote, " - full of trout."

The Conference venue, a large hotel outside Winchester, was very comfortable, though long walks between rooms were a problem for a few. The only other problem was that there seemed to be too few staff to serve meals and coffee quickly to a large number. This was the main reason why we tended to run late on the programme. However, the small swimming pool was a delight - some conference members enjoyed it several times over the weekend.

As I belong to the South-West Group, centred in Bath, I welcomed the chance to meet members from the main society in and around Manchester, and put more faces to names! I very much enjoyed hearing northern voices - having lived for many years in the north of England myself!

## Beau Geste

PS Margaret Lesser left us with a riddle which would have been solved had the final review panel not been cancelled. Margaret now reveals 'le mot juste':

The riddle in English, you'll remember, was:

'What would Majesty be without its externals?'

Answer: 'Nothing but a jest.'

Louise Swanton Belloc's lateral-thinking solution was:  
'Que serait UN ROI sans son extérieur?'

Answer: 'Rien qu'un 0 (= zéro).'

(Ed.:Merci beaucoup, Margaret.)

## With Gaskell in Naples

Alan Shelston

Readers of our journal will be familiar with accounts of Gaskell studies in Italy. These are very much attributable to the work done by academics and students under our vice-president Professor Francesco Marroni at the Centro Universitario di Studi Vittoriani e Edouardiani at the University of Chieti-Pescara. I have attended a number of conferences there, and have sometimes arranged for its members to visit Manchester, and I have always been impressed by their work.

A number of scholars from the research centre have been appointed to academic posts in Italy, and early this summer I was invited by my good friend and colleague there, Dottoressa Raffaella Antinnuci, to contribute to a conference at the Parthenope University of Naples. The theme of the conference was the perception of Naples in the eyes of writers and travellers from abroad: there were papers on the responses of authors past and present - Dickens and D.H. Lawrence for example - on graphic artists, and on the musical traditions of Naples: speakers spoke in Italian or in English as they wished.

I had agreed to speak on Gaskell (in English). As far as we know, Gaskell, unlike Dickens, never visited Naples. J.G. Sharps suggested that she might have found

time to do so in her Italian visit of 1857. I would never carelessly contradict such an authority, but in fact the 1857 visit is very well documented. Gaskell would seem to have spent most of her time in Rome, later writing that "It was in those charming Roman days that my life, at any rate, culminated". She travelled homeward via the northern cities of Perugia, Florence and Venice. 1820 it took Keats a week to make the journey by carriage from Naples to Rome. Keats was then a dying man, and things would perhaps have improved by the time of Gaskell's Italian ventures, but there was still no railway between Rome and Naples when she was there. It seems very unlikely that she would have ventured south. Her passport - still available - shows no sign of a visit to the kingdom of the two Sicilies, of which Naples formed a significant part. However, books about Italy - a good number of them in Manchester's Portico Library - were many at the time of the Risorgimento. Gaskell's knowledge of the city would almost certainly have come from her reading.

In 1863 Gaskell published an essay with the title of 'An Italian Institution' for Dickens's journal *All the Year Round*. The 'institution' referred to was the Camorra, and the Camorra were famous, then as now, as a Neapolitan version of the mafia. If this was a surprising topic for the author of *Cranford*, that in itself was a starting point for me.

The conference was held in the Villa Doria d'Angri, an elegant nineteenth century villa at Posillipo, high up and overlooking the Bay of Naples. In the entrance hall a plaque told us that Wagner had written *Parsifal* while staying there. It is now a conference and meeting centre for the university. Across the water, Vesuvius loomed up through the sunny mist. We were told several times that the longer the interval between eruptions the more severe the eruption when it came: the last one had been in 1944, so the Neapolitans were constantly expecting a spectacular event. Nevertheless the slopes were covered with small houses, built there illicitly since building on Vesuvius is officially banned. I had recently been reading Gillian Darley's new book, *Vesuvius*, with its accounts of the intrepid ascents made by Dickens and other nineteenth century travellers. We were able to see the ruined city of Herculaneum during our stay.

The conference opened with a splendid sequence of slides of early paintings and drawings of Naples shown by an ex-BBC correspondent, Charles Lister. My own paper was scheduled for the same morning. It focused on Gaskell's authorship of 'An Italian Institution' in the context of the unification of Italy in 1861 (Gaskell's essay appeared in 1863). In my paper I followed a lead in J.G. Sharps's *Mrs Gaskell's Observation and Invention*. Sharps points out that amongst the books recorded as having been at Plymouth Grove during this period was a work entitled *La Camorra; Notizie Storiche* written in Italian but by a Swiss author, Marco Monnier. When I compared this book with Gaskell's essay it became clear that she had read this work. I was asked about Gaskell's competence in Italian: she was probably taught the language at the Miss Byerleys' school. More than that though, in Cousin Phillis she shows her heroine struggling with Dante - something

which I suspect may reflect personal experience: she herself read Dante and eventually came to quote Dante from the original with confidence. *All the Year Round* shows how strong interest was in the Italian political situation at the time, and this was an interest that Gaskell clearly shared.

As I have said, there was a range of interesting papers at the conference, and there was also some good discussion. Poor Dickens got into trouble for his very forthright account of Naples in his *Pictures of Italy*, English commentators on the region at this time often emphasized the beauty of the bay and the magnificence of the volcano, contrasting them with the city's squalor. Dickens spent the best part of a year in 1844-45 in Italy and he had some scathing things to say about Neapolitan poverty, which he attributed to the power of the priesthood who, he wrote, taught the poor nothing but how to beg. Naples is a densely populated city and its urban sprawl, then as now, made it one of the largest in Europe: if it is a very vibrant city its social problems, again then as now, were inevitably extensive.

The conference over we were free to explore the city. It is, of course, notorious for its danger and its dirt, but these seemed less in evidence. As we left, brand new rubbish wagons were clearing the streets. Rubbish is the source of much of the modern Camorra's wealth so it is not clear who was controlling the operation but the white wagons had a certain symbolic appropriateness. A recent BBC programme suggested that you cannot spend a month in Naples without having come into contact with the Camorra. That is probably so, but you are unlikely to be aware of it. Anyway it seemed to me safe to give a paper on the Camorra in its home city, and no-one so far has come knocking at the door.

The Camorra has been in existence for some hundreds of years although its origins lie obscurely in the past. Bourbon rule in the 1840s and 50s turned it into a revolutionary organisation, although 'organisation' is perhaps not the right word. One of its features, sustained until now as Roberto Saviano's book and subsequent film, *Gomorra* makes clear, is that there is no apparent organisation as such; rather are there anonymous groups, each with its own capo who infiltrate every activity in the city. In her account of its activities Gaskell wrote: "It is a system of black-mail, so extended and organized as to apply to every walk in life, and every condition of human industry" and by Saviano's account this description still stands. As Saviano has shown, the concentration on the workplaces of the poor are what supports its authority to-day, but the revolutionary impetus of the 1850s having been superseded by the unification of Italy, the activities of the Camorra would seem now to have become exclusively criminal.

In my paper I referred to other writings about the Italian situation in 1862, and their implications for Gaskell's article. The 1850s and 60s were a crucial decade for Italy's emergence to nationhood and there are a number of indications of her interest in Italy at this time. She wrote a short introduction to a work by Colonel Vecchi, secretary to Garibaldi, *Garibaldi in Caprera*, a copy of which, with a letter

by its author, rests in the Gaskell collection in Knutsford public library. In *Cousin Phillis* Edward Holdsworth has been an engineer on Italy's new railway system: this is accurate both chronologically and geographically, and there are a number of other Italian references in the story. A *Dark Night's Work* has its heroine make a journey by sea from Italy which replicates aspects of Gaskell's own voyage out. Elizabeth Gaskell was a traveller in Italy, but one very much on the northern side of that north/south divide which is still sustained in Italy to-day. When, as she wrote to Charles Eliot Norton, she looked back to "those wonderful Italian days" we have to admit that it is unlikely that she would have been thinking of Naples and its politics as she called Italy to mind.

## Cranford in Crewe

Helen Smith

How delightful to have a refreshingly straightforward stage version of *Cranford* (adapted by Martyn Coleman and first produced in 1951), presented in Crewe by Ian Dickens Productions International Ltd., at the start of their national tour (spring 2011).

The action takes place entirely in Miss Matty's parlour in 1830 and 1831. All actors appear to enjoy their roles. Miss Matilda Jenkyns gains considerably in stature as her tribulations mount in the course of the action. The gentle retiring younger daughter of the late Rector and meek sister of the indomitable though now deceased Deborah develops into a strong-minded independent woman capable, as a share-holder, of defending the bank (The Town and County Bank) and herself able to cope with bankruptcy. Martha (Alicia Grace Turrell), the gauche maidservant, becomes a young lady of integrity and an excellent wife, mother and landlady. Miss Pole (Karen Ford), Miss Barker (Paula Stockbridge) and Mrs. Forrester (Susan Skipper) make their entrances and their exits. Mary Smith (Isla Carter) gently and unobtrusively manipulates and co-ordinates the activities of Cranford.

The Hon. Mrs. Jamieson (Hildegard Neil) gets her come-uppance with gout. As expected in the town of Amazons, the two male characters make but rare appearances. Even they come up trumps in the end. Finally snobbery is stifled; the goodness of human nature and justice prevail. Everyone appears to live happily ever after in this fairytale world of Cranford. A few characters of the original book are missing: "poor Peter", the Misses Jenkyns' missing brother; Signor Brunoni, Captain Brown and daughters. Rather surprisingly, these persons are remarkably inconspicuous in their absence.

Recorded Schubert (Unfinished Symphony, Arpeggione Sonata and other chamber works) provides a useful prelude and incidental music of the authentic period which fades out as the action gets underway.

The gentle irony and humour with the genuinely funny ways of "elegant economy" in Cranford come over so well in this stage performance. On the evening we attended (14 April) it was most unfortunate that the audience at the Lyceum in Crewe was rather thin and took a little time to tune in to the slightly whimsical atmosphere of Cranford.

## Elizabeth Rosemary Trevor Dabbs

8 July 1922 – 28th September 2010

Sarah Prince

It is now one year since I, accompanied by my mother Rosemary, opened the exhibition 'Elizabeth Gaskell - A Connected Life', at the John Rylands Library in Manchester to celebrate Elizabeth Gaskell's bicentenary; and what a year it has been. This exhibition drew on the connections of Elizabeth Gaskell through her writings and prolific correspondence with family and friends, with examples of those connections exhibited, both past and present, demonstrating her influence in her lifetime and how those alive are inspired by her life and work.

Now I have been asked to write something about our ancestral connection and specifically about my mother, Elizabeth 'Rosemary' Trevor Dabbs, née Jones, and Elizabeth Gaskell's great great granddaughter, who died on 28th September 2011, the day before Elizabeth Gaskell's 200th birthday.

Rosemary was born in Radyr, just outside Cardiff, on 8th July 1922, the only daughter of Clifford Trevor Jones and Daysie Jones (née Holland), Elizabeth Gaskell's great granddaughter. The simplest family tree runs like this: 201 years ago on the 29th September 1810 'Elly' (as William called her) was born in London. Most of the rest of her story is well documented, but her eldest child Marianne married Edward Thurstan Holland and gave birth to William; William married Evelyn Isdell and they had an only child Margaret Evelyn Averia (known as Daysie), my grandmother, who too had an only child: Rosemary. William was the only one of Marianne's children to marry, and since then there has been only one child born in each generation until 1958 when I was born to join my brother.

What comes to my mind when thinking this through is how tantalisingly close my mother was to having known someone who knew Mrs Gaskell. Her mother (Daysie), who died in 1990, stayed with Meta and Julia at 84 Plymouth Grove. She went up with her 'Nanny' and stayed for several days in around 1900. She didn't remember very much about it except that they were 'very frightening'; but how lucky we are to have photographs of the drawing room of Plymouth Grove and to be able to identify pieces of furniture in that room that we have lived with all our lives. She also stayed with Marianne in Bromsgrove and remembers the artist ... who painted the picture of Marianne in old age.



Rosemary stayed in Malvern as a child with Marianne's children, Uncle Brian and Aunt Enie, and remembers morning prayers in the dining room, where the staff filed in and sat on one side of the room whilst the Holland siblings and my mother sat on the other for the proceedings.

My mother grew up in Radyr in a house fascinatingly full of wonderful items of furniture, beautifully and lovingly polished, which included a rather large and overpowering credenza in the sitting room. Stored within this rather grand piece of furniture was the most fascinating collection of Gaskell artefacts that were treasured, but at the same time almost taken for granted in their existence. Any curator will be horrified to know that her letters that were kept in the credenza (these are now on permanent loan to the Brotherton Collection at the University of Leeds) were casually stored in a brown envelope and there was no restraint on getting them out and having a good browse!

She attended school in Devon (Poltimore College) which recently featured in the BBC Restoration programme and was 'finished' in Switzerland. On returning from there, the Second World War broke out and she joined the ATS driving an Austin K2 ambulance initially in the UK and then after D-Day in France, Belgium and Germany. She returned to England to work in a bank and then with MI5. She met Jack through a mutual friend when they both got involved as Wardrobe Mistress and Stage Manager for the Baltic Amateur Dramatic Society.

When Rosemary married Jack Dabbs, in 1952, she wore Elizabeth Gaskell's wedding veil, a tradition which has been carried on by a least four generations of Gaskell female descendants. This requires the planning of the whole ensemble to show off the veil to its greatest advantage. She also enjoyed the spectacle of us using Elizabeth's teapot at my daughter Eleanor's 21<sup>st</sup> birthday tea in 2009.

Following marriage and the birth of two children, Tim in 1954 and Sarah in 1958, she settled down to life in Wimbledon, as a full-time mother, wife and supporter of Jack who was a shipbroker in the City. As this stage in her life, my grandmother Daysie was still very much in charge of all things Gaskell and whilst my mother had an interest she was not active in events. In 1960, Daysie helped to celebrate Gaskell's 150<sup>th</sup> celebrations with events in Knutsford, and a detailed scrapbook of those events remains as a record.

I think Rosemary inherited many qualities from her ancestor; one of the principal ones being hoarding. This has proved to be a blessing as she grew up amongst these treasures of Gaskell life and we have in more recent years had an opportunity, because of the interest that they engender, to become more familiar with them. One must remember that until perhaps fifteen to twenty years ago Mrs Gaskell did not have the wide publicity and following that she now attracts. But thankfully the hoarding habit appears to have been a most useful one, in that it gave Rosemary some insight into Elizabeth's belongings and life and the opportunity to share these items with others. Another quality that I feel Rosemary shared with Mrs Gaskell

was quiet determination: since being widowed in 1987 she lived independently and quietly, supporting her charities, attending church, being neighbourly but never making a fuss or demanding attention.

My mother was thrilled with the wider awareness of Elizabeth Gaskell's work that became so much more prominent in recent years, largely due to the efforts of Joan Leach, the Gaskell Society, the restoration of Plymouth Grove and the popularisation of her work through film and television. She was very pleased and proud to be invited to become a patron of Plymouth Grove and gave generously towards the restoration project. She had in recent years several opportunities to visit the house both before and after the work and to see for herself the progress. Some of her photographs of life in the house in Meta's and Julia's time have enabled those working on the restoration to understand what it looked like at that time.

More recently she was honoured and excited to attend the première of the Cranford series in London, Alan Shelston's talk and the exhibition at the Portico Library, and the exhibition at the John Rylands Library last year. She had hoped to visit Heathwaite but, owing to a change of date, was unable to do so. Whenever we were in the area, we would stop in Knutsford and look at the Gaskell Memorial Tower and pay a visit to Brook Street Chapel. She was also delighted to be able to lend items to these exhibitions, following in the footsteps of her mother Daysie who lent items to the Knutsford Museum for Mrs Gaskell's 150<sup>th</sup> anniversary.

Rosemary made a great effort to correspond with all those who enquired of her for information regarding the Gaskell family, including John Chapple, Jenny Uglow, Barbara Brill and Alan Shelston to name but a few. She was always very happy to help students and scholars in their research, both from this country and abroad from as far afield as Russia and Japan.

It was with much regret that, owing to illness, she was unable to attend the service in Westminster Abbey last September. We had made arrangements for a very special weekend in London and she was insistent that the rest of us should attend. I was able to visit her in hospital on the Sunday evening and show her the Order of Service and the article in The Independent. This was the last time I was to see her. The extraordinary events of that week are now known to all, with Mrs Gaskell's bicentenary the following day, followed the next by the death of Joan.

Now I am faced with the onerous task of being responsible for one twig of the family tree and am very thankful I have two wonderful daughters Eleanor and Imogen to become the adjoining twigs through what appears to have become a tradition of female lineage in this family.

I would like to take this opportunity to thank everyone from the Gaskell Society and Plymouth Grove who expressed their words of comfort during my mother's illness and their subsequent condolences. I have a very full archive of recent events which will take me a while to collate ... but will be hoarded!

# Elizabeth Gaskell's Encounters with the Internet Technology of the 21st Century

Nancy S. Weyant

Elizabeth Gaskell lived and wrote in an era of dramatic scientific and technological developments. Readers of her fiction and her correspondence encounter numerous examples of the transformative impact of nineteenth-century technology on the lives of individuals and society as a whole. As dramatic as those developments were, readers of works by and about Gaskell, and Gaskell scholars writing on her life and works during the last quarter of the twentieth century and the first decade of the twenty-first century, have likewise experienced dramatic changes brought about by computer technology. As a librarian and a Gaskell bibliographer I have actively tracked with interest the impact of electronic access to the works of Gaskell, to critical analysis of her writing, and to the ever-growing presence of Gaskell on the Internet.

In 1966 when I began my work on my Master's degree in Library Science at Wayne State University, the chair of the Department, Dr. Robert E. Booth, after welcoming the entering class, informed us that, on some levels, he felt sorry for us. He noted that in our course-work we were going to be required to master all the traditional paper sources required to be effective librarians upon graduation but within ten years, we were going to have to adapt *all* those skills to a new research world - a world defined by computer technology. Dr. Booth was correct. Exactly 10 years later, in 1976, I accepted a job at Bucknell University after taking five years off from my career as a librarian until my son began school. In those intervening years, computers had invaded libraries and redefined both how librarians provided reference assistance and how scholars conducted research.

When I began my MA in 1981, writings by Elizabeth Gaskell, like those of all authors, were accessed by reading versions printed on paper or listening to versions recorded on audio tapes. Biographies, bibliographies and critical analysis (books, book chapters, and journal articles) were similarly still being published in paper. At the same time, however, researchers interested in identifying 'new' sources on Gaskell found themselves having to straddle two worlds. To locate literary criticism, they were dependent on both traditional paper indexes such as the *Annual Bibliography of English Language and Literature*, the *Year's Work in English Studies* and the Modern Language Association's *Annual Bibliography* as well as a core of new bibliographic databases that were rapidly becoming standard tools for research. Some of these research tools had paper equivalents while others 'lived' only in the online world. The challenge for scholars was made more complex because subscribing to and even accessing the bibliographic databases was costly. Unfortunately, this transformation of *how* research was conducted coincided with an economic slump that challenged libraries' ability to afford the new technology that was transforming research. Both libraries and individual scholars found themselves

challenged by the fiscal realities of this 'brave new world' of electronic access to information. And then came the Internet!

While the history of the Internet reaches back to the post-Sputnik era of the early 1960s, its impact on scholarly research didn't really begin to be broadly felt until the 1990s. The blend of computer technology, the concept of a personal computer on every desk, and an ever-growing number of 'websites' that included scholarly information, popular information, and business information combined to dramatically change both the volume and the nature of information readily available on Elizabeth Gaskell. Just as technological advances in Gaskell's lifetime had both positive and negative qualities, so too the technological advances in our time, most notably the Internet, have both positive and negative qualities.

In 2003 at the Gaskell Conference at Durham, I made a presentation profiling 'A Decade of Gaskell Scholarship, 1992-2001.' In that talk, I reported that conducting a simple keyword search of "Elizabeth Gaskell" on the Internet using several different search engines generated between 6,856 and 34,118 'hits'. By the time I reported on patterns of scholarship from 2002-2007 at the Canterbury Conference in 2007, these numbers had jumped from 67,400 to 309,000. Today, that same search generated between some 556,000 and 1,020,000 'hits'. Following the links takes one to a wide range of reputable information sources: Gaskell's works themselves, plot summaries, biographies, photographs, literary criticism, conference presentations, offerings of thousands of bookstores, announcements of completed theses and dissertations focusing on Gaskell, and vita for faculty teaching courses that include works by Gaskell or writing on Gaskell. Most recently, there has been an infusion of thousands of Gaskell-related 'blogs', online diaries that either discuss or briefly comment on Gaskell or on individual works by her. To date, virtually none of these are devoted exclusively to Gaskell. Some of these are created by major literary scholars; most by a wide range of individual enthusiasts: high school students, college students or adults reading Gaskell for the first time or viewing one of the BBC dramatisations of *Cranford*, *North and South* or *Wives and Daughters*.

As an academic librarian (albeit retired) and a Gaskell bibliographer (still active) who maintains my own website only partially devoted to Elizabeth Gaskell (<http://www.nancyweyant.com>), I spend a significant amount of time tracking Gaskell's presence on the Internet. It has allowed me to identify new Gaskell scholars and Gaskell enthusiasts from over twenty-five countries. It has helped me learn of works in progress or new publications by faculty who post their vitas on their college's or university's websites. It has helped me identify in a timely way new books issued by the publishers most prominent in Gaskell scholarship by regularly checking publishers' websites. The Internet, in short, has complemented the electronic databases available to me that give me access to the more traditional form of scholarly publishing: journal articles, book chapters and books, enhancing my ability to identify more scholarship devoted to Elizabeth Gaskell.



**Chairman Ann O'Brien and Secretary Pam Griffiths  
enjoy lunch together at the Knutsford meeting, 27 April 2011**



**Conference outing to the Hospital of St. Cross, Winchester, 23 July 2011**



**Samuel Johnson  
looks down on  
Gaskell Society  
members et al. at  
ALS Lichfield, May  
2011**



**Wedding Day  
for Mr. & Mrs. Dabbs, 1952  
(N.B. Veil belonging to ECG)**



**Mrs. Dabbs with Mrs. Gaskell  
at the Portico Library, April 2010**

Disturbingly, however, the Internet can also take one to hundreds of web sites that **sell** term papers. YES - one can now purchase book reports, term papers, theses, dissertation proposals and EVEN entire dissertations on the works of Elizabeth Gaskell. Some of these businesses soften their sales pitch with the spurious suggestion that buying one of their well-written papers will help you write a better paper on your own. (RIGHT!) Others are more forthright. These entrepreneurs use phrases such as "Written by our experienced writers", describing their "product" as "high-quality, custom written and research-based term papers" while claiming to employ "writers holding PhD and Master's degrees, along with writing experience of no less than 25 years, to work upon your term papers." Another posts this claim: "For nearly a decade, we've written hundreds of doctoral-level thesis papers and dissertations for research - 24 hours a day, 7 days a week - on incredibly intricate topics. Our 'Elizabeth Gaskell' researchers are highly-educated specialists with impeccable research and writing skills who have vast experience in preparing doctoral-level research materials. Equipped with proper tools, statistical software, and sources of reference, we write dissertations and theses that are one-of-a-kind, innovative, accurate, and up-to-date. In addition to regular libraries, our professional researchers have access to online, member-only research libraries that contain millions of books, journals, periodicals, magazines, and vast information on every conceivable 'Elizabeth Gaskell' subject. And remember, we can research ANY topic, of ANY length, at ANY level, for virtually ANY delivery date - guaranteed!" The cost of these term paper mills vary but the one that specializes in theses and dissertations has a rate of "only" \$18/page IF they can have more than 30 days to write it. If you need a paper no longer than 15 pages, you can have it in 24 hours for \$35/page. This same site talks about its "respect for the customer" and its "academic integrity". Having attended a college with an honour code and having applied that concept to all aspects of my life, I find myself bristling at this latter phrase. Clearly they are comfortable passing the concept of academic responsibility on to the "respected customer". I acknowledge that I am a bit of an academic elitist. I also am not naïve. Term papers have been bought, sold and recycled on college campuses for decades. Nonetheless, I am saddened by the blatant abuse of the academic process in general and by Gaskell's inclusion in particular. \*

Elizabeth Gaskell embraced the positive aspects of the scientific and technological developments of her day while exposing the negative fallout from those developments. I am certain she would similarly embrace the way in which the Internet has united both scholars and enthusiasts interested in her life and writings (albeit with some embarrassment) and adapt her strong communication skills to the Internet by maintaining her own 'blog'. Similarly, I am certain she would be disturbed by this entrepreneurial theft of her literary legacy that circumvents the integrity of the educational system. I am certain she would apply her skills as a teller of stories and write to expose this negative aspect of the Internet.

\* Much of this paragraph was included in my newsletter, posted through my website.

## A Dear Good Valuable Friend

Christine Lingard

Elizabeth Gaskell is often credited with being one of the first women writers to successfully combine a career with a full home life. She wrote of the problems of juggling the demands of a minister's wife, parochial work and mother to four daughters, with her writing. Cynics would point out that none of this would have been possible without a houseful of servants. The 1861 census for 46 Plymouth Grove lists a lady's maid, a waiter and three other housemaids. There would normally have been a cook as well but the post was vacant at the time - not an unusual occurrence - her letters reveal a number of occasions when this was the case. The family also made use of an outdoor man to look after the animals and garden, and a woman came in to do the laundry.

There was certainly chaos when the status quo was upset. Once, when the nurse was in London supervising Marianne on a shopping expedition, one of the maids was on compassionate leave, visitors were expected and the washerwoman hadn't turned up, she wrote in desperation to her daughter:

*Oh dear! poteration [confusion] take the house. - Moreover we can't get a bit of butter; - our butter woman won't come, why we can't make out. Please bring us some butter from London - really, I mean it;... Tell Hearn all her wits are wanted in this desolate, servantless, headless, washerwomanless, company full household. [L478].*

Normally the house ran like clockwork. The credit for this lay with the nurse - the redoubtable Hearn. (Use of surname was indicative of rank and prestige in the hierarchy of servants). Ann Hearn first came to work for the Gaskells about 1842, the time when they moved to Upper Rumford Street and was initially employed as a nursemaid to the three youngest children but took on more general duties when they older. It was Hearn who registered her mistress's death, the male members having returned to Manchester to break the sad news to her husband.

*She is a dear good valuable friend [L570] Gaskell wrote in 1865, and in 1858:*

*Hearn is going to... Venice, Yes! Our own old dear English Hearn!... She has had a good number of distressing events in her family, & lost all her savings during this past year, & she had been but in languid spirits, which we have been afraid were affecting her health. A week or two ago Meta was going sketching, & took Hearn to sit with her; not as chaperone, for we are too primitive here to require such articles, - but by way of giving Hearn a little fresh air, & merry talk. Meta came in, & said 'Do you know Mama the summit of Hearn's ambition is to go to Paris...there came a letter from a very good kind, & also very wealthy lady in Manchester, asking me if I could recommend her a respectable lady's maid for travelling...She [Hearn] quite jumped at the idea, - 'if we could but spare her.' [L401]*

And so Hearn went to Europe. She later accompanied the family on their second visit to Heidelberg, as well as many trips in this country. In the early years she slept with the babies, and could be trusted to take them without their parents to places such as to Bowdon. She was also responsible for the training and recruitment of the other servants. Her duties were varied:

*[Hearn] and Elliott talk of going over to see A Cheshire someday soon; if they can find a gap of time between pig-killing, painting & visitors [L415].*

When the eldest daughter Marianne was nominally left in charge while mother was away, she was always expected to consult Hearn, who was certainly confident enough to express her own opinion on the girls:

*Hearn holds up her hands over yr green frock, and proposes you should be dressed in leather. [L117].*

But who was this treasure? How did she come to work for the family? Gaskell, not for the first time, is contradictory. When in 1859 Hearn took an extended holiday in the West Country Gaskell twice named Devonshire as her native shire but on other occasions said that she came from Cornwall. For instance when trying to trace the words of the traditional Cornish ballad 'But Forty thousand Cornish boys will know the reason why':

*One of our servants, who comes from Cornwall, tells me it was a much longer song when she used to hear it from the miners in her youth. She lived near Penryn, which is the Trelawny country. [L125].*

Even her death has proved hard to track down. The General Register Office Index has transcribed her age as 51 rather than 81. She died in a lodging house in Buxton in January 1892, probably undertaking treatment at the spa. Her will gives her address as 84 Plymouth Grove and Meta and Julia Gaskell as her executors (replacing her first choice - their brother-in-law, Charles Crompton, who had died in the interim). She left a remarkable £413, including books, jewellery and trinkets.

Census and parish records confirm that she was baptised in Bodmin in February 1812 the daughter of William Hearn and Mary Hocking, who came from the nearby village of Cardinham. Her father was a publican and probably died at the age of 42 in 1822 when Ann was 12. On the 1841 census Mary Hearn is listed as a nurse at Calleynough Farm on the outskirts of Cardinham. The only Ann Hearn listed on that census was a laundress in Bodmin, but that person is five years younger than one would expect. (Ages on the 1841 census are rounded to the nearest 5 years.) I cannot explain the reference to Penryn, which is nowhere near Bodmin. Her cousin Elizabeth Isabella Hocking was in service at Littleham, near Exmouth, Devon, which would probably account for the confusion about her native shire. It is not impossible that she left Cornwall to be with her sister.

This sister, Elizabeth Hocking, was at least twelve years her senior, and an illegitimate daughter of her mother. She married John Ogle Curtis, from Boston, Lincolnshire,

at St. Pancras' church London, in 1825. Their first child, John, was born the following year and baptised at Hinde Street Wesleyan Chapel, Manchester Square. By 1830 they were living in Mansfield, Nottinghamshire where two daughters Mary (who probably died in childhood) and Elizabeth were born. In 1836 Curtis was appointed headmaster of the new school opened by the Unitarians in Lower Mosley Street, Manchester. This was the year when Charles, son of Rev John Gooch Robberds, senior minister at Cross Street Chapel, took up his first position as a Unitarian minister in Mansfield. Is this just a coincidence or did Mr Curtis recommend the position to him? Alternatively, he may have been the one who recommended Mr Curtis to his father.

Another daughter, Sarah, was born in Manchester and by the end of the 1840s Mary Hearn had also come to live with the Curtises at White Street in the suburb of Hulme, about a mile from Upper Rumford Street where the Gaskells were still living. Gaskell made enquiries about her health as early as 1848. By February 1850 she was described as dying, and Hearn had already had three weeks leave to help nurse her. The household was consequently 'at sixes and sevens' in her absence. Mrs Hearn died on 13th April at the age of 72. The cause was bronchitis. Hearn returned to work and immersed herself in the move to Plymouth Grove.

Mr Curtis was a respected figure in the Unitarian community. His school replaced the crowded old schoolrooms in the cellar of Lower Mosley Chapel. Only thirty children attended his first class. By 1847 there were four hundred pupils, both girls and boys, in the school, each paying 4 pence a week. He was also paid an extra £10 a year to establish a Sunday School, employing a number of volunteer teachers including Gaskell herself, who taught the children in her own home. He also started evening classes for adults, a forerunner of Mechanics Institutes, and taught English (he was particularly interested in the English language and the origin of words), Geography and Drawing himself. A number of his pupils underwent training as teachers.

When one of the Gaskell's servants was seduced it was Mr Curtis who was sent to ask the father to marry her. Given his own wife's origins he would have been a sympathetic choice for the task. We can only speculate how much all this fed into the novel *Ruth*. In 1857 he succumbed to the same disease as his mother-in-law and had to take several periods of leave. He went to St. Bees in Cumberland in October but died at the age of 55 the following month. William Gaskell conducted the funeral service. (Curiously Letter 136a in which Gaskell described a visit to Seascale in Cumberland has been speculatively dated as October 1857.) This is one of Hearn's family tragedies that Gaskell alluded to. Others included the death in 1855 of her uncle Richard Hocking who ran a grocer's shop opposite Bodmin's ancient parish church, and his son in 1858.

There are other occurrences of the name Curtis in Gaskell's Letters and it is now possible to clarify some of these and rectify some errors. In Letter 119, dated Tuesday Ap 14. Gaskell wrote:



*I received a letter yesterday from Mrs John Curtis (formerly Miss Crossley) at Heidelberg, in great anxiety as to the fate of three or four little orphan children of her cousin, Mr Robert Salter, who was drowned in the Mersey near Cheadle about a fortnight ago...the relations, who, it seems, are justly incensed by Mr Robert Salter's conduct.*

She was worried that the children may have to go into a workhouse. This letter has been dated as 1852 on the grounds that 14 April was a Tuesday in that year. The Stockport Advertiser reported the inquest in 1856 when the 14th was a Monday. Who hasn't made such an error with dates? An open verdict was recorded on Salter, a civil engineer. The nature of his misconduct remains a mystery. What is now known is that John Curtis was Hearn's nephew, born in London. He married Ann Crossley at Bolton register office in 1849, and may have been a cashier, living near his father in 1851. Ann is recorded as a widow in 1861, though I have not been able to verify the date of her husband's death. It may have taken place abroad.

It is also now possible to identify this Mrs Curtis with the Annie Curtis mentioned in Further Letters. In 1857 Gaskell was contacted by the German lexicographer, Jacob Grimm, (of folk tale fame). Gaskell wrote in reply and it was Annie Curtis whom she asked to translate the letter into German. Annie was a governess and as Gaskell's letter proves, had spent time in Heidelberg. The Curtises were known to the Schwabes, a family of wealthy German-born calico printers, who had relations in that city. In 1861 Annie was living with her mother-in-law and sisters-in-law in Hulme.

Hearn spent the rest of her life at Plymouth Grove. By the time of her death she had little family of her own. Her sister had died in 1882 at the home of her unmarried daughter Elizabeth, who ran a school in Birkdale, near Southport. Her other niece Sarah, married Frank Taylor, a member of a Bolton cotton spinning family, a leading Unitarian and later a magistrate, famous in the town for the promotion of education. Sarah also died childless in 1889, as did her cousin Elizabeth. Despite her frequent bouts of depression she stayed with the Gaskells and they became her family. Though we may never know her full story, Ann Hearn played a not insignificant part in the Gaskell's story, and deserves to be recognised.

*Further reading:*

*Cross Street Chapel Schools, Manchester, 1734-1942, by Lester Burney, 1977.*

*Letters of Mrs Gaskell, edited by J.A.V. Chapple and Arthur Pollard, 1997 edition. (letter numbers quoted in square brackets).*

*Further letters of Mrs Gaskell edited by John Chapple & Alan Shelston, 2000.*

## Two Encounters with ECG

Doreen Pleydell

I was born and brought up in a London suburb. At the age of 11, because I did not pass the scholarship exam, I attended a Central School, halfway between an elementary and a grammar school. There we had an inspiring English teacher who instilled in me a love literature which as lasted all my life.

Our first 'set book' was *Cranford* and immediately I was transported to a world so different from that of dull Ilford where I lived. I loved all the quirky characters, the small society and above all, the kindness of people one to another. I wished with all my heart that I could live in such a place.

Later I read many essays, articles about Mrs. Gaskell, but no actual novels. I knew of course that Knutsford was the real Cranford, but what an incredible piece of good fortune to find myself actually living in the town of my dreams!

This was many years later after the war years, marriage, children and many moves around the country. After fifty years of living in Knutsford I can still look at it through rose-coloured spectacles. Yes, I know the traffic is horrendous, the roads and pavements badly maintained, the aircraft noise almost insupportable - I could go on. If you believe that a place has a spirit, then Knutsford has a spirit of kindness. Mrs. Gaskell felt it - not in the bricks and mortar, but the way people look out for each other, are kind to each other - or so I've always found. The only time I'll leave it, I hope, is when I'm carried out in a wooden box!

The second, very brief, encounter with ECG was in Florence, many years ago. John and I were looking round the beautiful Uffizi art gallery, but it's possible to get cultural indigestion (and besides, my feet were hurting!). I was resting my weary limbs in the café when three people entered and asked if they might join me - husband, wife and their son. As they were carrying an English guidebook, I started to talk to them in English. They weren't British but Swedish and ran a bookshop in a provincial town in Sweden. They told me they were very keen on Victorian literature, profoundly hoped they could go one day to the Lake District (for Wordsworth) and to Haworth, as they much admired the Brontës. "Ah" I exclaimed, "then possibly you'll have heard of Elizabeth Gaskell, who wrote *The Life of Charlotte Brontë*."

"Yes indeed, *Cranford* is one of our favourite books. A new translation has just appeared called 'Cranford: an ideal village'". When I explained that I actually lived in Knutsford, they could hardly believe it and fell about my neck with delight. "To think" exclaimed the wife, "that we have met a lady who actually lives in Cranford." I tried to explain that Knutsford is no longer a "dear little country town". Nevertheless they continued to admire ME - I'd never been so flattered in my life!

We parted like old friends and wrote to each other once or twice but gradually lost touch. I still remember the Uffizi though, not for the pictures, but for that Brief Encounter.

## Happy 20th Birthday!

Fran Twinn

The London and SE Branch of the Gaskell Society is 20 years old this year: it was founded in 1991 by a small loyal group of 10 who wanted to consider, 'aspects of Mrs Gaskell's life and works that interested us individually'.

The first meetings took place at Francis Holland School close to Sloane Square thanks to another founding member, Jane Wilson, then Deputy Headmistress at the school. (Sadly, she has since died prematurely and as a group, we donated several volumes to the school library in her memory and as a token of gratitude.)

At the inaugural meeting of ten it was Dudley Barlow who graciously agreed to run the branch, and effortlessly and efficiently continued to do so for 12 years until he retired to Yorkshire in 2003. At the outset, when Francis Holland was not available, meetings were held in other venues. Olive Bridge offered hospitality in her delightful house close to Sloane Square but, on other occasions, the meetings became peripatetic. My abiding memory remains of a meeting on September 3rd 1994 which was held at the Central Baptist Church in Bloomsbury. I do not remember much about either the talk or the venue but because the rain was relentless and torrential I arrived soaked to the skin!! I shall never forget it but the weather that afternoon did not deter me, as I took over from Dudley in 2003 and continue to enjoy the quarterly meetings hugely.

Gradually over the 20 years the number of members has fluctuated but regularly there are over 20 at meetings and sometimes it can be over 30!! Of the founding members only Sylvia Burch remains a regular attendee. She is to be congratulated on her long standing loyalty to the branch and the society. Sadly death, and removals to other parts of the country, have taken their toll on those others who were there at the first meeting. However, Francis Holland has become the regular venue where we are made very welcome by the headmistress and looked after royally by the caretaker; we are all very thankful for this central and well-connected location.

Over the years the informal lunches somewhere in the vicinity before the meeting have been replaced by a sandwich lunch at the school followed by tea and cake after the formal part of the afternoon. Usually the meetings take the form of a talk by a visiting speaker, which is sometimes illuminated by slides, or now, by PowerPoint presentations; on occasions we have a led discussion about one of Gaskell's works but the focus of the afternoon is always an aspect of Gaskell's life or work in the tradition of the original aims of the founding group. Talks range from literary criticism of texts to aspects of Gaskell's life (a favourite with members) to places with which she was familiar and about which she wrote. For instance, we now know more about the plans for the future planting of the garden at Plymouth Grove; her web of friendships both here and across the Atlantic, more about Vernon

Lushington, her Cousin 'V'; the use of flowers in her writing and more about the relationship between *The Moorland Cottage* and *The Mill on the Floss*. These, and many other subjects, have been intellectually stimulating, entertaining and have enriched our knowledge of this great Victorian woman writer.

In addition there have been visits to Holybourne and Crix, a literary walk around Southwark and a summer tea party. The branch is flourishing; a bring and buy bookstall enables us to make modest but frequent contributions to The Gaskell House fund and it is to be hoped that we can continue to flourish for the next 20 years.

I should like to thank Dudley and all the founding members who had the foresight to recognise the need and potential for a branch of the Gaskell Society in this part of the world. We all appreciate the commitment and enthusiasm of those early members and, I hope, we can carry forward their approach into this century, 200 years after Gaskell's birth.

Thank you  
Elizabeth Williams

At our AGM in April, I retired as Chairman of The Gaskell Society, and was overwhelmed to be presented with a magnificent Victorian pendant. It's a moonstone, surrounded by amethysts and seed pearls, and mounted in gold, with a gold chain. As if this wasn't enough, I was also presented with a copy of Walter E. Smith's bibliographical catalogue of early editions of Elizabeth Gaskell's writing, which enables me to dream of acquiring a library of early editions. I don't feel that my thanks on the occasion were adequate (I was so stunned) and would therefore like to thank you all very much indeed for such wonderful generosity. I was informed that I could always exchange the pendant for another one, but nothing would persuade me to do that. It's far too lovely. That and the book are two perfect gifts.

The editor has asked me to write about my experiences as Chairman in the last six years, but I have problems because so much happened in that time. The last three years in particular were hectic, but I think that we can all be proud of what we achieved - the many meetings, the special events, the conferences and the never-to-be-forgotten commemorative event at Westminster Abbey in 2010.

Much of this activity owed its inspiration to Joan. Having nourished the society from its birth, she was always eager to see us doing more and more, and her ambition and hard work were the driving forces behind many of our finer moments. She seemed to have the same sort of energy as Elizabeth Gaskell (maybe it's something in the water in Knutsford) and never spared herself in organising events and outings for members. Planning events with Joan was always exciting - the challenge was to persuade her that you can't fit six events and 200 miles of travel



into one day. She commanded immense personal loyalty, and although there were occasions when the committee decided that they just couldn't do any more, these were few. So when, in the middle of our most hectic year ever, that of Elizabeth Gaskell's bicentenary, it became obvious that Joan was very ill, many of us were concerned for the society. How could we manage without Joan?

The simple answer is that we did. I'm not sure how, but somehow we carried on, and all the planned events happened. This was partly because we were inspired by our memories of Joan, but also because we had a determined and hard-working committee, and enthusiastic and loyal members. The bicentenary events all happened and there were no major disasters. This year's conference was as well-attended and successful as ever, and it was a delight to see a mixture of old friends with those who had never attended a conference before, all getting on well with each other. It was a very positive indication of our ability to survive.

We shouldn't be complacent however - all societies are having problems finding new recruits (especially active ones) and we are no exception. So if you think that you can help in any way, please let us know. We need a new treasurer, and a new minutes' secretary. I was fortunate in the level of support I received, and Ann O'Brien, our new Chairman, is going to need that same level of support. I was very lucky in the people I worked with, and I was continually struck by what very nice people our members are. So I shall end as I began, with a very big thank you to you all. And please carry on helping!

## Friends of Plymouth Grove: Update

Janet Allan

### The Roof

Many of you will have heard about the theft from our new lead-covered roof, which was discovered by two members of the Friends who found water running down the stairs. Very prompt action was taken and we now have a watertight temporary covering of roofing-felt, which hopefully will last until we raise the major funding to put on a (unstealable) steel roof. Generous donations have helped so we are grateful to everyone for this.

### The Lottery Application

We are busy putting together the full application to the Heritage Lottery Fund, having completed the first stage of reports so that an accurate costing can be made. You can see these reports at the house. They include detailed recommendations on the Gaskells' paint colours, wallpapers, furnishing, garden layout, the restoration and conversion of the entire house and opening it up to the public.

Before this becomes a reality we need to raise over 2.5 million - hopefully over 2 million from the Lottery and £500,000 from ourselves. We are halfway to this

target, with £221,000 already promised. Applications for £200,000 more in the pipeline (no guarantee we will get these however!). You can help by sponsoring a length of the beautiful cornice, a step on the Gaskells' front stairs the restoration of a newly-discovered flagstone or some of the roof.

### Friends' Activities

As always the Friends have been very busy not only with Open Days but with specialist groups and events. Our youngest recruit is 7-year-old Noah, who with other children from the Grove Village Improvement Team helped to do a grand clearance of the garden and plant the myriad pots of flowers which now stand at each side of the front steps. One of our oldest visitors was a 82-year-old from Texas, on a tailor-made literary tour. She had read many of Gaskell's books and enjoyed an afternoon tea in the dining room. We have had a very successful William Gaskell exhibition, researched and created by students from MMU, and an excellent tour of Victorian paintings at Manchester Art Gallery. Our enchanting Summer Soirée was much enjoyed, and our trip to Oakwell Hall and the Red House gave a fascinating insight into an early nineteenth-century house and garden.

### Requests

We are still collecting china teasetts, small teapots and embroidered tablecloths. Give them a good home! We also need rugs in traditional designs and an old-fashioned carpet sweeper.

We have a reputation for good food and would like to produce our own cookbook. Please send your recipes to Joss Hill on [josshattie62@btinternet.com](mailto:josshattie62@btinternet.com)

### Autumn Events

As this Newsletter goes to press we are still putting the final touches to our programme, including booking details. However please note the following in your diary.

**Open Days:** (admission £1): 12pm - 4pm, on Sundays - **4 September, 2 October, 6 November and 4 December.**

**Heritage Open Days:** (admission free) 12pm - 4pm **Saturday and Sunday, 10 and 11 September.** Volunteers needed! Please contact Joss 0161 248 6226.

**Greenheys Development Thursday 29 September (THE birthday!):** Mosscares Housing are officially opening their 65-home estate, including Elizabeth Gaskell Square and Mary Barton Fields. 84 Plymouth Grove will also be open on that day - details to follow.

**Musical Delights from Opus 5: Friday 7 October 7pm.** A fundraising concert at Alderley Edge Methodist Chapel (tickets £10).

**Tour of Ford Madox Brown Exhibition at Manchester Art Gallery:** 11.30 am, Wednesday 2 November, lead by the curator Julian Treuherz (cost £8 plus exhibition entry of £8/£6 unless you are a Friend of the gallery)

**Christmas event, Saturday 10 December:** A Christmas Carol.

## Book Notes

Christine Lingard

Cozzi, Annette, Assistant Professor of Humanities and Cultural Studies at the University of South Florida. *The discourses of food in nineteenth-century British fiction*. Palgrave Macmillan, £52.50.

Readings of discourses about food in a wide range of sources, from Victorian novels by authors such as Dickens, Gaskell, Disraeli and Hardy to parliamentary speeches, royal proclamations, and Amendment Acts. It considers the cultural politics and poetics of food in relation to issues of race, class, gender, regionalism, urbanisation, colonialism, and imperialism in order to discover how national identity is constructed.

Freedgood, Elaine, Professor of English at New York University. *The ideas in things: fugitive meaning in the Victorian novel*. University of Chicago Press, originally published in 2006 and now reissued in paperback, £19.50.

Discusses the hidden darker meaning of familiar objects in three novels Charlotte Brontë's *Jane Eyre*, Elizabeth Gaskell's *Mary Barton*, and Charles Dickens' *Great Expectations*.

Marroni, Professor Francesco, Vice President of the Gaskell Society. *Victorian disharmonies: a reconsideration of nineteenth-century English fiction*; translated from the Italian - *Disarmonie vittoriane*. John Cabot University Press: distributed by University of Delaware Press, £31.50.

A collection of literary essays including *Cousin Phillis*: illness as language, The cursed hearth: desire and deceit in the short stories of Elizabeth Gaskell. There are also essays on Dickens' *A tale of two cities*: and the guillotine, Wilkie Collins, George Gissing, and Thomas Hardy's *Jude the obscure*.

Fernandez, Jean. *Victorian servants, class, and the politics of literacy*. Routledge studies in nineteenth-century literature, University of Maryland, £80. First published 2009.

Using a wide range of fiction and non-fictional sources including diaries and autobiographies concerning servants this book discusses the development of mass literacy and its affect on class structure. Books discussed include Mary

Wollstonecraft's *Maria, or, The wrongs of woman*; Catherine Crowe's *Susan Hopley, or, The adventures of a maid servant*; Emily Brontë's *Wuthering Heights*; Elizabeth Gaskell's *The old nurse's story*; Wilkie Collins' *The moonstone*; and R.L. Stevenson's *The strange case of Dr. Jekyll and Mr. Hyde*.

*The widow and wedlock novels of Frances Trollope* general editor, Brenda Ayres Pickering & Chatto, the collected novels of the early nineteenth novelist who is often said to have influenced Elizabeth Gaskell, by the publisher of her own collected works.

*Mary Barton*; Cover to Cover, read by Juliet Stevenson, £22. Unabridged audio recording on 14 CDs, released in July.

## Alliance of Literary Societies AGM 2011

May 21st - 22nd

Hosted by The Samuel Johnson Society, Lichfield

Lynda Stephens

The venue for this year's AGM and literary weekend was the Cathedral city of Lichfield, birthplace of the lexicographer, author and wit, Dr Samuel Johnson who was born in 1709.

When we arrived at the Guildhall we were greeted by Marty Smith of the Johnson Society who directed us up to the oak-wainscoted hall. Delegates were busy setting up their author stalls with promotion leaflets and books for sale or just for reference. Around 30 societies were represented by their enthusiastic advocates. These included Gaskell, Dickens, Jeffries, Beddoes, Walmsley, Thirkell, Bennett, Carroll, Caldicott, Brontë, Pym, Sassoon, Trollope, Larkin, Clare, Austen and more.

We saved our seats by putting some belongings on them only to find our friends from the Arnold Bennett Society sitting there on our return - we didn't react as Samuel Johnson did on his visit - he left his seat for a moment and returned to discover someone had taken it. Without a word, he picked up the chair and its occupant, threw them into the pit of the theatre and went on calmly watching the performance. We just sat on the row behind!

The meeting was preceded by a welcome from the Mayor and then an introduction to the Johnson Society by their Chairman, Peter Barrett.

The new ALS President, Jenny Uglow was welcomed. There were two changes to the committee: Janet Kennerley resigned and Janet Allan was elected.

The subject of the next issue of the ALS Journal is 'Fashion in Literature'. Anyone considering writing a piece should contact Linda Curry at [l.j.curry@bham.ac.uk](mailto:l.j.curry@bham.ac.uk).

We enjoyed a buffet lunch in the hall, meeting old friends and new before going on a guided tour of Philip Larkin's Lichfield with Don Lee of the Larkin Society.

At 6pm there was a reception; we had a glass of wine and we met up with members of the Johnson Society, who entertained us with readings at the Birthplace Museum and bookshop. We had a photo session with the Town Crier who doubles as Samuel Johnson and then left for our dinner venue.

After an excellent meal Jenny Uglow talked about the importance and enjoyment of bringing the different societies together and we were treated to readings by several of our party, and it was perfectly ended by Janet Kennerley of the Gaskell Society reading from the first chapter of *Cranford* in which Captain Brown championed Dickens and Miss Jenkyns preferred Dr. Johnson!

At 11am on Sunday we met again for a very interesting tour of the Birthplace Museum by local playwright, David Titley. After lunch we went to the Cathedral Close and the Bishops Palace, which now houses the Cathedral School, and here we heard about the life of the poet Anna Seward.

Afternoon tea was served at Chapters, and we all said our 'goodbyes' and promised to meet up again next year on the 12th May in Nottingham, when the AGM will be hosted by the Dickens Fellowship.

## Summer Evening Meetings of The Gaskell Society in Knutsford

May & June 2011  
Janet Kennerley

During May and June we held two summer evening meetings at Brook Street Unitarian Chapel Schoolroom. These proved popular. Members and guests enjoyed reading and listening to excerpts from Gaskell's works and letters. During the interval, when drinks and light refreshments were served, we were able to view the recently opened Upper Gaskell Room. This contains display panels of 'Gaskell's Cheshire' from last year's Bicentenary event at Tatton Park, and other items of interest reflecting her childhood in Knutsford. During May, some members and guests were able to look round the old Unitarian Chapel, thanks to Rev Jean Bradley bringing her key. At the later meeting, members were able to see the newly laid memorial stone to Joan Leach, now at the foot of Elizabeth Gaskell's grave, in the beautiful garden surroundings.

My thanks to all who participated and assisted in any way, especially to Brook Street Chapel members for allowing us to use their splendid facilities.

There will be a third and final evening meeting for this year at Brook Street on Wednesday 14th September at 7.15pm with the theme 'Crime, Cops and Courts' in Mrs Gaskell's writing. Please do come along with a suitable reading or just listen if you prefer. For catering purposes, it would be helpful if you would let me know beforehand if you will be attending - email: [janetkennerley@hotmail.com](mailto:janetkennerley@hotmail.com) or telephone: 01477 571525.

## Forthcoming Events

### Autumn Meeting to be held at Knutsford Methodist Church 24 September 2011:

- 10.15 Coffee
- 11.00 Dr. Craig Thornber: Uncle Peter and Cousin Henry
- 14.00 Professor James Drife: A Gynaecologist looks at Mrs. Gaskell (Joan Leach Memorial Lecture)

**25 September 2011:** 11.00 Harvest Festival at Brook Street Chapel, Knutsford, preceded by laying of wreath at Gaskell grave.

## AGM

**AGM 14 April 2012:** Cross Street Unitarian Church, Manchester

## The Gaskell Society South-West

Our summer social event will be held on Sunday, **the 4th of September**, at Boyd and Elizabeth's home, 14 Vellore Lane, Bath. It will begin at 12.30 and will be a 'bring and share' lunch. Veronica Trenchard will organise arrangements as to what to bring, and members are welcome to invite a friend or partner.

Our next meeting will be held on **Saturday, 15th October**, at 2.30 pm at BRLSI, Queen Square, Bath. Elizabeth Williams, past president of the Gaskell Society, will speak to us on Elizabeth Gaskell and Dickens' *Household Words*. We look forward to welcoming her back to Bath. The event will cost £2 to members of BRLSI and the Gaskell Society, £4 to all others. Refreshments will be available for an extra £1.

Our discussion groups will again be held in February and March next year. Details will be available closer to the time.

**Any queries to Elizabeth Schlenther, 14 Vellore Lane, Bath, BA2 6JQ, Tel: 01225 331763.**

## London and South-East Group

As usual there are four meetings this year. In November, instead of the usual meeting we shall join King's College, London for a Gaskell Day conference.

### **Saturday, 10th September.**

The Gospel according to Gaskell: The Ideal family as flawed: a father's sin in *Lizzie Leigh*. Tracy Vaughan.

### **Saturday, 12th November.**

Victorian Afterlives. A day conference at Kings College London KCL Strand Campus in The Council Room. 9.45am to about 4.30pm.  
£12.00 to include coffee lunch and tea.

### **Saturday, 11th February 2012.**

Science Liberality and Good Taste: The Manchester Botanic Garden and its founders. Dr Ann Brooks.

### **Saturday, 12th May 2012.**

Domestic Arts in *Mary Barton* and *North and South*. Alison Lundie.

The meetings will take place at Francis Holland School, Graham Terrace SW1.

- 2 minute walk from Sloane Square tube station (District and Circle Lines).
- 10 minute walk from Victoria.

The formal meeting begins at 2pm but you are welcome to join us for a sandwich lunch anytime from 12.45pm onwards. *Please ring the bell marked 'Reception' by the main door in Graham Terrace and someone will let you in.* After the talk, tea and cake.

In addition there is a Bring and Buy bookstall in aid of The Gaskell House, Plymouth Grove, Manchester. I would urge you to bring books in September please so we can refresh the stall.

You are warmly invited. We ask for a contribution of £5.00 for the afternoon to include everything.

### **Further details from:**

**Dr Fran Twinn, 85 Calton Ave, Dulwich, London SE21 7DF;**  
**phone 0208 693 3238. Email [frantwinn@aflex.net](mailto:frantwinn@aflex.net)**

## The North-West Group

### **14 September, 7.15pm**

Brook Street Chapel: 'Crimes, Cops and Courts'

### **28 September**

To Warrington: Cairo St. Chapel, Art Gallery, Police Museum

Knutsford meetings are held at St. John's Church Rooms on the last Wednesday of the month. Buffet lunch available (£8) from 12.15pm.

We continue to study the short stories:

**26 October** Half a life-time ago

**30 November** Manchester Marriage

**11 January 2012** New Year lunch at The Cottons (on A50 just north of Knutsford)

Manchester Meetings: to be held at Cross Street Chapel on the 1st Tuesday of the month from October to March, excluding January. Lecture at 1pm.

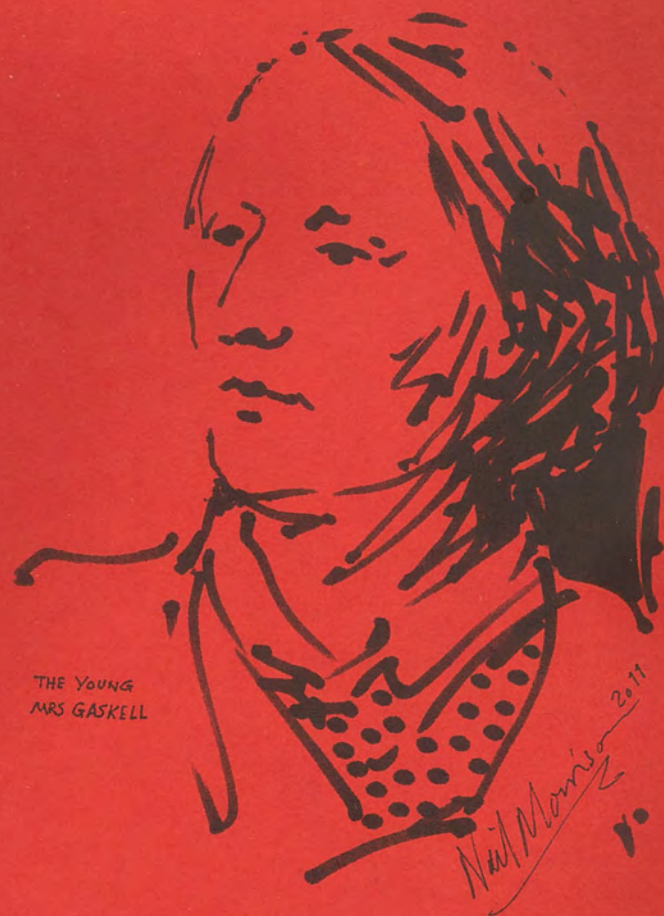
**4 October** Howard Gregg on Trollope

**1 November** Anita Fernandez-Young on Dickens

**6 December** Shirley Foster and Jo Pryke discuss The Moorland Cottage and The Mill on the Floss.



# The Gaskell Society



THE YOUNG  
MRS GASKELL

THE GASKELL SOCIETY HOME PAGE has all the latest information on meetings.  
<http://gaskellsociety.co.uk>

If you have any material or suggestions for future Newsletters, please contact Mrs. Helen Smith,  
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Telephone - 01565 632615 E-mail: [helenisabel@ntlworld.com](mailto:helenisabel@ntlworld.com)

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**Membership Secretary:** Miss C. Lingard, 5 Moran Crescent, Macclesfield SK11 8JJ

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## NEWSLETTER

Spring 2012 - Number 53



## Editor's Letter

Helen Smith

A very happy and healthy New Year to all our readers.

A number of matters must be mentioned in this letter. Firstly, Janet Allan has been awarded MBE (for services to Heritage in the North-West) in the recent UK New Year Honours List. Janet was Chair of The Gaskell Society (1999-2005). Janet was responsible for saving 84 Plymouth Grove from demolition. And Janet is the indomitable and indefatigable force behind the search for funding and refurbishing the Gaskell House.

We have not forgotten dear Joan (also MBE), whose ashes now rest at the foot of the Gaskell grave. A young crab apple tree (*malus evereste*: with white blossom in May, followed by yellow fruits in autumn) flourishes as a constant reminder of her at the former council offices on Toft Road in Knutsford. The Joan Leach Memorial Lecture and the Joan Leach Essay Prize have now been instigated.

Mr. Dickens, Mrs. Gaskell's junior by 17 months, now enters his bicentenary year. Mr. Dickens ignited the literary career of the anonymous author of *Mary Barton* who was later to become his "dear Scheherazade". Our President Alan Shelston writes a moving tribute in the opening article of this newsletter, to the "Great Inimitable".

We are deeply indebted to Brian Williams for his sterling work as Treasurer of the Society for almost 20 years. Now, Alan Parker has agreed to take on these duties; and a recent member, Catherine Westwood is aiding us with the website. We are most grateful to both Alan and Catherine for undertaking this work.

We continue to welcome new members from home and abroad (including a young lady "with an unpronounceable name" from near Ekaterinburg). We thank Christine Lingard for continuing her outstanding work as Membership Secretary.

On 11 January of this year, 41 members from the North-West enjoyed a delicious New Year lunch at Cottons organised by Janet Kennerley. Afterwards we were entertained by soprano Rosie Lomas (who has recently graduated from the Guildhall School of Music) and pianist Katarzyna Kowalik (trained in Warsaw and now a post-grad at the Guildhall in London) in a recital of Lieder and arias by Haydn, Mozart, Beethoven and Schumann. Rosie, unaccompanied (but in tune and in time!), sang "Jock o' Hazeldean" (recalling the humorous incident from Cranford) and "A North country maid up to London has strayed" (recalling how she has sometimes felt as a student in London). We wish Rosie and Katarzyna every success in their future careers in music.

Dates for diaries: AGM at Cross Street Unitarian Church, Manchester, on 14 April 2012

Autumn general meeting will be held in Knutsford on 29 September 2012.

Plans are shaping up for a trip to US 12-19 September 2012 (back in time for the 29th). Further details from Nancy Weyant, [sculpt02@ptd.net](mailto:sculpt02@ptd.net)

Work has begun on the next conference, 19-22 July 2013, to be held at Stratford Manor Hotel, a Q Hotel near Stratford-on-Avon, in Warwickshire, England.

I should like to thank all who have written for this Newsletter. Special thanks are due to James Drife and to Craig Thornber who delivered the lectures at our Autumn General Meeting in Knutsford on 24 September 2011 and who have now taken time and trouble to summarise their talks for the Newsletter.

Last and most certainly not least, we give our thanks to Rebecca Stuart for all her good work and meticulous care at Lithotech Print in Knutsford.

PS Deadline for the next Newsletter is 31 July 2012.

## Dickens Bicentenary

Alan Shelston

Where births and deaths, if not marriages, were concerned, the second decade of the nineteenth century was a significant one for the Victorian novel. Elizabeth Gaskell was born in 1810, Dickens in 1812, Trollope in 1815, Charlotte Brontë in 1816 and Emily in 1818, George Eliot in 1819 and Anne Brontë in 1820. There must have been something in the water. The decade also saw the death, in 1817, of Jane Austen: things dying, and things newborn. The result in our century has been, and will continue to be, a sequence of bicentenaries. The memory of the Gaskell celebrations in 2010 is still fresh, and now we hand our Olympic torch to the Dickensians - appropriately, given the strong connection between these two great writers.

When I googled the Dickens Fellowship I found nearly fifty separate branches from all over the globe. The Fellowship was founded by a group of enthusiasts more than one hundred years ago. Mr Pickwick features in a number of their branch titles, for example that of the Pickwick Bicycle Club of Waterlooville, whom one hopes are still pedalling away. In the United States Dickens seems to be remembered in all of the principal cities. He would have appreciated the irony of that. He is memorialized all over the globe, and no doubt the various branches will be organizing their own events.

Perhaps Dickens would also have appreciated the irony of following Elizabeth Gaskell. He famously admired *Mary Barton* so much that he feasted its author in London and expressed his delight when she agreed to initiate his *Household Words* project with her story *Lizzie Leigh*. However he soon found her intractable to his editorial influence and 'there is no English writer whom I would more desire to enlist' was to become 'do something with Mrs Gaskell, if anything can be done with that lady.'

The story of this semi-parting of the ways is a complicated one. Dickens, for all the spontaneity of his energy and imagination was an extremely disciplined editor and novelist. He sustained his uninterrupted output over a quarter of a century. Word limits were there to be observed, narratives to be planned and deadlines to be met. Gaskell's methods were different. A beginner when he first recruited her she tended to work out her stories as she wrote them, and was unsuited to the serial processes that had made Dickens's career. Dickens was delighted with *Cranford* but *North and South*, which succeeded it in *Household Words*, was another matter altogether - for Dickens this was to be a novel exclusively devoted to its industrial theme, whereas for its author it became the story of the mental and emotional development of its heroine. She complained that he was not allowing her to conclude the novel as she wanted, and she effectively re-wrote the final chapters for the novel's publication in volume form. But there was also a personal dimension to Elizabeth's increasing distancing of herself from her sometime patron. Dickens was a difficult man to place socially and she was not the only Victorian to find him difficult. On one occasion she wrote of 'the splendour of Mr Dickens' house' and says that she has heard that 'the Dickens have bought a dinner-service of gold plate' - it was a joke of course, but there is at least a suggestion here that Dickens is getting above himself. Matters were made irreparably worse by Dickens's very public separation from his wife. It was at about this time that Elizabeth dismissed *Household Words* as a 'Dickensy' periodical and to one correspondent she seems to have deliberately misrepresented the number of times her work had appeared in it. Nevertheless she continued to write for *Household Words* and after its closure for its successor, *All the Year Round*. While her work did appear less frequently in her later years, overall she remained Dickens's most prolific and most valued contributor.

To happier things: independently of each other these two writers produced increasingly substantial work until the days of their deaths. Gaskell's *Sylvia's Lovers*, *Cousin Phillis* and *Wives and Daughters* are the culmination of her achievement. Times were changing as both of these great novelists died with their final works uncompleted. In particular provincial realism was replacing metropolitan melodramatics. The young Henry James, who wrote a very generous obituary review of *Wives and Daughters*, said of Dickens's late novels that '*Bleak House* was forced, *Little Dorrit* was laboured and [*Our Mutual Friend* was] dug out, as with a spade and pickaxe'. The *Cornhill* was taking precedence, socially as well as culturally, over Dickens's publications. Thomas Hardy, who would be the newcomer, was busy destroying the draft of his first novel *The Poor Man and the Lady* in 1868, three years after Gaskell's death and two before the death of Dickens. Just as their birth dates were close, so were the dates of their deaths. The light now shines through Elizabeth's commemoration window in Poets' Corner onto the simple black marble tomb with just his name and dates of his birth and death. A memorial service will be held this year on the first of these, 7th February 1812. For me Dickens is the Shakespeare of the novel. No-one else can equal the fecundity of his characterization and the energetic comic inventiveness and ultimate seriousness of purpose that he



embodies. It is so right that he, and the novelist whose achievements more than justified his early encouragement, for all their differences should be memorialized together.

Planning for the Dickens bicentenary is well under way. A major exhibition is currently being held at the Museum of London (9 December 2011 to 30 June 2012). (Details of this and other London events are given at [www.museumoflondon.org.uk/dickens](http://www.museumoflondon.org.uk/dickens)) The BBC has already produced a new adaptation of *Great Expectations*. Amongst the most ambitious of the projects is a plan originating in the University of Buckingham, under Professor John Drew there, to make all of *Household Words* and all of *All the Year Round* available online, free of charge to anyone who wishes to consult them. Details are available on [www.djo.org.uk](http://www.djo.org.uk) for anyone interested. This splendid project will be of great use to Dickensians and Gaskellians alike, given Gaskell's contributions to both journals: there could be nothing more fitting as a lasting tribute to the occasion.

## A gynaecologist looks at Mrs Gaskell

James Drife, MD FRCOG

**Emeritus professor of obstetrics and gynaecology, University of Leeds**

It is an honour to be invited to give the first Joan Leach Memorial Lecture to the Gaskell Society. If Mrs Leach is watching us now (as I'm sure she is) she may well be thinking that the title of this talk is an anachronism. The medical specialty of gynaecology did not exist in Mrs Gaskell's time and the Royal College of Obstetricians and Gynaecologists was founded 64 years after she died. Obstetrics, however, (the part of the specialty concerned with pregnancy and childbirth) is much older than gynaecology and there have been "man-midwives" in England since the 17th century. In this lecture I shall look at the world of Mrs Gaskell from the viewpoint of an obstetrician and gynaecologist, as my practice involved both parts of the specialty before I retired. I shall begin by looking at Mrs Gaskell's own medical history, then discuss medicine as it was in her time, with particular reference to women as patients and doctors, and end with some thoughts on how obstetric issues affected her work.

### **Mrs Gaskell's medical history**

Let us imagine that Mrs Gaskell has come to my clinic as a new patient. One of a doctor's privileges is being allowed to ask very personal questions. We divide them into sections - the past medical history, the family history, and so on - to build a picture of the patient's background. I shall begin with the obstetric history.

#### *Obstetric history*

Mrs Gaskell had seven full-term pregnancies, which today would qualify her as a "grande multipara" - a term applied to a woman who has had more than four babies. From the fourth birth onwards the risks of pregnancy steadily increase, and

a grande multipara is a high-risk patient. We do not know whether Mrs Gaskell had any miscarriages. Statistically, one in six pregnancies miscarries but on the other hand her known pregnancies followed one another in fairly quick succession. She married at the age of almost 22 and her first child, a stillborn daughter, was born about ten months later. Marianne, her oldest surviving daughter, was born a year after that, and her next daughter, Margaret, three years later. This was to be expected. In the era before contraception, the first pregnancy would occur soon after marriage, a stillbirth would quickly be followed by another conception, and when a live baby survived there would be a gap before the next pregnancy because breast-feeding suppresses ovulation and is a natural contraceptive.

Mrs Gaskell grieved for her first, lost daughter. In keeping with the custom of the time, the dead baby was not given a name. Attitudes towards stillbirth have changed only recently. When I was a young doctor our usual advice was denial: "Just have another baby". The Victorians lost many of their children and we tend to assume they became inured to it but Mrs Gaskell did not forget, although she appeared to put the event behind her. Jenny Uglow (to whose excellent biography I am indebted for its medical details) records a touching sonnet, "On Visiting the Grave of my Stillborn Little Girl", in which Mrs Gaskell makes it clear that the dead child had been laid beside her, not whisked away, and she had vowed to visit "thy small nameless grave" even when she had more children to look after.

Her fourth pregnancy also ended sadly, with the delivery of a son who died soon after birth. Little seems to be known about that pregnancy: presumably she busied herself with her two little daughters. Florence, her third daughter, was born five years after Margaret, and two years later she had a second son, William, who died when just over nine months old. Her grief must have been almost unbearable. Her husband, as is well known, suggested that she take up writing to help her cope. Two years later she had one more daughter, Julia, and then her childbearing came to an end. She was only 36 years old. Why did she never conceive again? There is no obvious medical reason for her sudden infertility, and the average age at menopause, then as now, was 50. (During the 20th century the age of puberty fell but the age of the menopause did not change.). Either the Gaskells began using some form of contraception or, more likely, they decided to cease marital relations. At an age when many a modern career woman is starting a family, Mrs Gaskell's childbearing years, and probably her sex life, were over.

#### *Family history*

Her decision to stop having babies before turning 40 may be linked to her family history. Her own mother married at 26 and had eight pregnancies in 14 years. Only two of the children - the first and the last - survived. Mrs Gaskell's brother was twelve years older than she was, and her mother died at the age of 40, when Elizabeth was only 13 months old. She was one of several authors who never knew their mothers: for example, Leo Tolstoy and Charlotte Brontë lost their mothers early in life. Virginia Woolf was 13 when her mother died, and I think bereavement

at the time of puberty leaves the deepest scars of all.

Mrs Gaskell's father died at the age of 59, after a stroke. Doctors pay attention to family history because many conditions have a genetic component, and of course Mrs Gaskell also died of cardiovascular disease, at the age of 55. Today when a check-up reveals high blood pressure, raised cholesterol or signs of angina, action can be taken and life may be prolonged by decades, but in the 19th century nothing could be done to prevent history repeating itself.

Her brother, John, died either abroad or at sea when he was aged 30. This has no medical significance for Mrs Gaskell but his last letter to her includes a premonition of his death and, as Jenny Uglow puts it, "the figure of the sailor in peril moves through her fiction with the power of a recurring dream".

#### *Medical history*

I think her medical history falls into three phases. Until the age of 38, she seems to have been very well. She must have been, to have seven pregnancies in 14 years and to combine the roles of mother and minister's wife. The second phase began in 1848, when during the preparations for publication of her first major work, *Mary Barton*, she fell dangerously ill with measles. Over the next five years she was often ill with migraine, neuralgia and lassitude, and used the common remedies of the age, including opiate drugs and rest at the seaside. She was advised to move south, away from the smoke of Manchester. Even in retrospect, it is hard to know how serious these illnesses were. Measles in adults can be lethal but does not have hidden long-term complications. Some of her symptoms were brought on by stress (for example, when she read critical reviews of *Ruth*) but some may have been the first signs of her fatal heart trouble.

In the last five years of her life we can detect a third phase. When she was 50 she was confined to bed for several weeks with severe bronchitis, and at 55, she broke down while visiting Paris. On returning she collapsed again and spent three weeks in bed, but she seemed to recover, and her death, from a heart attack, was sudden and unexpected. Even during this final phase, however, some of her illness seems to have been caused by stress - for example when she heard that Marianne was considering converting to Roman Catholicism. With hindsight, though, it seems that her health was beginning to fail some years before she died.

#### *Medicine in Mrs Gaskell's time*

By today's standards, medicine in the mid-nineteenth century was primitive. The contrast with the sophistication of the arts, particularly literature, is striking and slightly embarrassing to me as a doctor. Nevertheless, medicine was beginning to take major steps forward. *The Lancet* (the name means window as well as scalpel) was founded in 1823 and soon became a forum for free and frank exchanges among medical men (all doctors at that time were male). Among them was James Young Simpson, an obstetrician who happened to be an exact contemporary of Mrs Gaskell.

#### *A celebrated contemporary*

Simpson was born near Edinburgh in 1811 and died there, aged 59, of cardiovascular disease. He became professor of midwifery at the age of only 29 and a few years later, when he heard about the introduction of ether in America, he set out to discover a better anaesthetic agent. On the 4th November 1847 he and three colleagues inhaled chloroform, which famously put them to sleep. Four days later he administered it to a patient (a doctor's wife) in labour. She was delighted. Simpson's discovery transformed women's experience of childbirth but pain relief in labour was controversial and some denounced it as being against God's will. In 1853, however, John Snow administered chloroform to Queen Victoria for the delivery of her eighth child. In 1866 Simpson became the first Scottish doctor to be knighted and later his statue was erected in Princes Street. Like Mrs Gaskell, he had prodigious energy, was unafraid of controversy, achieved great success and became unwell in his fifties. Unlike her, he received official recognition: novelists in those days, whatever their gender, were not honoured by the state.

#### *Women in medicine*

I mentioned that all doctors were male but this began to change during Mrs Gaskell's lifetime. The story of the first modern-day female medical graduate is a bizarre one, as she masqueraded as a man throughout her life. James Miranda Barry was an innovative doctor, carried out the first caesarean section in the British Empire in 1826, and was discovered to be female only after her death. When Florence Nightingale heard this, she commented, "I should say she was the most hardened creature I ever met throughout the army".

The first woman on the British medical register was Elizabeth Blackwell, who had emigrated from Bristol with her family and in 1849 became the first woman to graduate in medicine in the USA. She returned to Britain when the Medical Register was being introduced in 1858, after which the General Medical Council changed the rules to prevent more women from registering. Then, in 1865 (the year of Mrs Gaskell's death) Elizabeth Garrett Anderson became the first woman to gain a medical qualification in Britain and was finally admitted to the Medical Register in 1876. Popular as well as determined, in 1908 she succeeded her husband as mayor of Aldeburgh, becoming England's first woman mayor.

Mrs Gaskell was of course aware of the various political campaigns for women's rights but gave them, in Jenny Uglow's words, only "qualified support". She encouraged her daughter Margaret to become a nurse but did not get involved in that early campaign for women to be accepted into the medical profession: it did not become a major battle until long after she died.

#### *Women as patients*

Medical attitudes to women patients were equally unenlightened but in the first half of the 19th century there was little that doctors could offer male or female patients. During Mrs Gaskell's lifetime effective treatment did arrive, in the form of surgery,

once anaesthesia made it became possible for surgeons to open the abdomen. Ovarian cysts can sometimes grow to an enormous size and one of the first abdominal operations was their removal by "ovariotomy". Britain's first ovariectomy was carried out in Manchester by a Dr Charles Clay (alarmingly, in 1842, five years before anaesthesia.) With chloroform, the era of surgical gynaecology had arrived, and in 1863 Europe's first successful hysterectomy was performed - again by Dr Clay in Manchester. Simpson happened to pass through Manchester soon afterwards and took the operative specimen to Edinburgh.

The wave of enthusiasm for surgery was shared by many women as well as doctors. In France, Jean-Martin Charcot, "the Napoleon of the neuroses", demonstrated the condition of "hysteria", thought to originate in the womb, and in Britain it was believed that removal of normal ovaries could bring psychological benefits. No doubt in some cases (such as severe dysmenorrhoea) it did, but I feel the excesses of gynaecological surgery in those early days are too unpleasant to enumerate in detail. I think they were accepted because they offered women an alternative, albeit drastic, to suffering in silence.

#### *Later advances*

Before Mrs Gaskell's time, the only medical schools in Britain were in London, where there were two, and Scotland, which had four. The wealth of the industrial revolution had brought new hospitals to the north of England (Manchester Royal Infirmary was founded in 1752) and in the 19th century they were followed by new medical schools - in Newcastle in 1825 and Manchester in 1874. New medical schools appeared in London at the same time, but England's oldest universities took many years to follow suit. Cambridge did so in 1882 but Oxford did not establish an undergraduate medical school until 1946.

This meant that the north-south divide, that subject about which Mrs Gaskell wrote, was reversed, at least as far as gynaecology was concerned. Besides Dr Clay's trailblazing in the 19th century there were, in the 20th century, Marie Stopes, who worked in Manchester University before becoming a pioneer of family planning, and William Blair-Bell, the Liverpool professor who founded the British (later Royal) College of Obstetricians and Gynaecologists in 1929.

#### **A gynaecologist reads Mrs Gaskell**

I am no literary critic but I would like to discuss two medical aspects of Mrs Gaskell's work. One relates to her first novel, *Mary Barton*, and the other to her great non-fiction work, *The Life of Charlotte Brontë*.

#### *Maternal mortality*

The first major event in *Mary Barton* is the death of Mary's mother in childbirth. While in labour at home, she took "fearful bad", with cries of agony that "resounded in the little court in the stillness of the night". A neighbour took over from the terrified Mary while John Barton ran for the doctor, who arrived too late. He checked the

body and told John "You must go downstairs. This is a great shock, but bear it like a man." Having diagnosed the cause of death as "some shock to the system", he "grieved for the man; and, very sleepy, thought it best to go.. [and] let himself out." Having lost her own mother, Mrs Gaskell must have found this scene difficult to write. From a medical point of view it does not quite ring true. Death in labour can occur suddenly but more often it is distressingly slow, accompanied by bleeding or fever or coming at the end of a labour that has lasted for days. Unlike today's writers Mrs Gaskell spared herself and her readers the grim clinical details, but her account has deadly emotional accuracy. As far as I know, this is the only maternal death in any of her books. Having recalled in fiction what must have been one of the defining events of her own life she moved on and never returned to it.

Maternal death has been an interest of mine - not, I hasten to say, because it happens often in Leeds but because I spent 17 years on a national panel examining such cases. The UK Confidential Enquiry into Maternal Deaths is a long-running project to identify avoidable factors and make recommendations for improving care. It has published triennial reports since the 1950s and, we believe, saved many lives. Today the risk of maternal death in Britain is around 1 in 10,000 pregnancies, but in the 19th century the figure was 1 in 250. At a time when a woman commonly had ten or more pregnancies this meant that around one in 30 women died as a result of pregnancy.

The tragedy was no respecter of social class. In 1797 Mary Wollstonecraft died of childbed fever ten days after giving birth to a daughter who later became Mary Shelley. In 1817 Princess Charlotte died two days after giving birth to a stillborn boy who would have been heir to the throne: instead, the crown passed to Queen Victoria. In 1865 Isabella Maysom ("Mrs Beeton") died at the age of 29 after her third pregnancy: she had already completed her monumental *Book of Household Management*. Country churchyards record the deaths of less famous women, often with the poignant inscriptions, such as this verse dating from 1829:

*"30 years I was a maid  
13 months a wife  
4 Hours I was a mother  
And then I lost my life".*

Infection accounted for about half the cases. Puerperal sepsis, or "childbed fever", was mainly due to the streptococcus, an organism that 10% of people carry in their nasal passages, making it impossible to eradicate. Louis Pasteur identified it in 1864 - one of medicine's great leaps forward - but identification was not enough. What was needed was treatment, and antibiotics did not become available for another seventy years. In 1935 German chemists developed sulphonamides, and when these were brought to England the maternal death rate began to fall rapidly. This fall continued during the second world war, despite the bombing and food rationing, and once penicillin also became available, puerperal sepsis all but disappeared.

This is one of medicine's great success stories but the benefits are still restricted to developed countries. In the third world, maternal death rates are similar to those that prevailed in England in Mrs Gaskell's day and indeed for many years afterwards. For us post-war "baby boomers" it is a sobering thought that only ten years before we were born, a woman's risk of death in childbirth was still at mid-Victorian levels. How quickly we forget, and take medicine's miracles for granted.

#### *The death of Charlotte Brontë*

The same thought is prompted by the death of Charlotte Brontë. Unlike Mrs Gaskell she had already achieved worldwide fame as a novelist before she had her first pregnancy. Like many obstetricians visiting the Haworth parsonage I was struck by the sight of Charlotte's little dress and tiny shoes, preserved there. She was around 4'9" in height, and she was 38 years old when she married her Arthur Nicholls, her father's curate. A few months later she began what we would now recognise as a high-risk pregnancy and suffered severe vomiting.

Morning sickness is a well-known symptom of pregnancy and usually improves after the third month, but sometimes it is severe and amounts to "hyperemesis gravidarum". This causes dehydration which, if left untreated, can be fatal, and the remedy nowadays includes an intravenous saline infusion. When I was teaching medical students in Leeds I would point out that today Charlotte would be brought to Airedale Hospital and it might be a newly-qualified houseman who saved her life with this routine procedure.

It is possible that tuberculosis also contributed to her death but it seems clear that the immediate cause was her pregnancy. Nowadays hyperemesis is seen infrequently, and in the past it may have had a psychological component. Sometimes the woman, deep down, did not really want to be pregnant, and Freudians interpreted the vomiting as a subconscious attempt to get rid of what was inside her. The condition could deteriorate, despite intravenous hydration, and the final complication was liver failure. The only way to save the woman's life was to terminate the pregnancy. This drastic option was well recognised in the textbooks of my youth, but has disappeared from recent books, probably because a woman can now request termination of an unwanted pregnancy. The 1967 Abortion Act legalised abortion if there was a risk to the physical or mental health of the woman or her existing children.

Mrs Gaskell mentions Charlotte's pregnancy with delicacy. After the vomiting had continued for some time a doctor was called and "assigned a natural cause for her miserable indisposition: a little patience and all would go right". (It was not until the end of the century that the idea of antenatal care developed.) The sickness continued and Mrs Gaskell records that "a wren would have starved on what she ate during those last six weeks". She became weaker and eventually "a low wandering delirium came on: and in it she begged constantly for food and even for stimulants. She swallowed eagerly now: but it was too late." Charlotte died murmuring a prayer for God to save her.

Had her pregnancy continued, her chances of survival would have been slim. She must have realised this but her letters show she was content to accept God's will. There is no sign that she considered ending her pregnancy. Termination was illegal but was widely practised nonetheless. *The Lancet* and the *British Medical Journal (BMJ)* carried reports of doctors being prosecuted for procuring abortion, and commented that these cases were the tip of the iceberg. The last resort for poorer women, living in appalling conditions in Britain's cities, was infanticide, perhaps with the help of a midwife. There was no legal requirement to register stillbirths until 1873. The *BMJ* reported in 1869 that abortions were easily obtained in England, and that there were "mill-ponds, in the neighbourhood of factories, that have been made the receptacles for many a new-born child".

The back issues of *The Lancet* and *BMJ* are now available on the journals' websites, and an electronic search reveals that the problem of unwanted pregnancy, far from being a taboo subject, was discussed with increasing frequency from the late 19th century onwards, with a growing view that abortion should be legalised. This idea came long after Mrs Gaskell's time. I wondered whether, being the wife of a minister, she was never told about the illegal trade in abortion or whether she knew about it but realised that it was not a subject for discussion outside the pages of medical journals. She endured criticism for writing about "fallen women" and defended herself, commenting after *Ruth* was published that: "It has made them talk and think a little on a subject which is so painful it requires all one's bravery not to hide one's head like an ostrich." Mentioning abortion, however, would certainly have been a step too far.

*Note added after the lecture:* My question about how much Mrs Gaskell knew was answered by the President of the Society during the discussion after my talk. Mrs Gaskell's letters show that she, perhaps more than anyone, knew the risk that Charlotte was taking but that she did not know about Charlotte's pregnancy until it was too late. I am grateful to Elizabeth Williams (via Helen Smith) for sending me a copy of her letter of 12 April 1855 to John Greenwood of Haworth (no. 233 of "The Letters of Mrs Gaskell", ed. JAV Chapple and Arthur Pollard) in which she wrote:

*"How I wish I had known!*

*I do not wonder at your reluctance to write, when you feared it might be construed into 'meddling', and it is no use regretting what is past; but I do fancy that if I had come, 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. Poor poor creature!"*

#### **Epilogue**

May I say again how grateful I am for the invitation to give this special lecture. When Helen Smith first suggested it, I thought it was foolhardy to accept the challenge of talking about Mrs Gaskell to the Gaskell Society. My wife, however, pointed out that our house is full of her work and suggested that I start with *Cousin Phillis*, which she assured me was quite free from gynaecological or obstetric complications. I followed her advice and found myself spellbound by Mrs Gaskell's skill as a writer,

her perceptiveness about the details of life around her, and her deep insight into human nature. My admiration for her has increased hugely, and I hope this brief sketch of the medical context of her work may help in a small way to enhance your appreciation of this remarkable woman.

## Uncle Peter and Cousin Henry

Craig Thornber

Peter Holland was born on 30 June 1776, the eldest of nine children of Samuel Holland of Sandlebridge and Great Warford and his wife Ann Swinton. One of the daughters, Elizabeth, married William Stevenson and their daughter, also named Elizabeth, became Mrs. Gaskell on her marriage to the Rev. William Gaskell. It seems likely that Mrs. Gaskell took as the model for Mr. Gibson, (the country doctor in *Wives and Daughters*) her uncle, Peter Holland.

Peter's first marriage was to Mary, the daughter of the Rev. William Willetts of Newcastle in Staffordshire. Mary's mother was a sister of Josiah Wedgwood. Peter and Mary had seven children, three of whom died in infancy. Mary died in 1803 and in 1808 Peter married Mary Whitaker of Manchester. The couple had three children, including Susan, who married her father's partner, Richard Timothy Dean. The family lived for a time in King Street, Knutsford and the site is marked with a blue plaque. Until the year 1858 there were three medical professions in England. The physicians worked mainly in London; they were university-educated but had no practical experience. They were required only to learn the writings of Hippocrates and Galen and acted as lifestyle advisors. Surgeons and apothecaries qualified by apprenticeship and some people qualified in both. Apothecaries provided most of the medical service outside London especially for the middle and lower classes. In 1858 these three professions were combined and a medical registry was published showing approved practitioners.

Peter Holland was apprenticed to Charles White of Manchester on 5 December 1783, when he was 17. Charles White was an eminent surgeon and obstetrician. He was one of the founders of the Manchester Infirmary and published recommendations on the treatment of women in labour and after childbirth.

Peter then moved to practise in his home town of Knutsford. He is known to have had three apprentices including Samuel Dean in 1796. He developed a large practice and became the family doctor to the Leicesters of Tabley, the Stanleys of Alderley, the Egertons of Tatton, the Langford-Brookes of Mere and the Greys of Dunham Massey. In addition, he attended the Gregs and their Apprentice House at Quarry Bank Mill, Styal.

In an article in the *British Journal of Industrial Medicine*, Robert Murray described Peter Holland as a pioneer of occupational medicine. The earliest recorded occupation health service in England was at Samuel Greg's Quarry Bank Mill. Greg employed Peter Holland to examine apprentices before they were employed. By

1795 Peter Holland was treating the Greg family and was retained with an annual fee of 12 guineas for the care of the apprentices.

From 1804 to 1845 each visit of the surgeon was entered in a daybook. This may have been in response to Sir Robert Peel's Health and Morals of Apprentices Act of 1802. Peter Holland made notes on the cases in shorthand and left instruction for the treatment in longhand. Robert Murray was able to discover the nature of the shorthand. It was a system published by Jeremiah Rich in 1642 and adapted by Philip Doddridge, the writer of the hymn *Christians Awake*. Doddridge was associated with the founding of the Warrington Academy and Robert Murray suggests that Peter Holland may have been a pupil there.

Among the treatments listed are blisters, purges, poultices, laudanum (an alcoholic solution of opium), bleeding with leeches, powdered chalk with cinnamon, green mixture, antimonial wine (possibly tartar emetic) anodyne pills, and that standby of the Georgian Period, Dr. James' powders.

Peter Holland's connection with the Leicester family is known from accounts which survive at the Cheshire County Record Office. The first mention of Peter Holland is in 1794 as a partner of Daniel Howard and there is a full set from 1821 to 1826 inclusive. Probably as a result of his connection with Sir John Fleming Leicester, Peter Holland was appointed in 1803 as the surgeon to the Earl of Chester's Yeomanry Cavalry of which Sir John was Colonel.

Holland and Dean was the name given to the medical practice in the 1834 edition of Pigot's Directory of Cheshire. Richard Timothy Dean was the son of Samuel Dean, who had been Peter's apprentice. Richard married as his second wife, Peter Holland's daughter Susan on 10 April 1844. They had two sons who died in infancy and Richard died aged 46 in January 1851 leaving his wife with a new baby, Mary. Peter Holland himself died on 19 January 1855.

Henry Holland was born on 27 October 1788. As a boy he visited his maternal grandmother, Catherine, in Newcastle-under-Lyme and her brother, Josiah Wedgwood. He also came in contact with Josiah's grandson, Charles Darwin, his second cousin with whom he had a life-long friendship.

His early education was at a private school in Knutsford. In 1799, at the age of 10 he was sent to study with the Rev. W. Turner of Newcastle-on-Tyne for four years. It was this trip to the North-East and the visits he did while there which awakened his interest in travel. While there he attended short courses in Chemistry and Electricity which awakened his interest in science.

In 1803 he was moved to the school of Dr. Estlin near Bristol where his education was mainly in the classics and here he first met Richard Bright, who trained in medicine and described what we now call Bright's Disease.

In 1803, when 15, he spent Christmas at Stoke Newington near London with Dr. Aikin, his sister and daughter, Lucy. This was Henry's first trip to London and made

a big impression. On completion of his studies at Bristol, he returned to Knutsford on foot, having formed a plan to see Tintern Abbey.

Initially his ambition had been to go into a mercantile profession and he was articled to a company in Liverpool. He was allowed to spend two sessions at Glasgow University to further his education. Henry soon became involved with interesting and influential people, often some years his senior, and one useful contact led to another. While at Glasgow, he won a prize for translation of *Oedipus Tyrannus*, which he put down to lack of competition as other students were not interested in verse.

As a result of his experience at Glasgow, he decided to study medicine at Edinburgh and obtained a release from his post in Liverpool. In the six months before he could take up the course he obtained a post writing a County Report on Cheshire for the Board of Agriculture. He obtained this post through the good offices of Sir John Stanley of Alderley and travelled the county earning £200 for his report.

Later in 1806, when just 18, he went up to Edinburgh. He travelled to Iceland in 1810 with Sir G. Mackenzie and Richard Bright. At the end of his course at Edinburgh, he presented a thesis on the diseases of Iceland, in Latin. He took his degree in 1811 having spent two winters in London Hospital Schools at Guy's and St. Thomas's. When he qualified he was still three years too young to join the College of Physicians and so travelled for 18 months in Portugal, Spain, Sicily, Greece and Turkey and published a book on his observations.

Everywhere he went he seems to have had introductions to the most senior levels of society. He met Ali Pasha in Turkey and Ibrahim Pasha in Cairo. In 1813 he reached Athens and met Charles Cockerell, the archaeologist and later the architect of Birmingham Town Hall. On account of his travels at a time when journeys were restricted by the Napoleonic War, he was invited to dine at Holland House and Lansdowne House and extended his contacts with the upper échelons of Regency Society.

Through meeting the courtiers Keppel Craven and Sir W. Sell in Athens, he was recommended to be physician to the Princess of Wales. In 1814, he spent a year in Germany, Switzerland and Italy in attending her. He met the royal families of Spain and Holland, European nobility and travelling British nobility. In Berne the party met the Empress Maria Louisa, wife of Napoleon; while in Florence, they met Countess Albany, widow of the Young Pretender, Charles Edward Stuart.

Henry Holland spoke good Italian which served him well. He met Pope Pius VII in Rome and visited the galleries of the Vatican with Antonio Canova. The Princess's party met the King of Naples, Marshal Joachim Murat. While there they learned of the escape of Napoleon from Elba and the Princess was ordered home by sea. Henry Holland travelled home via Genoa, Milan, Venice, Trieste, Vienna, Dresden, Berlin and Hamburg with a short excursion into Hungary.

Henry had a short trip to France and Holland after the Battle of Waterloo where he witnessed the Duke of Wellington demonstrate with 30,000 men a manoeuvre of the Battle, saw Austrian engineers removing the Venetian Horses from the Louvre and met Antonio Canova supervising the recovery of some of Napoleon's loot including Greek marbles. In Paris he dined with the widow of Antoine Laurent de Lavoisier, now the wife of British scientist and engineer, Benjamin Thomas, Count Rumford. There he met several famous scientists including Gay-Lussac, La Place, John Jakob Berzelius and Claude Louis Berthollet.

When the Princess was tried in the House of Lords in 1821, Henry Holland was called as a witness and later that year he was one of the physicians attending her when she died aged 53.

These early travels set the scene for much of Henry's later life. Each year he put two months aside for travel and everywhere he went he was able to move in the highest levels of society based on his extensive network of contacts. He visited all the capitals of Europe at least once, went twice to Russia, eight times to North America, and also to Constantinople, Damascus, Jerusalem, Cairo and Algeria.

He began in practice first in Mount Street and then in Brook Street, Manchester. In 1837 he was appointed one of HM Physicians Extraordinary and became the same to Prince Albert after their marriage. He was at Windsor Castle for the last three days of Prince Albert's life.

In 1852, Henry became Physician in Ordinary to the Queen and in April 1853 became a baronet. He was a physician for six Prime Ministers - Canning, Aberdeen, Peel, Melbourne, Sidmouth and Palmerston. As a Fellow of the Royal Society, member of the Athenaeum and president of the Royal Institution, he knew leading scientists such as John Dalton, Michael Faraday, Humphrey Davy, Sir Joseph Banks, Henry Cavendish and Thomas Malthus. He was an honorary member of the Royal Academy and knew Sir Thomas Laurence and Henry Fuseli as well as several authors including Sir Walter Scott, Southey, Wordsworth, Fanny Burney and Maria Edgeworth.

Although the fact is not mentioned in his autobiography, Henry Holland married first Margaret Emma Caldwell with whom he had two sons, Henry and Francis, and two daughters, Emily and Elinor; the latter died in infancy. After Margaret died he married Saba the daughter of the celebrated wit, the Rev. Sydney Smith, with whom he had two daughters Caroline and Gertrude.

In 1863, when he was 75, he went to advanced posts of the Federal Army in Virginia. He met Lincoln, and the Secretary of War sent an Adjutant-General to conduct him to the Army of the Potomac. There he met General Meade who had been victorious at Gettysburg. In his 82nd year he made a trip to the USA and died just after a trip to Russia.

In addition to his autobiography, Henry Holland wrote many papers for the



*A Brief Bibliography*

*Peter Holland: a pioneer of occupational medicine*, by Robert Murray, British Journal of Industrial Medicine, 1992; **49**: 377.

*Recollections of Past Life*, by Sir Henry Holland, Longman & Green, London 1872

*A History of the Family of Holland of Mobberley and Knutsford*, edited Wm. Fergusson Irvine, Ballantyne Press, Edinburgh 1902

## Ford Madox Brown: Pre-Raphaelite Pioneer

Pat Barnard

### Exhibition at Manchester Art Gallery (ended 29 January 2012)

Julian Treuherz (formerly director of The Walker Art Gallery and Lady Lever Art Gallery) welcomed us all as The Friends of Plymouth Grove to a tour of the Ford Madox Brown exhibition, which he had curated and for which he was acting as our guide on Wednesday November 2nd 2011. He gave us a brief introduction.

Ford Madox Brown (of English parentage) was born and brought up in France and educated at the Art Schools in Bruges, Ghent and Antwerp. Nevertheless he was seen as the archetypal English artist. Although never officially part of the Pre-Raphaelite Brotherhood, he very much influenced them and they influenced him.

Why should we, as followers of Elizabeth Gaskell, show any interest in Ford Madox Brown? Did they meet? There is no evidence that they did actually meet but they certainly had friends and acquaintances in common and would have been aware of many of the same people. Perhaps they did meet--perhaps you know! Here are some of those friendships and acquaintances:

#### Dante Gabriel Rossetti

Throughout FMB's artistic career Dante Gabriel Rossetti's close friendship, advantageous to them both, was able to overcome many difficult times between them. Rossetti due to a lack of TIN frequently borrowed money but was not over-anxious to repay when situations changed! His prolonged overnight stays rising late and expecting breakfast could be exasperating. However, Rossetti's mother took Lucy, FMB's daughter by his first marriage to live with her family, probably to avoid the drinking bouts of Emma, FMB's second wife. A fondness and closeness between the two families is obvious. Lucy goes on to marry William Rossetti, Dante's brother.

Elizabeth recalls in one of her letters meeting Rossetti at a party 'where she had a good deal of talk with him, excepting times when ladies with beautiful hair came in when he was like a cat turned into a lady who jumped out of bed and ran after a mouse-----He is not mad'as a March Hare but hair-mad.'

#### John Ruskin

FMB reports in his diary - 'Rossetti says Ruskin is a sneak and loves him, Rossetti, because he is one too and Monroe because he is one too and Hunt he half loves because he is half a sneak, but hates Woolner because he is straightforward and me because I am too. He adored Millais because Millais was the prince of sneaks but Millais was too much so, for he sneaked away his wife and so he is obliged to hate him for Too Much of his Favourite Quality!!

An English Afternoon (now considered to be one of FMB'S masterpieces) engendered a quarrel between the two men as the following entry in diary illustrates and for which FMB paid a heavy price (spelling as in diary!)

While staying at Rossetti's "Enter to Us" Ruskin, I smoke, he talks divers nonsense about art, hurriedly in shrill flippant tones ----I answer him civilly--- then resume to my coat and prepare to leave. He then says "Mr Brown will you tell me why you chose such a very ugly subject for your last picture" -----your picture at the British ex. What made you take such a very ugly subject, it was a pity for there was some nice painting in it." FMB satisfied that Ruskin meant impertinence replied contemptuously "because it lay out of my back window" -----Ruskin seemed by this time in high dudgeon".

The antagonism resulted in complete lack of patronage from Ruskin. The other Pre-Raphaelites gained much by Ruskin's interest.

Elizabeth in her letter 562 is so pleased that Ruskin likes Cranford.

There are many examples of correspondence between them.

She appears to take the opposite side to FMB in the Effie Ruskin, John Everett Millais scandal.

**Catherine Winkworth**, a very longstanding friend of Elizabeth, translated from the German *Lyra Germanica*, an anthology of hymns. Three of FMB's religious productions were used for illustrations, Abraham and Isaac, The Entombment, and another version of the Entombment.

**Thomas Carlyle** was one of FMB's heroes sharing many of his radical views. FMB invited him to model as a Brain-Worker in the painting *Work*. This is FMB's great masterpiece, bought by Manchester Art Gallery and the site of which in Hampstead can now be easily recognised.

Elizabeth is greatly consoled by Carlyle's letter praising her work and, when feeling overwhelmed by some of the criticism engendered by Mary Barton, re-reads his letter!

**Frederick Denison Maurice**, founder of The Working Men's College and Queen's College for the education of women, particularly governesses. Elizabeth writes---- "I am sure he has more influence over the more thoughtful portion of the English





**Stewart Gardiner,  
Mayor of Knutsford,  
plants a crab apple tree**

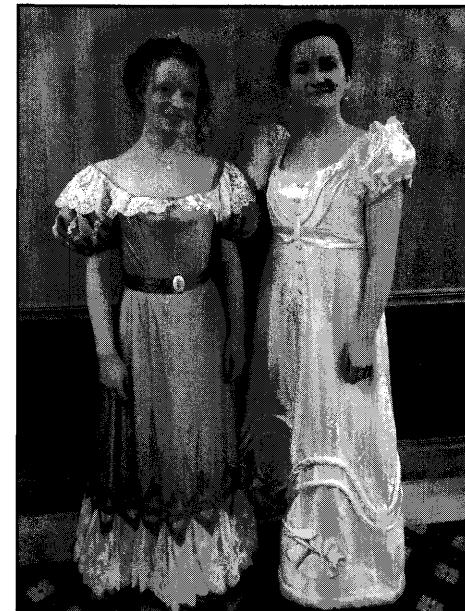
***"in memory of Joan Leach  
MBE to recognise her  
contribution to Knutsford"***

**as Joan's son Martin and  
sister Shirley, and others,  
look on.**

**17 Sept 2011.**



**Delia Corrie and Sarah Prince  
at Greenheys on 29 Sept 2011.**



**Katie Lomas and Katarzyna Kowalik our  
recitalists at Cottons, New Year lunch. 11  
Jan 2012.**



**Gaskell Society members surround the tomb of "darling Willie who now sleeps...in  
the dull chapel-yard at Warrington", on a sunny Wednesday in September.**



**New look at Greenheys.**

people than anyone I know." His principles form the foundation of Christian Socialism. FMB invites him to pose for the other Brain-Worker in Work and also includes a poster on the left of Work advertising The Working Men's College. Charles Kingsley, also, a Christian Socialist was known to both FMB and Elizabeth.

**Alfred Waterhouse**, architect, was acquainted with both Elizabeth and FMB. Waterhouse goes on to become the architect of our magnificent Town Hall in Manchester; and FMB designs and paints the 12 frescoes in the Great Hall which, sadly, Elizabeth would have been unaware of, as they were completed after 1865.

Elizabeth Gaskell, as we know, visited The Art Treasures Exhibition of 1857 in Manchester many times, taking with her the house guests from Plymouth Grove. Jesus Washing Peter's Feet and The Hayfield (at this stage owned by William Morris) painted by FMB were being exhibited.

One feels they must have met. Meta, with her talent and interest in Art, must have seen FMB's paintings displayed in Liverpool and perhaps have spoken of FMB. It is certain that FMB and William Gaskell met when the murals were being painted in the Town Hall and FMB entered and entertained the society of the time in Manchester. That is a research topic for another time!

Finally, the exhibition and accompanying catalogue were a treat and provide much to ponder over. FMB recognised the divisions of society and, through his most famous painting, appreciated the toil of the working man.

Elizabeth Gaskell would have thoroughly approved!

Editorial footnote: The exhibition moves from Manchester to the continent where it will be on display in Ghent from 25 February until 3 June 2012.

## Death in Leamington Spa?

**Christine Lingard**

It is always satisfying to take one of the mysteries contained Elizabeth Gaskell's letters and follow the fascinating trail which it leads you. One such case is that of Miss Sarah Taylor revealed in this letter of September 1854:

*Then again Sarah Taylor (Miss Boyce's niece) is so ill I fear Meta (who is gone to enquire) will bring word of her death from brain fever at Leamington. Mrs Allen has been telegraphed for home from Venice. Poor Harriet and Marianne are at home - waiting for telegraph messages all by themselves! [L209a]*

A perusal of death records for that quarter finds no one of that name dying nearer to the Warwickshire spa than Birmingham, nor did any one die in Manchester, in the event she had returned home. It is therefore probable that she survived her ordeal but with one of the commonest surnames in the country I despaired of ever identifying the lady.

That is until I discovered a book *Guardian, biography of a newspaper* by David Ayerst and the family tree on the endpapers revealed the answer. Sarah (c1837-94), Harriet (1838-1910), and Marianne Taylor (1840-1910) were the three children of the second marriage of John Edward Taylor, founder of the *Manchester Guardian*. His first wife had died in 1832 leaving three young children. He searched around for another wife, eventually marrying the children's governess, Miss Harriet Boyce, a native of Tiverton, Devon. She invited her unmarried sister Ann Dunsford Boyce to come and live with them. This is the Miss Boyce who is mentioned in Taylor's will:

*knowing that I do that she is highly esteemed and regarded by my children by my first marriage and these latter warmly love their younger sisters, it is my earnest wish...that...they will all live together as a united family.*

Sophia, the only daughter of his first marriage, married Peter Allen, who became a partner in the newspaper and so, if the date of Gaskell's letter is accurate, she was on her honeymoon at the time of her sister's illness.

Needless to say, Sarah did survive, and though she didn't have a particularly long life, she married in 1865 and had five children. Her husband Frederick Jevons and his two brothers married the three Taylor sisters. They came from Liverpool and were grandsons of William Roscoe (1753-1831), the historian and political pamphleteer. Her sister Harriet's husband, William Edward Jevons (1835-1882) was the most distinguished of the three, achieving something of a reputation in academic circles. He had spent a considerable time in Australia, where he had taken some pioneering photographs, before coming to Manchester to live with his aunt, Mrs Henry Roscoe (another Gaskell acquaintance) in Dickinson Road, Fallowfield. He became professor of moral philosophy at Manchester University, but later moved to London. He is regarded as the father of political economy, and was an adviser to several prime ministers. When he died in 1882, Meta and Julia Gaskell contributed 6 guineas (£6.30) to a memorial fund to establish a scholarship in his memory.

John Edward Taylor had come from a distinguished Unitarian family with several associations with the Gaskells. Though educated as a Quaker (under John Dalton) he had reverted to the Unitarian church and became a trustee of Cross Street chapel. His first wife was his cousin, Sophia Scott. The Scott and Taylor family trees were as intertwined and as complicated as the Hollands. His brother-in-law Russell Scott was a Unitarian Minister and an assistant of Rev John Relly Beard at High Street Chapel, Manchester. C.P. Scott, the most celebrated early editor of the paper was his nephew. Taylor died in 1844, and his second wife the following year, before Gaskell became a published writer. Very few letters survive from this period so it is not possible to gauge the strength of their friendship but she was definitely acquainted with his talented son, Russell Scott Taylor, an early editor of the paper, who died in 1848 of typhoid at the age of 27. He had been a pupil of William Gaskell and Francis William Newman, brother of the future cardinal, when he was a tutor in Manchester to the children of another family friend Samuel Dukinfield Darbshire.

The *Manchester Guardian* had been founded in 1821 and was only a twice-weekly publication until 1855. Initially Taylor had had financial backing from a local cotton agent, John Shuttleworth (1796-1864) but they disagreed and he bought the rival *Manchester Gazette*. Shuttleworth (no relation to James Kay-Shuttleworth) and his wife Elizabeth Noble, a member of a noted Lancaster Unitarian family, remained close friends of the Gaskells and are mentioned many times in her letters. They used to come to Plymouth Grove from their home at the Wilton Polygon, Crumpsall in their personal carriage. Gaskell records his unfortunate end!

*I am afraid Mr S. is sinking. He was in bed...& taking little but champagne. [L540]*

The *Guardian* remained the Gaskell family's newspaper of choice despite its review of *Mary Barton*, in February 1849, which can only be described as mixed:

*This tale is beautifully written; the characters introduced are graphically delineated; the events are so interestingly interwoven and the groundwork is so artistically constructed that whoever reads the two first chapters is sure to read the whole story...the only fault of the book is that the authoress has waived gravely against the truth, in matters of fact either above her comprehension, or beyond her sphere of knowledge...it is a libel on the workmen of Manchester...it is a libel on the masters, merchants and gentlemen of this city who have never been exceeded by those of any other part of the kingdom in acts of benevolence and charity both public and private.*

The bulk of the review, which is unsigned, goes on to point out a number of inaccuracies and is particularly disapproving of the dialogue. Interestingly it states that the author of the book was the wife of a dissenting minister in the city.

In later years Ayerst mentions the two Gaskell daughters:

*There they kept open house for generations of Guardian men. One of them was once asked whether 'it would look' - here they hesitated - 'at all "unbecoming", or "just a shade too unconventional" for two maiden ladies to provide cigars for the men after dinner.'*

And I should be grateful if anyone can explain this intriguing footnote on page 76:

*In the interval [after the death of the first Mrs Taylor] he had been engaged to Miss Gaskell, a cousin of the novelist's husband, who finally refused him partly because he wanted to retain his existing governess in charge of the children.*

So there is probably a lot more to the relationship between Gaskell and the *Guardian* than we know.

### Further reading

*Letters of Mrs Gaskell*, edited by J.A.V. Chapple and Arthur Pollard, 1997 edition (letter numbers indicated in square brackets)

*Guardian, biography of a newspaper*, David Ayerst [1971]

*C.P. Scott of the Manchester Guardian*, by J.L. Hammond, 1934.

*Elizabeth Gaskell the critical heritage*, edited by Angus Easson, 1992 [contains the *Manchester Guardian* review]

## Controversy at Cross Street

### Was George Eliot guilty of plagiarism?

Shirley Foster

Was George Eliot guilty of plagiarism? That was the question addressed by Jo Pryke and Shirley Foster at the Society's December meeting in Manchester, when they discussed the notable similarities between Gaskell's *The Moorland Cottage* (1850) and Eliot's *The Mill on the Floss* (1860).

These similarities were first noted by Swinburne in his essay of 1877, 'A Note on Charlotte Brontë', in which he accused Eliot of failing to acknowledge her 'palpable and weighty and direct obligation' to the older novelist. Later critics have taken up his observation and have suggested that Eliot must have known *The Moorland Cottage*, to the extent that she replicated various aspects of it in her own work, including the name of the heroine, the sibling relationship and the use of the environment. There is, however, no 'hard historical fact' to prove that Eliot had read the novella, or that she had borrowed from it. Indeed her biographer, Gordon Haight, states categorically that she 'had never seen' *The Moorland Cottage*.

The two women were, of course, aware of each other's writings. Gaskell envied Eliot's creative talents and wrote to her expressing how 'humbly' she admired her fiction. Eliot, for her part, makes reference to *Cranford*, *Mary Barton* and *The Life of Charlotte Brontë* in her Journal, and mentions Gaskell in her *Westminster Review* article of October 1856, 'Silly Novels by Lady Novelists', marking her out from the myriad of contemporary female writers who are capable only of 'feminine fatuity'. She also told Gaskell that reading her novels had shown her 'that my feeling towards Life and Art had some affinity with the feeling which had inspired *Cranford* and the earlier chapters of *Mary Barton*.' But nowhere is there an indication of her having come across *The Moorland Cottage*; if, indeed, it came to her attention when she and Lewes were reading literature for inclusion in the *Westminster Review*'s 'Belles Lettres' section - a listing of contemporary writings - mention of it did not find its way into the pages of the journal. It can perhaps be argued that after the success of *Mary Barton*, and then, later, *Cranford*, other works by the same author would have been seized on eagerly by her admirers. And of course George Eliot was a voracious reader. But until we find any definite evidence that she did in fact know *The Moorland Cottage*, textual evidence (possibly the product of unconscious assimilation) can be the only grounds for suggesting that the earlier text provided a partial template for the latter. Furthermore, coincidence in the use

of names, and cultural and social phenomena of the age in elements such as family structures and the role of the law, must also be considered as relevant to the question of influence. Without more firm knowledge, we cannot accuse Eliot of plagiarism.

## Moorland Cottage

Jo Pryke

I would argue that common sense suggests it is very probable that Eliot did read *The Moorland Cottage* and, as she found its plot and characters congenial to her own concerns and developing techniques, it was laid down in her memory, supplying, albeit perhaps unconsciously, significant material for her novel. Perhaps one could call it 'unwitting plagiarism'. Many details of internal evidence make it difficult to believe that there is *no* connection between Gaskell's novella and Eliot's novel.

The very titles announce a use of place common to both works. The central importance of Dorlcote Mill is obvious, while Gaskell's moorland setting, in particular the thorn-tree above the cottage, is crucial for the characterisation of Maggie and her relationship with her lover, Frank. At the watery crises which end both stories, (when both brothers are drowned), childhood scenes crop up in striking parallel. On the deck of the burning ship Frank, taking Maggie in his arms: 'was as calm and composed as if they sat beneath the thorn-tree on the still moorlands, far away.' Maggie Tulliver also finds peace, similarly linked to the shared rural scene in the past: 'brother and sister had gone down in an embrace never to be parted: living through again ... the days when they had clasped their little hands in love, and roamed the daisied fields together.'

The use of other typical realist techniques is also strikingly similar. At the opening of both books, a geographical and historical guide personally conducts the reader into the scene, setting the story to become within living memory. Moreover, both ensuing narratives turn on the importance of memory, and on the influence of the past in the present.

Most obviously, the family dynamics are the same in crucial ways, (though the individual characters of the two Maggies and their brothers are different). Each Maggie has a brother who, the favourite of his mother, domineers over her on grounds of her sex, and is given education denied to her, for which she is equally, if not better qualified. She feels the injustice of both this and of his assumption of superiority but, at least in childhood, defers to him. Both mothers are weak and foolish, dominated by 'what people will think', their only strong emotion being love for their sons. Each makes clear to her Maggie that she is a disappointment. Each Maggie's father is/was more loving to her than her mother is/was to Maggie. Each Maggie, with short, straight dark hair, has an affectionate (and important) relationship with a kind, pretty girl with fair hair in ringlets. Both Maggies grow up to be beautiful in a distinguished, dignified way.

Finally, the 'moral agenda'. The role of the law, in upholding morality, is questioned in the structure of each plot. The rigid, legalistic positions of the lawyer hired by Mr Buxton in *The Moorland Cottage*, and of Lawyer Wakem, pursuing his legal rights without mercy, are contrasted with a more compassionate and forgiving morality.

Thematically, the influence of education on morals is paralleled. While Tom Tulliver and Edward Browne both have a formal education, they do not have a moral one. The crucial results are clearly emphasised. The educational privilege accorded to boys, and the adults it produces, are criticised in both books. In contrast, Maggie Browne receives moral training from Mrs Buxton, teaching self-sacrifice and courage in her stories of women in the past, while Maggie Tulliver takes up Thomas à Kempis, advocate of self-abnegation. The results show a crucial contrast between the two Maggies when forced to choose, in a final parallel, between lover and brother. Maggie Browne, a typical self-directed Gaskellian heroine, refuses to give up her lover for the sake of her brother, while Maggie Tulliver does so.

## Maria Andreanszky 1910 - 2011

Stella Luce



Aged one hundred at her death in June 2011, Maria Andreanszky was a committed member of the Gaskell Society for almost two decades. She joined the London and South East Group in 1992, shortly after it was founded by Dudley Barlow. It delighted her to find that her late mother's doctor, Ian Gregg, was a member of the Society and had a family connection not only to Anthony Todd Thompson, the surgeon who attended at Elizabeth Gaskell's birth, but also to the Byerley sister who ran the school at Stratford-upon-Avon where Elizabeth Gaskell was a pupil.

Maria grew up in Budapest in a Hungary economically challenged after World War One and cheated of true democracy by Admiral Horthy's right-wing control. Before training as a corsetière, Maria was secretary to an artist and drawn into a circle of avant-garde intellectuals intent on contact with the West. Among them she developed her knowledge of art, a respect for intellectual rigour and a leaning towards England as home to a culture of freedom.

In the Second World War Maria fearlessly helped with an underground paper and aided endangered Jews. She faced the German, then Russian, occupation of her city and confinement to the cellar of her requisitioned home. She craved the mental and spiritual freedom that she was sure could be found in the UK. By 1947 Communism was tightening its grip in Hungary, but Maria had secured the necessary visas for uncertain travel across war-weary Europe to a housekeeper's post in Britain. It was a move she never regretted.

Three years later, now able to speak English, Maria moved to London to join, and later manage, the corsetry department at Dickens and Jones. She acquired British nationality and could savour the freedom so dear to her. She took classes at the City Literary Institute covering an impressive range of the arts, and she had occasional trips abroad. Science, she hoped, would find answers to the over-population and despoliation of the planet. Well-read, she wore her knowledge lightly. Maria was still attending Gaskell Society lectures at the age of ninety-nine. Her interest in others and lively sense of humour never left her.

Spiritually, Maria joined the Quakers in their silence-based worship. Among them she was a loved, supportive, wise and influential figure. Her belief in Guidance never faltered. The memorial gathering held in November, 2011, was a fitting celebration of Maria's inspirational gift for life and generosity of spirit towards her many friends.

## Visit to Warrington 28 September 2011

**Philip Morey**

Warrington. Usual hot summer weather. A cloudless blue sky. It's 10 o'clock in the morning and already the temperature is nearing 20C as a faithful band of Gaskell devotees gathers outside the County Police Office, where we are greeted by retired PC Peter Wroe, curator of the Museum of Policing in Cheshire.

Stepping back across the road, we admire the impressive late Victorian building, with a dash of Art Nouveau apparent in stained glass windows and the brick façade. It was built in 1901 to replace Warrington's police station which had become far too small: a great influx of workers occasioned by the construction of the Manchester Ship Canal in the 1890s had led to demands for vastly increased cell-space in the town.

The Museum, which is housed on the ground floor of the fully-operational police

station, was opened in 2007 for group visits, by appointment. As its name implies, its collections relate to all the police forces which at any time have been part of the County of Cheshire, itself of course subject to boundary changes. We have Peter Wroe to thank in large part for its existence. After he retired he began to organise items for display in Warrington, and persuaded former colleagues and their families to donate objects they might have collected. Since the 1960s Cheshire Constabulary had been amassing a rather haphazard collection of police-related artefacts at the Force Training Centre in Crewe, which was not open to the public. When this display was closed in 2004 its exhibits were transferred to Warrington so as to create a formal Museum - a registered charity run by volunteers.

Particularly remarkable is the range of materials assembled. Documents include not only crime records, photographs and newspaper cuttings but also letters, 'Wanted' posters and forged bank notes. For instance, a pre-First World War notice displayed in the local trams - 'DO NOT SPIT: fine £2 (£5 for a repeat offence)' - stressed the importance of the campaign to prevent the spread of TB. On the one hand, there are exhibits of murder weapons (including various gentlemen's walking sticks with blades hidden inside), on the other hand, nineteenth-century police pistols and truncheons, and post-war constables' uniforms. The evolution of policing can be traced from an original Victorian police cell to a 1960s CID office and a 1980s police car. There is a wealth of memorabilia: coats of arms of the various independent police forces, medals, personal memoirs and scrapbooks plus an online catalogue and family history section. It is a credit to the curator and his team that so many facets of law and order in rural and urban Cheshire over the last 150 years has been preserved, researched, and thoughtfully displayed.

On the five minute walk from the Police Museum to the Cairo Street chapel we were able to pause and admire the resplendent Golden Gates which guard the entrance to the park surrounding Warrington's Palladian gem, built in 1750 as a private mansion for the Patten family. It is a grade I listed building that Warrington Borough was fortunate enough to acquire as its Town Hall in the nineteenth century. It is well worth a detour, but we had no time to visit it.

On arriving at the chapel we were greeted warmly by Revd. Lynne Readett, Minister both of the Cairo Street and of the Unitarian chapel in Wigan. She was keen to point out the blue plaque on the wall outside which you can easily miss as you walk up Cairo Street. It commemorates the chapel's most famous minister, Philip Pearsall Carpenter (1819-1877), who campaigned tirelessly to improve public sanitation in the town and founded the Industrial School at Cairo Street to give orphan boys the chance to learn a trade. Active in temperance and anti-slavery movements, he emigrated to Canada in 1865 where he continued his public health campaigns until he sadly succumbed to typhoid. Interestingly, he is equally famed as a conchologist. In 1855 he bought a vast collection of unsorted shells and spent the rest of his life describing and classifying them, publishing his results in learned journals, and donating his complete collections to public institutions here and in North America.



We were able to picnic alfresco in the welcome sunshine or shade of the chapel grounds (one of our number had had the foresight to bring a sunhat), with tea and cake kindly provided by Lynne. At the far end of the grounds is the graveyard where the Gaskells figure prominently. The main surprise is that 'darling Willie' is buried in a vaulted tomb the size of a family grave. It lies next to that of William Gaskell senior and his wife Margaret, who died in 1819 and 1850 respectively. Inside the chapel Lynne gave us a brief survey of the origins and development of this sizeable building, remarkably light and well furnished, which in 1745 replaced a smaller dissenting chapel constructed only 40 years previously. Cairo Street (formerly Sankey Street) chapel was extensively repaired and re-aligned in the 1860s when the gallery was removed and the pulpit placed at the front. Famous past members of the Cairo Street congregation include Joseph Priestley, Anna Letitia Barbauld, and the industrialist Frederick Monks, owner of the town's prominent wire-works who presented the Golden Gates to the Borough. (Until very recently Warrington Rugby club was known as the Wires.)

When asked how a present-day congregation of 16 could maintain the building in such a good state of repair, Lynne explained that the recent refurbishment of the organ, vestibules and Victorian woodwork was financed largely by endowments and legacies. In the future, sale of the two adjoining properties, the Sunday School and the Industrial School - both now dilapidated - would enable the chapel to continue in existence. Next on the list for refurbishment are the wrought-iron entrance gates to the chapel burial ground which came from the house lived in by Joseph Priestley at Academy Place. Lynne reminded us that the chapel is open to the public during National Heritage Weekend, on the Sunday afternoon of which there is an Academy Service and Lecture - this year the subject was the life and work of Pearsall Carpenter.

And so to our last port of call, the Museum & Art Gallery, sited a couple of minutes' walk away past the Georgian buildings of Palmyra Square, in Warrington's Cultural Quarter. The Museum, the oldest public museum in the North-West, is located above the Central Library, the first rate-supported public library in the country (1848) which moved to these larger, well-preserved premises in Museum Street in 1857.

Our enthusiastic and knowledgeable young guide Francis took us on a detailed tour which comprised an Ethnology gallery (complete with dinosaur and Egyptian mummy) whose objects had been kept in their 1930s display cases, the Roman room (with the rare Actor's mask), as well as two refurbished galleries and the new WREN Gallery for Contemporary Art and Crafts which have only recently opened. The 'Window on Warrington' led us through Medieval Warrington and its Friary, the arrival of Cromwell during the Civil War, and the 18th Century town as seen in Donbavand's painting of 1772 and in a model of the Warrington Academy. (The original 600-tonne Academy building was moved on 'floatpads' up Bridge Street in 1981 as part of a road-widening scheme, converted into a commercial property and subsequently extended.) The historical survey of Warrington culminated in the

section devoted to the town's diverse industrial heritage: glass making, pin making and tanning followed by wire working, chemicals and brewing, with an emphasis on the everyday lives of the workers involved. At the end we were free to explore the new Art Gallery which has a permanent collection of mainly Victorian and early twentieth century paintings together with a space to showcase the work of local artists.

Whether you were familiar or unfamiliar with Warrington it was a fascinating day out. We are indebted to Janet Kennerley for organising it.

## GASKELL 20 QUESTIONS QUIZ: THE ANSWERS

1. What was the address of Elizabeth Stevenson's London birthplace?  
**Old Lindsey Row, Chelsea**
2. In which month and year did she die?  
**November 1865**
3. What was the second name of ECG's daughter, Julia?  
**Bradford**
4. Who was the music teacher to the Gaskell family at Plymouth Grove?  
**Charles Hallé; and also Henry Burnett (brother-in-law of Charles Dickens)**
5. Name 4 other names which appear with ECG in the window of Poets' Corner.  
**Fanny Burney, Robert Herrick, A E Housman, Christopher Marlowe (Oscar Wilde also makes an appearance)**
6. What was the cause of death of ECG's son, William?  
**Scarlet fever**
7. Which of ECG's novels finishes with these words - "That woman!"?  
**North and South**
8. In "North & South", where is Captain Lennox's regiment stationed?  
**Corfu**
9. What was the name of Aunt Lumb's daughter?  
**Marianne**
10. Which continental city is featured in "Dark Night's Work"?  
**Rome**

11. Which publication was Mr Davis reading in "The Squire's Story"?  
**Gentleman's Magazine**
12. Which word did ECG use to describe the drains at Plymouth Grove?  
**Pestilential**
13. By what name did William Gaskell call his wife?  
**Lily**
14. Where was ECG when she wished she had a book to write instead of just a letter?  
**Chatsworth**
15. What did Lizzie Leigh want her baby to be called?  
**Anne**
16. Which ECG novel has a link with Winchester?  
**Sylvia's Lovers**
17. Name 3 doctors who appear in ECG's fiction.  
**Messrs Gibson, Donaldson, Morgan & Harrison  
(That adds up to 4 by my reckoning. Ed.)**
18. Which surname does ECG use in both "Wives and Daughters" and "The Half Brothers"?  
**Preston**
19. Which short story by ECG begins with this line - "Mr & Mrs Openshaw came from Manchester to settle in London."?  
**The Manchester Marriage**
20. Which ECG biographer has recently become the President of The Alliance of Literary Societies?  
**Jenny Uglow**

Our very sincere thanks to Janet Kennerley who prepared this quiz for our New Year lunch held at Cottons near Knutsford on 12 January 2011. More thanks are now due to Janet for supplying the answers. The Editor recommends that any member who failed to gain 100% in this quiz should immediately re-read the complete works of ECG.

## Greenheys Opening Event

Helen Smith

On Mrs. Gaskell's 201st birthday (29 September 2011, should any member have forgotten) Mossclare Group arranged an opening event for the Greenheys Scheme, a new housing development in Moss Side, Manchester. Gaskell Society committee members were invited to and welcomed at this happy occasion.

The sun shone on the old redbrick terraces and on the new, asymmetrically shaped, stylish terraces built in different shades of new brick, with interesting railings and colourful panels. After a delicious buffet lunch in the garden at Cardinal Court and speech of welcome from the Chief Executive of Mossclare Group, Rob Ferguson, we all strolled from Moss Lane East to the new development at Elizabeth Gaskell Square.

Dressed in Victorian garb (which included Mrs. Gaskell's shawl), Delia Corrie read the moving paragraphs from the opening of Mary Barton:

*"There are some fields near Manchester, well known to the inhabitants as 'Green Heys Fields,' through which runs a public footpath to a little village about two miles distant .....there runs a tale that primroses may often be found, and occasionally the blue sweet violet on the grassy hedge bank."*

Sarah Prince now owner (or guardian) of the shawl which had belonged to her great-great-great-grannie Gaskell, gave a brief speech contrasting the opening lines of the novel with how things are now. Before an audience of various colours and creeds, many of whom are now residing in the new houses, Sarah unveiled a grey plaque commemorating Mrs. Gaskell. A flurry of cameras, presentations of bouquets in dazzling sunshine... and it was all over.

*Long may they live  
Happy may they be  
Blest with content,  
And from misfortune free.*

This charming verse known to ECG from childhood and still used in the sanding ceremonies in Knutsford, echoes our wishes for the residents of Moss Side as redevelopment and refurbishment continue in the area.

## Book Notes

Christine Lingard

The following new books will be reviewed in detail in a future issue of the *Gaskell Society Journal*:

Oxford history of the novel in English, vol. 3: The nineteenth century novel, 1820 - 1880, edited by John Kucich and Jenny Bourne, Oxford University Press.



Giving Women: alliance and exchange in Victorian culture, by Jill Rappoport. Oxford University Press, discusses the effects of altruism and acts of charity of Victorian authors such as Gaskell, Browning and Rossetti.

Split subject of narration in Elizabeth Gaskell's first person fiction by Anna Koustinoudi. Lexington Books. Anna is from Greece. You may remember her at the Manchester Conference.

Two volumes from the series - Studies in nineteenth-century: literature and culture, edited by Gillian Beer, Cambridge University Press:

Shock, memory and the unconscious in Victorian fiction, by Jill Matus which includes a chapter: Dream and trance: Gaskell's *North and South* as a "condition-of-consciousness" novel.

and

Tuberculosis and the Victorian imagination by Katherine Byrne, of the University of Ulster which includes a chapter Consuming the family economy: disease and capitalism in Charles Dickens's *Dombey and Son* and Elizabeth Gaskell's *North and South*.

The 'invisible hand' and British Fiction, 1818-1860: Adam Smith, political economy, and the genre of realism by Eleanor Courtemanche of the University of Illinois (Palgrave Studies in Nineteenth-Century Writing and Culture) Palgrave Macmillan, which discusses the influence of Smith on George Eliot and Gaskell.

Also

The text of a dramatization of *Cranford* by Campbell Kay has been published by Phoenix Press in association with Nottingham Arts Theatre. This play was produced at the theatre in 2009 and is not the version that toured to Crewe and Buxton in 2010 and 2011,

Interest in Gaskell still continues in Europe. Recent translations include:

In Germany: *Cranford* - translated by Johanna Ellsworth, Gebundene Ausgabe published by Von Nikol Verlag.

In Spain: *La casa del páramo* (with introduction) - a translation of Moorland cottage by Marta Salis, published by Alba, Barcelona.

In Serbia: *Veštica Lois* - a translation of *Lois the Witch* by Milan Miletić, published by Rad in Belgrade. This is the first translation of Gaskell published in Belgrade since its split from Yugoslavia.

And a number of titles in Hungary:

*Phillis* - a translation of *Cousin Phillis* by Miklós Molnár and

*Édesek és mostohák* - a translation of *Wives and Daughters* by Ginda Leyrer, both published by Lazi in Szeged, the third city of Hungary, where Lajos Kossuth the nineteenth century patriot who impressed Gaskell on his visit to Manchester in 1851 began his campaign; and:

*Észak és Dél* - a translation of *North and South* by Zsuzsa Rakovszky published by Artemisz in Sopron near the Austrian border.

Editor adds: *Fallen Angel* by member and author George Hauton - Charlotte makes a return to Haworth: fiction, fantasy and fact.

## The Gaskells' House Report

Janet Allan

An exciting few months lie ahead of us. Our major bid to the Heritage Lottery Fund is due to be submitted at the beginning of March and we have already raised a creditable £360,000 in match funding - with another £90,000, we hope, in the pipeline. If we get the grant, work should start by the end of the year.

The garden is greatly improved, thanks to many volunteers aged 7 to 80, from near and far, including Ardwick, Manchester and America. The daffodils which we planted in front of the house are now poking their tips through the earth, and with forget-me-nots and wallflowers will make a goodly show.

We look forward to seeing you at the events in the house.

Besides the usual first Sunday in the month openings from 12 - 4, these are:

**Sunday, 26 February 11am. - 4pm.** Manchester Histories Festival special open day £1 admission.

**Saturday, 24 March 10.30am. - 3.30pm.** Dickens Study Day. To celebrate Dickens's bicentenary, in partnership with the Dickens Fellowship, we have three talks: Alan Shelston on Dickens in the North-West; Elizabeth Williams on Gaskell and Dickens; and Veronica Walker on Dickens's children. Coffee, tea and an excellent lunch will be provided. Cost for the whole day, £20. Please book in advance. Tickets £20 from Hilda Holmes, 8 Peter Street, Hazel Grove, SK7 4BQ. Please send sae.

**Saturday, 31 March 2pm.** The AGM of the Manchester Historic Buildings Trust, owners of the house. All subscribing Friends are entitled to come, and to vote. We will be able to update you on our latest news.

**Saturday, 5 May 2pm.** The Moorland Cottage. A costumed reading of Robin Allan's adaptation of the Gaskell short story, performed by Delia Corrie, Charles Foster and four drama students from the School of Theatre at Manchester

Metropolitan University. Tickets, including tea and cakes, £10 from Hilda Holmes, 8 Peter Street, Hazel Grove, SK7 4BQ. Please send sae.

**Sunday, 27 May 6 for 6.30pm.** A string trio from the Hallé. We are delighted to have three very distinguished players to perform in the room where Charles Hallé taught the Gaskell Daughters. Gina McCormack, violin (member of the Fibonacci Sequence), Catherine Yates, viola (Section Leader of the second violins of the Hallé) and Nicholas Trygstad, (Principal Cello in the Hallé.) More details of their programme later. Tickets, including canapés and a complimentary glass of wine £10 from Hilda Holmes, 8 Peter Street, Hazel Grove, SK7 4BQ. Please send sae.

As usual we are very grateful to the Friends and volunteers because without you, nothing would have been possible.

## Alliance of Literary Societies

The ALS AGM 2012 will be hosted by The Dickens Fellowship in Nottingham on 12 May.

## Forthcoming Events

### Annual General Meeting

**Saturday, 14 April 2012, 10.30am.**  
Cross Street Unitarian Church, Manchester

Suzanne Fageance Cooper, author of *The Model Wife: Effie, Ruskin and Millais*, will deliver the Daphne Garrick Lecture. More details to follow

## The Gaskell Society South-West

**Saturday, 25 February 2012, 2.15pm.**  
Discussion group at Elizabeth Schlenther's, 14 Vellore Lane, Bath, BA2 6JQ, on *Sylvia's Lovers* (Tel: 01225 331763) £3 per person. Tea and coffee to be provided.

**Saturday, 24 March 2012, 2.15pm.**  
Continuing our discussion group on *Sylvia's Lovers* at Bren Abercrombie's, 12 Mount Road, Lansdown, Bath, BA1 5PW (Tel: 01225 471241) £3 per person. Tea and coffee to be provided.

**Saturday, 21 April 2012, 2.30pm.**

At the BRLSI, Queen Square, Bath, we will have an illustrated talk by Robin Allan: *Every Story Needs a Picture*.

The nineteenth century was the golden age of the illustrated novel, and this talk will examine the artists' work in famous novels by Dickens and others, including George Cruikshank, Gustave Doré and George du Maurier and Birket Foster, both of whom illustrated Elizabeth Gaskell. Members are invited to bring their own illustrated volumes to display.

£2 to members of the BRLSI and the Gaskell Society South-West; £4 to all others. Refreshments will be available at an additional cost of £1.

**Any queries to Elizabeth Schlenther, 14 Vellore Lane, Bath, BA2 6JQ, Tel: 01225 331763.**

## London and South-East Group

**Saturday, 11 February 2012**

*Science Liberality and Good Taste: The Manchester Botanic Garden and its founders.*

Dr Ann Brooks who was so illuminating last year about the plans for the garden at Plymouth Grove is kindly coming again to share her prodigious knowledge about Manchester in Gaskell's time, to discuss Unitarianism in the city which was connected with the Botanic garden and she may add something about the Manchester Art Treasures exhibition of 1857 which Gaskell visited. Something for everyone here!

**Saturday, 12 May 2012**

*Domestic Arts in Mary Barton and North and South*

Alison Lundie, a founding member of the London Gaskell Reading group, who is currently studying for a Ph.D. at Roehampton is coming to enlighten us about the domestic arts in Gaskell's work, the subject of her thesis. Her talk will focus on shawls and needlewomen in *Mary Barton* and *North and South* especially.

The topic of objects in Victorian fiction and the whole idea of the domestic arts is the current line of literary research so we are very fortunate in being kept up to date with these academic themes and trends by having Alison this year.

On a Saturday tba in October 2012

Elizabeth Williams : Mrs. Gaskell and gossip.

## **Domestic Arrangements**

The meetings will take place at Francis Holland School, Graham Terrace SW1 (2 minutes' walk from Sloane Square tube station (District and Circle Lines) and a 10 minutes' walk from Victoria).

## **The North-West Group**

Knutsford meetings are held in St. John's Church Rooms on the last Wednesday of the month. Buffet lunch available (£8) from 12.15pm.

### **29 February 2012**

*My Lady Ludlow*

### **28 March 2012**

Elizabeth Williams will continue work on *My Lady Ludlow*

### **25 April 2012**

More Lady Ludlow if required, or a short story, if time permits

### **Manchester Meetings:**

to be held at Cross Street Chapel on the 1st Tuesday of the month from October to March, excluding January. Lecture at 1pm.

### **7 February 2012**

Revd. Alex Bradley: The Crisis of Faith in the 19th century

### **6 March 2012**

Professor Richard Pearson: William Makepeace Thackeray



# The Gaskell Society



*Tabley Old Hall*  
by Sir Richard Colt Hoare

THE GASKELL SOCIETY HOME PAGE has all the latest information on meetings.  
<http://gaskellsociety.co.uk>

If you have any material or suggestions for future Newsletters, please contact Mrs. Helen Smith,  
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Telephone - 01565 632615 E-mail: [helenisabel@ntlworld.com](mailto:helenisabel@ntlworld.com)

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**Membership Secretary:** Miss C. Lingard, 5 Moran Crescent, Macclesfield SK11 8JJ

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NEWSLETTER  
Autumn 2012 - Number 54



## Editor's Letter

Helen Smith

### **STOP PRESS NEWS see page 40**

A very warm welcome to Shirley Foster, our new President, elected at the AGM in April. Shirley has been an active member of the Society for many years and we are delighted to inaugurate her as our very first Madam President.

On the same day we had to bid a fond farewell to Alan Shelston as he passed the reins to Shirley. However we hope that, now released from presidential duties, Alan will be able to devote more time to research and to writing for the Newsletter. Thank you, Alan, for all you have done over the years for the Society.

Welcome also to the four new members of the committee and sincere thanks to the four members who have retired from the committee.

9 UK members will be linking up with 11 American members across the pond to explore some literary sites in the Massachusetts area, 12-19 September. (Mrs Gaskell herself cherished a notion of visiting the United States but did not live to achieve this.) Connections with Charles Dickens and Charles Eliot Norton will be traced in the Boston area. One of our American members, Nancy Weyant, is working hard to organise this study tour. A report of the transatlantic trip will appear in the next Newsletter.

Closer to home, on an early summer's day, Jean Alston led an amazing outing to Derbyshire and Jean has herself submitted a full report for this Newsletter.

We are sorry to have lost dear Mary Syner, a real stalwart of the Society and the very soul of discretion. (Without her help, advice and encouragement, I should never have embarked on the editorship of the Newsletter. She also came to my rescue on occasions when I managed to get lost at conferences.)

Very long-standing members John and Doreen Pleydell celebrated their Platinum (yes, that is 70th!) Wedding Anniversary in April of this year. When I called to see them just before the event, John was caught in the act of reading *My Lady Ludlow* on his Kindle. Our warmest congratulations and our best wishes for good health to the very happy couple.

On a very positive note, the hard toil of Janet Allan MBE and her team has finally been rewarded. We look forward to the restoration of the Gaskell House in the now not so distant future.

### **Reminders for 2013:**

AGM 13 April and Conference 19-22 July

The conference sub-committee is already hard at work to achieve the high standards we have come to expect at our biennial conferences.

And now the 150th anniversary of the death of ECG is fast approaching. Does anyone have any ideas for celebrations?

Please remember not to forget to write for the Newsletter. The subject must be strictly Gaskellian in nature. I look forward to receiving articles, short or long, by e-mail, snail mail or by airmail and "even the typed and the printed and the spelt all wrong". Deadline for the next Newsletter is 31 January 2013.

To all who have written for this Newsletter and to W H Auden, I give heartfelt thanks. Our appreciation and thanks go to Rebecca Stuart of Lithotech Print in Knutsford for the finished product.

## Presidential Address Dr Shirley Foster

It is a great honour to be invited to become President of the Gaskell Society, following on, moreover, from such illustrious predecessors. Mrs Gaskell herself never presided over the charitable organisations with which she was involved, that role being reserved for men, but she was something of a committee woman, and certainly managed to organise herself and her daughters in the running of home and local affairs (most notable, perhaps, is her engagement with the relief work during the Cotton Famine and Distress in Lancashire, caused by the American Civil War). Ordering the diverse strands of her life showed what might be called today her administrative flair.

I have no intention of trying to organise the Gaskell Society, nor to chivvy its members into doing charity work, literary or otherwise. Having the sort of fun that Mrs Gaskell always so enjoyed (convivial gatherings, interesting discussions, and good eating) is, after all, one of our main purposes. But I recognise the huge effort that the committee puts into making such things happen and run so smoothly, especially since Joan's death, and I shall do my best to support and promote their admirable labours. I would also urge all members to consider offering their talents to help us continue to sail along so well. We are now deeply into the new electronic age, and our Society, too, is involved in this revolution, with our website, e-mail communications, and the likelihood of our *Journal* going online at a future date. All this will widen our influence in the literary and academic arenas, and will, we hope, bring in more members to carry on Gaskell scholarship and enthusiasm for her writings.

So it is an especially exciting time for me to be President, and I look forward to a bright future for us all, even in this period of unpredictability for the humanities and



literary societies in general. Let's all raise a glass to Mrs Gaskell (who **did** drink, despite her horror at smelling like a public house in front of the very proper Charles Bosanquet, after she had taken rum and peppermint for a headache), and hope for many more years of celebrating Mrs Gaskell and her work.

NB Cri de coeur from Madam Editor: Delighted as we are with our new President, we are however still seeking a Minutes Secretary and a Treasurer. Do not be afraid and hide your talents. Please contact any member of the committee if you are able to help. **YOUR SOCIETY NEEDS YOU.**

## An Appreciation of Alan, now Former President, Shelston Elizabeth Williams

Alan Shelston, who stood down as President of the Society at the last AGM, served us in that capacity for seven years. But his connection with the Society goes back much further than that and his interests are wide.

As a boy in London, he attended Latymer Upper School in Hammersmith. This was followed by national service as an officer in the RAF, a post which apparently involved counting pigs in Norfolk. He later went to King's College, London, where he took a first in English and then produced a Master's thesis on Mrs Gaskell.

Alan came north in 1966 when he gained a position at Manchester University, where he remained until his retirement as a senior lecturer in 2002. The year 1985/86 was spent teaching at the University of Missouri, which he thoroughly enjoyed. American students are apparently much more willing than British ones to ask questions, and his enthusiasm about this reveals a man who genuinely enjoys interaction with students. When he came back to Britain in 1986, he was met by a reception committee consisting of Joan, Arthur Pollard and John Geoffrey Sharps, asking him to start a Journal for the Gaskell Society. We all know that it was not easy to say no to Joan, and Arthur Pollard was apparently an even more forceful personality. The first number of the Journal, edited by Alan, appeared the following year - the first of eleven issues which he was to edit. It says much about him that he still feels indebted to that group of people who got him involved, as well as to John Chapple, his predecessor as President, with whom he edited *Further Letters of Mrs Gaskell*.

Other publications include editing works by Gaskell, Dickens, Henry James, Hardy and Carlyle, as well as writing *The Industrial City 1820-70* jointly with his wife Dorothy, and producing *Biography* as part of the Methuen Critical Idiom series. In 2010, to mark Elizabeth Gaskell's bicentenary, Hesperus Press brought out *Brief Lives: Elizabeth Gaskell* written by Alan. He is an Honorary Fellow of the John Rylands University Library and an Honorary Professor at the Victorian and Edwardian Research Centre at the University of Chieti-Pescara in Italy. He has



lectured in Italy and Japan as well as giving talks to a variety of groups in the Gaskell Society and beyond, within the UK.

And there are other activities. He and Dorothy have three sons and four grandsons, so can be relied upon for tips on entertaining small boys. He paints, and the results are impressive. Although not a church-goer, he enjoys hymns. He says that he learned about his understanding of poetry from his exposure when young to the language and structures of hymns, something that many modern students lack. He has a splendid collection of books, and is interested in illustration, on which he has given talks. He is an active member of the Portico Library. He never stops researching, as is evidenced by the number of papers he continues to publish, and he was recently in London to investigate the poetry of Elizabeth Holland, Elizabeth Gaskell's sister-in-law.\*

He says that he has gained a great deal from his involvement with the Society, and feels that literary societies make a tremendously important contribution to the study of literature, attracting the true enthusiasts, academic and non-academic, each of whom can learn from the other. We have certainly been fortunate in his continuing willingness to be involved. I am sure that I speak for us all, when I thank him wholeheartedly for all that he has done for us.

\* The fruits of this research can be read on page 17

## Mary Syner: a personal tribute

Alan Shelston



Mary Syner, who has died after a long illness, was a colleague and friend of mine in the English Department at Manchester University and then, again as colleague and friend, in the Gaskell Society. Mary was a senior secretary at the university; she also had a BA and an MA, in Mediæval History, which she had acquired, also at Manchester, as a mature student in the History Department. Extremely efficient as an administrator, she always kept up her academic interests, and this she was able to continue when she became involved with the Gaskell Society. At the university she handled the students with wisdom and with skill, as indeed she did the staff, often a more difficult proposition; to me in particular her help became invaluable.

She was instrumental from the start in the preparation of the Gaskell Society Journal; last Christmas she wrote to me: 'I have lots of good memories too [she was by then very ill]; I often wonder how we managed to create the early Journals on a typewriter!' Well, she was her own answer to that one.

Editing for her was not simply a matter of tidying up the punctuation; with the acuteness that was the result of her historical training she would suggest developments and sometimes deletions to my wider flights of editorial fancy. Mary was quietly and clearly incisive in her judgment of people as well as ideas, not always a common quality in universities, then or now, and she was a very human person to work with.

We both retired from the university in the early years of this century. Mary stayed on with Professor Donald Scragg, to work on an AHRC funded research project in the field of Anglo-Saxon language. In that respect her interests went back in time rather than forward: she never lost her love of the early period. At the same time she found she could devote more time to the Society, by involving herself, in particular, in the organisation of its biennial conferences, where she became invaluable. When she knew that she was suffering from a serious illness she moved to the South of England, first to a house of her own and then to live with her son Christopher and his family. Never nervous of technical novelty, she used a Kindle to replace the books whose pages she found difficult to manipulate and, as she once explained, for the pleasure she got from reading to her grandchildren.

Three generations of Mary's family gathered with friends and colleagues at Mary's funeral at Redditch, once her home town. The chapel where the service was conducted surprised those who had not seen it before in that it was bathed in light coming from a huge framed plain glass window at what Philip Larkin calls 'the holy end'. Through the panes of this window on a clear day in early spring we could see the outline of the distant hills beyond. It was difficult to grieve in such surroundings, easier to remember and give thanks.

Mary Syner was a modest and a truly remarkable person, and her qualities were an influence on all who knew her.



# Life before the Gaskell Society

Doreen Pleydell

The Gaskell Society was founded in 1985, but before that time there had been great interest in Mrs Gaskell's life and work. In 1960, the 150th anniversary of Elizabeth's birth, a ball was held in the Assembly Rooms at the Royal George, together with performances of *Lois the Witch* at the Little Theatre and an exhibition of Gaskell memorabilia in the Unitarian Chapel Schoolroom.

At that time, there was a Knutsford Society which later became the Knutsford Civic Society. A small committee grew from that - we met in Aunt Lumb's house in Gaskell Avenue. Our task was to arrange various events connected to Mrs Gaskell - we went to Townley Hall near Burnley for instance, and to Rufford Old Hall in Lancs. But the main event was an annual lunch held at the Angel Hotel at, or near, Mrs Gaskell's birthday. This was a dressy affair - hats were worn!

As nowadays, speakers were invited: one year Brian Redhead, the broadcaster, came (What happened to *The Manchester Guardian* was his theme). On another occasion we invited the Editor of Cheshire Life.

We were particularly keen to have Olive Shapley, the Editor of Woman's Hour. On the radio she sounded an attractive person and a good speaker. Accordingly our secretary, Elsie Graver, wrote to ask if she would be willing to come. Olive Shapley replied that she would be delighted and that her fee would be £20. In those days £20 was a vast sum, far more than our committee could afford. Elsie Graver wrote back explaining this, adding that "As you know, the ladies of Cranford have to practise 'Elegant Economy'" so regretfully, we should have to cancel our invitation. Olive Shapley was so amused by this that she was willing to reduce her fee to £5, the talk was given: satisfaction all round!

The Gaskell Society as it is today, was started in 1985 and at first took very tentative steps towards becoming today's very successful organisation.

A committee was formed of which I was a member. My job was to act as hostess for the committee meetings, as our house on Ladies' Mile was deemed the most suitable venue...

Editor adds: Doreen claims that her memory of those early days is now rather shaky and that she does not think chronologically. She has given me permission to finish off this article.

Well, many early notables spring to mind: some intimidating, some reverential, some boring, some adoring, but all united in their worship of Elizabeth Gaskell. Today we remember these very active early founders with respect and great affection.

On a very wet July afternoon, I called to pick up Doreen's article and had tea chez Doreen and John. Doreen enquired about the set book for next session (they had been on their Platinum Honeymoon in Shropshire and had missed the last meeting in April). When informed that it was *Ruth*, Doreen revealed that she had reached the stage in life when she doesn't enjoy doom and gloom any more. However she would take *Cranford* to her Desert Island. (That should bring some light relief to Doreen after *The Bible* and the complete works of Shakespeare.)

## 'That unfrequented stone hall': Elizabeth Gaskell and Tabley Old Hall

Sarah Webb

Among the many delights of her Cheshire youth Elizabeth Gaskell looked back fondly on visits to Tabley Old Hall, just outside Knutsford. Tabley Old Hall was the original home of a local gentry family, the Leicesters of Tabley, and was situated on a picturesque moated island site with a backdrop of ancient oaks and a chapel nestling in its shadow. It was abandoned by the Leicesters in 1767 for their new Palladian mansion, Tabley House. In contrast to its 'plain, substantial' replacement, the Old Hall always charmed and delighted its guests. Although it is likely that she visited its grander usurper, Elizabeth Gaskell preferred to leave an account of the Old Hall, rather than Tabley House, revealing its enduring powers of attraction.

Her brief memoir is reproduced in Joan Leach's revised *Knutsford and Elizabeth Gaskell*:

Near the little, clean, kindly country town, where as I said before I was brought up, there was an old house with moat within a park called Old Tabley, formerly the dwelling place of Sir Peter Leycester, the historian of Cheshire, and accounted a fine specimen of the Elizabethan style.... Here, on summer evenings did we often come, a merry young party, on donkey, pony or even in a cart with sacks swung across - each with our favourite book, some with sketch books, and one or two baskets filled with eatables. Here we rambled, lounged and meditated; some stretched on the grass in indolent repose, half reading, half musing, with a posy of musk roses from the old-fashioned trim garden behind the house, lulled by the ripple of the waters against the grassy lawn, some in the old crazy boats, that would do nothing but float on the glassy water, singing, for one or two were of a most musical family and warbled like birds, 'Through the Greenwood' or 'A Boat, A Boat unto the Ferry' or some such old catch or glee. And when the meal was spread beneath a beech tree of no ordinary size (did you ever notice the peculiar turf under beech shade?), one of us would mount up a ladder to the belfry of the old chapel and toll the bell to call the wanderers home. Then, if it rained, what merrymaking in the old hall! It was galleried, with oak settles and old armours hung up, and a painted window from ceiling to floor. The strange sound our voices had in that unfrequented stone hall! (Leach p.4-6)

This account was utilised in *Mr Harrison's Confession* (1851) and there was, as Esther Chadwick suggested in *Mrs Gaskell Haunts, Homes, and Stories*, something of Tabley Old Hall in the creation of Hamley Hall in *Wives and Daughters*.

Since 1927 Tabley Old Hall, undermined by the local brine pumping industry, has slowly collapsed. The Leicester Warrens (as they had become) rescued as much as possible and left the building to be colonised by the elements. Now the only substantial part that remains is the twisted and broken brick façade, hidden by ivy and just about kept upright by the aid of wooden props until it finally gives way. Elizabeth Gaskell's joyful account of her visit seems to awaken what is left of the Hall from its slumbers and help it rise, however momentarily, from its decay.

Tabley Old Hall, or more properly, Nether Tabley Old Hall was, as Mrs Gaskell wrote, 'an old house' the ancestral home of the Leicesters from the fourteenth century. Unlike the Hamleys, the Leicesters of Tabley, being merely Norman in origin, could not trace their ancestors back to the Heptarchy. John Leycester (d.1398) built the original timber-framed hall but it was the Cheshire historian Sir Peter Leicester (1614-1678) who improved it so sensitively creating the beautiful house so admired by visitors. For a man so attached to the authenticity of historical records the house he produced was built to deceive the eye. His symmetrical E-shaped east front seemed to have three stories. In reality there was only a ground and first floor and the circular windows above looked into the rafters. Visitors only had to wander round to the back of the Old Hall to find a very different looking building – no battlements and three jutting wings overlooking a garden.

Sir Peter had built his private chapel partly so that he would never have to listen to nonconformist preachers again as he had had to during the Commonwealth. As in his old chapel at Brasenose College, Oxford, (the model for this one), worshippers were seated by sex (men on the south and women on the north); and there was a pre-Reformation statue of St Peter. The tower and spire were added by Sir Peter's grandson, Sir Francis Leicester, and it was only because of the latter that the Old Hall was still in existence and Elizabeth Stevenson was able to see it. With only one surviving daughter, Sir Francis was anxious for the future of his Tabley estate. When he died in 1742 his will, later confirmed by the Court of Chancery, directed that the Old Hall always had to be kept in good order, and if an heir neglected this requirement they forfeited the entire estate.

In the Regency period the Old Hall was in the care of Sir Francis's great-grandson Sir John Leicester. Sir John must have given a general permission to Dr Holland, Elizabeth Gaskell's uncle, to enjoy the Old Hall whenever he, or his friends and relations, liked. The unfrequented Hall seems not to have been of much interest to Sir John who was busy attending King George IV, directing the Cheshire Yeomanry and creating his own collection of modern British art. This was in contrast to the mid-Victorian period when the Old Hall was more widely known and locals, ramblers and those coming by train, wished to see it in increasing numbers. By the Edwardian period the then owner Eleanor, Lady Leighton Warren fought assiduously against

day trippers and succeeded in reducing them to single figures. Although Mrs Gaskell's account recorded the Old Hall before the heritage tourists, they were moved and interested by the same things as she was.

The Gaskell description intrigues because it implies that the Old Hall was entirely unoccupied. Other later accounts recorded that retired Tabley servants were lodged there and acted as guides; some were garrulous entertainers and others let visitors roam at will. In exchange for shelter and a little dole, these occupants kept the Hall secure, rooms tidy and free from dirt and vermin, lit fires to keep damp at bay and threw open windows and let the air circulate. Perhaps while some of the Holland party sang 'Hark, hark the lark at Heaven's gate sings' and 'Blow, blow thou winter wind' from the gallery delighted aged retainers listened from the shadows. In *Mr Harrison's Confession* the farmer and his wife seemed to act the part of custodians and hosts for the Duncombe party.

How the party got over to the island is itself curious. The illustration\* by Sir Richard Colt Hoare shows an impressive stone bridge but this was removed by a later generation (possibly Sir John or his son) and its fabric used to build a new boathouse. What had replaced it by the end of the nineteenth century was a wooden bridge. From the bridge (of whatever material) a path of flags followed the edge of the island, over the neatly clipped lawn, and then turned at right angles to give a dignified approach to the entrance porch.

On either side of the porch stood ionic columns, lions sat on their tops, and at the apex of the arch was the Leicesters' shield. The stone flags continued into the screens passage, cold beneath their feet, and the light changed as someone closed the 'battlemented front door ... a thing of beauty which the artist or the lover of the picturesque must contemplate with delight' (Newns p4). On the right-hand wall were 'dagger or spear marks in the plaster' but their history was hard to decipher. 'Various theories have been advanced to account for the marks; one of them is that they were made by bolts from crossbows shot across the lake.' Or perhaps they were 'signs of an attack by Parliamentarians during the Civil War' (Newns p4).

Light came into the passage from the left through the two arches into the Great Hall but the visitors had several choices of how to explore. At the end of the screens passage was a room that looked over the garden. On the right-hand side of the passage were three doors – probably the doors leading to what had been the ancient kitchens. The first (nearest the porch) led into a pretty sitting-room, the second on to a staircase and the third into the kitchen. The draw, as Mrs Gaskell indicated, was the Great Hall.

The stone flags, set diamond-wise, continued from the passage into the Great Hall. This space was dominated by the great bay window, sometimes called the oriel window. Elizabeth Gaskell's slight exaggeration that it was a 'painted window from ceiling to floor' reveals its magnificence as it was 'emblazoned [with] the Leycester pedigree in stained glass' (Newns p.5). In addition there were portraits of English

*\*The illustration is reproduced on the cover of this newsletter.*

monarchs, an older slightly cruder set and a more sophisticated group paid for by Sir Francis Leicester in the 1730s. Then there were panels of glass engraved by family members or visitors over time. One poignant message was engraved by Sir Francis's daughter Meriel in the 1720s on her first marriage: 'Tabley I must leave with grief'. Alas, there is no evidence that Elizabeth Stevenson was allowed to engrave her name on a pane there. The Great Hall rose to forty feet in height, a 'lanthorn' hung from its apex, and it was panelled in oak probably grown on the estate. The 'old armours hung up' were certainly from the Civil War when the Leicesters had been for King Charles I. Sir Peter Leicester 'came under the Parliamentary vengeance he was imprisoned, but eventually allowed to compound for the Tabley Estates for the sum of £778 18s. 4d.' (Newns p13).

One of Mrs Gaskell's omissions was the exuberant and still brightly painted Jacobean fireplace, almost opposite the large window. Mr Harrison noted 'the glorious wood fire in the wide old grate ... and a huge black kettle stand on the glowing fire' (Gaskell 1995 p209). It celebrated the marriage of Sir Peter Leicester's parents although it was created a few years after the event in 1619. There is a great armorial centrepiece with the arms of the Leicesters combined with those of the Mainwarings of Peover, but this is overshadowed by wooden statues of Lucretia stabbing herself and Cleopatra pressing asp to her breasts. Beneath their feet huntsmen chase large hares across the fireplace while Adam and Eve, as terms, support the whole edifice. The frieze at the top has a mermaid, merman and a child with an hourglass interpreted as 'Truth conquering Corruption and discovered by the light of Learning and Time' (Newns p5) and an owl and dove perched at each corner.

Although Elizabeth Gaskell mentioned the oak settles the whole building contained 'valuable articles of furniture' many of 'which have been there in all probability since the earliest days of the Hall' (Newns p4). When the Leicesters left for Tabley House in 1767 they took the best of the heirlooms with them but abandoned the majority of the antique pieces behind at the Old Hall as they thought them old and outdated. This meant that the Hall resembled a house where time had almost stopped; there was china in the kitchen, chairs to be sat on, beds to be lain in and pictures on the walls. The experience must have been a little disconcerting and rather reminiscent of the dislocated feeling in her short story *Curious, If True*.

Without a housekeeper or cicerone to guide the way, Elizabeth Stevenson was able to explore this house in a way she could not, for example, at nearby Tatton Park, Toft Hall or Peover Hall (the latter two also perhaps inspirations for Hamley Hall). The staircase at the end of Great Hall climbed to the gallery where members of the party sang. The walls of the staircase bulged slightly as it was old and weak and in the late Victorian period would need a brick buttress on the outside to steady it. There were two bedrooms off the gallery (on either side of the Great Hall's chimney stack) and these were quite small. Further on, beyond what was called the minstrel's gallery, was the older wing of the Hall and this contained bedrooms too with those on the west side overlooking the garden.

Although inventories exist from over four centuries, it is quite perplexing to match them to the plans of the Old Hall; rooms changed names and those taking the inventories assumed that people reading them would always know where they had been standing. One bedroom, for example, contained: Jacobean bedstead, velvet top and bottom valance and a velvet bedspread, Elizabethan chair, walnut Queen Anne Bureau, powder stand with a blue and white bowl, walnut dressing table, needlework table, rush light holder, old engravings on the walls and a piece of old Brussels carpet (Tabley Old Hall Inventory 1916 pp19-21). The surviving Tabley inventories are perhaps given life by Elizabeth Gaskell's later description of Molly's room at Hamley Hall:

All the furniture in the room was as old-fashioned and as well-preserved as it could be. The chintz curtains were Indian calico of the last century — the colours almost washed out, but the stuff itself exquisitely clean. There was a little strip of bedside carpeting, but the wooden flooring, thus liberally displayed, was of finely-grained oak, so firmly joined, plank to plank, that no grain of dust could make its way into the interstices. There were none of the luxuries of modern days; no writing-table, or sofa, or pier-glass (Gaskell 2000 p63).

When Molly opens her window and gazes out, what she sees could almost be what those gazing through the lattice windows of the Old Hall would have seen with Tabley Mere in the background.

A flower-garden right below; a meadow of ripe grass just beyond, changing colour in long sweeps, as the soft wind blew over it; great old forest-trees a little on one side; and, beyond them again, to be seen only by standing very close to the side of the window-sill, or by putting her head out, if the window was open, the silver shimmer of a mere, about a quarter of a mile off. On the opposite side to the trees and the mere, the look-out was bounded by the old walls and high-peaked roofs of the extensive farm-buildings (Gaskell 2000 p62-63).

The 1918 guide to the Old Hall wrote of the 'old-world herb and flower garden, a real quiet retreat.' Visitors were informed that it was 'the accepted opinion that this garden has been here since the Hall was built' (Newns p7). Richard le Gallienne listed 'Wild Thyme, Star of Bethlehem, Wormwood, Spikenard ... Balm of Gilead, Rue, St James' Wort, Black Helebores, Balm for the Warrior's Wounds, Borage' (Le Gallienne p276) and of course there was also Mrs Gaskell's 'posy of musk roses from the old-fashioned trim garden behind the house'.

In the old wing was a secondary staircase back to the ground floor and the screens passage. The small room at the end of the screens passage contained much of what was left of the Old Hall collection of paintings. There were Hanoverian royal portraits and a *Mediterranean Seascape with Galleys* by Kasper van Eyck, then interpreted as a painting of the Spanish Armada. The other popular painting was a Jacobite contrivance 'for drinking the forbidden toast' to King Charles II while he was in exile. The picture was laid on a table and a glass set down on its centre 'into which glass the distorted features were reflected back in their normal expression

... the object being, for Jacobite squires, to be able to introduce at their banquets a portrait of the King at a time when to possess an ordinary portrait of him might lead to dangerous consequences' (Newns p8).

Although some of the party brought books with them, there were a few books still in the Old Hall for the curious to read, either here or in other rooms. It had once contained two important libraries. The earlier belonged to Sir Peter Leicester and was what he used to research and write his *Historical Antiquities* published in 1673 while the second was that of his grandson Sir Francis a minor local bibliophile. Both collections had been removed to the new Tabley House but one small part of Sir Francis's library, his collection of bound seventeenth century pamphlets, was left behind. They were not recognised as important until the late 1890s, when they were rescued from obscurity and damp and taken to Tabley House. An earlier reader, such as Elizabeth Stevenson, perusing their pages on an indolent summer's day, would have been drawn into the struggles and raging political debates of the seventeenth century and the terrifying religious struggles to be found in *Lois the Witch*. But the draw of 'the old crazy boats ... on the glassy water' was perhaps too much and putting the book down the visitor, casting a glance back at the old red-brick Hall, would be drawn to join those singing on the moat.

For those people intent on adding a further tour to the excellent *Knutsford and Elizabeth Gaskell*, Elizabeth Gaskell and Tabley Old Hall is a more difficult but nonetheless fascinating prospect. After the island was undermined by subsidence in 1927 Mr and Mrs Leicester Warren rescued as much as was salvageable. St Peter's chapel was moved brick by brick and erected by the side of Tabley House, a quite amazing architectural feat. A room was built connecting the Chapel to the House and this was decorated with items rescued from the island – the Chapel rafters, the painted panes of glass and Jacobean fireplace from the Great Hall – and it was called the Old Hall Room. After the University of Manchester acquired the Tabley Estate, in the 1970s, and opened the state rooms of Tabley House to the public the Old Hall Room became its tearoom. Here on summer afternoons come merry parties, young and old, although they no longer arrive by donkey, pony or cart, and lounging over their tea and cakes they can meditate on that lost 'unfrequented stone hall'.

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*Editor: The following review is reproduced  
from The Morning Post, Thursday, September 29, 1910*

## MRS GASKELL, Haunts, Homes and Stories.

By Mrs Ellis H. Chadwick. Sir Isaac Pitman and Sons.

This being the centenary year of Mrs. Gaskell's birth, an interesting attempt to portray the gracious matronly presence of a very distinguished woman, of what we now call the Mid-Victorian Era, has been made by Mrs. Chadwick to make amends for the regrettable fact that no complete or satisfactory biography can be written, owing to the prohibition privately conveyed to the loving and obedient children.

One who vividly remembers the famous authoress of "Mary Barton" and "Cranford" and who was privileged on one occasion to enter deeply on a subject very near to Mrs. Gaskell's heart and conscience, is very glad of the opportunity to add a contribution to the story of those old days, being entrusted with the unlooked for privilege of reviewing the present book.

The editor and those who possess all the private family records are confronted with the initial difficulty of attempting to convey Mrs. Gaskell's thoughts and opinions by constant reference to the utterances of the people who throng her remarkable fictions. These are, of course, substantially true; Mrs Gaskell never paltered with her own convictions, and was remarkably clear in expressing them. She never would or could have dramatized a Dinah Morris, and captured a generation of readers by evoking an apostle of what George Eliot at that epoch of her life regarded as a creed outworn. But while fully admitting that the utterances of her good people do reflect Mrs Gaskell's own thorough goodness, it is disconcerting to find such fine sentences protected by inverted commas, and the image of another speaker confusing the memory of the author's gracious self. This is but the statement of an inevitable result.

Elizabeth Stevenson was born and bred up amidst Puritan associations, and the two years of her life as a schoolgirl were spent at Avon Bank, in Stratford, in the house of the Misses Byerley, great-nieces of Josiah Wedgwood, the famous potter. Two other inmates were granddaughters of Dr. Joseph Priestley, brought from America to England in infancy after the death of the famous old philosopher. They were contemporaries of the girl who was to become so famous in literature, and the three women who emerged from that school to play strenuous parts in the future (and one of whom survived to very great age) bore emphatic witness to the lasting impressions of an ideal sincerity in word and deed communicated by the teachers of their youth.

Mrs. Gaskell married young, and became the wife of a Unitarian minister, whose father had been a student at the Warrington Academy in company with the sons of

Josiah Wedgwood, and in friendship with the Aikins and the daughter who became Mrs. Barbauld, and whose poetic genius remains to us in one poem often quoted to this day. It contains the famous expression in reference to our happy dead: "Say not Good night – Good morning."

Up to the year 1850 the household of the young minister and his wife was carried out on the serene lines of peace and righteous economy so familiar to those who can remember the Puritan ideal. It was blessed with young children, and one precious infant, the only boy, was taken away, leaving a memory which no lapse of time could weaken. This little soul seems to have remained in Mrs. Gaskell's future years as a permanent visitant in his mother's heart and imagination. He is referred to with undying love and yearning, and it was owing to his death that she seems first to have sought occupation in the use of her pen. She planned and executed her first novel in the silence of her own heart, and when at last it was published it was under the assumed name of Cotton Mather Mills. The title was the simple one of "Mary Barton", and it is no exaggeration to say that it took the reading world by storm, and shook the conception of capitalistic power to its foundation. It raised an angry storm in the world of wealth, and a passionate yearning in the world of poverty. The use and the terrible responsibilities of riches were never again unquestioned. It was truly the first nail in the coffin, an articulate wail from the Hungry Forties, and the controversy then openly suggested is unabated today. Mrs. Gaskell's name was soon brought forward as the author of "Mary Barton" and she became not only a noted writer but the personal friend of that group of great geniuses who enlivened the Fifties with a glow which still lingers, and is one of the best items in our national assets of today.

Few looking on Mrs. Gaskell's dignified form and handsome features in those years of the early Fifties could have imagined that fifteen more years were to close her career of personal influence. Yet so it was. She wrote eight books of varying importance, of which "Ruth" was, perhaps, the least effective, because it warred against the peculiar reserves of the epoch at which it appeared. Yet it certainly aroused strong feeling at the time and the two main issues were hotly discussed. One concerned the falsehood, which to modern ears would sound so harmless, regarding the supposed widowhood of the heroine, which falsehood was painfully allowed by the very holy minister who rescues her and the boy Leonard; and the other pertaining to the initial tragedy of the seduction. When memory recalls the hot discussion as to the propriety of the subject at all, it seems as if our old England had oddly slipped away from the heroic heights of "Clarissa Harlowe"! "Ruth" is the one book in which Mrs. Gaskell seems to have felt that she could not possess a free hand, and yet it was on this one subject that on one unforgettable occasion she was heard to speak with fearless decision and wonderful tenderness. Where a woman was to be absolved and a man condemned for unspeakable wickedness Mrs. Gaskell's verdict left no room for doubt.

Turning to quite another subject she showed in "Sylvia's Lovers" how she could handle tragedy. The poignant effect of the culprit's resignation of his life made to one reader an absolute impossibility of a second perusal. Finally the book entitled "Wives and Daughters" with its last unfinished chapter interrupted by the hand of death, is thought by some to be the very crown of Mrs. Gaskell's achievement. She herself had a strange presentiment that if ever she was immortalised it would be through "Cranford". She said that so many had spoken to her of that book. It was "understood of the people" with its mingling of tenderness and humour, and it will probably be reprinted as long as our language lasts.

As a critic "sixty years after" it remains to speak of the profound sincerity and appreciation shown in "The Life of Charlotte Brontë". Mrs. Gaskell drew a picture of the three sisters which is as true a work of art as any Rembrandt. "There are devotees of the Brontës who will travel miles to walk over the ground which the Brontës trod, often with a copy of Mrs. Gaskell's "Life" in their hands rather than a Brontë novel". And the colours of that picture will remain undimmed. Who that stood by the side of that aged father in his loneliness after Charlotte's death, and received his grave salute, and his permission to visit the empty room where Charlotte's portrait was all that remained of her, could doubt the penetrating truth of her friend's description. "I did so try to tell the truth," wrote Mrs. Gaskell to one of her correspondents after the "Life" was published. "I weighed every line with my whole power and heart so that every line should go to its great purpose of making her known and valued." And, moreover, "It is to Mrs. Gaskell that we are indebted for the record of the religious and ethical side of Charlotte Brontë's character." The elder woman understood the younger, and did her best to portray her, and that feat was immortal, and nothing of a later time can ever replace it. "People may talk as they will about the little respect that is paid to virtue, unaccompanied by the outward accident of wealth or station ... but all the better and more noble qualities in the hearts of others make ready and go forth to meet it on its approach; provided only it be pure, simple, and unconscious of its own existence." The nobility of Charlotte Brontë shines out in the pages written by her friend, against all that adverse criticism which has long died away. We may say with John Milton –

*For if virtue feeble were,  
Heaven itself would stoop to her.*

B.R.B.

Editor thanks Janet Kennerley for typing this out at midnight on 29 September 2011.

# London looks at Charlotte and Elizabeth: “The Life of Charlotte Brontë” - A Reading Day

**Katharine Solomon**

In March 2012, members of the London branch of the Brontë Society spent a day reading *The Life of Charlotte Brontë* by Elizabeth Gaskell. We met in the beautiful hall of the Concert Artistes Association near Covent Garden; sixteen of us sat around a long table, each with our own copy of the work. In turn we each read a pre-selected extract. The day was co-ordinated by Jenny Dunn, who had chosen the extracts; she introduced each of them, and chaired the discussion after each reading.

We started the day with a discussion about Elizabeth Gaskell's motives in treating the life of Charlotte Brontë in the way she did. We felt that Gaskell had been concerned to rescue her friend from the charge of “coarseness”. We considered what the word meant to the Victorians, and whether *Jane Eyre* was correctly considered coarse.

Our readings started with Mrs Gaskell's impression of the “character of the people of Haworth”; they seemed to her to have a degree of self-sufficiency “rather apt to repel a stranger”. We discussed whether she was right to perceive Haworth as remote and wild, or whether we should rely on a modern biographer's description of it as a well-populated semi-industrial area.

We moved on to an extract from the early years of the Brontë family. We read about Mr Brontë's alleged rages, his burning of coloured leather boots and his cutting up of his wife's silk dress. Mr Brontë was not happy with Mrs Gaskell's portrayal of him, and we considered whether Mrs Gaskell had been over-influenced by a report from a former servant. Mrs Gaskell contrasted her account with a much more favourable story about Mr Brontë seeking his young children's opinions, giving them the opportunity of speaking freely from behind a mask.

We read about the food at Cowan Bridge School, “Lowood” in *Jane Eyre*. There was a distinct contrast between Mrs Gaskell's comparatively benign account of the prime mover, Mr William Carus Wilson, and Charlotte's violent reaction to the school and to “Mr Brocklehurst” in particular. We moved on to Roe Head School, where Charlotte made two lifelong friends, whose correspondence provided much material for Mrs Gaskell's biography; she found that quoting Charlotte's own words was often more effective than her own narrative could have been.

We read the letter from the Poet Laureate, Robert Southey, written in 1837 after Charlotte had sent him some of her poems. The well-known sentence in Southey's letter, “Literature cannot be the business of a woman's life, and it ought not to be.” proved to be misleading when read as part of the whole letter, which was kind and not entirely discouraging.

Two years later, Charlotte received her first proposal of marriage. Gaskell does not name the gentleman, except to say he was a clergyman, and by implication, the brother of a friend. We read Charlotte's letter about the episode, describing her “kindly leaning” but lack of “intense attachment”. Mrs Gaskell comments on Charlotte's acceptance that marriage was not for her, but no obvious alternative presented itself – she was not a natural teacher of children.

So we come to Brussels – a critical period for Charlotte. Mrs Gaskell had visited Brussels and met M.Héger, and had been shown extracts from Charlotte's intense letters. But she only described, very unrevealingly, a “silent estrangement” between Charlotte and Madame Héger.

Back in Haworth, we read the account of Emily's final weeks in 1848 and her agonised death. Anne's more tranquil death followed only a few months later. Mrs Gaskell's narrative power conveyed the sadness of both these deaths, so different and yet both heart-rending.

We came to Mr Nicholl's first proposal of marriage, which was unsuccessful. Both Charlotte Brontë's and Elizabeth Gaskell's powers of description were fully deployed in the account of Mr Nicholl's proposal: “He made me, for the first time, feel what it costs a man to declare affection when he doubts response.”

Finally, in order to show that Charlotte, like Elizabeth Gaskell, had to deal with unfavourable criticism, we read her hurt letters to G H Lewes after his review of Shirley. First Charlotte sent a short, angry note, then a more considered but still reproachful letter. Both Lewes and Mrs Gaskell considered that Charlotte's tone was “cavalier”, but then none of us enjoys criticism. *Villette* excited some interest from female readers and we read Charlotte's reaction to a fan seeking more details about Paul Emanuel.

The day ended all too soon: we had only been able to read a limited number of extracts from this wonderful book, but we had been forcibly reminded of its excellence.

## The Two Elizabeths **Alan Shelston**

A little known volume of poems has recently come to light via a catalogue of the antiquarian bookseller, Charles Cox of Launceston, Cornwall. (Catalogue no.63). The book is entitled *Poems and Translations*; its author is referred to as Elizabeth Gaskell Holland. It has no publisher's imprint and no date.<sup>1</sup> Elizabeth Gaskell Holland was the sister of William Gaskell and thus the sister-in-law of Elizabeth the novelist. She enjoyed a long life, living from 1812 to 1892, during the course of which she bore ten children, including a pair of twins. What particularly took my eye in the description in the catalogue was its reference to a poem the then Elizabeth Holland wrote on the marriage of the then Elizabeth Stevenson to her brother.



This seemed to me a potentially interesting Gaskell find, but the book itself was surrounded by an element of mystery.



**'Dearest Lizzie' with her five eldest children in 1845**

In his catalogue Charles Cox describes the book as 'her (ie Elizabeth Holland's) only book' and this would certainly seem to be the case. He goes on to say that there are only two copies known in addition to the one he has for sale; one of these is held by the Women's Library at London Metropolitan University and the other is in North Carolina. There are other copies, I believe, in the possession of the Holland family. I have checked the Women's Library copy, and I must thank the librarian there for giving me access to it.

The volume itself was very attractively bound in dark green leather, with an elegant border of intertwining clover leaves in gold leaf. Its end papers give no indication of date, publisher or printer; there is no contents page but there are 310 pages of poems and translations. Most of the poems are relatively short, and some of them related to figures in Elizabeth Holland's family at various points in their lives. Some are dated over a period of a long life. Otherwise there are poems in a very Victorian mode about nature, the divinity, children, death – often these themes are interlinked – while the hundred pages of translations (mostly from the German) follow similar themes. It would be nice to be able to say that they show a genuine poetic talent, but in all honesty, apart from a facility for simple rhyme schemes, the talent, where it existed, was a very predictable one: Elizabeth Holland was mistress of the rhetorical cliché. Versifying was then seen as an accomplishment for young women, much as were drawing and musical performance. Did Elizabeth Holland learn her German from her brother William, as did Catherine Winkworth, the hymnodist whose *Lyra Germanica*, translations of German hymns, were published in two series, in 1855 and 1858?

<sup>1</sup> I am reliably informed that it was printed by the Women's Printing Society Ltd of 66 Whitcombe Street, London, WC, but their imprint does not appear on the copy I consulted.

The absence of any reference to publisher or date raises interesting problems: when, by whom, and under what circumstances, was this volume published? The first poem in the book, a dedication to Elizabeth Holland's unnamed son, is dated 1828, and the last 1890; her style never changes. In the Women's Library copy there is a pencilled signature on the fly-leaf: 'Edith H. Norton'.<sup>2</sup> This was the married name of one of Elizabeth's daughters, born in 1845, but again the signature is undated. All of this – the beauty of the binding, the anonymity of the publisher, the family centred content of many of the poems and above all the very few copies of the book now in existence suggests that the book was privately printed towards the end of Elizabeth Holland Gaskell's life as some kind of family tribute or memorial, perhaps for her eightieth birthday, which would have fallen on 21 September 1892; she died however on 8 March of that year. The fly-leaf signature on the copy I inspected suggests that it was kept in the family at least during the next generation, but after that its history disappears. It remains to consider the wedding poem written by one Elizabeth for the other. It reads as follows:

On the Marriage of E. C. S [Elizabeth Cleghorn Stevenson]  
August 30th, 1832

Nay, blame her not for those dew-like tears,  
She is leaving the home of her early years,  
She is going to one that she knows not of,  
With him to whom she has plighted her troth.

Nay, blame her not, 'twas a happy home,  
One that she'll dream of in years to come –  
The home where her childhood footsteps roved  
The dwelling of all that she ever has loved

What though no dearly loved father is there  
To mourn for the darling he watched with such care,  
Though her mother, alas! in the damp grave is sleeping,  
Yet one there is now in her loneliness weeping –

The one who has loved and cared for her when  
She was motherless, friendless; oh, never again  
Will she meet with affection so pure, so sincere,  
As beams in that eye though 'tis dimmed by a tear.

Weep on aged mourner – no gay laugh to-morrow  
Will playfully strive to beguile thee of sorrow,  
No footstep be heard lightly bounding along,  
No sweet voice to warble thy favourite song.

And the bridegroom so joyous that bears her away,  
Does he chide his young bride for those sad tears to-day?

<sup>2</sup> Professor Chapple tells me that Edith married a merchant. John Norton, of Norbiton, Surrey in 1875. They had 5 children.



Ah no! he remembers the moment too well  
When he bade his own home and loved inmates farewell.

Then blame her not; soon again she will smile,  
And the flow'ret transplanted will wither awhile,  
And the young bird transported to some foreign clime  
Will droop and remember its home for a time.

It has to be said the Lizzie's poem to Elizabeth is a somewhat lugubrious affair: it is weighted towards the sadness involved in leaving the single state as much as welcoming the joys of marriage. This was perhaps a not unconventional view in the Victorian period: for inexperienced young women the entry into marriage might well seem forbidding. George Eliot's Celia Brooke expresses this anxiety in *Middlemarch* when she asks her sister Dorothea about her wedding journey with her gloomy husband and this may not have been entirely a special case. Elizabeth Gaskell's delight in her own marriage in her early letters is a refreshing corrective. One wonders what she might have thought of a wedding tribute in which her dead parents 'mourn' from the 'damp grave' and in which her surrogate mother, Aunt Lumb, is cast as an 'aged mourner'. One should say, perhaps, that the lines in tribute to Aunt Lumb confirm her importance in Elizabeth Stevenson's early life. Anyway they express the closeness of these Holland and Gaskell networks. We have Elizabeth's word that Aunt Lumb, 'my more than mother, expressed surprise that so serious a man as William would have taken a fancy to 'such a little giddy thoughtless thing' as she, and she herself joked that she was about to learn 'obedience' from her prospective husband. (*Gaskell Letters*, p1; *Further Letters* p19) As we know the 'young bird' was not transported to droop in some foreign clime after her marriage: she spent a month in North Wales discovering the delights of matrimony. (*Gaskell Letters*, pp2-3)

Elizabeth Holland, affectionately referred to by Elizabeth Gaskell as 'Lizzie', kept house for her brother in Dover Street in Manchester before he married. The two Elizabeths would have met often during these pre-wedding months, and they continued to correspond in the early years of the Gaskell marriage; from all the evidence they valued their mutual acquaintance. Elizabeth wrote excitedly to Lizzie from North Wales about 'this obstreperous brother of yours' (*GL*, p2) where the Gaskells went on their wedding journey and there is a sequence of early letters which reveal the closeness of their relationship. Two long later letters show that this continued into middle life. (*GL* nos 145, 424) where unstated family issues are alluded to.

Lizzie married Charles Holland in 1838 and a long letter from Elizabeth Gaskell at that time clearly responds to anxiety on Lizzie's part about the prospect of her own marriage. It would seem that she has suggested that the marriage should wait. 'I would not have the engagement much prolonged', Elizabeth Gaskell replies, 'you will always (put it off for 20 years) [sic] have a month of nervousness at last to go through — a feeling of awe on entering a new state of life, and quitting old habits and old places &c, — but you only put off the evil time by delaying your marriage.'

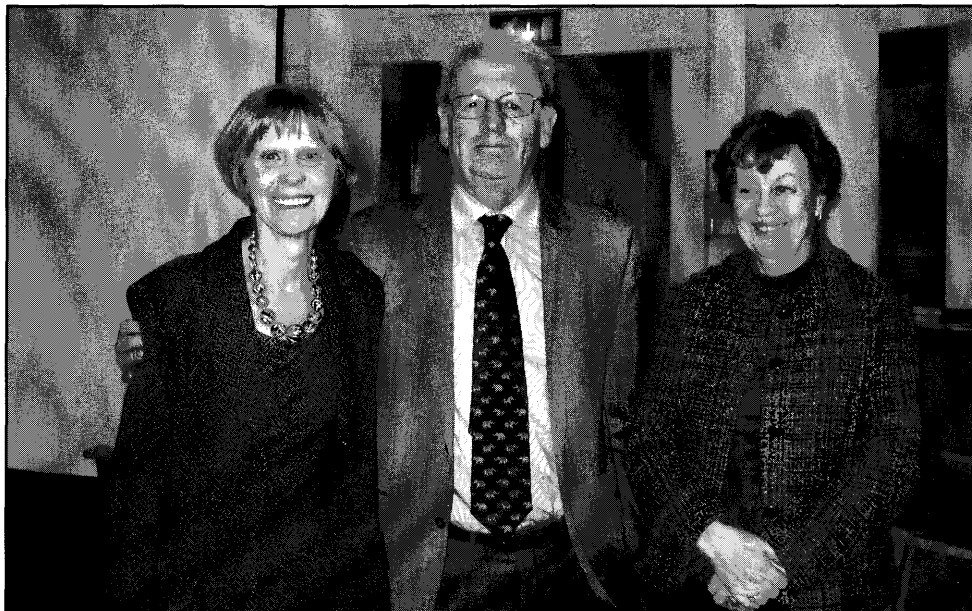
The 'new state of life' may seem intimidating but she argues that 'you will gain more knowledge of his tastes and habits in a week living in the house with him, or in a day married to him, than by years of pop [sic] visits...where the joy of seeing you swallows up ... any individual peculiarity of character' (*GL*, pp36, 35, 19 August 1838). This sounds very much like the voice of experience.

Lizzie did not postpone her marriage, and she lived for a much longer time than her mentor. During that time she continued to write her poems, all much of the same kind on typically Victorian subjects. A delightful family portrait, showing her with five of her children playing in the drawing-room with their toys, exists in the possession of the Holland family. There are also portraits of her as a young woman and in later life, again in the possession of the family I am grateful to Professor Chapple and to the Holland family for access to copies of these materials. Unlike Elizabeth Gaskell's, all of Lizzie's children survived; nevertheless in her several poems about babies she invariably emphasises their vulnerability. Nature is given heavily Romantic significance: its features figure prominently as evidence of the divine. The poems are often self-questioning and they fill in some of the details of her family associations. For her translations, mostly from the German, she seems to have chosen poems similar in their subject-matter to her own; again a beneficent view of nature predominates. Her poems, by their very typicality, tell us much about Victorian attitudes, and much indeed about this Elizabeth who outlived her husband and lived on until the final decade of the century.

The Holland family were widespread through Lancashire and Cheshire — so much so that it is not always easy to sort out the connections between its various members. They became established in the Unitarian networks of the eighteenth century and most of them increased in prosperity in the nineteenth. Elizabeth Gaskell's mother was a Holland, and her eldest daughter Marianne, married another. It is a nice twist that Elizabeth Gaskell's first intentions were to write verse, one poem of which commemorated the grave of her first unborn child, and that the husband with whom she had written some early verse should have been the brother of another Gaskell poet who would one day connect the Gaskell and Holland families via marriage. While one Elizabeth was to abandon verse and become famous as a novelist, the other worked away consistently at her poetry which nevertheless remained a private affair. There is no record of what either of them thought of each other's literary achievements.



**Mrs Charles Holland, nee  
Elizabeth Gaskell (aka Lizzie)  
1812-1892, in 1870**



**Alan, now Former President, Shelston  
flanked by (R) Chairman Ann and (L) Secretary Pam, after AGM, 14 April 2012**



**Lea Hurst with high turret where ECG toiled over North and South in 1854;  
and visited by members of the Gaskell Society, 30 May 2012**



**Doreen and John Pleydell  
were married on 18 April  
1942.**

**Here they are, 70 years  
later, enjoying their  
garden between April  
showers.**



**Willersley Castle, Derbyshire, also visited by ECG; and the Gaskell Society.  
Cromford Church and Canal Wharf on right  
(from an early 19th century drawing supplied by Christine Lingard)**

# What a single word can do

Alan Shelston

Dr Johnson, in the Preface to his edition of Shakespeare, was scathing about the process of writing notes. Of the efforts of a fellow-editor, he wrote, 'the writing of notes is not of difficult attainment.' But the annotation of literary works can often be a frustrating business; all the more if one reflects on the possibility that most readers will pass over most notes. However they have their uses. Some years ago I was asked to edit *Mary Barton* for the new paperback in Everyman's Library. I was very conscious of the authority of Angus Easson's major edition of the novel (Ryburn Publishing, 1993). It is very authoritatively annotated and I did my best to limit my borrowings: however there was one occasion when I turned to it for enlightenment, and found the solution not there.

Chapter 8 of *Mary Barton* concludes with the singer, Margaret Jennings, who is losing her sight, singing a ballad the first line of which is 'What a single word can do'. The theme of the song is that a single word can on occasion transform an entire situation, and the song itself is unattributed. I was unable to discover who has written it. Easson passes over this item, and in private conversation he told me that it had not proved possible to trace its origin. This, as far as I could tell, was indeed the case, and my edition went to press with an admission of failure.

Somewhat later, though, and too late for inclusion in the edition, I found the answer quite by chance when working on Elizabeth Gaskell's unpublished correspondence. I was checking a letter in a file of correspondence held in the Library of the Wordsworth Centre at Dove Cottage, at Grasmere when I turned to the preceding page and found a letter from William Gaskell to an autograph seeker written to him after Elizabeth's death. Enclosed with the letter was a second sheet giving the two stanzas of Margaret's song exactly as they appear in the novel. The correspondence reads as follows:

Plymouth Grove  
Jan 24th 1867

Dear Sir,

I have had so many claims on my time that, I am obliged to confess, your note was laid aside with some others and forgotten. I send a short song of mine which was inserted in "Mary Barton," and which has been thought worth setting to music by two or three different hands [.]

In haste

I am, dear Sir,

Yours faithfully

Wm Gaskell

A. Vogue Esq.

There was then an enclosure in William Gaskell's hand, on a separate sheet, giving the two stanzas of the *Mary Barton* poem:

What a single word can do!  
Thrilling all the heart-strings through,  
Calling forth fond memories,  
Raining round hope's melodies,  
Steeping all in one bright hue –  
What a single word can do!

What a single word can do!  
Making life seem all untrue,  
Driving joy and hope away,  
Leaving not one cheering ray,  
Blighting every flower that grew –  
What a single word can do!

We know little of William's correspondent: the 1861 census records an 'A. Vogue' as having been born in France but now living in Northamptonshire. William's letter to him is directed to a London address, but in fact there is an earlier letter to him from Elizabeth herself to a Nottingham address in which she apologises for delay in response to an earlier request for an autograph. This letter is included in *Further Letters* (p262) and is dated 8th March 1864. Vogue is not registered in the 1871 census: perhaps by this time he had returned to France, or possibly died.

It could be argued that little of this matters in any material way. But that is not entirely so: apart from confirming the tendency of Victorian enthusiasts to seek autographs – a practice that Elizabeth herself indulged in – it extends our awareness of her husband's involvement in her early work, and also his post mortem willingness to respond to an enquiry related to it. Dr Johnson erred, I think, provided that is, that editors get it right.

*I am grateful for the assistance of the staff at The Wordsworth Trust, Dove Cottage, Cumbria for allowing me access to the correspondence referred to in this article [Stanger ms 2/104, 1-6] and for the permission of the Curator, Jeff Cowton, to reprint it.*

## A brief account of illustrated editions of Elizabeth Gaskell's works

Emma Marigliano

The mid-eighteenth century is widely acknowledged as the hey-day of Victorian book illustration. From the popular press to pamphlets, from volumes of instruction and information to works of great literature - pictures interpreted the words. Many authors had their own favourite illustrators; think of Hablot K Browne (otherwise

known as 'Phiz') and you think of Dickens; mention John Tenniel and you connect him with Lewis Carroll, Tennyson – willing or otherwise – attracted the artistic imagination of the pre-Raphaelites. There was no shortage of illustrators and illustrations for the Victorian novel, that's for sure. The publishers, in particular, quickly realised that a picture spoke a thousand words and, consequently, commissioned artists and illustrators to speak them.

One therefore has to wonder why the descriptive and dramatic tales that Elizabeth Gaskell wrote were so rarely adorned by the illustrators of the day. In fact there were no illustrated editions of her work until the very end of her career with the serial publication and illustration of *Cousin Phillis* and *Wives and Daughters* in the 'Cornhill Magazine'. As far as her novels were concerned it was her publisher, George Smith, of Smith, Elder, who decided to commission George du Maurier.

Elizabeth Gaskell was known to have made a very brief remark just once on du Maurier's illustration in a letter to George Smith, the publisher, dated 10th December 1863. "I like the illustrations to *Sylvia* much – but I must end." (Chapple and Shelston, p266, quoted in Recchio, p77, 2009, Ashgate Publishing). George du Maurier (1834-1896) and, briefly, Myles Birket Foster (1825-1899) were the only illustrators within her lifetime.

The serialisation in the Cornhill Magazine of *Cousin Phillis* and *Wives and Daughters* between 1863 and 1866 was the first time that Gaskell's fiction was illustrated whilst the first novel to be illustrated was *The Moorland Cottage* which was published as a Christmas Book in 1850 with Birket Foster's illustrations.

Du Maurier illustrated *Sylvia's Lovers* (1863), *Cranford* and *Dark Night's Work* in 1864; *Lizzie Leigh* (see right), *The Grey Woman* and *Cousin Phyllis* in 1865, *Wives and Daughters* in 1866 and *North and South* in 1867. *Cranford* had appeared in Dickens's 'Household Words' in serial form between 1851 and 1853 and *North and South* between 1854 and 1855 but neither title was illustrated at this time.

There is no evidence in Gaskell's correspondence with her publishers to suggest any plans on her part for illustration of her novels. Thomas Recchio, on this basis, assumes that her late fiction and the production of illustrated editions of her early work were driven by her publisher's concerns (2009). Given the



small number of du Maurier's illustrations for *Sylvia's Lovers* and *Wives and Daughters*, Recchio goes on to suggest that George Smith commissioned the illustrations to help sell Gaskell's books at a crucial time in the marketplace, setting her on a par with Dickens's serial publications and Chapman and Hall's novel publications.

Hugh Thomson (1860-1920) illustrated *Cranford* in 1891, about 25 years after Mrs Gaskell's death. It was so popular that it set off a stream of illustrated editions between the United Kingdom and America throughout the 1890s and the first 20 years or so of the 20th century. Recchio points out the stylistic differences between du Maurier and Thomson's illustrations, charging the latter with producing 'a set of visual stereotypes in the service of a cultural narrative that evokes a nostalgic sense of national identity, a literary definition of what it is to be English.' (2009)



Thomas Heath Robinson (1869-1950), brother to Charles and the fantastically inventive William, illustrated *Cranford* at the close of the century in 1896 and, stylistically, did not depart dramatically from the pattern of his predecessors. T H Robinson had illustrated a number of fantasy and fairy tales and although he went on to apply himself to more realistic art, such as *Cranford* and *Hawthorne's Scarlet Letter*, he never entirely left whimsy as this can be seen in just a few of the *Cranford* illustrations (see figure on left for instance).

The first few years of the twentieth century saw another prolifically talented pair of siblings, Harry (H M Brock [1875-1960]) and Charles (C E) Brock [1870-1938], try their hand with *Cranford* although Charles was more inclined towards Jane

Austen's works. It could be seen in these later interpretations that the drama that du Maurier had conveyed in his much more graphically heavy illustrations had been lost, somewhat, along the way. Nevertheless, not much more was changing, stylistically and the generally stereotypical illustrations hardly moved on.

In 1914 E H New (Edmund Hart New [1871-1931]) provided some illustrations for an edition of *Cranford* published by Methuen. New submitted a number of illustrations for George Musgrave's translation of Dante's *Inferno* around this time and, as he favoured pen and ink sketches of the geography of literary works, the illustrations for Dante tended towards Florentine locations in particular. New adopted the same style for *Cranford*, and the novel was a departure from his usual 'guide book' illustrations (*The English Lakes* and *Oxfordshire*, for instance). His sketches for *Cranford* were probably taken from those he produced for George Payne's *Mrs Gaskell and Knutsford* which, as Recchio suggests, effectively turned the novel into a guidebook of Elizabeth Gaskell's girlhood home (pp76-77).



E H New affords an almost irrelevant diversion, serving mainly to introduce the change of approach heralded by the twentieth century. It may be no coincidence that a more marked departure from the same-old-same-old was due to the advent of a spate of women illustrators on the scene which continues to this day. Mention here is made of a few more prominent names. M(ary) V Wheelhouse (fl 1895-1947) was better known as a painter and illustrator of children's books but, in fact, she took to Gaskell's works in a big way. *Cranford* seems to have been the favoured title for the majority of illustrators, except for George du Maurier who was selected to illustrate a number of novels and tales. Wheelhouse, however, was a popular and prolific illustrator and counted amongst Elizabeth Gaskell's works *Cousin Phillis* (1908), *Cranford* (1909), *Sylvia's Lovers* (1910) and *Wives and Daughters* (1912). Colour illustrations were being applied more frequently to the Gaskell illustrated editions and Wheelhouse's designs picked up details of furnishings and wall and floor coverings as they had never been seen before. Costume design had a more three-dimensional quality to them because of the colour and gardens took on a new life and the children seemed to jump out of Kate Greenaway's nursery.

In the same year as E H New's rather pedestrian guide book (1914), another edition of *Cranford* was published which continued to emphasise the feminine touch that Elizabeth Gaskell's work had hitherto lacked. One can't help wondering if she would have been more pleased with this change of style than she appeared to be over du Maurier's faithful illustrations. Sybil Tawse (fl 1900-1940) painted portraits, designed posters and illustrated books in line and colour. She chose colour for the *Cranford* illustrations and, although the influence of Thomson and the Brocks is evident in the design of the costumes her attention to detail and accuracy in historical context and setting is all her own. There is a warmth and homeliness in her painterly illustrations that turns the characters into individuals with personalities that the reader could better relate to. This was probably lacking in previous interpretations, including those by Wheelhouse. At the same time Tawse was able to project a theatricality that the moment requires (see figure above).



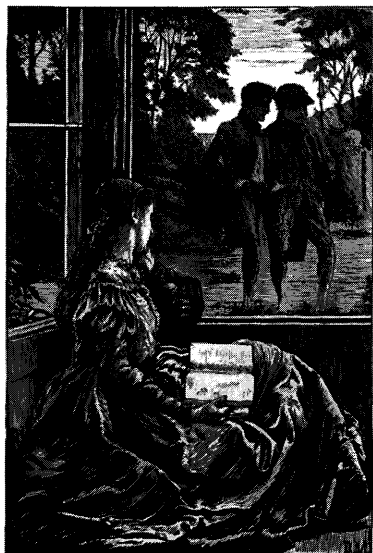
We must travel some considerable years now to one of the more distinctive illustrators of Mrs Gaskell's works, even though *Cranford* is, again, the choice of title – whether the artist's or the publisher's. Joan Hassall (1906-1988) was the daughter of John Hassall and her wood engravings added a style and elegance to many classic works of literature, including those of Gaskell, Brontë and, in particular, Jane

Austen. Not surprisingly, the Folio Society commissioned this superb draughtswoman to illustrate all of Austen's works, and a subsequent Folio set included not only the earlier wood engravings but also later scraperboard versions of Jane Austen's novels. She was obviously extremely well regarded by the Folio Society because they asked Hassall to illustrate Gaskell's *Cranford* (1940) and her inimitable and fresh approach to the line and style of these designs is immediately recognisable. There is quality almost of caricature of some of the characters and the meticulous line and detail of the illustrations display a skill and dedication to her art that is unmistakable. Miss Jenkyns' earnestness, as she reads Dr Johnson's *Rasselas* to Captain Brown is worthy of Rowlandson. Joan Hassall also collaborated with Margaret Lane in a book based on Elizabeth Gaskell's biography of Charlotte Brontë.



Our final, and probably most recent illustrator is another female who has chosen to return to the line-drawing style of earlier illustrators. Having illustrated Wilkie Collins and Anthony Trollope for the Folio Society, Alexy Pendle was asked by them to illustrate Elizabeth Gaskell also. Pendle hails from the East coast of England but, after attending the Central School of Art and The Institute of Education, London University, she went to live, briefly, in the Middle East before she emigrated, in 1976, to the USA and now lives in Boulder, Colorado. She has taught drawing and painting for many years and has illustrated numerous books. She was delighted receive this commission from the Folio Society as Elizabeth Gaskell is one of her favourite authors.

Her style retains a distinctly romantic element but is more reminiscent of du Maurier's than might at first be thought. There is evident inspiration from this earliest of illustrators to the latest (see the comparisons in the two illustrations from *Wives and Daughters*, du Maurier on the left and Pendle on the right).



Though this has been a brief account of the more noteworthy British illustrators of Elizabeth Gaskell's works, it is clear that Mrs Gaskell has not inspired a great many artists. Her works, however, continue to inspire visual interpretation with more recent theatre and television adaptations, growing to great acclaim. These mini-series have captured the interest and imagination of creator and audience alike far more than the illustrations; and the actors have conveyed the wit and the passion of Elizabeth Gaskell with originality - perhaps more successfully even than the illustrations so far seen.

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Emma Marigliano is Librarian of The Portico Library, Manchester.

## Casa Guidi, Florence

Pauline Kiggins

Casa Guidi, in Piazza S. Felice, Florence, is an apartment primarily remembered in connection with the poets Robert Browning and Elizabeth Barrett Browning. On their first wedding anniversary, 12 September 1847, the couple had watched from Casa Guidi as the crowds below, assembled from many regions of the not-yet-unified Italy, surged towards the courtyard of the Pitti Palace to rejoice together at the granting by the Austrian Grand Duke Leopold II of Tuscany the right to form a civic guard, an event which signalled political change and the first stirrings towards unification. It had been an event that thrilled the Brownings, especially Elizabeth.

The apartment in Palazzo Guidi became home to Robert and Elizabeth and there, on 9th March 1849, their son Robert Wiedemann (later known by his self-chosen nickname Pen, or Penini) was born. Elizabeth Barrett Browning died in Casa Guidi on 29th June 1861.

After expressing the wish to have Casa Guidi recreated as it had been during his parents' time there, and preserved in their memory, Pen Browning bought the whole of the palazzo in 1893, but all was sold again in 1912 after Pen's death. However, although Pen did not see it fulfilled, his wish was remembered and carried out many years later. In 1971 the apartment was acquired by the Browning Institute based in New York. Restoration work was started, using as a guide the painting by Mignaty commissioned by Robert after his wife's death and before he and Penini left Florence. Eventually the Institute realised that restoration was beyond its resources. The apartment was sold and is now owned by Eton College. At the end of 1990, the Headmaster, Dr Anderson, proposed that the Landmark Trust might support the school in the use of this property. (The Landmark Trust is an independent charity, founded in 1965, with two main aims, the first, to rescue worthwhile buildings and their surroundings from neglect; the second, to promote the enjoyment of these places and make them available for short breaks or longer holidays. Most of Landmark's properties are in England, Scotland or Wales, but there is also one in the USA and there are four in Italy. I have mentioned the Landmark Trust here with this account of its aims, because of the interest I believe Gaskell Society members have in the preservation and use of buildings with interesting histories!) When not being used by Etonians, Casa Guidi is available for private bookings.

A stay in Casa Guidi is a magical experience on many levels. Situated in the Oltrarno district, (south of the river on the other bank from the immediate centre round the Duomo and Battistera) along the Via Maggio and almost opposite the Pitti Palace and the Boboli Gardens, it is an ideal location, within easy walking distance of central Florence, over either the famous Ponte Vecchio or the Ponte Santa Trinita.

In her biography, *Elizabeth Gaskell: a habit of stories*, Jenny Uglow mentions two

visits to Casa Guidi intended to be made by Mrs Gaskell as the party was travelling homewards through Florence, after their memorable stay in Rome in 1857. Uglow covers the visits in a single paragraph, as follows:

(Elizabeth Gaskell) arrived in Florence. Robert Browning paid a long call as soon as they arrived and Elizabeth took Katie Winkworth to meet his wife. Elizabeth Barrett Browning, however, scarcely spoke a word and Elizabeth desperately filled the silences by telling long stories about Charlotte Brontë, with Katie acting as chorus and the Brownings' friend Isa Blagden stopping the gaps [-----]. Even Katie was driven to admit the evening was 'not particularly brilliant'. Elizabeth and Charles (Eliot Norton) tried to call again before they left, but the news of Mr Barrett's death had just reached the Casa Guidi; his daughter was devastated and would see no one.<sup>1</sup>

So it seems that Mrs Gaskell's experience with both of the Brownings was rather strained and difficult. In Letter 421 of Chapple and Pollard, Mrs Gaskell writes of the Brownings to Tottie Fox: "I liked her better than him; perhaps for the reason that he fell asleep while I was talking to him." Perhaps the second visit planned with Charles Eliot Norton to Casa Guidi, might have been more successful. But it was

not to be - their timing was so unfortunate. The glimpses we get of the interwoven lives of these 19th century writers are fascinating, and are made so much more real when pictured in the places where they actually happened. Walking into Casa Guidi seems like stepping back in time: the drawing room and main bedroom in particular, have been recreated as they were when Mrs Gaskell visited.

**Photograph of the drawing room at Casa Guidi, Florence, Italy, furnished by the Landmark Trust to look as it was at the time of Robert and Elizabeth. A painting of the room, commissioned by Robert Browning after his wife's death in 1861 was used to recreate the colour scheme, furnishings and fabrics, while some of the items seen in the room are actually the originals.**

<sup>1</sup> Uglow, Jenny, *Elizabeth Gaskell: a habit of stories*, (London, Faber and Faber, 1993) p.425.

## Away From It All

Christine Lingard

The major subject of the problems faced by Elizabeth Gaskell, in juggling the demands as the wife of a busy minister and the mother of four lively daughters, and also as a successful writer, is well-documented. For her, home and family always came first but her publishers and editors were always imposing deadlines for her latest work. While we may have a romanticised image of her writing at the table in the dining room of Plymouth Grove, her solution was more likely to get away from it all. Frequent visits to friends and relations were often an excuse to get some time to devote to her latest project. Much of *North and South* for example was written at the Nightingale home at Lea Hurst near Matlock.

This was particularly the case when she embarked on *Sylvia's Lovers*. This was a mammoth project, comprising three volumes to be published by Smith Elder. She had first met the former Arctic explorer, Dr William Scoresby in Dunoon as long ago as 1855 and got underway on the book after a visit to Auchencairn, on the Solway Firth, in 1859. Her exploratory trip to Whitby where she did most of her research took place in November 1859. Work was well underway in 1862 when the blockade put on exports of cotton from the United States during the American Civil War caused the cotton mills of Manchester to fail. Thousands of mill workers were made destitute and the Gaskell women were among the many middle-class Manchester women who rallied to the call to organise sewing circles and soup kitchens.

This had taken its toll on their health, Meta's especially, and all work on the novel was suspended. In order to catch up Gaskell took herself and her daughter Meta away for a month in September 1862 to a town on the south coast of England: Eastbourne in Sussex. Though a fishing village of some antiquity, its reputation as a sea-bathing resort was relatively recent. It had long been overshadowed by its grand neighbour, Brighton, the favourite haunt of the Prince Regent. Despite its Georgian appearance, it was not until the 1850s that work began to turn it into a serious rival, and this was still on-going at the time of her visit.

The long sea-front at Eastbourne, which consists almost exclusively of hotels, was developed by the 7th Duke of Devonshire, who had inherited land in the town from his mother's family. This duke was not the one who entertained Elizabeth at Chatsworth in 1857 but his cousin, previously known as the Earl of Burlington, who succeeded him in 1858. His statue can be seen in nearby Devonshire Place. The front is divided into several terraces known as parades. The Gaskells' lodgings were at 35 Marine Parade, the section to the east of the pier. (Though this had not yet been built at the time of their visit). Number 35 (almost at its eastern end) is one of the most modest buildings in the terrace, consisting only of two bays and only the simplest of metal work decoration. It was run as a lodging-house for many years by William Cummins. The Queen's Hotel, which later dominated this parade, was not completed till 1870.



Despite being so busy Elizabeth and Meta had time for sight-seeing. It is generally believed that it was during this visit that Mrs Gaskell got the idea for another piece – a short story (one of seven) entitled *How the First Floor Went to Crowley Castle*, that was contributed to *Mrs Lirriper's Lodgings*, the extra Christmas number of Dickens's *All the Year Round* of 1863. This is a Gothic story describing a ruined Norman castle within easy reach of Brighton and its neighbouring church, where the family was commemorated with ancient brasses.

As Geoffrey Sharps explains there are several possibilities in the neighbourhood, most notably Pevensey Castle, built shortly after the Battle of Hastings by William's first half-brother on site of a Roman fort near to the point where the Conqueror landed. Originally on the coast the bay has silted up and it had long been a ruin. It is now administered by English Heritage, but neither of the local churches fit with the description in Gaskell's story.

There was another castle in the area at Herstmonceaux (sometimes spelt Hurstmonceaux), although it wasn't Norman. Built in the 1440s by the Fiennes

family, it was more of grand manor house than a fortification. It had been in ruins since the end of the eighteenth century and partially dismantled. It has now been restored and for many years it was the home of the Royal Observatory. Now it is a conference centre and the grounds and gardens are open to the public. Nearby All Saints church contains tombs and brasses of the Dacre family dating from the sixteenth century and this church fits the bill. It would have been of interest to Gaskell for other reasons. Several members of the Winkworth family had visited it and a former rector was known to her – Julius Hare, Archdeacon of Lewes, who was active in the campaign of Charles Kingsley to alleviate the lot of tailors and seamstresses.



**35 Marine Parade Eastbourne  
where ECG wrote and Meta rested in  
Sept 1862**

Whatever the case, there is no local legend that could have furnished the plot. As usual Mrs Gaskell has skilfully mixed fact with imagination, to create a unique story. It is unfortunately one of her rarer stories only reprinted in the Knutsford edition of 1908 and in the Pickering & Chatto edition of 2006. The manuscript is in the collection of the Manchester Central Library.

#### **Further reading:**

Sharps, J G *Mrs Gaskell's observation and invention: a study of her non-biographic works*. 1970.

## **Gaskell - Nightingale Tour, 30 May, 2012**

**Jean Alston**

On Wednesday, 30 May, thirty-four members of the Gaskell Society and friends enjoyed a day in the Peak District. Participants joined the coach in Manchester, Knutsford and Macclesfield, and were fortunate to have warm dry weather, a comfortable coach and an excellent driver.

The tour began with a short stop at Ashford in the Water, where we enjoyed coffee and delicious home-made biscuits at the Riverside House Hotel. The sheep dip and bridge on the River Wye, and tympanum and virgin lanterns in the church would surely have been appreciated by Mrs Gaskell. Did she travel near this location by coach at any time? She would travel principally by train when she went to the Nightingale's home in 1854 but may have used a combination of the two. One can well imagine that the Arkwright family would visit Ashford when they used their coach for outings in Derbyshire.

Our next stop was Cromford to learn about the influence of Sir Richard Arkwright; some members enjoyed the factory tour while other strolled by the canal, enjoying the mallard and coot with young, and the hawthorn bushes and trees in full blossom.

Clive Tougher, who has studied the Nightingale family and buildings, joined the coach in Cromford and led some of the groups into Willersley Castle Hotel. This building was commissioned by Sir Richard Arkwright and on completion was lived in by his three sons. The hotel is now a location for Christian Guild Holidays but retains many of the architectural features that ECG would have enjoyed when she visited the Arkwright family in 1854. We were shown a remarkable three story oval atrium and original Georgian staircase which Elizabeth would have appreciated; she would also have enjoyed walking in the gardens and observing the river below and spectacular limestone outcrop on the rise beyond. In a letter from Lea Hurst to daughter Marianne in 1854 she referred to Mr and Mrs Arkwright:

They were sorry I had not spoken to them on Sunday at church & sent to ask me to lunch there yesterday, & were very friendly and agreeable.

From Willersley Castle we travelled up the hill to the village of Lea. Clive pointed out Riverside House on our left, which was owned by Florence Nightingale's aunt, and where Florence spent many years in her later life.

We had all been looking forward to seeing Lea Hurst and had fortunately been given permission to visit the garden by the Kay family who had recently acquired it. Lea Hurst is a fine stone building originating in Jacobean times. It was purchased in 1771 by Peter Nightingale II and in 1822 was inherited by William Edward Shore (Peter's nephew, who changed his name to Nightingale). William Edward was father of Parthenope and Florence Nightingale. The house was extended and redesigned by William during the following two years.

However, it is reputedly described by Florence Nightingale's mother as not a very large house as it had only fifteen bedrooms. Elizabeth was invited to stay in the house when demands of visitors and family at Plymouth Grove were preventing her from meeting deadlines imposed by Charles Dickens who was awaiting her serial contributions of *North and South* for the journal *Household Words*. During her stay at Lea Hurst, Elizabeth wrote several letters including one to her daughter Marianne, in which she wrote:

the gardener and his wife ...will live in one part, far far away, & I shall have all the rest of the large place to myself, i.e. two rooms downstairs and a room & a balcony high up at the top... all to myself

To Catherine Winkworth, she wrote:

It is getting dark. I am to have my tea, up in my turret - at 6. And after that I shall lock my outer door & write. I am stocked with coals, and have candles up here; for I am a quarter of a mile of staircase & odd intricate passage away from every one else in the house.

Janet Kennerley read excerpts from the letters, as we sat or stood around in the garden of Lea Hurst, examining the building and enjoying the views that ECG had appreciated when she stayed there.

Although we were reluctant to leave Lea Hurst, we eventually walked back to the village of Lea, where Clive had arranged that we should visit the Florence Nightingale Memorial Hall. This village hall was built in 1932 on land donated by the Nightingale Estate. The villagers have made it a centre for Nightingale studies and, on the wall, there are maps showing locations of battles and events of the Crimean War, and other collections relating to Florence Nightingale. We were invited to have afternoon tea at this hall on a future occasion.

Our final stop was at Lea Hall. This is the Nightingale ancestral home and where the family lived as it built up its fortune (on lead). It was built in the 17th century and bought by Thomas Nightingale in 1707. The newer Georgian front was added by Peter I in 1754. It was inherited from his son, Peter II, by Florence's father in 1822, the year after Florence was born. Florence lived at Lea Hall during her early years

and enjoyed walking from there to the nearby church at Dethick. Lea Hall is now one of the properties owned by Nicola and Peter Bunting, who have several Derbyshire country houses and furnish them with antique furniture appropriate to their age and architecture. These beautiful houses are available for Peak District holidays. We were provided with 'mountains' of delicious scones, butter, cream and jam by the resident caretakers at Lea Hall and could make ourselves at home in many of the rooms, garden and large patio. The weather continued to be warm and pleasant for the whole day.

Again, we were reluctant to leave but duly boarded our coach for the return from Nightingale country to Gaskell country. Once again, we must thank the Gaskell reputation for the opportunity to visit so many interesting and pleasant locations.

Editor adds: And **WE** must thank Jean for organising such a wonderful day. It would appear that Jean has control even over the weather.

## Book Notes

Christine Lingard

**Elizabeth Gaskell: the Life of Elizabeth Gaskell in Photographs by Tatsuhiro Ohno. Ohsaka Kyoiku Toshō, Osaka. ISBN 978 -4-271-21014-6**

Members who have been on Society holidays and outings in the last ten years may remember Professor Ohno of Kumamoto University with his camera and tripod. The result is this book consisting of 502 of his colour photographs illustrating numerous places in the United Kingdom associated with Elizabeth Gaskell including places mentioned in her writing. The book is chronologically arranged annotated with quotations (in English) from the letters and other writings. It is particularly useful in establishing the current condition of the places mentioned.

**The Selected Letters of Charles Dickens, edited by Jenny Hartley. Oxford University Press. ISBN 978-0-19-859141-1**

The British Academy Pilgrim edition of the Complete Letters of Charles Dickens encompassing twelve volumes includes over 14,000 letters was edited by a number of distinguished academics, including Professor Angus Easson, so it is useful to have 450 of the most interesting in a single volume, and revealing his work as writer, publisher, editor and family man. The work includes seven of his letters to Elizabeth Gaskell outlining their difficulties in producing *North and South* in instalments for *Household Words* in 1854. The book contains the same detailed textual notes as the original.

Letters of Mrs Gaskell's Daughters, 1856-1914, edited by Irene Wiltshire, available in hard copy and as an E-book (PDF and Kindle) from Humanities Ebooks, Tirril Hall, Penrith CA10 2JE, <http://humanities-ebooks.co.uk> ISBN 978-1-84760-204-6

Elizabeth Gaskell's two eldest daughters Marianne and Meta were their mother's confidantes and their letters include useful extra information illuminating events in her life but all four continued to lead interesting lives after her death, and deserve to be better known in their own right. Correspondents include Charles Elliot Norton and members of the Wedgwood family. A lot of Meta's correspondence dates from the 20th century and deal with the establishment of the Gaskell Collection in Manchester. The book contains copious footnotes. Dr Wiltshire, a former membership secretary of the Society, is still remembered for the regular meetings she conducted in Knutsford.

Please note that the Gaskell Collection in the Manchester City Library has now been added to the library's online digital catalogue. A link to the catalogue has been placed on the Gaskell Society web page. The Library itself is still closed pending extensive renovation and is due to reopen in 2013 but the collection is available at the Greater Manchester Record Office. (The website gives directions.) The temporary library at Eliot House, Deansgate has a good collection of background material in its Manchester room.

The collection contains an extensive range of Gaskell editions, including some early translations, major monographs and biographies including some doctoral theses, books from Gaskell's personal library, cuttings and periodical articles as well as an extensive range of material by and relating to William Gaskell. To browse the collection it is advisable to do undertake a keyword search including the word Gaskell Collection in addition to the term you are interested in.

*Editor adds:* I was delighted to receive recently from Masuko Adachi a copy of her latest book published in March 2012 (not yet available in English translation): *A Study of Elizabeth Gaskell's fiction: exploring themes and techniques*. (ISBN 978-4-7553-0266-4) Masuko covers the six novels and seven of the Novelle and short stories. Quotes are given in the original English as well as in Japanese translation. There are photographs of Knutsford, Silverdale, "Heppenheim" and elsewhere. This is a beautifully produced hardback. Masuko is now Emeritus Professor at Notre Dame Seishen University, but she will continue to do some part-time teaching. We wish her a very happy retirement.

*Cranford* makes a cameo appearance in *The Heather Blazing*, by Colm Tóibín.

## Alliance of Literary Societies AGM Weekend

12-13 May 2012

Lynda Stephens

This year's ALS weekend was hosted by the Nottingham Branch of the Dickens Fellowship. We gathered at the Mechanics Institute for coffee before being welcomed by Rosemary Longland, Chairman of the Nottingham Branch and also by Joan Dicks of the International Dickens Fellowship. Rosemary told us that they have a tradition of reading the books out loud at their monthly meetings and this year it is *A Tale of Two Cities*.

The Fellowship is very active in this bicentenary year and they are particularly proud of the permanent legacy of the work done by the University of Buckingham in putting all of the journals online to be freely available at [djo.org.uk](http://djo.org.uk).

Anita Fernandez Young gave Michael Eaton's presentation of Dickens's Screen Heritage and recommended [imdb.com](http://imdb.com) as a resource for films. There was a 1922 film about the London locations in the books.

Karen Mersiowsky of the D H Lawrence Society showed us a film of her researches in Eastwood into Lawrence's home and family. She had interviewed elderly residents and recorded their insights.

We had a pleasant lunch and a chance to meet some of the other delegates, all of whom were enthusiastic about their own authors and keen to advertise upcoming events.

It was announced at the AGM that next year's event will be hosted by the Barbara Pym Society and will be held on the first weekend in June at St Hilda's College Oxford. In 2014 it will be in Canterbury with the Christopher Marlowe Society; in 2015 hosted by the Trollope Society and in 2016, by the Brontë Society.

We had an enjoyable dinner followed by the traditional readings, Janet Kennerley of the Gaskell Society read the letter in which Mrs Gaskell wrote of a train journey during which she read some of a Dickens novel over a gentleman's shoulder and regretted that he wasn't a quicker reader.

On Sunday morning we met at D H Lawrence's birthplace museum in Eastwood for a fascinating tour led by a well-informed guide.

We said our goodbyes and journeyed back to Cheshire through the delightful Derbyshire countryside. Another excellent ALS weekend.



## Exciting News from 84 Plymouth Grove

Janet Allan

We now have the go-head! £1,851,800 has been awarded by the Heritage Lottery Fund, with a further £500,000 in match funding raised by the Manchester Historic Buildings Trust ensures the future of the House.

The announcement was broadcast on television, press and local radio on 13 June, when Professor Hannah Barker from Heritage Lottery Fund met representatives of the Trust and the Gaskell Society at the House.

We will have a restored and converted House – the garden setting and the ground floor as they were in Elizabeth Gaskell's time, the lower ground floor with sympathetically restored kitchen and servants' hall, new toilets, and a connecting lift. Upstairs the large original bedrooms will be available as conference, exhibition and office spaces, with a new staircase connecting it to the rear. There will be sensitive interpretation (sponsored by the Gaskell Society), research material, a book collection and hopefully the best home-made cakes in Ardwick! The money will also pay for a house manager and audience development post for five years, and the success of the house will depend upon them and upon our team of volunteers from near and far.

Work is due to start in September on the disabled ramp and damp-proofing the basement. Our architect and his team are currently preparing detailed plans for the main work, and we hope the builders will be on site by February. Completion is planned for early 2014 when the whole house will be open to the public.

It's taken a long time and we could not possibly have achieved this remarkable result without the dedication and commitment of many people. So thank you all, and please come and see us when we reopen!

## Forthcoming Events

### Autumn General Meeting

**Saturday 29 September, 2012, at the Methodist Church, Knutsford**

**10.30am** Tea and coffee

**11am** Alison Lundie will deliver the Joan Leach Memorial Lecture  
***A Woman's Touch: Domestic Arts in the Work of Elizabeth Gaskell***

**12.30pm** approx. lunch

**2pm** Tracy Vaughan  
***The Gospel According to Gaskell: Flawed Family and a Father's Sin in Lizzie Leigh***

**3.30pm** approx. finish.

Cost £12.50 to include lunch

## Annual General Meeting

**Saturday 13 April, 2013**, at Cross Street Unitarian Church, Manchester. Further details TBA in next Newsletter.

## North-West Group

### Manchester Meetings

**Gaskell Society Meetings at Cross Street Unitarian Church**

held on the first Tuesday of the month (October to March excluding January) Street at 1.00pm.

The Chapel will usually be open at 12 o'clock so that you can bring your own lunch. This session's meetings, including lunch will be held in the Percival Room.

The theme for the meetings is **Victorian Contemporaries**.

**Tuesday October 2, 2012**, Barbara Hardy on George Eliot's novel *Middlemarch*

**Tuesday November 6, 2012**, Geoff Thomason on Charles Hallé

**Tuesday December 4, 2012**, Professor Angus Easson on "*Christmas stories*". A look at the Christmas stories (not always very "Christmassy") that Dickens wrote in 1850s and 1860s for his magazines

**Tuesday February 5, 2013**, Ian Emberson on 3 Quartets: the Rossettis, the Mendelssohns and the Brontës.

**Tuesday March 5, 2013**, Dr Patsy Stoneman on Charlotte Brontë and her relationship with Elizabeth Gaskell and the marked differences between them.

## Knutsford Meetings

Meetings are held on the last Wednesday of the month (October to April excluding December) in St John's Church parish rooms, Knutsford, Cheshire.

An excellent buffet lunch is served at 12.15 (£8, pay on the day), followed by a talk and discussion, led by Elizabeth Williams at 1.30pm. Meetings end about 3pm.

The meetings will start again on 31 October 2012 when the work to be studied will be *Ruth*.

## The Gaskell Society South-West

### **Sunday, 2 September 2012, 12.30 pm**

Bring and Share lunch at Bren and Nick Abercrombie's, 12 Mount Road, Lansdown, Bath, Tel: 01225 471241. All members and partners welcome.

Please phone Kate Crawford to tell her you can come (Tel: 01373 834353). Food and drink will be organised by Veronica Trenchard (Tel: 01225 852155).

### **Saturday, 10 November 2012, 2.30 pm**

At the BRLSI, Queen Square, Bath, we will have a lecture by Professor Michael Wheeler, Visiting Professor at the University of Southampton. His topic will be *One of the Lost Continents: religion in nineteenth-century fiction*. Professor Wheeler has had a distinguished career as an academic at Lancaster University where he masterminded the project to build the Ruskin Library.

He then moved on to Hampshire where he served as co-director of the Chawton House Library. He is now an independent scholar and lecturer as well as a Visiting Professor at Southampton.

## Discussion Groups

We will hold our discussion groups again in 2013, on **Saturdays, 23 February and 23 March, 2.15 pm**, and the book will be *North and South*.

The groups will again be held in homes, the first at Elizabeth Schlenther's, 14 Vellore Lane, Bath, and the second at Bren Abercrombie's, 12 Mount Road, Lansdown, Bath. The cost will be £5 for both sessions.

**Any queries to Elizabeth Schlenther, 14 Vellore Lane, Bath, BA2 6JQ, Tel: 01225 331763.**

## London and South-East Branch

Sandwich lunch will be available from 12.45pm. Meetings begin at 2pm; tea and cake will be served after the meeting. Usually the formal part of the meeting finishes about 3.30pm for those needing to catch trains.

**Venue: Francis Holland School, Graham Terrace, London.**

The entrance is via doors on Graham Terrace, please ring the bell marked 'RECEPTION' loudly to gain entry. For security reasons the door must be locked until opened from inside.

The school is a three minute walk from Sloane Square tube station (on the District and Circle lines) and about a 15-20 minute walk from Victoria. There are also buses from Victoria. (Please check running of the tubes as they often carry out engineering work at weekends).

**Book Stall:** We have a 'bring and buy' book stall (proceeds for the renovation of the Gaskell House in Manchester). Please bring unwanted books and buy replacements.

Meetings are £5.00 (including everything) payable on the day. You are warmly invited. All meetings are held on Saturdays.

Further details from Dr Fran Twinn [frantwinn@aflex.net](mailto:frantwinn@aflex.net)

**Saturday, 13 October, 2012, Elizabeth Williams: Elizabeth Gaskell and Gossip**

**Saturday, 9 February, 2013, Ann Brooks: The Portico Library and the Gaskells' connections**

Ann (and Bryan Howarth who may join us) became volunteers at The Portico,

Manchester, in 1985 and Ann continued to serve for 20 years. They are the co-authors of the official history of the library, *Boomtown Manchester 1800-1850 The Portico Connection. A History of the Portico Library and Newsroom*. (The Portico Library, 2000).

**Saturday, 11 May, 2013**, Carolyn Lambert: **Sex, Stability and Secrets: Artefacts and rituals in Elizabeth Gaskell's fiction.**

Carolyn will share the fruits of her PhD research.

**Saturday, 14 September, 2013**, Alison Lundie: **Domestic Arts in *Mary Barton* and *North and South*.**

Alison, a founding member of the London Gaskell Reading group, is studying for a PhD at Roehampton. Her talk will focus on shawls and needlewomen in *Mary Barton* and *North and South*.

## Academy Service

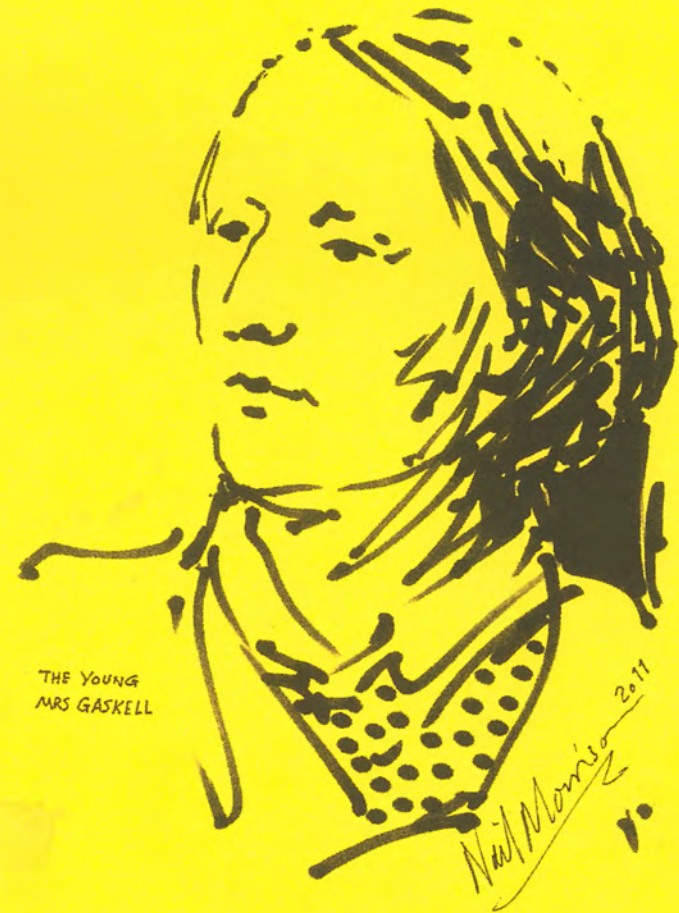
**Sunday, 16 September 2012, 3 pm**

**Dickens Bicentenary: "Dickens's Correspondence with Elizabeth Gaskell".**

This event at Cairo Street Chapel, Warrington, will be a service of hymns and readings with the address given by two members of the Dickens Fellowship in full period costume.



# The Gaskell Society



THE YOUNG  
MRS GASKELL

THE GASKELL SOCIETY HOME PAGE has all the latest information on meetings.  
<http://gaskellsociety.co.uk>

If you have any material or suggestions for future Newsletters, please contact Mrs. Helen Smith,  
11 Lowland Way, Knutsford, Cheshire, WA16 9AG.  
Telephone - 01565 632615 E-mail: [helenisabel@ntlworld.com](mailto:helenisabel@ntlworld.com)

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**Membership Secretary:** Miss C. Lingard, 5 Moran Crescent, Macclesfield SK11 8JJ

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NEWSLETTER  
Spring 2013 - Number 55



## Editor's Letter

Helen Smith

Enclosed with this Newsletter is information about the AGM (13 April) and the Conference (19-22 July). Please read, digest carefully and then send your replies to Christine Lingard by 31 March.

The US study tour in September 2012 leaves us quite breathless. Christine Bhatt leads us through the adventures and shows us the sights of this visit in her comprehensive report. Fortunately all the Brits returned safely and in time for the Autumn General Meeting in Knutsford on Mrs Gaskell's 202nd birthday.

Back in Knutsford we have been busy studying *Ruth* under the skilful and expert guidance of Elizabeth Williams and we have celebrated the New Year with a lunch at Peover Golf Club (We do not believe ECG played golf!) on Wednesday 16 January. After we had indulged in more than adequate sustenance, Shirley Foster entertained us with tales of Mrs Gaskell and food. Gourmand and gourmet Mrs G was certainly not 'clemmed', and how ostentatious many of the wealthy Victorians were in their greed and conspicuous consumption. Our thanks to Shirley for permitting her talk to be printed in this Newsletter.

<http://www.lang.nagoya-u.ac.jp/~matsuoka/EG-Newsletter.html>

At this Japanese website the contents of all Newsletters from number 20 (August 1995) to date are listed. This is a very useful, and possibly not generally known, tool. The first 19 Newsletters also contain items of interest but must be searched, when located, individually.

Often I invite friends and members to write for the Newsletter. The most frequent reply to this heart-felt plea is: "I don't know what to write about" or, "What shall I write about?" (Other members do produce the goods, for which most grateful thanks). May I suggest some possible topics for your consideration:

- Mrs Gaskell and the Brothers Grimm
- Mrs Gaskell travels to Silverdale
- Mrs Gaskell visits Florence
- Mrs Gaskell and Warrington
- Mrs Gaskell: Dover Street, Upper Rumford Street and Plymouth Grove
- Mrs Gaskell and servants
- Miss Stevenson in Knutsford

The scope is endless: please exercise the imagination and start writing. Fortunately you do not need to ask your daughters to sharpen your quills although our children may well prove to be helpful with technology. And snail mail is also accepted.

As I trot along the cobbles in Red Cow Yard to discuss the printing of the Newsletter with Rebecca, I often wonder if Elizabeth, hand-in-hand with Aunt Lumb, may have toddled along this very path 200 years ago. We shall never know.

As ever, I wish to thank everyone who has written for this Newsletter; please continue to do so and I look forward to contributions from new authors. Our thanks to Rebecca Stuart at Lithotech Print in Knutsford for her hard work and patience in producing our Newsletter.

Happy New Year to all our readers! We are really looking forward to meeting many members at the Conference (19-22 July) which, we hope, will be the highlight of the Gaskell Year.



Just desserts for Shirley Foster and Alan Shelston? New Year lunch

## Elizabeth Gaskell and Food

Shirley Foster

Having just enjoyed an excellent lunch with all of you, I thought it might be appropriate to this occasion to consider some aspects of Mrs G's relationship with food, both how it featured in her own life, and also its function in her writings.

From her letters, we gain the impression that she enjoyed her food, took note of what she and others consumed, and was ready to complain if she didn't have enough to eat. Her relish for the luxuries of country fare is evident in a letter from Sandlebridge of May 1836, in which she describes 'cream that your spoon stands

upright in, & such sweet (not sentimental but literal) oven-cakes and fresh butter' (6). This contrasts with her grumble, many years later when they were living at Plymouth Grove, that, with a houseful of guests they can't get enough butter: the butter woman doesn't come, and, with their own cow, they can make only about 4lbs a week, 'at the very outside' (636). One also suspects that the Manchester butter was not as good as that from Cheshire. The problems of planning menus and having enough food prepared for the many guests who came to Manchester is a frequent topic. Such concerns, she claims, also exercised her when she was away from home. She notes how difficult it is to get provisions in 'wild' Silverdale (505), adding that there is no bread nearer than Milnthorpe (her guests apparently had to make do with shrimps on their own for tea). At Auchencairn, where she stayed in July 1859, there is a similar difficulty with basic foodstuff: there is plenty of meat available 'but potatoes [are] a delicacy not to be purchased nearer than Castle Douglas, nine miles away' (565). There is, though, a note of self-irony in these complaints; she probably enjoyed 'roughing it' – or, rather, giving her correspondents the impression that she was doing just that.

Gaskell, it seems, was usually hungry. After she and William had walked over to Pendleton, to see their American friends, the Bradfords, she was delighted that they were offered 'such a supper' (18), fuelling them for dancing and their walk back to Manchester in the early hours of the morning. For her, restrictions on food intake were particularly disagreeable. She describes a visit to a Miss Nancie Smith, for instance, where they have 'a very scanty lunch' (600). One place where this was an especial problem was at the Paris house of her friend Madame Mohl ('Clarkey'). Mohl was a kind and lively woman who wanted her guests to enjoy themselves, but it seems that she and her husband, Julius, had little appreciation of healthy English appetites. On a visit in 1855, Gaskell describes how she and Meta go to a 'great soirée got up in my honour', which, although fun, failed to provide adequate sustenance:

[...only] cups of rich chocolate and cream cakes, which made Meta wish she could have kept either her good dinner or her good tea to another day, for she is perpetually hungry. We hardly ever have more than twice to eat in the day. Breakfast, tea and bread and butter. *Then* 6 o'clock dinner, and *nothing* whatever after, not even when we go to [the] theatre. (333)

Ten years later, things haven't improved, as is clear from Gaskell's description to Emily Shaen of their daily diet chez Mohl: they have breakfast coffee at 8.00; then a second breakfast around 11.00 – cold meat, bread, wine and water, and sometimes an omelette, 'what we should call lunch, in fact, only it comes too soon after my breakfast, and too long before dinner for my English habits'. Dinner at the Mohls' is at 'six sharp' – 'Soup, meat, one dish of vegetables and roasted apples are what we have in general'. Afterwards, everyone falls asleep, then 'at eight exactly M Mohl

wakes up and makes a cup of very weak tea for Mme Mohl and me, nothing to eat after dinner; not even if we have been to the play' (750). Sometimes after dinner she goes to an evening party, where she enjoys talk and listening to music, and 'I come home hungry as a hawk about one a.m.' (751). Presumably she then spent a restless night, kept awake by her rumbling empty stomach! Though her tone here is light-hearted, she attributes a fortnight's illness and weakness to 'the real want of food and lowness of diet' in Paris (753).

As well as telling us about Gaskell's own attitudes, references to food and eating in the letters also help to give a picture of the diet and eating habits of an average middle-class Victorian family; they give, too, glimpses of higher social class habits (as I shall show, details of the diet of the poor are chiefly found in Gaskell's fiction). The magnificent supper that she and William enjoyed at the Bradfords' produces a naïve admiration as well as bodily gratification: 'I suppose the Bradfords are very rich, - for [there were] wine and grapes, and pines, and such cakes my mouth waters at the thought, and ducks and green peas, and new potatoes and asparagus and chickens without end, and savoury pies, and all sorts of beautiful confectionery' (18). This is clearly 'how the other half lives'. (Among other things, if the Bradfords grew their own pineapples they would have need a hotbed and a heated glass house, items of some expenditure). Again, the provisions prepared for the Shaens' Christmas dinner at Crix, in December 1847 - 40lb sirloin of beef and two turkeys, for ten in the parlour and thirty-two in the servants' hall - gives some idea of the prosperity of this well-to-do Unitarian family. Gaskell notes more extravagance on a visit to the Behrens at Worleston, where dinner consisted of 'turtle soup, green peas (at half a guinea a quart), iced pudding, ducklings, chickens, lamb etc. etc.' (546). In contrast, references to the Gaskells' meals suggest a simpler, less ostentatious diet: lunch could be ham sandwiches and beer (William also eats sandwiches on the train), and one quickly prepared tea included 'eggs filled with anchovy, à la Mrs Shadwell [wife of their friend Col. Shadwell]' (652). Boiled sole is offered for dinner to the children and Old William (not WG), not apparently wholly to the latter's liking (839). Of course, Gaskell had a cook who actually prepared the food, even if she herself chose it. On the rare occasions when she cooked, the result was perhaps less than perfect: she mentions frying ham and eggs at home, and setting fire to the fat in the pan so that someone had to rush out into the garden with it. She adds humorously: 'The toast was not so first-rate. We were like thorough cooks and only did the best dish well' (857).

Gaskell's experiences of eating abroad (in addition to the Mohls) are also referenced in the letters. Foreign travel was of course much less common than it is now, and Gaskell's response to unfamiliar diet is surprisingly tolerant. Unlike William, who disliked foreign food 'like poison' (506) <sup>1</sup>, she was prepared to find at least some enjoyment in difference. On her first visit to Germany, she itemises the oddities of lunch (lasting an hour and a half) at Frau von Pickford's: 'soup, boiled meat and potatoes, sausages and pancakes (no bad mixture), RAW pickled fish and kidney

beans or peas stewed in oil, pudding, roast meat and salad, apricot or cherry open flat tart about one and a half yards round, desert cakes, apricots, wild strawberries, coffee' (44). Apart from the raw fish, and perhaps the curious order of courses, the meal seems to have met with her approval - though surely she must have been struck by how much the Germans eat! She experiences another strange foreign meal in Paris, where she goes to 'a real Russian dinner'. Her reactions are mixed: 'First soup made of mutton, and sour kraut, very nasty and horrible to smell. Then balls and rissoles very good; fish, rice, eggs and cabbage, all chopped up together, and cased in bread. Then caviar and smoked fish handed round with bread and butter. Then sweetbreads done in some extraordinary fashion, then eels, chopped up with mushrooms, lemon juice and mustard. Then roti of some common sort; then gelinottes or Russian partridge, which feed on the young sprouts of the pine trees, and taste strongly of turpentine. Then a sweet soup, ball of raisins and currants like plum-pudding, boiled in orange-flower water'. That was probably all, she says, adding demurely, 'it was all I took at any rate' (751). There was also far too much food at a dinner she went to in Heidelberg, including large amounts of soup, baked potatoes with no butter, cabbage which she left untouched (probably more sauerkraut), passable sausages, unacceptable beef, and - surprisingly - a good rice pudding. More to her taste was the (this time adequate) food she and Julia had at a French hotel in Dieppe in October 1865. Here, they could have breakfast (coffee, bread and butter) in their own room, lunch (chocolate, cold meat, bread and butter, Neufchatel cheese and grapes) in the salle-à-manger whenever they liked; and a table d'hôte dinner of soup, fish, two meats, pudding and desert' [sic] (778). All this was nine francs inclusive, obviously a bargain.

Given Gaskell's interest in food, and also the fact that almost all her writing belongs to the genre of social realism, it is not surprising that we find many references to eating and customs associated with it in her work. As with the Letters, such details provide the social historian with valuable information about contemporary behaviour. Further, though, they can be used as part of the mechanics of narration, a means of illuminating character or furthering the plot. In many of the novels and short stories, local names for foodstuff - for example, 'clap-bread' - tell us of regional differences and specialities. The immense meat pie that is the supper dish for the Holman household in *Cousin Phillis* gives an indication of what a prosperous Cheshire farmer would offer his workers after a hard day in the fields. In one of Gaskell's early short stories, *Christmas Storms and Sunshine* (1848), she tells us what two lower middle class couples might buy for their Christmas meal: the slighter better-off pair choose turkey and sausages, while the other pair make do with roast beef; they also have plum-pudding or mince pies (both choices are consumed when the couples are reconciled and share their celebration meal). *Cranford*, of course, provides delightful details of eating habits among the respectable middle class and gentry. Oranges are special, but are too messy to be eaten in public (and distastefully associated with a certain action associated with young babies); tea-time treats include Savoy biscuits and seed-cake; Betty Barker

(who wants to impress) offers scalloped oysters, potted lobsters, jelly and 'little Cupids' (macaroons soaked in brandy – was the name itself partly their attraction?) for supper; bread-jelly is an invalid food. Mr Holbrook belongs to an earlier generation, so when Miss Matty and Mary go to lunch with him, they are presented with two-pronged forks with which to eat peas. Interestingly, too, Holbrook himself adverts to the current custom in which "folks begin with sweet things, and then turn their dinners topsy-turvy", whereas he sticks to his father's rule of broth, followed by suet pudding, followed by meat (similar to the Yorkshire habit of eating Yorkshire pudding before the roast?). And of course much of the humour of the novel derives from the clash between the characters' healthy appetites and their 'gentility' which forbids them showing a vulgar interest in food.

One of the texts that most interestingly pictures local eating habits is the 'factional' piece, *Cumberland Sheep Shearers* (1853), which describes the meal offered to the narrator and her family at a prosperous Lake District farm. Hot and weary from their walk up from Keswick, they are presented with a huge tea which includes berrycake (puff-pastry filled with gooseberries), currant bread, plain bread and butter, hot cakes with honey and cheese, green and black tea with sugar and a little 'rich yellow fragrant cream'. The poor children have 'sweet butter' (rum butter) forced on them to put on the 'clap-bread' or oatcakes, a substance which the narrator says 'is altogether the most nauseous compound in the shape of a dainty I ever tasted'. They are also not given enough milk, because the farmer's wife thinks visitors should have 'grocer's stuff' rather than ordinary farm produce – a common misreading of tastes. In contrast to these sweet things, the main meal for the shearers, seventy in all, consists of 'rounds of beef, hams, fillets of veal, and legs of mutton bobb[ing], indiscriminately, with plum puddings, up and down in a great boiler', while ovens disgorge endless berry-pies and 'rice-puddings stuck full of almonds and raisins'.

There are various instances of Gaskell's more symbolic use of food in her fiction, but I have time here to mention only two examples. *Mary Barton* uses social realism to reinforce its message of the sufferings of the poor and the ills of social inequality. At the opening, when times are relatively good, we see the Bartons and their guests enjoying the luxury of eggs, Cumberland ham, bread and tea with milk and rum; when conditions have deteriorated, they often go hungry or eat merely a little bread (butter is very expensive), with perhaps a scrap of cold bacon. One of Gaskell's direct interpolations in the novel concerns the overall weakening effect – psychological as well as physical – of hunger. When Margaret has started to do well with her singing, she offers Mary a sovereign to buy food for her and her father, and the narrator alerts readers to the Lancashire saying that 'food gives heart'; as she shows, there is a world of difference between having something to eat (even the very basic of foodstuffs) and having nothing. The contrast between the poor and the well-off in this respect is also used to further the plot. John Barton's anger at the sight of a wealthy woman buying food for a party – 'haunches of venison, Stilton

cheeses, moulds of jelly' – while his son lies dying of starvation at home both validates his outrage at this social inequality and hints at the coming violence which such resentment will generate. Similarly, the rather obvious contrast between the ghastly cellar in which Davenport lies dying and the plenty in the Carsons' kitchen, where the cook is preparing breakfast as Wilson goes to get an infirmary order, stresses the huge gulf between the 'two nations'. Gaskell highlights the contrast by stressing the good smells, and the lavishness of expenditure and consumption (Mrs Carson has said that she can't afford more than 2/6 a pound for salmon, and demands cold partridge, a well-buttered roll and coffee with cream for her breakfast).

One other, rather more subtle, symbolic use of food consumption is to be found in the early pages of *Wives and Daughters*. Here it is an indicator of character, as well as foreshadowing future events. When Molly is inadvertently left behind at the Towers' fête, Clare (Mrs Kirkpatrick) is instructed by Lady Cuxhaven to take her some food. Molly however is too faint and ill to eat, and passively allows Clare to eat it instead:

Molly...leant back, picking languidly at the grapes, and watching the good appetite with which the lady ate up the chicken and jelly, and drank the glass of wine. She was so pretty and so graceful in her deep mourning, that even her hurry in eating as if she was afraid of someone coming to surprise her in the act, did not keep her little observer from admiring her in all she did. (Penguin, 17)

The narrative viewpoint is skilfully manipulated here – Molly is cast as the 'little observer', but most of the passage replicates her consciousness – in order to indicate, without direct commentary, Clare's selfishness and deceit, traits which will surface much more during the novel and cause Molly much distress. Here, the contrast between the delicacy of the food itself and the greed with which Clare devours it, is used to excellent effect. Later, too, Molly's slight resentment at Clare's failure to own up to Lady Cuxhaven that it is she, not Molly herself, who has eaten the lunch, subtly reinforces the older woman's innate deviousness. Her refusal, too, to allow Mr Gibson to eat bread and cheese when he returns from his rounds, because cheese is 'vulgar', indicates her false sense of 'gentility' which impacts upon her behaviour as a whole.

Much more remains to be said on this topic, but I hope that this has given some idea of its fruitfulness for future research.

NB Numbers in brackets refer to page numbers in *The Letters of Mrs Gaskell*, Chapple and Pollard.



<sup>1</sup> She was always anxious about William's eating habits while she was away: she tells the elder girls' governess, Barbara Fergusson, that he must have egg beaten up with milk and sugar in the morning; meat or eggs for tea, 'Kidneys, sweet breads and such tit bits – and fowls by way of variety, and devil the legs etc' (FL, 31-2)

## George Richmond 1809 -1896 and his portrait of Elizabeth Gaskell

(bequeathed by Meta to, and now in store at, the National Portrait Gallery)

**Pat Barnard**

George Richmond belonged to a family of artists. In 1831 he married Julia Tatham, the daughter of the architect Charles Heathcote Tatham at Gretna Green and of their 15 children, their son William Blake Richmond became a painter, sculptor and designer. From this, it will be ascertained that George was a follower of William Blake! However it was through portraiture that he made his living, and, of course, of special interest to members of the Gaskell Society he made chalk portraits of Elizabeth Gaskell and of Charlotte Brontë!

Letter 100 to Marianne Gaskell 13th July 1851:

Wednesday I did not go to Richmond, it was too bad a day for him to draw - Tuesday [Thursday?] a long piece of Richmond again, I think it is like me; I hope Papa will think so but I am most doubtful ....

Letter 115 to ?George Richmond February 24th [?1852]:

Dear Sir,

I must plead indisposition as an excuse for not sooner having written to tell you that some time ago my husband placed £31-10s to your account at Masterman's; he says you will know where the bank is so I daresay my having forgotten the more exact address will not signify. With many pleasant recollections of the time I passed in your studio, I believe to remain  
Yours truly, E. C. Gaskell



Letter 166 to John Forster Sept 1853:

Visit to Haworth - in the sitting-room - there was her likeness by Richmond given to her father by Messrs Smith & Elder.

Letter 241 to George Smith, May 31st 1855:

Dear Sir,

I believe you have a copy of Richmond's portrait of Miss Brontë. I want to know if there is any probability of its ever being engraved; or if you would ever object to a daguerreotype being taken from it at future for my own self. I can not tell you how I honoured & loved her.

At the request of the Gaskell Society, and for the 200th anniversary of the birth of Elizabeth Gaskell, the National Portrait Gallery retrieved from storage the two portraits of Elizabeth Gaskell and Charlotte Brontë and displayed them with accompanying titles. (Pastel drawings are subject to deterioration in the light of day so are now back in storage but arrangements may be made to see them. The Gallery also has some interesting papers associated with ECG in a box called Elizabeth Gaskell Sitter Box of which Gaskell Society member Marjorie Darlington has copies)

The portrait of Elizabeth was positioned along one corner of a room with that of Charlotte Brontë alongside the adjoining wall. Charles Darwin's portrait in oils (still on view) was in the same room.

Perhaps you know whether William approved of the drawing! I know most of us were enchanted by this pastel and in my view it is the best portrait of her, but did Elizabeth herself think so? I wonder!

## Elizabeth Gaskell and George Eliot :

siblings, spoilt dogs, cream-jugs, torn dresses, farm labourers, the judgment of Solomon, and the outward gaze

**Barbara Hardy**

As she gained her position as the greatest woman novelist of her day, even challenging the position of the dominant men, Dickens and Thackeray, George Eliot may have had reasons for feeling what Harold Bloom has called 'the anxiety of influence', not only as the common *jealousie de métier* but with the extra pang of sisterly emulation. Elizabeth Gaskell was her most successful woman rival, born ten years earlier, first established in popularity and talent; like her beginning under cover of a male pseudonym, like her turning nostalgia into art, like her blending

pathos and fun, but unlike her emerging into a stable social position as writer, married woman and mother. The mention of Gaskell in Eliot's anonymous essay *Silly Novels by Women Novelists*, first published in the Westminster Review, 1856<sup>1</sup>, before George Eliot the novelist came into existence, is often cited, but the brief comment merely brackets Gaskell with Harriet Martineau, very much her inferior as a writer, and Currer Bell, who was dead, as excellent women novelists 'treated as cavalierly as if they had been men'.

Gaskell and Eliot have been often associated in the discussion of *The Moorland Cottage* (1850) and *The Mill on the Floss* (1860), because of some obvious resemblances, and also perhaps because Eliot denied knowing the book when Swinburne accused her of plagiarism in his hostile *Note on Charlotte Brontë* (1877). *The Moorland Cottage* is not one of Gaskell's best stories, inferior to *Mary Barton*, *Cranford*, *Ruth*, and *The Life of Charlotte Brontë*, which Eliot and Lewes read, and its lack of depth have been an extra reason for Eliot's irritated disclaimer, if this was disingenuous or if she recalled what she had forgotten. Gordon Haight asserts that Eliot had never seen Gaskell's book, apparently accepting her own word (*George Eliot: A Life*, p. 525<sup>2</sup>).

Gaskell had earlier written an amusing letter about happily accepting the authorship of *Adam Bede* – she laughed at herself in a way Eliot never did, because Eliot could joke, but not about her art – though the gossipy and intrusive part Gaskell played in the Liggins scandal is less admirable. Eliot had replied amicably to Gaskell's famous letter expressing admiration and rueful regret that she was not 'Mrs Lewes', saying she knew her writing showed an affinity with the feeling that inspired the early chapters of *Mary Barton* and *Cranford*.

Jo Pryke is persuasive in the conversation with Shirley Foster published in the last but one number of this Newsletter<sup>3</sup> when she says 'common sense suggests that Eliot probably had read *The Moorland Cottage*, opting for unconscious rather than conscious plagiarism' but she makes some points I find less convincing. She argues that the environment and symbolism of *The Mill on the Floss* derive from *The Moorland Cottage* and its surrounding nature, but this ignores the influence of Wordsworth: 'The Thorn' has its special link with Maggie Brown's sacred place, the knotty thorn-tree on its mound, and the poet is a strong presence, explicit and implicit, in the work of both novelists. (Gaskell and Eliot shared not only this love of the English poet, but a profound and informed affection for Dante, whom they both read in Italian and used subtly, though differently, in *North and South*, *Cousin Phillis*, *Felix Holt*, *Middlemarch* and *Daniel Deronda*.) Though Wordsworth was a beloved model for both novelists, their common emphasis on memory need not be attributed to his insistence on the faculty in the patterns and passions of life and poetry. Gaskell's *Cranford* is a nostalgic and loving tribute to the Knutsford of her nurturing, and Eliot pointed out the sources of *The Mill on the Floss*, her own most autobiographical novel, not in a mill and a dangerous river, but in the personal

places of a 'brown stream' where she fished with her brother, and the attic in Griff House (still there) from which, like Maggie Tulliver, she looked out at distant horizons. She did not need the stimulus or influence of Wordsworth's or Gaskell's insistence on memory, given the bitter personal circumstances of her own severance from place and family, starting with the estrangement from her father when she lost her Christian faith, and culminating in the complete break with her family after she confessed her relationship with Lewes. The emphasis on emotional and social continuity is there, in personal and particular, lamented and analysed, before she read Gaskell. Neither Pryke nor Foster, who mentions 'family structures', considers the autobiographical origins of *The Mill on the Floss*: its story of the preferential treatment of the boy and the siblings' troubled relationship, has a well-documented origin in Eliot's life and is less the story of Maggie and Edward Browne than that of Mary Ann and Isaac Evans. We can read the sources in George Eliot's letters and the reminiscences she shared with her husband John Cross, which he warmly and minutely recorded in his biography. Finally, the name Maggie seems to me weak rather than strong evidence: were Eliot guilty of plagiarism, Maggie is the last name she would have chosen for her heroine. What it suggests is that Gaskell's story struck a chord in her mind, resulting neither in copy nor *hommage* but a fascinating unconscious echo.

There is no doubt about the resemblance in the sibling relationship and the drowning, and it is not the only example of a plot in which Eliot seems to be remembering Gaskell. *Ruth* and *Adam Bede* both tell the story of a young woman who is seduced and deserted by a man of higher class, contemplates drowning herself in a pool, and gives birth to a child. In *Middlemarch* Dorothea's inherited fortune is small compared to Margaret Hale's but it also enables her to marry the man she loves. One is tempted to suggest that Eliot is re-writing Gaskell, but these resemblances are broad and less interesting than more particularised small echoes.

My first example is the similarity of two domestic dramas, in Chapters VII and VIII of *Cranford* (1853) and Chapter VII of *Amos Barton*, *Scenes of Clerical Life* (1856), their common properties a jug of cream and another of milk, their chief characters two small spoilt dogs, Lady Jamieson's Carlo, and the Countess Czerlaski's Jet, with their lady owners. Carlo appears when Lady Jamieson insists on taking him to Miss Barker's party, where he arrives panting and rushing round his mistress, is addressed as 'poor ittie doggie' by his hostess, swallows 'chance pieces of cake', and barks with a loud snapping bark; then in a less hospitable gathering at home where 'the poor dumb creature' lies on the rug, barks ungraciously, and laps his saucer of cream which 'he knew quite well ... constantly refused tea with only milk ... so the milk was left for us'. The hungry visitors wryly observe 'the gratitude evinced by his wagging his tail for the cream which should have been ours'. Eliot's Jet also gets cream poured by a fond owner, when the maid Nanny has forgotten the jug of breakfast milk, and is bidden to get more cream, speaks out and

happily precipitates the departure of the unwelcome guest. Carlo has a small comic role, sympathetically developed when he dies; Jet is a plot-mover. Eliot's outspoken Nanny is very Gaskellian, more individual and assertive than Eliot's usual servants, who with a few other exceptions, like Denner in *Felix Holt* and Tantripp in *Middlemarch*, are subdued in behaviour, speech, and fictional role. Names are re-cycled: if the Bartons' Nanny echoes Miss Barker's Nancy in *Cranford*, another Nanny turns up later as a housemaid at the Towers in *Wives and Daughters* (1865). As for milk and cream, the dairy-wise Eliot has her own expertise: butter-making plays an erotic role in *Adam Bede*, and cream is a prominent object in the first chapter of her published fiction, in *Amos Barton*. It is a psychological as well as a social marker, as Mrs Patten's niece pours it into 'fragrant tea with a discreet liberality', Mrs Hackit abstemiously declines it, and the Reader is informed of its merits at some length. Eliot must have found Gaskell's dog-milk-cream image-chain congenial, perhaps inspirational, and Carlo and Jet are resonantly related in one of those concatenations which fascinated the ground-breaking Shakespearean image-analyst Caroline Spurgeon, who pointed out the personal and social significance of the repeated spaniel-fawning-sweetmeat image chain, itself coincidentally related to Gaskell's and Eliot's shared distaste less for small spoilt dogs than for their silly owners.

In Gaskell's story *Lizzie Leigh* (its first part published in Dickens's *Household Words* in 1850, then the whole in a volume with other Gaskell stories in 1853) there is a domestic scene with some resemblance to one in *Adam Bede* (1859). In the first chapter Anne Leigh, like Lisbeth Bede, is mourning her husband's death; she has suffered from his hard-hearted refusal to forgive their 'fallen' daughter Lizzie, but recalls early happy days, like Lisbeth who has suffered from her husband's drinking and Adam's inflexibility. Mrs Leigh has two sons, Will stern and inflexible, the younger Tom delicate and gentle, in some ways like Adam and Seth. Anne comes down from the bedroom where her husband's body is laid out to find that her sons have 'the tea-things' ready, boiled the kettle, and 'done everything in their power to make the house-place more comfortable for her'. In Chapter 10 of *Adam Bede* Lisbeth comes from the chamber of death to find the place disordered but Seth making a fire 'that he might get the kettle to boil, and persuade his mother to have a cup of tea'. He tells her he wants to put some 'things away, and make the house more comfortable'. The situation is similar and so are some words, for instance 'house' and 'comfortable'. There is no question that Eliot's scene and novel are larger and more complex, her language, affective form and ideas more original, sustained and profound than Gaskell's, but there are affinities, echoes and multiple associations - what John Livingstone Lowes in *The Road to Xanadu*, his seminal study of Coleridge's reading and sources, called 'hooked atoms' (1927).

In Chapter 2 of *Ruth* (18) there is a crucial episode in which the looped garland of a ball-dress is torn during a dance, and the dancer withdraws to have it mended by Ruth, in attendance as a milliner's apprentice: the effect of Ruth's beauty and

dignity on the lady's partner, Bellingham, who watches the repair, precipitates the love-affair and the main plot. The occasion is echoed in Chapter 11 of George Eliot's *Silas Marner* (1860) where the waist of Nancy Lammeter's is torn as she dances with Godfrey Cass, and her sister Priscilla does the repair, telling Godfrey brusquely that his presence makes no difference to her. Again, the scenes, characters and function are completely different, but here too the scene is pivotal to the plot: for Godfrey this is a moment of commitment as he recklessly decides to follow his feelings for Nancy, in spite of his secret marriage. And in each case there is a man attending an intimate occasion, a woman mending another woman's dress, a tear, the interruption of a dance, a subtle erotic charge, and some delicate symbolism.

That surely unconscious use in *The Mill* of the name Maggie is confirmed by another striking coincidence of name and character.<sup>4</sup> A character called Timothy Cooper makes a small but important appearance in Gaskell's narrative gem, the novella *Cousin Phillis* (1863-4), and another of the same status and name turns up in Eliot's epic of provincial life, *Middlemarch* (1871-2). The two characters share a name, and a vocation. Gaskell's farm labourer figures in a small sub-plot, as a character who is a thorn in the flesh of Holman, Phillis's father, the not always tolerant Christian minister, whose resentment shows itself in an amusing scene where he explains that he'd like to change the marital bedroom to one where Timothy's incompetence, a 'daily temptation to anger' (Part II), won't be visible from the window. Timothy's stupidity kills a fine Ribstone Pippin when he tips a load of quicklime against its trunk, but he redeems himself in the eyes of master, narrator and reader as he keeps the noisy market-day carts from disturbing Phillis in her sickness, dryly commenting to the narrator Paul, in his only speech, "I reckon you're no better nor a half-wit yourself" (Part IV).

Eliot's Timothy Cooper is a slow though not stupid farm labourer, but unlike his predecessor, who makes several appearances and in a sense develops, if not in himself then in the image he presents to the reader, is an even more important nonce character. He makes his bow once, in his single and impressive speech, when the railway survey comes to Middlemarch, and a minor but significant and historical truthful and representative riot is stirred up by dubiously motivated *agents provocateurs*, involving Fred Vincy, who finds his vocation, and Caleb Garth, who finds unexpected opposition in Timothy, who is not one of the rioters:

"Somebody told you the railroad was a bad thing. That was a lie. It may do a bit of harm here and there, to this and to that; and so does the sun in heaven. But the railroad's a good thing."

"Aw, good for the big folks to make money out on", said old Timothy Cooper, who had stayed behind turning his hay while the others had been gone on their spree; - "I'n seen lots o' things turn up sin' I war a young un - the war an' the pe-ace and the canells, an' th'oald King George, an' the Regen', and the



new King George, an' the new un as has got a new ne-ame—an' it's all been aloike to the poor mon .... This is the big folks's world, this is. But yo're for the big folks, Master Garth, yo are."

Timothy was a wiry old labourer, of a type lingering in those times ... having as little of the feudal spirit, and believing as little, as if he had not been totally unacquainted with the Age of Reason and the Rights of Man. Caleb was in a difficulty known to any person attempting in dark times and unassisted by miracle to reason with rustics who are in possession of any undeniable truth which they know through a hard process of feeling, and let it fall like a giant's club on your neatly-carved argument for a social benefit which they do *not* feel. (LVI) Each Timothy is called 'Tim' by the gentry, and Eliot's character echoes three words of Gaskell's: 'yo're', 'sin' and 'clem'. The two are minor characters – Gaskell's the centre of a sub-plot, Eliot's an impressive nonce-character – but once we imagine their omission, they turn out to be indispensable to finer meanings. Eliot, a less overtly political novelist than Gaskell, uses the name of a Gaskell character for a powerful political encounter, a single speech and a moment without which the great novel would lose something vital, the statement of that 'undeniable truth', the one radical criticism of the worthy Caleb, and his work for Dorothea's land-rights, as a 'Master's Man'. Of course Eliot was influenced by Gaskell here (as perhaps also in her mentions of the railway and the canal-system) and the influence led to a coincidental choice of name which she would never have used had she not been using it unconsciously. Had she not used it, no-one would have perceived the slight, delicate, subtle link between the two novels and novelists. His author, who would have been most fascinated by the second Timothy and recognised his name, died before *Middlemarch* was published.

The coincidence of the two Timothys draws attention to politics, and to the creative imagination of our two novelists, which brilliantly invented the nuanced and humane presence and pressure of minor characters, possessing their individual centres of self. Why always Dorothea? asks the narrator of *Middlemarch*, turning to the less sympathetic Casaubon. Gaskell and Eliot ask it also – not arrestingly and explicitly -- of a smaller presence: Why not also Timothy Cooper? The coincidence of naming draws attention to the affinity between two great novelists. and should be welcomed by those Gaskell admirers who have some justification for feeling and thinking that their novelist has been under-privileged in literary reputation, especially when compared to her more conspicuously celebrated sister and rival. It is one of several echoes I have noticed over the years, not while researching this subject but reading with other subjects in mind. Some are unconscious memories, some coincidences, others common tropes – we may argue about categories - but all show similar preoccupations and affinities, in details more eloquent of influence than the more obvious plot resemblances.

My last conjunction belongs to a trope found in earlier and later painting - for instance, Vermeer and Caspar David Friedrich - and earlier fiction - for instance, Jane Austen. <sup>5</sup> In *Ruth*, *North and South*, *Wives and Daughters*, *The Mill on the*

*Floss* and *Middlemarch* there are many scenes where characters, almost always women, look out of a window or in one case, from a beach, out to sea, in a gaze which is morally and psychologically resonant. This outward look links *North and South* and *Middlemarch*, both psychologically and socially wide-ranging and profound works.

In *North and South* Margaret is shown in a long sequence of visions, which culminates in a successful acceptance of the world that is larger than her own existence and which stimulates her to subdue her self. <sup>6</sup> Gaskell's Unitarian vision sometimes suggests God or a Creator: on the beach at Cromer, Margaret looks at the sky, hears 'the psalm' of the waves, and decides to take her fortune into her own capable human hands (Chapter 49), and the emphasis is secular. But in a scene written later, and inserted as the final paragraph of Chapter 48 in the second edition of the novel, she looks from the window of her old Harley Street nursery, a sacred place where she now repents untruthfulness and prays to renew her youthful vows to live 'sans peur et sans reproche', as her night sky – perhaps a little strangely – shows 'faint pink reflections of earthly lights on the soft clouds which float tranquilly into the white moonlight', and the emphasis is on the act of prayer. In this revised version the new London scene obviously makes the whole image-set more concentrated and more sacramental in emphasis, picking up earlier religious imagery, like 'dome', the circles of Dante's *Inferno*, and making the later 'psalm' and perhaps even the 'east', more resonant, but the human consequence is always prominent.

In Chapter 50 a man replaces the woman, and the moral emphasis is entirely secular: after a sleepless night of conflict and crisis, John Thornton opens a shuttered window, to experience a 'ruddy dawn', where the emphasis is on sunrise but also on a east cold wind informing him that the weather will not change for his commercial convenience. Like Margaret's but more practically, though picking up resonance from the previous scenes, his outward gaze stimulates and symbolises the subjugation of self.

So does Dorothea's. Dorothea's habitual view is from her sacred place, the boudoir in Lowick which has a westerly outlook on to the grounds and trees of Lowick Manor, but on the last occasion she looks east, from her bedroom, after a night of vigil and struggle, to see 'the bending sky' and 'the pearly light' on a world beyond her own domain, on the road a man carrying a burden, a woman and child, in the field 'perhaps the shepherd with his dog': 'the largeness of the world and the manifold wakings of men to labour and endurance'. The agnostic's emphasis is humanist and secular: any religious implication in its eastward view is wide, in this novel appropriately reminding us of many mythologies. Eliot's presentation of her heroine's creative outward look is the culmination of a more clearly and systematically patterned sequence than that in *North and South*, and her final vision is more eloquently expanded as climax and culmination than Gaskell's, though with a similar theme of personal tradition and sacrament.

Ruth and Molly Gibson also share the outward look, but without such affinities with Eliot, though Molly has one image in common with Dorothea – another hooked atom. Eliot's revision of the imagery and the meanings of scenes and images from *North and South* for *Middlemarch* is confirmed by an elaborate and striking simile Eliot is unconsciously recalling from *Wives and Daughters* (1865). Molly Gibson's conquest of her barely articulate jealousy of Cynthia's attachment to Roger Hamley, as he lies 'ill and unattended in ... savage lands' is compared to that of the real mother in King Solomon's judgment, (Kings, Bk.1. Chap. 3. 16-18), who pleaded, 'O my lord! give her the living child, and in no wise slay it .... Let him live, let him live, even though I may never set eyes upon him again!' (Chap. XXXVII). In Dorothea's night vigil the comparison is repeated as she sees two images of Will Ladislav, 'the bright creature whom she had trusted' and 'a living man towards whom there could not yet struggle any wail of regretful pity, from the midst of scorn and indignation and jealous offended pride': 'two living forms that tore her heart in two, as if it had been the heart of a mother who seems to see her child divided by the sword, and presses one bleeding half to her breast while her gaze goes forth in agony towards the half which is carried away by the lying woman that has never known a mother's pang' (Chap. LXXX). Eliot's image and Dorothea's emotion are more violent and complex than Gaskell's, but the second author is unconsciously re-imagining her predecessor's Biblical simile from one novel, seven paragraphs before she unconsciously elaborates and deepens the dawn symbolism from another. (If we compare Gaskell's experience of maternal pangs with Eliot's childlessness the echo sounds an extra poignancy.)

Gaskell was a more prolific and uneven writer than Eliot, *The Moorland Cottage* and *Lizzie Leigh* simpler and cruder fictions than *The Mill on the Floss* and *Adam Bede*, but I propose that *North and South*, *Cousin Phillis* and *Wives and Daughters* played a part in the making of *Middlemarch*, and stand comparison with it.

#### Notes:

- <sup>1</sup> Reprinted in *Selected Critical Writings*, p. 319, ed. Rosemary Ashton, World's Classics, OUP, Oxford, 1992
- <sup>2</sup> OUP, Oxford, 1968
- <sup>3</sup> 'Controversy at Cross Street. Was George Eliot guilty of plagiarism?' and 'Moorland Cottage', *The Gaskell Newsletter*, pp. 23-25, No. 53, Spring 2012
- <sup>4</sup> I discuss this more fully in 'The Two Timothy Coopers', *The George Eliot Review*, pp. 25-27, No. 35, 2004
- <sup>5</sup> See 'Perspectives on Self and Community in George Eliot: Dorothea's Window', ed. Patricia Gately, Dennis Leavens & D. Cole Woodcox, Edwin Mellen Press, Lewiston, Queenston, & Lampeter, 1997
- <sup>6</sup> I discuss aspects of this subject in 'Two Women: Some Forms of Feeling in 'North and South'', *The Gaskell Journal*, pp.19-29, No. 25, 2011

## Margaret Emily Gaskell

Ann O'Brien

This year marks the centenary of the death of Margaret Emily (Meta) Gaskell, Elizabeth Gaskell's second daughter. Meta was born on 7th February 1837.

Shortly after Meta's birth Elizabeth's "more than mother" Aunt Lumb suffered a severe stroke. Elizabeth hastened over to Knutsford with baby Meta, to look after her aunt. Staying in lodgings, she spent most of the day with Aunt Lumb, returning to the lodgings only to feed Meta. After eight weeks of suffering, Aunt Lumb died, leaving Elizabeth devastated.

Despite such an inauspicious beginning, Meta seems to have thrived. She was baptised by William Turner on September 28th. (He was the Unitarian minister with whom Elizabeth had stayed in Newcastle-on-Tyne, for three winters before her marriage and with whom she maintained a close friendship.)



We have only fleeting glimpses of Meta as a baby; comparing her with Marianne, Elizabeth writes that Meta is 'far more independent than Marianne was at her age... she is very affectionate, but not so sensitive as MA was...'. Six months later a little more is revealed about Meta, as her mother writes, 'She is a more popular character: very lively, enjoying a joke...but she is passionate and wilful, though less so I think than she was.'

Meta's upbringing was typical of the Victorian middle class, the girls helping with household duties. Writing to Elizabeth Holland, Elizabeth tells her that after their lessons it falls to Meta to 'fold up Willie's clothes - Meta is so neat and knowing, only handles wet napkins *very gingerly*'. Then after tea, when the two younger children, Flossy and Willie, have been put to bed, Elizabeth read to Marianne and Meta while they 'sew, knit or (do) worsted work.'

Education followed the traditional pattern: at first, the girls were educated by a governess. Eventually Elizabeth became so dissatisfied with education provided by their governess, Barbara Fergusson, that she decided to organise it herself.

She brought in teachers, one to teach French and another to teach arithmetic and writing, while their father was to teach history and natural history. Meta was to have music lessons from their friend Rosa Mitchell (Marianne was already receiving piano lessons from Emily Winkworth). She arranged for both girls to study drawing at the School of Design. Elizabeth planned to give them 'dictation and grammar lessons.....and make myself as much as possible their companion and friend.' This indeed she did, as on her frequent trips, both in this country and abroad, her daughters often accompanied her; they also helped her both in the running of the household, and, as they grew older, by acting as her secretaries.

It is recognised that Meta was the most intellectual of the daughters. In a letter to Anne Robson, Elizabeth writes 'Meta ...is so brim-full of...I don't know what to call it, for it is something deeper, and less showy than talent' and goes on to describe Meta's musical ability and her artistic gifts and how she is able to appreciate any book that her mother is reading. Charlotte Brontë sent Ruskin's *The Stones of Venice* for Meta and her mother to read 'and find some passages to please you.' In fact there was quite a correspondence between Charlotte and Meta in addition to that between Charlotte and Elizabeth (Meta was only 14 years old at the start of this friendship!)

In 1850 Marianne was sent away to school in London; this was the first time the sisters had been apart for so long. Elizabeth wrote to Marianne 'Meta cried sadly last Sunday because you did not write to her'. It is evident that there was a close and loving relationship between the two girls, which lasted throughout their lives.

Two years later Meta was sent away to Rachel Martineau's school in Liverpool (Rachel was the younger sister of Harriet Martineau), eminently suitable for this gifted young girl. Susanna Winkworth wrote of it as being '... the most admirably-managed of any school I have ever known, --with regard to the thoroughness of the intellectual training imparted'. There were lessons in Latin, maths and history as well as music lessons, given by Mr James Hermann, the leader of the Liverpool concerts.

Visits to the Lakes reveal Meta's early love of walking. On one such visit, before she started at Miss Martineau's school, the family and friends paid a three day visit to the Yorkshire Dales; Meta and her father walked fourteen or fifteen miles across the hills to Airedale. Walking was a lifelong passion later to be shared with younger sister Julia.

Meta was not entirely devoted to intellectual pursuits and outdoor leisure: she also enjoyed the same social life as any girl of her age and class. She loved going to parties and balls both in London and at home in Manchester. Elizabeth writes to Eliza Fox that the military presence in the city meant that they are invited to 'more [balls] than I like, as Miss Meta and one of the officers are a little too thick in the dancing line, 8 times in one evening being rather too strong - and drawing down on the young lady a parental rebuke!'.

In February 1857 the family, minus Papa, had a wonderful holiday in Rome, taking in the sights and a full social life, with most of Roman society. On this holiday they met Charles Eliot Norton, with whom Meta corresponded regularly until his death over fifty years later. Meta also met Captain Charles Hill and so began the most traumatic period in her life. Catherine Winkworth, in her letters to her sisters back home in England, relates how Captain Hill often accompanied the Gaskell party on their sight seeing trips. Meta was swept off her feet by the dashing captain and only a month after their return to Manchester, her engagement to Captain Hill was announced. The wedding was planned to take place the following year, but after discovering that her fiancé had gambling debts and was not the honourable man she had believed him to be, Meta broke off the engagement. The effect on her was devastating. She was consumed by doubts as to whether she had done the right thing and her health suffered accordingly. However, she continued to devote herself to her work in helping the poor of Manchester and also to teaching at the Sunday school.

Meanwhile Elizabeth decided to take her daughter first to Silverdale, and then, when she had enough money, abroad, 'out of the clatter of tongues consequent on her breaking off her engagement'. At the end of September 1858, Elizabeth took Meta, Marianne and Florence, to Heidelberg where they stayed and met many interesting people who lived there. Meta and Florence had German lessons and Meta, spent much of her time sketching. By the time they reached home, in December they had been away for six months. The long holiday had achieved its purpose and Meta was much improved. Furthermore, a meeting and ensuing friendship with Charles Bosanquet had, according to her mother 'done much to restore her faith in mankind which Captain Hill had shaken.'

The following year Meta kept herself busy, 'with almost too many interests.... working at Greek and German; practising, drawing, teaching at the Ragged School, has a little orphan boy to teach French to, reads with Elliott every night, etc. etc. and has always more books she [is] wanting to read than she can get through.'. She spent more time travelling, though this year she did not go abroad; she visited Dumfries, London, Gloucester, Canterbury, Whitby and finally, after Christmas, Edinburgh.

In May 1860 there was an extended holiday, sketching in the Pyrénées, with a middle-aged relative, Catherine Darwin, sister of Charles Darwin. Her interest in painting and sketching led to painting lessons given by John Ruskin and friendships with other artists such as Holman Hunt and Rossetti. This was also the time when Meta considered becoming a professional artist and decided against but continued to be an enthusiastic and talented amateur.

She continued to devote herself to social work and in the great distress caused by the cotton famine of the early 1860's she worked tirelessly to alleviate the suffering of

the poorest victims. This eventually led to a breakdown in health, with problems relating to headaches and severe backache, believed by Elizabeth to be as much mental as physical.

Despite her bouts of poor health, Meta took an active role in the negotiations for the purchase of the house in Hampshire which Elizabeth was buying as a retirement home for herself and William. Meta also helped in buying the furniture for the new house. It was a devastating blow for Meta when her mother died so suddenly, in her arms, in that very house. After this Meta suffered a brief breakdown in health but two weeks later she was able to write to Charles Norton, telling him of the circumstances surrounding her mother's death. Undoubtedly her strong religious beliefs helped her deal with her grief. In her letter she wrote 'For me it has changed the face of this world for ever, but thank God, one feels every day more sure that this world is but a threshold of the future where there will be no more sorrow or parting.'

Meta and Julia now devoted themselves to taking care of their father, who survived his wife by nineteen years. Whilst he continued the work of his ministry at the Cross Street Chapel, and his various other educational activities, his daughters continued to teach at the Mosley Street Sunday School and to help the poor of Manchester.

After their father's death, using the royalties from Elizabeth's books, they were able to support many charities, including the Unitarian College, Manchester College, Oxford and particularly the sick and needy of Manchester. The Manchester and Salford Sick Poor and Private Nursing Institution was a charity close to the hearts of both Meta and Julia, and for thirty-five years Meta served on its committee. Among their many gifts to the people of Manchester was a recreation ground created on a piece of land opposite their home in Plymouth Grove.

Meta was a member of The Association for Promoting the Higher Education of Women, which raised funds to establish the Manchester High School for Girls and records show that she was a generous subscriber. She became a foundation governor at the school, serving on many committees, including those which dealt with matters of art, literature and scholarship. (She also served on the North of England Council for the Education of Women, which was campaigning for women to be admitted to higher education. Her interest in education extended to Owens College, later the Victoria University of Manchester, to which she made regular donations as well as giving items from her parents' collections. In her will she made further donations to the University.)

When Julia died suddenly in 1908, Meta was heartbroken. Julia had been her constant companion since the death of their mother. Gradually, over the next five years Meta's health deteriorated, although she continued to fulfil her obligations

to the various committees on which she served. When she died, in 1913, there were many who mourned her passing. Although Meta was not as famous as her parents, for the people of Manchester her death was a source of great sorrow. There were numerous tributes in the newspapers of the day. Perhaps this from *The Daily Chronicle* best describes the high regard in which Meta was held: 'Many Englishwomen of our time have earned wider fame, but few have lived more remarkable or more fruitful lives than Miss M.E. Gaskell'.

## Belonging

Doreen Pleydell

There's an old Scottish Music Hall song, 'I belong to Glasgow, good old Glasgow town'. When I first heard it, it set me thinking of what 'belonging' means. One can belong to an organisation, such as The Gaskell Society; that doesn't mean that one is owned by the organisation, but that one willingly is a member of it.

Belonging in some respects implies possession. In the Anglican marriage service, one is required to 'forsake all others and cleave only to him/her as long as ye both shall live.' The husband and wife belong to each other. Sadly, that wish is very often broken not because of infidelity, but owing to the wish to be independent - the feeling that one has lost one's independence by marrying. There is more divorce now than ever; could it be that marriage is a prison to escape from. In Ibsen's play *A Doll's House*, Nora has the courage to leave her husband, and less courageously, her children too.

I've been watching the TV programmes on Queen Victoria and her children. It's amazing to what extent she was able to exert power over her daughters - how she arranged their marriages and wished to control every aspect of their lives. (Nowadays she would only mourn as they go their own way.)

Even before the Second World War parents, especially fathers, had great control over their children. In my own case, my father decided that I should enter the Civil Service, because, as he said "If you don't marry, you'll get a pension at 60." It didn't occur to me to rebel.

Children certainly belong to their parents, but from a very early age wish to be independent, to think for themselves. They still belong to a family though, just as Mrs Gaskell belonged to hers. When one possesses an object, one can do so



**Happy Birthday Mrs Gaskell!**



**Tracy Vaughan (L) and  
Alison Lundie, our speakers  
at the Autumn General  
Meeting in Knutsford, 29  
September 2012**



**On the threshold... Members of Manchester Historic Building Trust, Friends of  
Plymouth Grove and Gaskell Society members assemble at 84 Plymouth Grove for  
the Heritage Lottery Fund announcement, 13 June 2012**



without a feeling of guilt. I possess a rather lovely vase - it simply belongs to me and I don't feel guilty about owning it.

Until very recently it was thought that the world was organised entirely for the human race - that we could do as we liked, without thought that other species might have a claim on it - the trees, animals, plants, insects, even the very earth itself. We are only just beginning to realise that we were mistaken, that if we continue on the same course, there will soon be no civilisation as we know it. Is it too late to change our ways?

What about belonging to a place? Elizabeth Gaskell was brought up in Knutsford, and apart from the time spent at boarding school, Knutsford was her home until she married. Then smoky Manchester became her home, but was she ever as attached to it as she was to Knutsford? Certainly she said that she always felt better when visiting "the dear little country town where I grew up."

The last line of the music hall song runs like this - 'When I've had a couple of drinks on a Saturday, Glasgow belongs to me!' I belong to Knutsford, just as did Mrs G but I can't say "Knutsford belongs to me!"

## Former President, Professor JAV Chapple remembers...

In 1959 I joined the staff of the English Department at Manchester University as an assistant lecturer. Professor Frank Kermode asked me if I was then working on anything in particular. I was not, so he gently suggested that I should use my Yale experience with manuscripts (mostly from the sixteenth to eighteenth centuries, in fact) to join with my senior colleague Arthur Pollard in collecting and editing the widely scattered letters of Elizabeth Gaskell. At that time, she was generally known for little more than *Cranford* and *The Life of Charlotte Brontë*, despite the efforts of A. W. Ward, Mrs E. H. Chadwick, A. S. Whitfield, Clement Shorter, Ross D. Waller, David Cecil, Winifred Gérin and Raymond Williams, together with books by overseas enthusiasts, Gerald DeWitt Sanders, Jane Whitehill, Aina Rubenius, A. B. Hopkins, Coral Lansbury, Edgar Wright and Enid Duthie.

Arthur Pollard discovered that too often Gaskell manuscript letters had been badly transcribed. Also, though many letters from her had survived in early printed

sources, some of them had been grotesquely mangled in ways that only became fully apparent when we were fortunate enough to find the original manuscripts to set beside them for close comparison. A number of Gaskell manuscripts seem to have been destroyed or had vanished without leaving a trace. We found that owners and holders of letters from Elizabeth Gaskell were exceptionally generous in allowing us access to unpublished material. Marianne Gaskell's descendant, Mrs Trevor Jones, gave us permission to publish without hesitation. Her own group of 51 letters was especially valuable, as one might have expected. The late Rosemary Dabbs and her daughter Sarah Prince (née Dabbs), continued this gracious tradition.

In those days, Geoffrey Sharps, an energetic, pertinacious young graduate student, was preparing his Oxford BLitt thesis on Gaskell. He helped us enormously. Manchester University Press supported us without stint, bringing out *The Letters of Mrs Gaskell* in 1966, a year later than we had hoped would be possible. The accuracy of every text in some 900 closely set printed pages had been double checked by Ursula Pollard and Kate Chapple. No more than a handful of transcriptional errors of manuscript material have been noted. The dating of texts, my special responsibility as the spider at the centre of the organisational web, was less successful, even though I sedulously recorded the various watermarks and embossed designs in their paper. 'Sunday morning before breakfast' and the like were fences at which I fell more often than perhaps I should have done.

Geoffrey's BLitt thesis was accepted at Oxford. His *Mrs Gaskell's Observation and Invention* (1970), is an inexhaustible record of his truly remarkable knowledge, still a treasure trove of unexpected, detailed information and learned commentary. That between us we had created a solid foundation for future historians, biographers, critics and commentators is shown by all those who drew upon our work and continue to do so. The letters we printed - vital, perceptive and amusing records of a busy life - justified Arthur Pollard's confidence in their quality. Not only do they display one of the most attractive personalities of the Victorian period, they allow numerous insights into the social history of her age and illuminate many controversial aspects of Gaskell studies.

More letters continued to surface after publication, but eventually Arthur and Geoffrey were sadly no longer with us. Fortunately, Alan Shelston was able to join me in preparing *Further Letters of Mrs Gaskell* (Manchester UP 2000) to take account of the many unexpected letters that reviews and publicity brought forth. The paperback reissue in 2003 even contains a few extra letters, but we recognise that the flow of material, though diminished, is never-ending. More will appear in print.

In 2007, The Gaskell Society commissioned a reprint of my favourite book, a labour

of love: *Elizabeth Gaskell: A Portrait in Letters* (1980), a selection with commentary, checked by Geoffrey Sharps. *Private Voices: The Diaries of Elizabeth Gaskell and Sophia Holland* (Keele University Press, 1996) is the fruit of another collaboration I had with an American scholar, Anita Wilson. Mrs Rosemary Dabbs and Mrs Portia Holland willingly allowed us access to the fascinating manuscripts that recorded the upbringing of Elizabeth and Sophia's children when they were little. Gaskell's diary, as Anita Wilson points out, was her first sustained piece of writing. The appendices contain relevant contextual material from similar manuscript sources, especially writings by Mary Robberds and William Turner.

On 12th October 1985, 175 years after Gaskell's birth, Joan Leach inaugurated 'The Gaskell Society' at a meeting in Brook Street schoolroom. About 45 people were present, including Barbara Brill, Tessa Brodetsky and three members of the Brontë Society. John Nussey, great great nephew of Ellen Nussey, wrote an account of this first meeting. (*Gaskell Society Newsletter* 1, March 1986). In the following April of 1986, a formal meeting at Plymouth Grove elected Professor Arthur Pollard as President and Professor Francesco Marroni as Vice-President. Joan Leach became our Secretary, Dr Ken Whalley Chairman and Geoffrey Sharps Vice-Chairman. A committee was formed: Mary Thwaite, Kenneth Oultram, Mrs I Stevenson, Mrs B Kinder and Miss M Leighton (GSN 2, August 1986).

As a busy Pro-Vice-Chancellor (1985 -1988) during a fraught time for Hull University, I missed the inaugural meeting of the Gaskell Society. I did, however, manage to contribute an article to *The Gaskell Society Journal* 1 (Summer 1987), edited by Alan Shelston with Janet Allan as his deputy. Later, I became a more regular attendee at the always stimulating and enjoyable meetings of the Gaskell Society. I continued to publish books, reviews and articles upon Elizabeth Gaskell, her family, her Unitarian faith (see *The Cambridge Companion to Elizabeth Gaskell*, ed. Jill L Matus) - and her fiction, which I had not read in its entirety. My *Cranford & Selected Short Stories*, with notes and introductions (Wordsworth Classics 2006) is an example.

A visiting fellowship at Corpus Christi College, Cambridge, a grant from the Leverhulme Trust and the support of hundreds of individuals enabled me to publish *Elizabeth Gaskell: the Early Years* (MUP1997). It is fittingly dedicated to Joan Leach and Geoffrey Sharps, and could not have been accomplished without the support of my wife and children.

Retirement to Lichfield in 2000 combined with increasing age now makes my attendance at Gaskell events elsewhere more problematic. Here, too, on the market square is the birthplace of Samuel Johnson. Years ago I published an article on a unique copy of Johnson's Proposals for *Printing the History of the Council of Trent* [1738], found by Moses Tyson in Manchester University Library. More recently, I edited Johnson's *Life of Dryden* for the Yale Edition of the Works of

Samuel Johnson, volume 21 (2010). I am honoured to have been chosen as President of the Lichfield Johnson Society for this year. My address on Shakespeare and Johnson will be published in its *Transactions* 2012. In the Cathedral Close is the house where Erasmus Darwin lived for a time and entertained members of the famous Lunar Society, the lunaticks. Both houses are vibrant centres of cultural activity, as members of the Gaskell Society know from a visit they made to Lichfield last year. My interest in science, stimulated by Arthur Pollard, who had commissioned me to write *Science and Literature in the Nineteenth Century* (1997), challenged me to disentangle the connections between the Willets, Wedgwood, Darwin and Holland families for GSJ 21 (2007).

I have in all likelihood neglected to mention significant members of the Society or distinguished speakers at its meetings. I offer profound apologies to those I should have noted. Do I really recall that a friend, Julian Savory, sang to us once? In this country, Mrs Heather Sharps, John and Doreen Pleydell, Bill Ruddick, Philip Yarrow, Christine Lingard, Irene Wiltshire, Mary Syner, Brenda Colloms, Brian and Elizabeth Williams, Jo Pryke, Janet Kennerley, Marie Moss, Jean Alston, Frances Twinn, Dudley Barlow, Howard Gregg, Rosemary Marshall, Dudley Green, Graham Handley, Ian Campbell, Stephen Gill, Angus Easson, Michael Wheeler, Andrew Sandars, Patsy Stoneman, Marion Shaw, Terry Wyke, Jenny Uglow, Joanne Shattock, Josie Billington, Fran Baker, Barbara Hardy, J R Watson, Malcolm Pittock, John and Gillian Beer come vividly to mind as I write. How could I have failed to notice Lucy Magruder, Nancy Weyant, Mary Kuhlman, Jill Matus and Walter E Smith across the Atlantic; Yuriko Yamawaki, Mitsuharu Matsuoka and Tatsuhiro Ohno in Japan; Mariaconcetta Costantini, Anna Enrichetta Soccio and Renzo D'Agnillo in Italy? Then there are our translators on German visits, Peter and Celia Skrine; Caroline Arnaud, Christine Bhatt and Véronique Baudouin on French ones. How the dull brain perplexes and retards!

Nevertheless, I believe that the drive and determination of Joan Leach, Arthur Pollard and Geoffrey Sharps will inspire the Society they created with the willing assistance of so many others as it goes forward under its new President, Shirley Foster.

Editor adds: John and Kate Chapple joined the weekend of celebrations in London September 2010 when ECG was unveiled in Westminster Abbey. The Editor has not sighted him since but snail mail communication led to the creation of this article. Many thanks to John for this and for his stalwart help and support to the Society over the years.



# A Tale of Two Elizabeths

Editor: Readers will remember Alan Shelston's article on the two Elizabeths in the Autumn Newsletter. Now Ann Elizabeth Sachs, (née Holland) great-granddaughter of Elizabeth (younger sister of Rev William Gaskell) and Charles Holland (cousin of ECG), takes up the tale of two Elizabeths:

I was very interested to read Alan Shelston's article on The Two Elizabeths in your Autumn Newsletter.

I am the great-granddaughter of Charles Holland, who married the Rev William Gaskell's sister, Elizabeth Gaskell, known within the family as Eliza or Lizzy. My father, Leonard Menzies Holland (1885-1967), was the son of Walter Holland, who was one of Elizabeth and Charles Holland's ten children. My grandfather, Walter Holland, became the senior partner of the shipping firm Lamport and Holt in Liverpool, which was involved with trade to South America. He died in 1915, aged 73. I was told that he was much affected by the loss of many friends who were on the inaugural voyage of the Titanic in 1912 and by the outbreak of the Great War, especially when his four sons (including my father) joined the army.

Like most children, I did not ask many questions about my father's family, but I was always told that we had a strong family connection with Mrs Gaskell, as Charles Holland was her cousin. I like to think that Mrs Gaskell would have been instrumental in introducing her cousin Charles to Eliza and encouraging the romance. I see that Charles and Eliza did not marry until 1838, six years after Mrs Gaskell's own marriage in 1832. I was delighted to read that the two sisters-in-law were good friends and many letters were exchanged between them.

I have a copy of *Poems and Translations*, published privately by Elizabeth Gaskell Holland and see that most of her poems were dedicated to members of the family, including the poem on the marriage of Elizabeth Cleghorn Stevenson to the Rev William Gaskell on 30th August 1832, mentioned in Alan Shelston's article. There is also a particular poem entitled 'Willie', which may have been written on the tragic loss from scarlet fever of Mrs Gaskell's son William in 1845. I understand it was after William's death that her husband the Rev William Gaskell suggested to his grieving wife that she should start writing.

I give the last verse below:

Then may blessings attend thee for evermore,  
May peace and love on thy path be shed,  
May no sorrow blight thy beauty bright,  
No pain or grief shade thy gladsome life,  
May angels guard thee my darling boy,  
And for ever watch o'er thee with love and joy.

Of course, I am prejudiced but I think the poems are quite wonderful. I particularly like the first poem entitled 'To My Children' with the final line 'Take these feeble lines of mine, and love them for my sake',

Elizabeth Gaskell Holland died in 1892 aged 80. She spent her last few years in London leading an active and social reforming life to the end. Her obituary in *The Inquirer* of 2nd April 1892 mentioned, among the many tributes, that she campaigned fearlessly for recognition of the equality of the sexes, from a strict sense of justice, which implies she was an embryonic suffragette. The education of women for the medical profession was one of the schemes nearest to her heart. She was buried in the Ancient Chapel, Toxteth, Park, Liverpool.

## Supplementary information

Charles Holland, born 1799 and died in 1870 aged 71. He returned to England from South America around the 1830's and continued his business career in trade until he retired in 1855. He was an ardent supporter of the Reform Bill and fought for the principles of Free Trade and the repeal of the Corn Laws. He was amongst the first to join the Financial Reform Association becoming President in 1865, an office which he held until his death. He was one of the Founders of the Liverpool Chamber of Commerce and was elected President in 1856.

I quote from the History of the family of *Holland of Mobberley and Knutsford* compiled by Edgar Swinton Holland: 'Charles Holland's name will be remembered especially with the measures for the application of limited liability to partnerships, and also in connection with the reform of the banking and currency system in this country.' - which seems very relevant today! He was invited to stand for Parliament in the 1860 election but had to decline 'owing to a weakness of the throat'.

From the *Inquirer* 2 Apl 1892

## MRS CHARLES HOLLAND

LAST month took from amongst us another of those gifted women to have known whom makes us feel with Longfellow that

"Our hearts in glad surprise

To higher levels rise."

With deepest regret we record the death of Elizabeth Gaskell, the widow of Charles Holland, of Liverpool, who passed away swiftly and peacefully on March 8, in her

eightieth year. At eighty she died young, for nothing seemed to have grown old about her but the love of many friends.

Her father, William Gaskell, of Warrington, was a member of one of the oldest Presbyterian families of the North of England. She inherited his strong Nonconformist views, and derived from them all through her life a strong sense of comfort and religious support. She was sister to the Rev William Gaskell, the well-known minister at Cross-street, Manchester, whom she resembled in the unaffected charm of manner which expressed the harmonies of a mind alike gentle and earnest, formed by nature and attuned by culture to be in all its utterance a part of this world's spiritual music. Like her brother, she had a grace of person, and was brilliant in conversation, although never talking for effect. Her wit and wisdom were always humanised by kindly sympathies and dignified by an unswerving adherence to the cause of truth and justice. Mrs Holland's power of fascination enabled her to find the good side of all who knew her, and to fill her life with the love of many friends. It made her at once the guide and cherished centre of her large family circle.



**Mrs Charles Holland  
née Elizabeth Gaskell, aged 25**

Brought up in a stronghold of Unitarianism, Warrington, Elizabeth Gaskell sought as a girl to spread her principles, and taught in the Sunday-school of the Old Cairo-street Chapel, showing even then the same large-hearted sympathy with the poor and the ignorant that characterised her after years. She received a thoroughly classical education, which confirmed in her an intellectual and poetic tendency, and raised her high above the level of what then was thought to be the sufficient culture of woman's mind. The classical authors, both Latin and Greek, were even to the end of her life a constant source of ever-recurring pleasure. Her marriage with Mr Charles Holland of Liverpool, one of the pioneers of the Anti-Corn Law League, was entirely happy. There was between husband and wife a unity of religious and political opinions, and her fidelity to the home duties of wife and mother called forth in her the fullest energies of life. When settled near Liverpool, Mrs Holland constantly interested herself in benevolent objects. One of these was the starting and carrying on of a club or drawing-room for working-men and their wives to come to of an evening; another was the superintendence of a district nurse among the poor in their own homes, a charity which at that time was in its earliest infancy. She

also helped to found a cottage hospital in the low populous district of Seacombe, and while she fulfilled in the highest sense of the word her duties as a wife and mother she found time for lettered ease, and numbered among her intimate friends Hawthorne, Barry Cornwall, Professor Morley, and her sister-in-law, Mrs Gaskell. The intercourse with such minds encouraged the literary and poetical side of her nature. She translated a great deal of poetry from German authors, and wrote and published many original poems.

At this time of her life the friendship and ministerial services of the Rev. W. H. Channing influenced her strongly to work for the good of humanity. She threw her whole heart into the growing labours of the time to secure for women their right place in life. And when, after her husband's death, she settled in London she helped those who were foremost in all work tending to give women freer scope for the development and use of all their powers. Her outspoken fearless demand for a recognition of the equality of the sexes, from a strict sense of justice, has often helped the wavering to stand firm by their opinions.

The education of women for the medical profession was one of the schemes nearest to her heart. For this Mrs Holland worked indefatigably, and notably assisted the medical school for women and the building of the New Hospital for Women, both with influence and money. One of the most touching tributes to her memory was a lovely wreath sent by the medical staff and the Committee of the New Hospital for Women to be laid on her coffin. Mrs Holland was also a promoter and warm supporter of the Victoria Coffee Hall, afterwards converted into a memorial to Samuel Morley. She also founded a scholarship for the study of lunacy in memory of her brother, Mr Samuel Gaskell, who had instituted many benevolent reforms in the asylums while Commissioner in Lunacy.

But we have said enough to suggest what no words can adequately tell. On March 12 she was laid in the little graveyard of the Ancient Chapel, Toxteth Park, Liverpool, and over her will be placed the words she loved,—

“ He giveth His beloved sleep.”

Editor: The Inquirer is a Unitarian newspaper which has been published fortnightly since 1842. It claims ‘to reach parts of the mind and soul that other papers cannot reach’.

# Gaskell study tour to Boston, September 2012

Christine Bhatt

'We dare not hope ever to be sufficiently people at large with regard to time and money to go to America, easy and rapid as the passage has become.' Thus wrote Elizabeth Gaskell to John Pierpoint, Unitarian minister of Hollis Street, Boston in 1841. How fortunate were the Gaskell members who were able to make this trip and even more easily and rapidly than Mrs Gaskell would have been able to do. Landing just after sunset, as I did, the lights of the city, enhanced by the multi-coloured landing lights of the runway, gave Boston a fairy tale aspect.

The hotel which Nancy Weyant had chosen for us with the help of Boston friends, the John Jeffries House Hotel, was perfect. It was situated on the edge of the historic Beacon Hill area of Boston, within walking distance of good restaurants, grocery stores and even the harbour from where we took the boat to Salem on our fifth day. The hotel was a red-brick building, originally constructed in 1909 as housing for nurses at the local Eye and Ear Infirmary. It had a very homely, comfortable, lived-in air, breakfast was simple but plentiful, and coffee was permanently on tap, most welcome after a long day. There were eleven society members from the UK, most of whom gathered for afternoon tea American style (with wine and cheese) on the afternoon of the arrival day, September 12.

Nancy, drawing no doubt on her expertise as a librarian and bibliographer, had done a thorough and efficient job of forwarding to members of the group a very detailed itinerary, together with relevant websites, which ensured that we were all, potentially at least, well-prepared for what was to come. However, even Nancy, at the end of our first morning walking the Black Heritage Trail confessed that "I didn't know I didn't know that much". We were led by a member of the National Park Service, whose astonishingly detailed knowledge of Boston's 19th century African American community unfolded a history most of us knew little of. We began our tour at Augustus Saint Gauden's *Robert Gould Shaw and the Fifty-fourth Regiment Memorial*. This fine bas relief in bronze was, according to our guide, the first example of a realistic portrayal of African Americans in American art. In a letter to Gaskell dated 23rd April 1863, Charles Eliot Norton writes of Colonel Shaw: 'He is a fine young man; exceedingly well fitted to fill so responsible a position, and full of the true spirit of a soldier and a believer in the equal rights of man.' Elizabeth Gaskell knew Mrs Shaw and wrote to her to express her sorrow on hearing of Robert Shaw's death in action. We finished our walk at the African Meeting House, which served as an institutional haven during the nineteenth century for Boston's community of free African Americans and the self-emancipated arriving via the Underground Railroad Network.

On the afternoon of this first day, we had a guided tour of the Freedom Trail, led by

our costumed guide Mercy Otis, in character as America's first woman playwright. Her brother James, whose grave we visited in the Old Granary Burying Ground, was a patriot of the Revolution. Other famous graves included those of Samuel Adams, a signatory of the Declaration of Independence, Paul Revere and Judge Samuel Sewall, one of the Salem witch trial judges. Among well-known Boston landmarks, we passed the Omni Parker Hotel, the oldest surviving hotel in US, where Charles Dickens once stayed.

After a long and very warm day, spent mostly on our feet, we were delighted to gather at a convivial Italian restaurant, chosen by Nancy and only 15 minutes' walk from the hotel. On our return to the John Jeffries, the evening was rounded off in a suitably literary fashion by the reading of a poem by Roseanna Prince, written by her late father Frank, who was Professor of English at Southampton University, where a recent memorial exhibition had marked the hundredth anniversary of his birth.

Our third day began early with a coach to Hartford, where we were to visit the Harriet Beecher Stowe Centre and tour the Mark Twain House. In a letter to Grace Schwabe in 1853 Elizabeth Gaskell writes of Harriet that she is 'short and American in her manner, but very true and simple and thoroughly unspoilt and unspoilable'. In an echo of Gaskell's situation, we learnt that Harriet came to write *Uncle Tom's Cabin* at the age of 41, following the death of her eighteen month old son. By 1860 the book had sold over three million copies and had fuelled the fires of the abolitionist movement. We were very fortunate to be given access to a special collection of Harriet's documents during this tour, which included a letter from Gaskell, editions of *Cranford*, a sketch of Rome and watercolour of the Alps (by Harriet) and a volume of signatures collected by the Duchess of Sutherland while Harriet was touring England to garner support for the abolitionist movement. The Mark Twain house contrasted strongly with the Harriet Beecher Stowe residence, being much grander and more elaborate and we learned that the designer had been a church architect.

After lunch at the Japanese restaurant at the Mark Twain house, we continued by coach to Storrs, where we were to visit the University of Connecticut library to view an exhibition of editions of *Cranford*, organised by Thomas Recchio. Unfortunately, our coach driver took the scenic route, so that we were late arriving at the campus, which was set in beautiful parkland. We had an extensive tour of this very pleasant campus before locating the library, but by the time we arrived Professor Recchio and his students had departed, having decided, in our absence, not to let the afternoon tea laid out for us go to waste. As true Gaskellians, we did not let this deter us from a thorough perusal and appreciation of the many beautiful editions of *Cranford* left on display for us.

A very long and interesting day saw us back at the hotel to make our own

arrangements for the evening from the many good restaurants in the vicinity, a pattern repeated each evening but the last, when we once more gathered as a group.

After two very warm days, Saturday morning dawned a little cool and wet, but by the time our coach brought us to Lexington, the rain had stopped and the sun appeared. In Lexington and then Concord, our costumed guide, Masha Tabor, gave us a very detailed and lively introduction to the events in April 1775, which led to the American Revolution. In Concord the homes of Louisa May Alcott, Ralph Waldo Emerson and Nathaniel Hawthorne have been maintained and are open to visitors. We could also visit the Concord Museum, which proudly displays the lantern which hung in the steeple of Boston's Old North Church on the night of Paul Revere's famous ride. Sadly, there was not time to visit more than one or two of the venues available and some of us had rather a brisk walk to get back to the coach in time to be whisked on to the Sleepy Hollow Cemetery. We climbed up to the 'Authors' Ridge' section of this beautiful, peaceful, tree-shaded ground and saw the graves of Louisa May Alcott, Hawthorne, Emerson and Thoreau, among others. Our final visit on this packed trip was to Walden Pond, where we could squeeze, one or two at a time, into Thoreau's tiny cabin. After such a full day, not everyone was energetic enough for a further sortie, but a small group of adventurers was led by an American member to the 'Cheers' bar, where a table was found for us, as if by magic (it was a Saturday night) and we ate fish and chips and drank beer, presided over, perhaps appropriately, by a painting of Lord Byron.

Sunday was a lovely sunny day for the hour long boat trip to Salem. In spite of the Witch History Museum, the Witch House and the Salem Witch Trials Memorial, Salem was far from being a gloomy place. Before setting out to explore Salem, Mary Kuhlman gave the group a brief, insightful talk on *Lois the Witch*. Some members later met up with Mary and Tom in the Chestnut Road area of Salem, where Tom pointed out the significant architectural features of the beautiful houses on this tree-lined road.

Though the visit to Salem was, for many, one of the highlights of our trip, we had another treat in store on Monday, when we made the relatively short journey to Cambridge, to visit America's first rare book and manuscript library in the Houghton, at Harvard University. We were to view part of the wonderful collection given to the university by Amy Lowell. A special display featuring Gaskell first editions and her correspondence with Norton was laid out for us by Leslie Morris, but the whole of the display was truly stunning. Among the Gaskell documents were early editions, including a German version of the story *A Dark Night's Work*, which, interestingly, is entitled *A Night's Work*, a letter to Ruskin, mentioning *Cranford*, the diary of Marianne's first years and Henry James' copy of *North and South*. It was interesting and amusing to see Harriet Martineau's rather acerbic annotations of her copy of *The Life of Charlotte Brontë*. Other parts of the display included such

gems as a manuscript signed in 1523 by Michelangelo, a manuscript poem by La Fontaine, signed "Pour Mlle C" and a drawing by Sir William Hamilton of the recent eruption of Mount Vesuvius in 1793. In the beautiful, wood-panelled entrance hall to this library were to be seen many volumes, mainly religious tracts, by Cotton Mather.

Our afternoon venue, though a total contrast to the graceful buildings and beautiful surroundings of Harvard, was an elegant, modern construction set in a green, open space overlooking the harbour. The interior was spacious, calm, but crammed with history: it was the John F Kennedy Library and Museum. Here, ancient manuscripts were replaced by the full panoply of modern technology, with newsreel and audio recordings of momentous events.



**Members pose at the JFK Center**

Our last full day took us to the mill city of Lowell, much of which is now a designated Historic Park. By 1850 almost six miles of canals coursed through this city, which drove the waterwheels of forty mill buildings. Our trolley tour took us alongside a stretch of these canals and we could have been forgiven for thinking we were in Manchester or Salford. At the Boott Cotton Mills Gallery, we were exceptionally fortunate in being able to view the special exhibition on Dickens, co-curated by Diana Archibald, who was on hand to explain and guide us through this fascinating display. Among much else, we saw the portrait of Griff, the raven, and a letter from Dickens to William Macready, in which Dickens refers to America as the 'land of freedom and spittoons'. He visited Lowell during his American tour of 1842 and was particularly impressed with this booming, industrial town.

On the evening of this last day, we gathered in a private room in one of Boston's best known fish restaurants for an excellent meal, which began with a fantastic clam chowder. At the end of the meal, Ann O'Brien, on behalf of the group, thanked Nancy most heartily for our truly wonderful visit to Boston and presented her with an illustrated publication on homes of American literary figures. Not to be forgotten was Nancy's friend Violet, who was a constant presence and marshalled us with quiet efficiency. We hope she liked the mug from the JFK Museum.

Since every hour of this trip was precious, on the morning of departure day our coach took some of us to the Isabella Stewart Gardner Museum. Space does not permit the recounting of the wonders of this museum, but details can be found online for anyone contemplating a trip to Boston. For those of us fortunate enough to have made the journey, the experience will linger long in the memory.



**Nancy at the helm**

## Elizabeth Gaskell and Rome

**Robin Allan**

My first encounter with the work of Elizabeth Gaskell was through my love for Charlotte Brontë. When I realised that the author of Charlotte's biography had lived in Manchester, I determined to visit her house.

I moved to the north in 1973. Working off the Oxford Road I discovered that I was not far from Mrs Gaskell's house on Plymouth Grove. It was then International House and a home for foreign students at Manchester. I saw the nursery window where the Gaskell children had scratched their initials and was touched by the faded beauty of the building.

For the first time I read Elizabeth's great novels and some of her letters: letters which astonished me with their liveliness and vibrancy, so different from the stuffy pomposity of her contemporaries. The relationship between Elizabeth Gaskell and Charlotte Brontë, who had stayed with Elizabeth in this very house, led me to consider a dramatised play-reading based on their correspondence. So *Charlotte Brontë and Elizabeth Gaskell* was performed, often, in the drawing room at Plymouth Grove. We have also taken it to the Buxton Festival Fringe and many other venues.

Since then I have adapted some of Elizabeth's short stories, including *My Lady Ludlow* (2009) performed at Silverdale, the little town near the Lake District loved by both Mrs Gaskell and her daughters. In 2011 our redoubtable professional actress Delia Corrie presented *The Grey Woman* at the Gaskell Conference near Winchester, and this year she again acted, along with her professional colleague Charles Foster, and acting students from the School of Theatre at Manchester Metropolitan University, in my adaptation of Elizabeth's *The Moorland Cottage*. The versatility of this author, her work veering from domestic and political or social issues, her love of the macabre or even the sensational, made her a stimulating template for adaptation, and, of course, her letters were a constant delight.

My most recent adaptation, *Elizabeth Gaskell and Rome*, is based not on her fiction but on the letters written by herself, her family and friends. When Elizabeth Gaskell's American friend Mrs Story wrote to her in 1856 inviting her to stay with her and her husband in Rome, Elizabeth wrote back:

My Dear Mrs Story, May I first thank you for all the kind help you have given us, and then accept your charming invitation to spend the first few days with you in – Rome. We are really and truly coming to Rome!!!!!!

The six explanation marks reveal the impetuosity of the writer – the childlike

excitement and emotional openness of the woman, which comes through in all her work. When in Rome she met Charles Eliot Norton (1827-1908), a young American scholar who had met John Ruskin and was studying art in Italy; he later became Harvard's first Professor of Art History.

Elizabeth and her daughters Marianne and Meta, along with their friend Catherine Winkworth, were profoundly influenced by the charm and artistic knowledge of the young American, who became a constant companion during the short time that they spent in Rome. He also accompanied them on their slow journey homewards and at last parted company with them in Venice. Was there any romantic attachment between the young American and the author seventeen years his senior? Of course there was attraction; who would not be attracted by the attentions of a stimulating companion such as Charles Eliot Norton, and the light, colour, music and art of springtime in Italy, after the pall of smoke surrounding Manchester, and after the painful gestation of her devoted life's work to honour her dear dead Charlotte Brontë. The nineteenth century was obsessed with other matters such as religion and morality, while the 20th and 21st centuries' infatuation with sex would have surprised Elizabeth Gaskell and her contemporaries. Her devotion to Norton and her family's delight on hearing of his engagement and marriage and later of the birth of his children, adds to the sense of bondage between the families. Meta Gaskell's devotion to Charles Norton after her mother's death is evident in her letters to him (revealed in *The Letters of Mrs Gaskell's Daughters*, ed. Irene Wiltshire, HEB Humanities-Ebooks, 2012).

The warmth of this friendship I hope is evident in the story that is told in these letters. Delia Corrie again plays Elizabeth Gaskell and the part of Charles Eliot Norton is taken by Charles Foster, while Ella Burton, who plays Meta Gaskell, acts as narrator.

We intend to present the piece as a dramatised play-reading, with many illustrations, at the August celebration of Mrs Gaskell's life in Knutsford and at different venues during the summer months of 2013. Watch this space.



Constant Moyaux (1835 - 1911)  
- View of Rome from the Artist's Room  
at the Villa Medici 1863

## Book Notes

Christine Lingard

Mary Barton has now been published in the Wordsworth edition at a recommended price of £1.99. ISBNs: 1840226897: 978-1840226898

The growth of technology now means that a number of Gaskell's shorter novels and stories which have been out of print are now available though not in edited scholarly editions. Kindle publications include *The Half-Brothers*; *Lizzie Leigh*, *Dark Night's Work*; *Manchester Marriage* (in the anthology *Victorian Short Stories: Stories of Successful Marriages*); *Doom of the Griffiths*; *Old Nurse's Story* (in the anthology - *The Lady Chillers: classic ghost and horror stories by women authors - 15 complete stories by Victorian and Edwardian mistresses of the macabre.*) It is possible to obtain these titles in paperback.

Interest in Gaskell in Europe continues to be strong. There are now translations into French of *Cousin Phillis – Ma Cousine Phillis* by Béatrice Vienne, with photographs by Véronique Chanteau. L'Herne, ASIN: B008AX788G and *Mr Harrison's confessions* by the same translator *Les Confessions de Mr Harrison*. Seuil.

From Spain comes the first ever translation of *Ruth* into Spanish: Colección Tesoros De Época. ISBN: 978-84-938972-4-6; as well as *Sexton's Hero and Christmas Storms and Sunshine - El héroe del sepulturero, seguido de Tormentas y alegría navideñas*. Jose J Olañeta (editor) Centellas ISBN 978-8497167482 ; and a translation of Charles Dickens' Christmas anthology for *All the Year Round - Mrs Lirriper's lodgings. La señora Lirriper* by Miguel Temprano García: Alba Editorial which contains Gaskell's rare short story *Crowley Castle*.

There are also two academic studies available in French which make mention of Gaskell. *Le Pasteur anglican dans le roman victorien. Aspects sociaux et religieux*, by Louis J. Rataboul. Didier erudition, 2208032640 [The Anglican clergyman in the Victorian novel, which deals with *North and South*, *My Lady Ludlow* and *Cranford* in particular] and *Poésie et identité féminines en Angleterre: le genre en jeu* (1830-1900) by Fabienne Moine, which discusses *The Life of Charlotte Brontë* and Gaskell's poem *On Visiting the Grave of my Stillborn Little Girl*. L'Harmattan (Kindle and paperback ISBNs 2296114148: and 978-2296114142).

### Academic studies:

*Atonement and self-sacrifice in nineteenth-century narrative* by Jan-Melissa Schramm, (Fellow in English at Trinity Hall College, Cambridge); Cambridge studies in nineteenth-century literature and culture, no. 80. ISBNs 110702126X; 9781107021266. Contains the essay 'Standing for the people: Charles Dickens, Elizabeth Gaskell and professional oratory in 1848', which explores the conflicting



attitudes of the Victorian novel to sacrifice, as shown in the fiction of novelists such as Dickens, Gaskell and Eliot, at a time of Chartist protest, and national sacrifices made during the Crimean War.

*Giving women: alliance and exchange in Victorian culture* by Jill Rappoport. Oxford University Press, ISBNs 0199772606; 9780199772605. Discusses gifts made by Victorian women at a time when property rights were nonexistent to show how this defines contemporary culture; with reference to Charlotte Brontë, Elizabeth Barrett Browning's *Aurora Leigh*, and Christina Rossetti's *Goblin Market*. She also mentions a number of literary, political and Salvation Army pamphlets, and includes a chapter: 'Conservation in Cranford: sympathy, secrets, and the first law of thermodynamics.'

*Literature and authenticity, 1780-1900* - essays in honour of Vincent Newey (Emeritus Professor, University of Leicester) edited by Michael Davies: Ashgate, ISBNs 0754665992; 9780754665991. Contains the essay: 'The authentic voice of Elizabeth Gaskell', by Joanne Shattock, editor of the Pickering Chatto edition of the Works of Elizabeth Gaskell.

*Queer Others in Victorian Gothic: transgressing monstrosity by Gothic literary studies* by Thomas Ardel, (City College of San Francisco). University of Wales Press, ISBNs 9780708324646 (cased) 9780708324653 (pbk.) (Originally published by the University of Chicago.) Includes a chapter 'Escaping heteronormativity: queer family structures in Elizabeth Gaskell's *Lois the witch* and *The grey woman*'. This book explores intersections in nineteenth-century British literature of sexuality, gender, class and race using gothic horror, in the works of authors such as Wilkie Collins, Elizabeth Gaskell, Sheridan Le Fanu, Florence Marryat and Vernon Lee.

*Rewriting the Victorians: theory, history, and the politics of gender: Women, feminism and literature*, edited by Linda M. Shires, (Professor of English Stern College, Yeshiva University, New York). Routledge library editions, vol. 12. ISBNs 0415521734, 9780415521734. Contains 'The "Female Paternalist" as historian: *Elizabeth Gaskell's My Lady Ludlow* by Christine L. Krueger. This collection of essays, both feminist and historical, analyses power relations between men and women in the Victorian period, and is influenced by Marxism, sociology, anthropology, and post-structuralist theories of language and subjectivity.

*Victorian unfinished novels: the imperfect page*, by Saverio Tomaiuolo. (Lecturer in English Literature and Language at Cassino University, Italy). Palgrave Macmillan, ISBNs 1137008172; 9781137008176. Contains 'Becoming Ladies and Gentlemen in W. M. Thackeray's *Denis Duval* and Elizabeth Gaskell's *Wives and Daughters*.'

*Women and literary celebrity in the nineteenth century: the transatlantic production of fame and gender*, by Professor Brenda R. Weber, (Indiana University).

(Ashgate series in nineteenth-century transatlantic studies), ISBNs 1409400735; 9781409400738. A discussion of biography in particular *The Life of Charlotte Brontë*, and stresses the physical frailty of Charlotte's body in contrast to her genius.

*Writing Britain: wastelands to wonderlands*, edited by Christina Hardyment. British Library Publishing Division, ISBNs 0712358749; 9780712358743; (hbk.) 0712358757; 9780712358750 (pbk.) published to accompany the exhibition *Writing Britain: wastelands to wonderlands*, May 11-Sept. 25, 2012 at the British Library, featuring Elizabeth Gaskell's industrial northern towns.

## The Gaskells' House Report

Janet Allan

On 13 June last year the Heritage Lottery Fund (HLF) awarded just under two million pounds for the restoration and conversion of 84 Plymouth Grove, a triumphal end to our long campaign to rescue the House which started in the 1990's. Professor Hannah Barker, a member of the HLF's Manchester committee, joined members of the Manchester Historic Buildings Trust and the Gaskell Society in the celebration on the steps of the Gaskells' Manchester home.

Work on the first stage, the construction of the disabled ramp and improvements to the servants' quarters in the basement, will be completed in February. The second stage, the main works, will start in March.

By late 2014 the whole house should be open to the public for the first time. We should have a beautified but friendly ground floor, much as it was in the Gaskells' time, with their drawing room and dining room, William's study (the bookcases appropriately filled) as a resource centre. Downstairs the original kitchen will become a tearoom, also selling books our established tradition. Next to it the servants' hall will become a meeting room, there will be a modern kitchen, loos and a lift. The bedroom floor, which contains some very large rooms, will become meeting rooms or offices. The garden setting will be in the style of the 1850s, when the family moved in.

The transformation has already started. Members of the Friends saw the work going on in the old kitchen, which now has its original flagged floor rescued and restored, and got a sense of the spacious lobby entrance. The outlines of the flower beds and carriage sweep in the front of the building, together with the changes in gradient up to the front steps, give an exciting glimpse of what is to come. And the disabled ramp, tucked discretely at the side of the building, will be of great use without spoiling the overall impression.



In 2012 the Friends were very active and we have had concerts, dramatic presentations, a day school and many specialised visits and tours. But our job is not over! Although we cannot use the House during the conversion, we are planning events and excursions, and working with Victoria Baths on their Open Days. The Baths have also very kindly agreed to store those things, including books and our beloved tea sets. A newsletter will be issued shortly, and we are revising and updating our website so please follow the story!

## Annual General Meeting 2013

**Saturday 13 April**, at Cross Street Unitarian Church, Manchester. All members are welcome.

**10.30am** Coffee and tea

**11am** Dr Margaret Lesser will deliver the Daphne Carrick Lecture:  
**Mary and William Howitt: A New Look**

**12noon** AGM

**1pm** Buffet lunch

**2.15pm** Sarah Webb: **A love affair of long ago: Margaret Leicester (1847 - 1921)**

## Autumn General Meeting

**Saturday 28 September**, Knutsford Methodist Church. Further details TBA.

## North-West Group

### Manchester Meetings

**Gaskell Society Meetings at Cross Street Unitarian Church** held on the first Tuesday of the month (October to March excluding January) Start at 1.00pm.

The Chapel will usually be open at 12 o'clock so that you can bring your own lunch.

This session's meetings (including lunch) will be held in the Percival Room.

The season continues with the theme **Victorian Contemporaries**.

**Tuesday February 5, 2013**, Ian Emberson: 3 Quartets: The Rossettis, the Mendelssohns and the Brontës.

**Tuesday March 5, 2013**, Dr. Patsy Stoneman: Charlotte Brontë and her relationship with Elizabeth Gaskell and the marked differences between them.

### Knutsford Meetings

Meetings are held on the last Wednesday of the month (October to April excluding December) in St John's Church Centre, Knutsford.

An excellent buffet lunch is served at 12.15 (£8, pay on the day) followed by a talk and discussion, led by Elizabeth Williams at 1.30pm. Meetings end about 3pm.

We are continuing to study *Ruth* until the last meeting of the season on 24 April 2013.

A summer outing will be arranged, probably in May.

## The Gaskell Society South-West

**Saturday, 23 February 2013, 2.15 pm.** Our first discussion group of the year will be held at Elizabeth Schlenther's house, 14 Vellore Lane, Bath, and the topic will be *North and South*. There are still places available, so Elizabeth should be contacted as soon as possible if you wish to come. A fee of £5 will cover both sessions.

**Saturday, 23 March 2013, 2.15 pm.** The second discussion group, a continuation of the first, will be held at Bren Abercrombie's house, 6 Vellore Lane, Bath. (Please note the change of address.)

**Saturday, 20 April 2013, 2.30 pm.** We look forward to a lecture by Ann Brooks, one of our members and an expert on the Portico Library in Manchester. She and a colleague, Bryan Haworth, wrote the official history of the library. Her topic will be: 'A behindhand place for books': The Portico Library Manchester and the Gaskell Connection. The lecture will take place as usual at the BRLSI, Queens Square Bath, and there will be a charge of £2 for members of the Gaskell Society and the BRLSI and £4 for non-members.

Our Bring and Share lunch will take place in late summer, and there will be more details about that at a later date.

Any queries to Elizabeth Schlenther, 14 Vellore Lane, Bath, BA2 6JQ, Tel: 01225 331763.

## London and South-East Branch

Sandwich lunch will be available from 12.45pm. Meetings begin at 2pm; tea and cake will be served after the meeting. Usually the formal part of the meeting finishes about 3.30pm for those needing to catch trains.

**Venue: Francis Holland School, Graham Terrace, London.**

The entrance is via doors on Graham Terrace, please ring the bell marked 'RECEPTION' loudly to gain entry. For security reasons the door must be locked until opened from inside.

The school is a three minute walk from Sloane Square tube station (on the District and Circle lines) and about a 15-20 minute walk from Victoria. There are also buses from Victoria. (Please check running of the tubes as they often carry out engineering work at weekends).

**Book Stall:** We have a 'bring and buy' book stall (proceeds for the renovation of the Gaskell House in Manchester). Please bring unwanted books and buy replacements.

Meetings are £5.00 (including everything) payable on the day. You are warmly invited. All meetings are held on Saturdays.

Further details from Dr Fran Twinn [frantwinn@aflex.net](mailto:frantwinn@aflex.net)

**Saturday, 9 February, 2013**, Ann Brooks and Bryan Howarth: The Portico Library and the Gaskells' connections. Ann and Bryan became volunteers at The Portico, Manchester, in 1985 and Ann continued to serve for 20 years. They are the co-authors of the official history of the library, *Boomtown Manchester 1800-1850 The Portico Connection. A History of the Portico Library and Newsroom*. (The Portico Library, 2000).

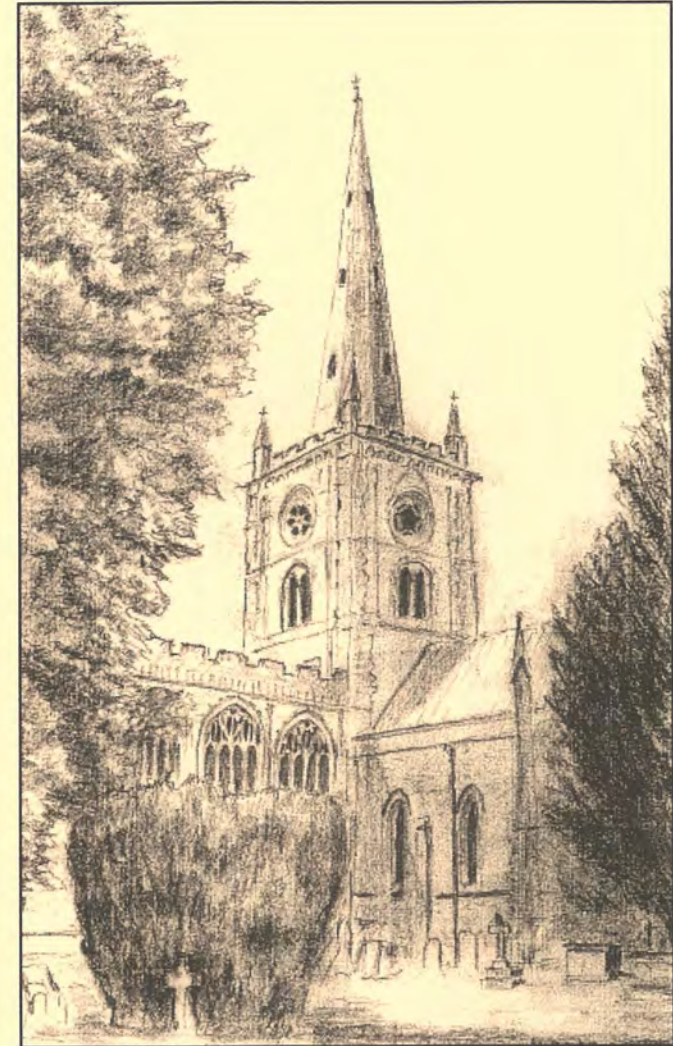
**Saturday, 11 May, 2013**, Carolyn Lambert: Sex, Stability and Secrets: Artefacts and rituals in Elizabeth Gaskell's fiction. Carolyn will share the fruits of her PhD research.

**Saturday, 14 September, 2013**, Alison Lundie: Domestic Arts in *Mary Barton* and *North and South*. Alison, a founding member of the London Gaskell Reading group, is studying for a PhD at Roehampton. Her talk will focus on shawls and needlewomen in *Mary Barton* and *North and South*.

**On a Saturday TBA** in November 2013, Janet Allan: Developments in the renovation of the Gaskell House in Plymouth Grove



# The Gaskell Society



THE GASKELL SOCIETY HOME PAGE has all the latest information on meetings.  
<http://gaskellsociety.co.uk>

If you have any material or suggestions for future Newsletters, please contact Mrs. Helen Smith,  
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NEWSLETTER  
Autumn 2013 - Number 56

## Editor's Letter

Helen Smith

Welcome readers and writers to our 56th Newsletter. We are hotfoot from the Conference, which has definitely surpassed our previous record for success; and now we really are fired with even more enthusiasm for Mrs Gaskell, for her life and especially for her works. As soon as the euphoria subsides, we shall start planning the next biennial Conference for 2015, 150 years after the death of Mrs Gaskell.

We should also like to welcome new member Dr John Ross (who wrote an article on Mrs Gaskell's death in Newsletter no 48).

However we are very, very sorry to report the deaths, in May 2013, of two of our members: Margaret Birchall (aged 96); and Hilda Holmes (considerably younger), a stalwart of the Society and a tireless worker for the Friends of Plymouth Grove. We shall certainly miss them and we extend our sympathy to their families.

The summer outing for North-West members was to Chatsworth (last visited by the Society in 1992). This event took place on 22 May and proved to be another action-packed day very much in the Joan Leach tradition. En route, the party visited Buxton, death place of "our dear good valuable friend" Hearn, aged 80 in 1892, after 50 years of service to the Gaskell family. (See Christine Lingard's article on Hearn in Newsletter no 52.) Many thanks are due to Pam Griffiths for organising this trip and to Christine Lingard for her invaluable research and extensive knowledge which she happily shares with us all.

Knutsford is celebrating Mrs Gaskell in August. The Heritage Centre, King Street, and the Schoolroom (on Adams Hill) of the Brook Street Chapel are hosting events and holding exhibitions. This is a joint venture with Knutsford Heritage Centre, The Gaskell Society and Friends of Plymouth Grove. By the time this Newsletter is sent out, these will be past events.

For the smooth running of the Society's finances, we must again express our thanks and gratitude to Brian Williams for going that extra mile in his role as Treasurer. We are now very happy to give a warm welcome to our new Treasurer Clive Heath. We are also delighted that Celia Crew has become Minutes Secretary.

Important date for diaries: AGM Saturday 12 April 2014, Cross Street Chapel, Manchester

A correction! Professor Barbara Hardy has pointed out to me that she promoted the Honourable Mrs Jamieson to Lady Jamieson in her article in the Spring Newsletter. The Editor (Lady Helen!) apologises for failing to spot this error before publication.



To all, and especially new, writers who have contributed to this Newsletter I offer my grateful thanks. Please continue to write and encourage others to do so, "when inclination prompts and leisure permits" as Charlotte Brontë wrote so invitingly to ECG in 1850. Many thanks are due to my brother David Robinson in Canada for his cover drawing of Holy Trinity in Stratford where ECG along with other pupils from the school run by the Misses Byerley worshipped (and where the Bard is buried). As ever, we owe thanks to Rebecca Stuart of Lithoprint for her meticulous work and care in printing the Newsletter. Deadline for next Newsletter: 25 January 2014.

## Joan Leach Memorial Essay Prize

The biennial Joan Leach Memorial Essay Prize for Graduate Students is running again, to showcase some of the newest research being undertaken in Gaskell Studies. The deadline for entries is January 10th, 2014. Entries will be judged by members of the journal's editorial board, and the final decision will be made from a shortlist by a leading scholar in Gaskell Studies. The winning essay (and impressive runners-up) will be published in the 2014 Gaskell Journal. Please see journal website for more details: [www.gaskelljournal.co.uk](http://www.gaskelljournal.co.uk)

## The Gaskell Society Conference 19-22 July Stratford Manor Hotel, near Stratford-on-Avon

Helen Smith

He was not of an age, but for all time. Ben Jonson, of Shakespeare, 1623

In the prologue before dinner on Friday, former Director of the Shakespeare Birthplace Trust and author of *Thanks to Shakespeare*, Roger Pringle enthralled us with tales of writers who had visited Stratford over the last few centuries. An early visitor was the actor David Garrick in 1769, and one of the most recent was Carol Ann Duffy (British Poet Laureate), who likened Stratford to Bethlehem. Of the many notable visitors to the town, were Keats (place of abode, "everywhere"), Sir Walter Scott, Tennyson, Edward Fitzgerald, Dickens (several times but not for the Tercentenary in 1864), Thomas Hardy, a huge host of Americans, including Henry James, Harriet Beecher Stowe, Jefferson and Adams (later to become Presidents of the USA); Yeats, Rupert Brooke, et al: some inscribed the walls of the Birthplace, others signed the visitors' book and others declined to sign at all. The Gaskell Society follows in good company.

After dinner Geoff Holman, the actor from Knutsford, brought to life the practicalities of performing Shakespeare. Geoff taught us much, with humour and anecdotes

which spiced up the evening. Geoff pointed out to us how Shakespeare himself wished his plays to be performed as Hamlet advises his players in Act III scene ii "...but let your own discretion be tutor: suit your action to the word, the word to the action..." Delia Corrie as Lady Macbeth joined Geoff, in the role of Macbeth, for the few lines of intense drama just after the murder of Duncan. And so to bed, eventually, perchance to dream of iambic pentameters and trochaics - Macbeth had not murdered our sleep.

Business began in earnest at 9.00am sharp on Saturday. The Conference was now in possession of the Amazons.

Professor Michèle Cohen (of Richmond American International University in London) addressed us on "A mother's dilemma: where best to educate a daughter, at home or at a school?"

In the eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries, there was no standard curriculum for girls (unlike boys, who were taught Classics). Should girls be taught at home by mother as governess "intended by nature" or at school; followed by promotion to "a dignified marriage"? ECG feared she was "becoming a lazy mother" by sending Marianne to school. In general girls studied a very wide range of subjects, from globes to orthoepy, albeit at a rather superficial level. Good habits were considered of more importance than academic learning.

Professor Ruth Watts (University of Birmingham) spoke on "A liberal education for women: Elizabeth Gaskell, her educational ideals, practice and networks".

Professor Watts approached the subject from the perspective of Unitarians with their rational religion and concentration on action, not mysticism. Joseph Priestley believed in association of ideas and favoured environment rather than heredity. Joseph Wright advocated learning in the family. Girls had to obtain 'polish'. Professor Watts reminded us that Molly Gibson (in *Wives and Daughters*) and Margaret Hale (in *North and South*) became intellectual companions to their fathers and Ruth herself was a prime example of Mrs Gaskell's principles.

After the break for coffee, Dr Mary Summers gave the third and final lecture of the morning: Anne Brontë's approach to education, parenting and marital relationships in Victorian times.

At first Aunt Branwell and Patrick Brontë educated the girls at home and then Eliza and Maria went off in 1823 to Crofton Hall which proved to be too expensive. The two older girls with Charlotte and 6-year old Emily then moved on to Cowanbridge (immortalised as Lowood in *Jane Eyre*) which led to the deaths of the 2 eldest girls. Charlotte eventually taught at Roehead where Anne joined her as a non-paying pupil in 1831.



Anne had many theories about education and child-rearing: she believed in kindness and joy when children are good and showing disappointment and sadness when they were not good; a trusting relationship was essential between parents, or in loco parentis, and children. Discipline was required for Branwell: "reason with him, then whip him." Poor Branwell eventually succumbed to his addictions to opium and rum.

Some interesting questions were posed to these three excellent and really riveting speakers before lunch. This discussion was chaired by Rosemary Marshall of the South-West of England Group.

In the afternoon, we departed by coaches for Barford to see, from the exterior, the house where some of the six Misses Byerley ran their school. We sauntered through the very English village to St Peter's Church where we were warmly welcomed by Barford Heritage Group and Revd David Jessett, Rector of St Peter's, led a short service. A small booklet had been written in our honour by Ann McDermott.

We then proceeded to Stratford - Shottery to visit Anne Hathaway's Cottage set in an English country garden basking in English sun and swarming with visitors from around the globe.

And then the Conference Dinner. Chairman Ann O'Brien welcomed us all to the Conference and mentioned all from abroad by name. After an excellent meal, Ann O'Brien and Elizabeth Williams brought us all up-to-date on the refurbishment of the Gaskell House in Plymouth Grove.

Sunday morning began with Sister Rosemary Kolich (Assistant Professor of English at the University of Saint Mary in Leavenworth, Kansas) in a very moving (and appropriate for Sunday) lecture: Prophetic imagining; the Gospel according to Elizabeth Gaskell.

Delia Corrie read from relevant passages of Mrs Gaskell's letters. Rosie spoke of women's role and fulfilment and we were totally drawn into her spell. Rosie explained how Mrs Gaskell empowers her characters to act through Scriptures. "Forgive them for they know not what they do": this occurs many times in the works and most movingly when John Barton dies in Mr Carson's arms: the creation of a Pietà - the man of sorrow supporting the dying man - creating a powerful religious image.

Dr Valerie Fehlbaum (English Dept, University of Geneva): 'A woman's no business wi' being so clever'- George Eliot's *The Mill on the Floss*.

Although Valerie claimed to be a Gaskell neophyte, she excelled herself in this

fascinating lecture on George Eliot, a 'dark blue stocking'. Mr Evans recognised and nurtured his daughter's exceptional talents from a young age. We were of course relieved that George Eliot did not include Mrs Gaskell's works in her 1856 *Westminster Review* article "Silly novels by lady novelists". Valerie analysed the novels of George Eliot and as Valerie herself now well-accustomed to the author's 'preachiness' was able to point out, sympathy is a leitmotif in George Eliot.

Our final lecture was given by Professor Valerie Sanders (Professor of English and Director of the Graduate School at the University of Hull): 'My school-days! What recollections!' Gaskell's contemporaries recall their education.

As a specialist in Victorian women's writing, autobiography and family studies, Val covered recollections of home education, school environment and self education with frequent quotations from authors' memoirs. Continental boarding schools provided a less stultifying education than governesses and English schools: the Queen Olga School in Stuttgart sounded much more exciting for Mènie Muriel Dowie.

After a brief question session with the morning's lecturers chaired by Mary Kuhlman (Creighton University, Omaha, Nebraska) we adjourned for lunch.

Sunday afternoon outing whisked us off to the Vale of Evesham and Dumbleton: Church and Hall: set in a beautiful landscape with lake, black swans and immense cedars. The Hall, (where ECG, as guest of her cousin Edward Holland, wrote part of *The Life* in 1856) now functions as an hotel where we relaxed over a cream tea and heard Professor Adrian Phillips narrate the history of the fine house.

After dinner we were somewhat relieved that music no longer remained "a small kind of tinkling symbolising the aesthetic part of a young lady's education" as George Eliot satirised.

Rosie Lomas a graduate of the Guildhall School of Music and Drama accompanied by Katarzyna Kowalik (Artist Fellow at the Guildhall School of Music and Drama) entertained us with Mrs Gaskell's music. Rosie opened the recital with an unaccompanied song (words by Burns) "Oh my love is like a red, red rose". The young ladies continued with folk songs and classical works from Schumann, Haydn and others. Rosie spoke between items and placed them in context in Mrs Gaskell's works: a very fitting epilogue to the week-end's activities. President Shirley Foster had final word in her vote of thanks and presentation to the young recitalists.

PS En route back to the North-West we visited Clopton Hall (ECG described this fine seat to William Howitt who then incorporated it in *Visits to Remarkable Places*, 1840), now converted to flats in private ownership; and Baddersley Clinton, a mediaeval moated manor owned by the National Trust.



Many thanks are due to the Conference Sub-committee for all their very hard toil over the last two years to make this Conference operate like clockwork. We are more than grateful to Jean Alston for organising the outings and the weather, in addition to engaging Rosie Lomas and Katarzyna Kowalik to entertain us on Sunday evening.

Hotel staff and coach drivers deserve to be commended for their assiduity and skills in dealing with us all. Our thanks to all who contributed to this week-end.

## Elizabeth Gaskell and Shawls

### Creative Artistry and Identity

Alison Lundie

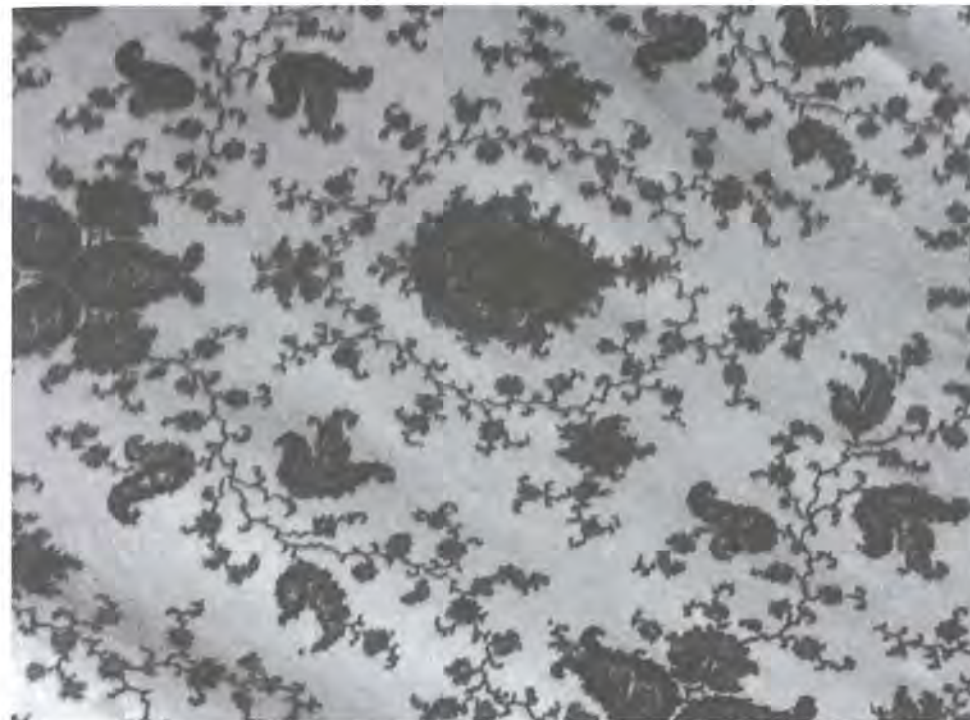
In the nineteenth century women's dress from bonnets, caps, hats, gloves, morning dress, afternoon dress and evening dress was a vast and motile world of continual change according to the fashions of the day. Every item of dress, including the specific fabrics and colour of clothing were considered to be a display of selfhood and a code for judging character. One particular item that might be overlooked because of its apparent simplicity as an accessory is the shawl.

In the 1840's and 1850's, regardless of social class, from the aristocracy to the middle and working classes, the shawl had established itself as the desired and revered garment in a woman's wardrobe. "Shawls began to be appropriated by all women, from the wealthiest aristocrat to the humblest kitchen maid, as beautiful, exotic and practical adjuncts to feminine dress" (4). The favoured and sought-after Paisley shawl had its origins in the importation of Indian shawls, originally admired for splendour of colour and woven with the luxuriously soft pashmina wool of the Himalayan goat. The newly acquired Jacquard power-looms in the 1830's enabled fast production, and designs that impressively displayed the ambition to produce an imitation of the Indian shawl in the traditional Paisley design.<sup>1</sup>

There are four shawls in existence that belonged to Elizabeth Gaskell. These have been passed down through the family line to her descendants. The obvious care that Mrs Gaskell must have taken with these shawls is testament to at the very least the high esteem in which they were held.

I am indebted to Sarah Prince for her kind generosity in an invitation to see and photograph these exquisite shawls, and in providing an historian's description of the materials, patterns, colour and dimensions of the shawls.

Printed cashmere shawl decorated with arabesques and foliage, 155 cm square.



Paisley shawl with a border of blue arabesques, 153 x 312 cm.





Victorian printed shawl, the central square reserve with a garland of leaves surrounded by bands of stylised foliage and on a red ground, 152 x 147 cm.



Paisley shawl with a central black reserve, within a broad border of arabesques, 173 cm square.



It is the intricate and variegated patterns and blending of colours, the detailed attention to produce what can certainly be described as a work of art that we can see when looking at these shawls. But it is also the condition of the shawls and the brocade surrounding them that is particularly striking. Although a precise historical date to distinguish between the shawls does not exist, we can be certain, particularly in view of the Paisley design, that they would be dated somewhere between the 1830's and early 1860's. Were they possibly gifts, like Gaskell's description of the Indian shawl in *North and South*. Mrs Shaw explains the origin of her daughter Edith's trousseau, "she has all the beautiful Indian shawls and scarfs the general gave to me" (7). Or perhaps Gaskell purchased them herself, because we know from her letters that she was fond of shopping for shawls and she describes her shopping expedition to Marianne and Meta. Going "to look at black shawls for you, MA & Meta, at Moore and Butterworth's – silk barège scarf shawls, 35s – grenadine shawls ditto – (like E. Marslands) cashmeres embroidered 3 guineas – I inclined to the barèges much; but we left it for you to choose" (487). Either way it is interesting to speculate on these existing shawls' origin. The cherished shawls are now protected in layers of acid proof paper. They are subsequently enfolded in heavy cotton and kept away from light to resist any deterioration to the fabric and colour.

The shawl is just one item in a massive collection of garments that we encounter in Gaskell's novels. But its frequent appearance implies that there has to be some underlying meaning. On many occasions when the mention of a shawl appears in Gaskell's novels it tells us of an aspect in a character's personality. In *Cranford*, Miss Matty's appearance in "such a thin shawl! It's no better than muslin. At your age Ma'am you should be careful" (77) suggests the characteristic trait of regression in her personality. Dressing in a shawl that befits a young woman is an attempt to recapture a return to her youth and restore her loving relationship with Holbrook. But there is also the luxurious "large, soft, white Indian shawl" (102) described by Miss Matty and this tells us of both character and culture. The Indian shawl was often given as a gift, deriving from 1798, when Napoleon and his army returned from Egypt with Indian shawls as presents for their womenfolk. The Indian shawl in *Cranford* is also a gift sent from Peter to his mother. It is then a symbol of generosity, a generosity of feeling from Peter, as Miss Matty explains it was "just what my mother would have liked". The generous feeling extends when Miss Matty repeats her father's words concerning the shawl. "She shall be buried in it," he said; "Peter shall have that comfort; and she would have liked it" (102). But also and crucially this shawl is an emblem of the generosity that extends between the ladies of *Cranford*. The setting up of a shop for Miss Matty, and particularly Miss Matty's open-handed liberality in distributing sweets to the children. In *Cousin Phillis*, the absence of a shawl to cover Phillis's body, "Phillis had nothing on but her indoor things – no bonnet, no shawl" (269) suggests an aspect of self-development in her character. Until this point we know that Phillis had been forced by parental restriction to dress in a manner that would suppress her growth into womanhood.



Dressed in clothing that reminds us of the conventionally de-sexualised woman of the era we are informed that Phillis "so old, so full grown as she was wore a pinafore over her gown" (226). When Phillis refuses to dress in the conventional manner of bonnet and shawl she demonstrates a move toward erotic self-development, expressed in the pivotal scene when Phillis and Paul are caught in a thunder shower. It is notable that *Mary Barton* begins with an intricately detailed and rich description of the shawl, which markedly arrests the reader's attention and requires explanation.

"Groups of merry and somewhat loud-talking girls, whose ages might range from twelve to twenty, came by with a buoyant step. They were most of them factory girls, and wore the usual out-of-doors dress of that particular class of maidens; namely a shawl, which at midday or in fine weather was allowed to be merely a shawl, but toward evening or if the day were chilly, became a sort of Spanish mantilla or Scotch plaid, and was brought over the head and hung loosely down, or was pinned under the chin in no unpicturesque fashion." (6)

It is the feminine realm of display that asserts itself when Gaskell introduces the women factory workers. This is the display of a particular type of shawl that would have been of natural interest to the female reader.<sup>2</sup> The fundamental point that clearly appears is that these women are represented as possessing creative talent. They demonstrate skill in using their hands to adjust the material of the shawl in the creative process of fashioning the garment to the design of a "Spanish mantilla". It is an interesting analogy because placing this in an historical context we know that the mantilla was introduced by Queen Isobel of Spain, and the garment was composed of luxurious fabrics particularly lace and silk. Most importantly would be the image of complete sophistication that these working class factory women demonstrate if seen through the eyes of a Victorian woman reader. In mentioning the mantilla there is the suggestion that the women are artistically arranging their hair over combs, this being a form of dress associated with middle class womanhood. This is certainly a considerable elevation in status for the factory woman worker. During the nineteenth century in fiction and non-fiction it was the euphemism "hands" that became the recognised description of the factory worker. "Hands" is a term that suggests a metonymic dismissal of an individual's identity, and an aspect of industrial dehumanisation. Gaskell's concern is to humanise the factory workers, and this is particularly clear in the image of the women factory workers' hands that demonstrate their creative talents. They are women who share comparable skills to those attributed to the middle class woman in showing their familiarity and expertise in the popular domestic art of working with the hands.<sup>3</sup> This is a skill that Gaskell would confirm again in *North and South* when the women factory workers express their expert knowledge concerning Margaret's dress and choice of fabric. They would "even touch her shawl or gown to ascertain the exact material" (67).

"For the apparel oft proclaims the man"(12) Isabella Beeton, in *Mrs Beeton's Book*

of *Household Management* informs her nineteenth century reader, suggesting that in this era clothing was understood to be a form of language that communicates identity. In considering the various designs, fabrics, colour and colourlessness of the shawls encountered in *Mary Barton*, I will suggest that the shawl can be read as a key symbol appertaining to traits in a character's identity. It is the contrast in Esther's choice of the design and colour of her shawls that implies both an intention to redeem her, and also an unmistakable, powerful aspect of good in her identity. When John Barton encounters Esther on the streets, Gaskell presents a detailed description of the fabric of Esther's shawl. Her shawl is composed in the material "barège" (124) a semi-transparent material that can naturally be interpreted in line with the fine thin semi-transparent cotton of her "muslin dress", as an accessory to her trade as a streetwalker by drawing attention to her body. Although the barège shawl was a garment thought to be of middle class attire, the barège shawl is also in this episode a garment that Gaskell associates with an immoral aspect of Esther's identity, and not least in Esther's choice of the suggested gaudy colours "the gay-coloured" material Esther favours. But it is when Esther exchanges her barège shawl for a "plaid shawl, dirty and rather worn to be sure, but which had a kind of sanctity" (236) that an aspect of her character more suitably fitting to the role she performs in the narrative emerges. The plaid shawl was a practical outdoor garment, and the plaid is often thought of solely in terms of the pattern of the material. Rather than functioning as an item of adornment it was in general a shawl that was used to protect the body from external conditions, explicit for instance in *The Moorland Cottage*, when Maggie's brother Edward returns home in wet clothing following a rain storm and Maggie in an effort to prevent Edward's increasing chill "brought her old plaid to wrap around him" (71). The plaid shawl also functions as a protective garment in the characterisation of Esther. In an era that considered to even touch the skin of a streetwalker was tantamount to contamination, Esther performs her final deed of protection. Enveloped in the widths of material, which were often a feature of the shawl, Esther places a barrier, a form of cordon sanitaire around her body to prevent any touch and thus a spread of infection to Mary. Certainly when Mary attempts to kiss her aunt goodbye "her aunt pushed her off with a frantic kind of gesture, stating 'Not me. You must never kiss me. You!' (242). In considering Esther's continual mission of protection toward her child, and as a "watcher" (159) continually roaming the streets in an attempt to watch over and protect Mary, Esther's selection of a plaid shawl with its capacity for protection is well suited in keeping with the positive aspects of her identity. It is a shawl that crucially, as Gaskell tells us, has the quality of "sanctity", the holiness that we interpret in Esther's good deeds for others.

It is Mary's redemption from self-absorbed vanity that is apparent in her choice of a modest shawl. We are presented with Mary's choice between two unmistakably different types of shawl. One of which Sally Leadbitter owns and offers to Mary in the expectation that Mary will be attracted to the design of the garment and accept it. Not unexpectedly, in keeping with Sally's paramount desire to attract attention



she offers Mary the most favoured garment in her possession, the "black watered scarf" (276). But Mary selects her "old plaid shawl" (276). In contrast to Mary's probable choice of the "black watered scarf" in her earlier life, Mary's decision to opt for the practically designed plaid is entirely appropriate in Mary's consideration, because it reflects a new aspect of her identity. It is the developing characteristic trait of a practical consciousness that she expresses in her comment to Sally when she states, "How can I think of dress at such a time? When it's a matter of life and death to Jem" (276).

In a minimal but perfectly apt comment on choice of clothing, Margaret informs Mary that in attending her debut as soloist she wore her "white shawl" (94). The design of this shawl is omitted any description because the emphasis is on "white". Recognising in the colour "white" the reflection of a radiant light, Margaret's choice is appropriate with her holy role in the narrative. She is described as "angelic" and "an angel from heaven" and "an angel of peace" (175,193,280). There are many occasions when Margaret puts her angelic role into practice. Not only does she purchase the expensive material bombazine to make mourning dresses as a personal gift to the Ogden family, but also insists on Mary accepting a "golden sovereign" (94) to help toward feeding herself and her father after the contents of the Barton home are pawned. The interests of others are always a concern for Margaret, and she proceeds on her errand of mercy to assist the exhausted Mrs Wilson in caring for the dying Alice. But perhaps it is Margaret's selfless loyal devotion to her grandfather Job Legh that might be considered as the epitome of her angelic goodness. When Margaret puts on her "white shawl" it reflects light and this is the light of holy goodness that is a leading trait in her identity.

#### Notes

- <sup>1</sup> Pamela Claburn, *Shawls* (Buckinghamshire, England: Shire Publications Ltd, 2002), pp. 4-11.
- <sup>2</sup> Harriet Martineau in *Household Words* vol.v. ed. Charles Dickens (London: Wellington Street North, 1852), pp. 552-556.
- <sup>3</sup> Marjorie Henderson and Elizabeth Wilkinson, eds. *Cassell's Compendium of Victorian Crafts* (London: Macmillan Publishing Co., Inc., 1977).

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- Gaskell, E. *Mary Barton*. London: Penguin Classics, 1996.
- Cranford*. London: Penguin Classics, 1986.
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## The Seamstress

Christine Lingard

Sewing is a traditional activity of women of all classes and consequently something to which most can relate. Molly Gibson on arrival at Hamley Hall unpacks her clothes and her worsted work. Mrs Hamley approves: "Ah! You've got your sewing like a good girl."

Gaskell's knowledge is shown in her advice to a young mother who wanted a career in writing:

As well as having always some kind of sewing ready arranged to your hand, so that you can take it up at any odd minute and do a few stitches. I dare say at present it might be difficult to procure the sum that is necessary to purchase a sewing machine; and indeed unless you are a good workwoman to begin with you will find a machine difficult to manage. But try, my dear, to conquer your 'clumsiness' in sewing; there are thousand little bits of work, which no sempstress ever does as well as the wife or mother who knows how the comfort of those she loves depends on little peculiarities which but she [who] cares enough for the wearers to attend to...[L515]

The plight of professional needlewomen was a different matter. Like today's sweatshop workers they were on the bottom rung of the employment ladder, suffering appalling hardship. 106,000 seamstresses are listed on the 1841 census. After a two-year apprenticeship, usually living on the job, and paying a premium of up to £35 for the privilege, a journeywoman received £15-50 a year depending on how much accommodation was offered. Hours were usually 8am to 11pm sometimes working all night to meet a deadline for an order. As little as 20 minutes were allowed for dinner, other meals being taken as they worked. Conditions were unhealthy. There was a marked lack of ventilation in case valuable fabrics were damaged. Small fibre-particles irritated the lungs. Dusting was discouraged to keep the circulation to a minimum. The death rate from lung disease was high. Of 52 milliners and dressmakers, whose deaths were recorded in the London Metropolitan Union area in 1841, the average age was 28. 33 died of lung disease.

Though Gaskell would have met girls when off duty, she was only likely to have seen their working environment on a prearranged visit such as the one she made to the Schwabe's factory, near Middleton. Few of her middle class readers would have had even that opportunity. Seamstresses, however, were just that bit closer to personal experience. They were to be found all over the country, as everyone needed clothes.



Libbie Marsh was a seamstress, as too was Mary Barton. John Barton was determined that his daughter should not follow him into the mill and tramped around trying to find her a position – but he couldn't afford the premiums. Mary was more determined and found a job herself, but was able to live at home. Later through the character of Margaret Jennings we learn of the hardship. Eye problems were another common concern. Margaret was going blind:

Th'only difference is that if I sew a long time together, a bright spot like th'sun comes right down where I'm looking; all the rest is quite clear but just where I want to see...Plain work pays so bad and mourning has become so plentiful this winter I were tempted to take any black work I could; and now I'm suffering for it. [Chapter 5]

It was also the profession of Ruth Hilton:

Mrs Mason was particularly desirous that her work-women should exert themselves tonight for, on the next, the annual hunt-ball was to take place. For many were the dresses she had promised should be sent home 'without fail' the next morning; she had not let one slip through her fingers, for fear if she did, it might fall into the hands of a rival dressmaker.

She could not sleep or rest. The tightness at her side was worse than usual... but then she remembered the premium her father had struggled hard to pay, and the large family younger than herself, that had to be cared for, and she determined to bear on. [Chapter 1]

Gaskell was concerned not only with physical conditions but also the temptations which the girls encountered. Some argued that their position was worse than factory girls because there was less regulation and their exposure to luxury products encouraged dissatisfaction. Young girls were often long distances from home. Though weekly hours were long they didn't work on Sunday, unlike domestic servants who were also in this situation. Employers often took no interest in them. No dinner was cooked or fires lighted in any rooms to which they had access. They were left to their own devices. The risk of prostitution was high.

The image of the needlewoman became a cultural icon. There was a whole body of fiction on the subject. Most has sunk without trace but Gaskell couldn't have failed to be aware of it. First was John Galt's short story *The Seamstress* (1833). In poetry too – Thomas Hood's *The Song of the Shirt* is the most famous example. It was inspired by real life reports of needlewomen pawning their work. Charlotte Tonna (1790-1846), whose *Helen Fleetwood* is often described as the beginning of the social problem genre, wrote *The Wrongs of Women* (1844) – a collection of four documentary stories quoting verbatim from *The Second Report of the Children's Employment Commission*. One told of a needlewoman who dies and whose sister succumbs to prostitution:

The pain, sir in my chest is constant. I must stoop, because it seems to relieve the great pain in my shoulder-blades; but the stooping makes my breath shorter. Palpitation of the heart comes on if I only change my attitude or speak: a mist is over my eyes, and a choking in my throat and very great sickness... there is such a headache! Grievous racking pain in the limbs, and you may see my right shoulder-blade is growing out.

Dickens took up the cause, on the recommendation of the sanitary reformer, Thomas Southwood Smith, in his short novel *The Chimes*, based on a true incident of a seamstress who tried to drown both herself and her baby. She was charged with attempted murder. A death sentence was commuted to seven years transportation, after a public outcry. In *David Copperfield* Little Em'ly was a dressmaker, as were Little Dorrit and Kate Nickleby. In *Alton Locke* Charles Kingsley has his hero visit the garret of a seamstress:

There was no bed in the room, no doubt. On a broken chair by the chimney sat a miserable old woman fancying that she was warming her hands over the embers which had long been cold, shaking her head, and muttering to herself, with palsied lips, about the guardians and the workhouse; while upon a few rags on the floor lay a girl, ugly, small-pox marked, emaciated, her only bedclothes the skirt of a large handsome riding-habit, at which two other girls, wan and tawdry, were stitching busily, as they sat right and left of her on the floor.

Two forgotten novelists, with whom Gaskell was acquainted, also tackled the issue. Elizabeth Stone (1803-56) of Manchester was the novelist, whom she claimed was the author of *Mary Barton* when trying to preserve her anonymity. Her brother, James Wheeler, published an anthology of poetry including William Gaskell's verse. Her novel *William Langshawe* described a mill owner whose son was murdered by some of his workers. Though Mrs Gaskell denied it, this may have inspired *Mary Barton*.

In 1840 Stone wrote an extensively illustrated history of fashion, edited by the Countess of Wilton of Heaton Park, Manchester. Another novel, the *Young Milliner* contrasted the lives of workers with that of their rich clients. The preface sets out her aims:

Fashionable ladies, individual kind and good and exemplary, – are collectively the cause of infinite misery to the young and unprotected of their own sex. Of the existence even of this misery, they are, it may well be believed, scarcely aware; of its frightful extent, utterly unconscious...Should this narrative meet their sight, it is hoped that its appeal will not be in vain.

This rare novel, despite its long-term failure, was reviewed in London journals:



It was very bitter – it was almost unbearable. Sometimes, in the earlier part of the season, she had stood to her sewing throughout the night and had thereby been enabled to repel the advances of sleep more effectively: but this she could no longer do, her ankles [sic] swelled... On Sunday morning about ten o'clock she retired to bed, after being (for it had been a dreadfully busy week) at work for upwards of seventy hours consecutively...

The other author is Eliza Meteyard (1816-79) of Shrewsbury. The only recorded meeting with Gaskell was a dinner with the Howitts in 1850. She is now only remembered for her monumental, though unscholarly biography of Josiah Wedgwood. She eked out a living writing fiction to support her siblings, using the pseudonym Silverpen to conceal her gender. Though justly deserving criticism the biography made a lot of information available for the first time. Her stories were published in *Howitt's Magazine*, along with *Libbie Marsh*. One tale *Lucy Dean, the noble needlewoman* was serialized in the popular feminist magazine, *Eliza Cook's Journal*. The heroine was typical to type – lonely garret, spluttering candle, wintry moon, and prostitute sister:

untying the parcel she had brought she laid the two unfinished shirts on the table...'you see, ma'am,' she continued 'so much was taken off the last job of waistcoats, owing to the fault you found with the match of the stripes, that but sixpence was left me for bread and rent, and, as even my last candle end was burnt out tonight, I have brought those in the hope that you will let me have a trifle as my need is sore.'

The answer to her heroine's problems was emigration, as it was for Pasley, the 16-year-old dressmaker, in whose fate Gaskell showed an active interest. She was in Manchester's New Bayley prison for prostitution in 1850. On Tottie Fox's recommendation, Gaskell involved Dickens and his friend, the philanthropist, Angela Burdett Coutts. They arranged passage for her to the Cape. This incident is generally seen as the inspiration for *Ruth* though the outcome is different.

Irish born Julia Kavanagh (1824-77) cared for an invalid mother, and earned a living writing fiction and biographies, forestalling Gaskell's plans for a book about Madame Sevigné, with one on French women of letters. She died in Nice, ten years before her mother. William borrowed her *Rachel Gray* from the Portico Library. This novel in which the heroine, again a needlewoman, is credited with having influenced the writings of George Eliot.

In 1850 Gaskell forwarded two Christian Socialist pamphlets by Charles Kingsley to her brother-in-law, William Robson, of Warrington.

They are anxious to obtain a circulation among the working-classes for these tracts, and it is they that have instituted the Co-operative Tailors' Society, and who hope to form a similar Society for Needlewomen. [L67]

Kingsley was the only Christian Socialist to express his views in fiction. *Alton Locke* was influenced by Henry Mayhew's report *London Labour and the London Poor* based on a series of interviews with poorly paid and unemployed tailors and needlewomen. Controversially many of the East End tailors interviewed said that women had cheapened the trade. It caused public indignation. A stream of the letters to the press followed, for example, one pointing out the double standards of a famous American novelist currently visiting Britain.

In the East End dressmakers performed 16 hours of work irrespective of season with 40 minutes allowed for eating... Workrooms in which 10 or 12 of them are employed in making a dress for Mrs Beecher Stowe, the champion of the black slaves of America. [Times 1853].

As Gaskell abandoned the social-problem novel, the burgeoning Women's Movement took up the cause. She had been exposed to this group since coming to London in 1849. It was the literary editor William Howitt, who found a publisher for *Mary Barton*. His home was a perfect environment for Gaskell to pursue her religious, artistic and social interests. His wife, Mary was a feminist. She gathered around her a number of younger women with like interests – her daughter, Anna and her friend from Art School, Tottie Fox, who formed a special bond with Gaskell, Adelaide Procter, author of *The Lost Chord*, who visited Plymouth Grove, Jessie Boucherett, a product of Avonbank school like Gaskell, Emily Faithfull, founder of the women's Victoria Press, Bessie Rayner Parkes, great granddaughter of Joseph Priestley, and Barbara Bodichon (née Leigh-Smith) whom Gaskell "admired but did not like".

Generally known as the Langham Place Group, they were actively involved in the unsuccessful campaign to present the Married Women's Property Petition to Parliament in 1855. Married women's earnings were by law automatically the property of their husbands and they had no right to them. Mary Howitt was the secretary and collected most of the 20,000 signatures herself, with the help of 18-year-old Octavia Hill (of National Trust fame) pasting the sheets together. They thought it propitious to secure the support of as many respectably married women as possible. By then Gaskell's reputation was sufficiently high, so with Elizabeth Barrett Browning and Jane Carlyle, her name was at the top of the list. She was pleased to oblige – it was her only overtly feminist act.

One of the first feminist articles on the cause of the seamstresses was a plea by Anna Jameson (1794-1860) in *Sisters of Charity, Catholic and Protestant and the Communion of Labour*. She called for Protestant women to adopt the charitable activities of Catholic sisterhoods. Jameson belonged to an older generation of more moderate feminists, and took the younger ones under her wing – 'her nieces' as she called them. Known principally as an art historian and travel writer she had both popular and critical success. One of several books she gave to Gaskell was her *Commonplace Book*:



[I] peep in, and read a sentence and shut it up to think over it's [sic] graceful suggestive wisdom in something of the gourmet spirit of a child with an eatable dainty...I do like your book – I liked it before – I like it even better now. [L219]

Another gift was the tract – *The Communion of Labour: a Second Lecture on the Social Employment of Women* which placed emphasis on the need of women to lead useful lives, and have the opportunity to earn their own living. In her younger days she had been governess in Dublin to the children of Lord Hatherton, who married Mrs Davenport of Capesthorpe. Though not intimate acquaintances, they exchanged a number of letters. It is evident that Gaskell valued the older women's opinion highly and sent her a copy of her latest book for approval, which was forthcoming.

Bessie Rayner Parkes (1825-1923) came from a Unitarian family in Coventry. Her great uncle had married one of the Byerley sisters of Avonbank School. Her daughter claimed that Gaskell had taken her mother to Haworth. She was definitely entertained at Plymouth Grove. A gift from Bessie of her poetry is in the Manchester Central Library collection, along with the gift from Anna Jameson. She was devoted to Mary Merryweather (died 1880), a Quaker nurse – a friendship which survived Bessie's conversion to Roman Catholicism. Gaskell was familiar with her charitable activities:

her management of Mr Courtauld's girls is the most successful I ever heard of – [L630]

She managed the girls' school founded by Samuel Courtauld at his silk factory in Halstead, Essex for 14 years from 1847, established a night school, a factory kitchen, a hostel for working girls, a nursery for mothers to leave their babies and a sick fund. The project failed for lack of support. Girls resented the restraint of the hostel and the mothers preferred to leave their babies with friends. Perhaps it was antipathy to 'do-gooders' that was the problem.

The Courtaulds were shareholders in *The English Women's Journal*, the magazine founded by Bessie with Leigh-Smith. Matilda Hays was co-editor. This 1865 letter probably refers to the journal and would therefore be written to her:

Dear madam, I have received a letter from Miss Parkes this morning in which she tells me of your kind wish that I should contribute to the Magazine that you propose to start. I am, however, unable to promise this as my time will be very fully occupied during the next year or so. [L568]

Perhaps there is more to her refusal. She had not responded to Eliza Cook's request for her to contribute to her feminist journal. Bessie's friend Mary Ann Evans (George Eliot) was also reluctant, pleading pressure of novel writing. She disapproved of another of Bessie's projects, *The Waverley Journal*, declaring the

writing was not up to standard. Quality journalism was more important than the 'woman-only' tag. She was equally dismissive of *The English Woman's Journal*. 'It is middling' she wrote. Did Gaskell feel the same?

Bessie abandoned her cause after her marriage to Louis Belloc, whose Irish born mother Louise Swanton had translated several of Gaskell's books into French. She was the mother of Hilaire Belloc.

*The English Woman's Journal* contained several articles on the lot of seamstresses. Bessie was critical of many of the philanthropists, calling for the foundation of associations of women, similar to those in New York. Other articles were contributed by Ellen Barlee (1826-93), who with aristocratic patrons, founded the Institution for the Employment of Needlewomen in Lamb's Conduit Street, London, designed to cut out the middleman and get the full profit for the women's efforts. She placed regular appeals in *The Times*. Jenny Lind gave a concert on her behalf. Gaskell wrote in 1861:

I shall be very glad to make Miss Barlee's acquaintance and when I next go to London...I will call on her, or try to see her in a way most pleasing to her and you. I am very interested in her paper for the Report – having seen something of the kind of work at York St., Westminster, under Miss Stanley's auspices. I fancy Miss Barlee must be well acquainted with this as Miss Stanley shares the Army contract for shirts and until recently I have been the means of her purchasing the calico here in Manchester. Owing I believe to the undermining of the former contractors, difficulties have arisen in procuring the description of shirting, - difficulties which, possibly Miss Barlee has met with as well.

Hon. Mary Stanley (1813-79), was the sister of Arthur Stanley, Dean of Westminster. This aristocratic Cheshire family had known the Hollands for decades. She had been a friend of Florence Nightingale, but they became estranged when she converted to Roman Catholicism. Bishop Manning prevailed on her to take a second contingent of nurses to Scutari, but she proved to be unsuitable for the task and soon returned. A.J. Munby, a lecturer at the Working Man's College described her thus:

Behind a counter, also full of shirts in progress, sat Miss Stanley, stitching away at a wristband...She is the Hon Miss Stanley, who was with Miss Nightingale in the Crimea: and here she now sits, day by day, looking after the making, by poor needlewomen at their own homes of some thirty thousand soldiers' shirts per annum. A quiet self devoted woman of forty or so; slight and worn, with traces of past beauty in her calm & ladylike and unpretending face. A woman worthy of deep respect; and of a certain desideratum too, when one looked at her busy hands – thin, uncared for, dignified by no wedding ring. [L494a]

The early 1860s period in Manchester is known as the Cotton Famine, when the



American Civil War cut off this important source of cotton. There was great hardship. Ironically the provision of sewing circles was seen as a means of relief. She wrote to David Grundy, vice-chairman of the Sewing Circles Committee.

Marianne and Meta are so sorry to see the thin poor clothing they go out in, to receive their parish money...& we think if you would kindly let us have a few fents & scraps of cloth we could manage a cape or cloak apiece for Xmas Day...you once gave us a grand beautiful bundle of woollen slag, and therefore we ask you to give us more. But I know two or three poor women to whom I should be glad to give the employment of making up even such small scraps of woollen stuff, - and poor old women shivering to the Union in a warm bombazine petticoat, & calico gown & shawl equally worn, won't be particular if they have a covering of many colours, so that it is warm. [L606]

In 1862, Barlee published the findings of a visit to one circle set up in City Road, Hulme by William Birch, a young clerk still in his twenties. Within a year there were 3,000 women employed in a network of circles, paid 8d a day with lunch included (potato hash on the day of the visit). Unwanted clothing was also collected and distributed, and pawned clothing redeemed. In 1859 Gaskell had expressed reservations about sewing circles.

I think a sewing club is an error - good for the people whh [sic] sew, as it is self denying on their part, but not for doing half a quarter so much good to others as might be done by the same amount of self-denial. The best mode of administering material charity seems to me by giving employment and taking thought in adopting the kind of employment and in helping to find out who can do it. If you cut out the work, gave it to poor women to do for a moderate payment and then either gave the ready-made clothes yourselves or sold it at cost price to be given by others to the poor who needed it I should say it was far better wiser and more noiseless. [L424]

Yet the Gaskell women were tireless in their efforts for the relief of victims. Work on *Sylvia's Lovers* was set aside.

Last autumn and winter was such hard work - we were often off at nine, - not to come home till 7 or ½ past, too worn out to eat or do anything but go to bed. The one thought ran through all our talk almost like a disease. Marianne worked quite as hard, if not harder than Meta...but Marianne did not think about it all as Meta...but Meta laboured day and night in weighing and planning and thinking...- the pressure on the brain was telling on the spine. [L526]

In the end the experience was dispiriting. She feared that in the long run more harm was done than good.

It is interesting that many of these descriptions of philanthropy are included in

letters to Janet, Lady Kay-Shuttleworth, of Gawthorp Hall. Estranged from her husband from 1853 she spent her time at health resorts here in Britain and on the continent, but never returned to Lancashire. Most biographers fail to expand on her character, but if her replies to Gaskell's letters (which haven't survived) are of equal stature she was a woman of intelligence and compassion. Perhaps she was one of those titled people who provided financial support for charities but directed her activities from her sofa, as a semi-invalid, (there was a period of a year when she never left her bedroom), but then so did Florence Nightingale.

This issue was certainly a major one that concerned Gaskell at all times of her career. I certainly feel there is still a lot more to be learnt about her charitable activities.

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## The Connection between Elizabeth Gaskell, Charles Eliot Norton and Autumn Leaves by John Everett Millais Pat Barnard

For those of us who treasure the painting *Autumn Leaves* by Millais and who are also members of the Gaskell Society this connection is very exciting!

Millais painted *Autumn Leaves* in the orchard of his first marriage home Annat Lodge in Perth. I found the site which is now a small cul-de-sac of attractive houses.

Effie (Euphemia) wife of Millais, and former wife of John Ruskin, chose the girls for the painting. The two girls on the left are Effie's younger sisters Sophie and Alice. Sophie is holding a bunch of leaves which are dropping into the garden wicker basket held by Alice.

Effie then had problems finding some girls pretty enough. There was nothing to suit in Mr Murdoch's school and the girls at the School of Industry (for orphans) were all so ugly except for Matilda Proudfoot! She is wearing the brown cotton dress and cape of the school and her brilliantly red hair glows against the background, with the peak of Ben Vorlich in the distance. Isabella Nicol was found sitting over the fire and watching with great interest two pears roasting in the room of an invalid named Kitty Fox whom Effie had been visiting for 12 years. Mrs Nicol came in to tidy the room and in return Isabella was being taught to read by Kitty.

Charles Eliot Norton wrote to Elizabeth Gaskell on 24/7 1857 that during a walk he had met her daughters (with I think, Hearn) and the scene had reminded him of the painting *Autumn Leaves* by Millais.

The original hand-written letter is to be found in Box 21 of the Tatham-Worthington collection in the Rylands Library. Tatham-Worthington were the solicitors to Meta Gaskell and other members of the family. The well-worn fragile letter was found amongst the papers. This was on display for the 150th anniversary exhibition of the Art Treasures Exhibition of 1857 in the Rylands library.

Editor adds: *Autumn Leaves* (oil on canvas, measuring 104.3 x 74cm and first exhibited in 1856) is now exhibited with the Pre-Raphaelites on the first floor of Manchester Art Gallery.

## 'Such a life': Elizabeth Gaskell and Charlotte Brontë Patsy Stoneman

*A shortened version of a talk given to the Gaskell Society  
at Cross Street Chapel, Manchester, on Tuesday, 5th March, 2013*

'Scheherazade' was Dickens' name for Elizabeth Gaskell and Jenny Uglow writes that 'she could not help turning lives into stories'.<sup>1</sup> It was certainly as a good story that she first encountered Charlotte Brontë.

When *Jane Eyre* was published under the pseudonym 'Currer Bell', in October, 1847, it caused a sensation. Everyone who could read wanted to read it, and of course Gaskell agog with curiosity about the author. Two years later, *Shirley* was published 'by Currer Bell, Author of *Jane Eyre*', and Gaskell was still in the dark, begging Tottie Fox to find out 'who wrote *Jane Eyre* and *Shirley*'.<sup>2</sup> Less than a week later, however, she was able to gloat over Catherine Winkworth about 'Currer Bell (aha! What will you give me for a secret?) She's a she – that I will tell you – who has sent me *'Shirley'*'.<sup>3</sup>

By early in 1850 the secret of Charlotte Brontë's identity was generally known,<sup>4</sup> and the two women finally met at the Kay-Shuttleworths' Lake District home in August, 1850. Gaskell was genuinely drawn to Charlotte. 'She and I quarrelled and differed about almost everything,' she writes, 'she calls me a democrat, & can not bear Tennyson – but we like each other heartily... and I hope we shall ripen into friends'.<sup>5</sup> It was Charlotte's life which fascinated Gaskell, and as soon as she returned home, she dashed off letter after letter.<sup>6</sup> 'Such a life as Miss B's I never heard of before', she writes, sweeping on not only to describe what she herself had seen and heard, but also to repeat the ill-founded gossip passed on to her by Lady Kay-Shuttleworth, much of it derived from a disgruntled servant dismissed from the Brontë household.

In these letters Gaskell conjures up Brontë's bleak moorland home, the early death of her mother and the eccentric ways of her 'strange, half-mad' father. She paints Charlotte's audacious journey to Brussels and rushes on to the success of *Jane Eyre*, so rapidly followed by the deaths of her brother and sisters – all in a typical Gaskell torrent of emotive detail.<sup>7</sup> Charlotte, for her part, writes to Ellen Nussey that Gaskell 'is a woman of the most genuine talent – of cheerful, pleasing and cordial manners and – I believe – of a kind and good heart'.<sup>8</sup>

The two women also wrote to one another, and Charlotte visited the Gaskells' home in Manchester three times in the early 1850s.<sup>9</sup> They continued good friends, and when Gaskell's *Ruth* and Brontë's *Villette* both appeared in January 1853, Charlotte wrote, 'I daresay we shall not be able wholly to prevent comparisons... but we need not care: we can set them at defiance: they *shall* not make us foes: they *shall* not mingle with our mutual feeling one taint of jealousy: there is my hand on that: I know





St. Peter's Church  
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Vivienne Young, President Shirley, Jo Pryke and Meghan Healy

## Conference Outings



Gaskellians at Barford House



Dumbleton Hall



you will give clasp for clasp'.<sup>10</sup>

Indeed the friendship was not damaged, and in September 1853 Gaskell finally visited Charlotte at home in Haworth, again writing long letters describing Charlotte's warm welcome, together with the odd behaviour of her father, Patrick Brontë, who took his meals alone and handled 'a deadly little pistol'. She was now able to describe at first hand how 'the wind goes piping and wailing and sobbing round the square unsheltered house in a very strange unearthly way' and how Charlotte's conversation was filled with 'the wild, strange facts of her own and her sisters' lives'.<sup>11</sup>

Gaskell's busy life meant that though she took a lively interest in Charlotte's marriage to Arthur Bell Nicholls, further visits were deferred, so that it was a great shock when, in March, 1855, she received a letter from John Greenwood, the Haworth stationer, informing her of Charlotte's death. 'I can not tell you how VERY sad your note has made me', she wrote. 'My dear dear friend that I shall never see again on earth! .... I loved her dearly, more than I think she knew. I shall never cease to be thankful that I knew her: or to mourn her loss'.<sup>12</sup>

Charlotte's death stirred up a new storm of interest in her life, not all of it sympathetic. In June, *Sharpe's London Magazine* published what Juliet Barker, the Brontë biographer, calls 'a gossipy article... which, with salacious glee, related a series of lurid anecdotes about Charlotte's life and gave a grim portrayal of her home and father'.<sup>13</sup> The article stung Charlotte's life-long friend, Ellen Nussey, who urged Charlotte's father and husband to take action. 'I wish', she writes, 'that Mrs Gaskell, who is every way capable, would undertake a reply and would give a sound castigation to the writer. Her personal acquaintance with Haworth, the Parsonage, and its inmates, fits her for the task'.<sup>14</sup>

'The great irony', Juliet Barker comments, 'is that Mrs Gaskell was actually responsible for the article' – not that she wrote it herself, but that it 'quoted extensively from the [...] letters she had written from the Lake District in 1850 after her first meeting with Charlotte'.<sup>15</sup> By 1855, however, Gaskell saw Charlotte as a dear friend rather than as a source of sensational tales, writing to George Smith, who was publisher to both women, saying 'I can not tell you how I honoured & loved her.... Sometime... I will publish what I know of her, and make the world... honour the woman as much as they have admired the writer.' Gaskell was imagining writing something perhaps 'years hence',<sup>16</sup> but only days later she received a formal request from Patrick Brontë 'to publish a long or short account of [Charlotte's] life and works, just as you may deem expedient & proper'.<sup>17</sup>

Gaskell rose to the occasion, albeit with misgivings. 'I never *did* write a biography', she writes to a friend, 'and don't know quite how to set about it; you see you have to be accurate and keep to facts; a most difficult thing for a writer of fiction'.<sup>18</sup>

Nevertheless she set herself a programme of research which was possibly unprecedented for a biography of that time. She had access to the hundreds of letters which Charlotte had written to Ellen Nussey, but she also travelled to almost every place where Charlotte had lived, and interviewed as many people as possible who had known her.

Her absolute priority was to 'make the world... honour the woman', and in defence of her friend she was fearless – even foolhardy – in exposing the Clergy Daughters' School at Cowan Bridge, the original for Lowood in *Jane Eyre*, and the perfidy of Lydia Robinson (later Lady Scott), the woman who, she believed, had seduced Charlotte's brother Branwell. 'Do you mind the law of libel', she writes to George Smith – 'I have three people I want to libel – Lady Scott (that bad woman who corrupted Branwell Brontë) Mr Newby, & Lady Eastlake'.<sup>19</sup> Newby was the unscrupulous publisher who held the manuscripts of *Wuthering Heights* and *Agnes Grey*, and tried to exploit the success of *Jane Eyre* by suggesting that they were by the same author. Lady Eastlake wrote a notorious review of *Jane Eyre* suggesting that if it were written by a woman, it must be 'one who has, for some sufficient reason, long forfeited the society of her own sex'.<sup>20</sup>

Like several other critics, Eastlake found Charlotte's writing 'coarse', meaning 'indelicate' or 'improper', and Gaskell tried to head off this kind of criticism by stressing the hardship of Charlotte's life, in the process painting Patrick Brontë as an eccentric tyrant and Branwell as abject in his lack of self-discipline. She also concealed the fact that Charlotte had fallen in love with a married man. In May, 1856, Gaskell followed Charlotte to the Pensionnat Heger, in Brussels, where she had spent two years learning French and German, and Charlotte's teacher, M. Heger, showed Gaskell the desperate letters which Charlotte had written to him after leaving Brussels. 'Day and night', she had written, 'I find neither rest nor peace. If I sleep I am disturbed by tormenting dreams in which I see you always severe, always saturnine and angry with me.... If my master withdraws his friendship from me entirely I shall be absolutely without hope; if he gives me a little friendship – a very little – I shall be content – happy, I would have a reason for living – for working'.<sup>21</sup> Gaskell kept the secret, writing not a word to suggest Charlotte's obsession.

Gaskell's *Life of Charlotte Brontë* was published in March, 1857, but she was obliged to make extensive revisions to a third edition, published in August, to pacify the various people who felt themselves to have been libelled. Modern scholars voice a different objection to the biography – that it puts an over-romantic emphasis on the Brontë children's melancholy childhood, Patrick's reclusive eccentricity and Branwell's dissipated worthlessness. Yet Elizabeth Gaskell was probably the best biographer that Charlotte Brontë could have had.

The book was stunningly original. There was no outstanding biography of a woman writer which might stand as a model for Gaskell's work, and she wrote a new and



unique kind of memorial, in which Charlotte's private trials and emotions took equal place with her public life. And if Gaskell occasionally 'plays to the gallery' in recording the difficulties of such a life, it is her story-teller's skill which renders the story memorable. As Patrick Brontë said to an objector, 'Mrs Gaskell is a novelist, you know, and we must allow her a *little* romance, eh?... But the book is substantially true, sir, for all that'.<sup>22</sup>

There were, however, aspects to Charlotte's life which Gaskell could not or did not know. She seriously misrepresented Patrick Brontë. She only met him twice – once before, and once after Charlotte's death – and confessed to being 'sadly afraid of him in my inmost soul'.<sup>23</sup> This trepidation meant that she was reluctant to apply to him for information, and that he had no opportunity to deny some of the bizarre behaviour which she attributed to him. Patrick's response to her stories demonstrates, as Barker puts it, his 'self-deprecating sense of humour' and 'his remarkable forbearance'.<sup>24</sup> 'I do not deny' he writes, 'that I am somewhat excentrick. Had I been numbered amongst the calm, sedate, *concentric* men of the world, I should not have been as I now am, and I should, in all probability, never have had such children as mine have been'.<sup>25</sup> Despite all the trouble it had caused, his opinion of Gaskell's *Life of Charlotte Brontë* was 'that it is every way/ worthy of what one Great Woman, should have written of Another, and that it ought to stand, and will stand in the first rank, of Biographies, till the end of time'.<sup>26</sup>

It is Juliet Barker, among the modern biographers of the Brontës, who has done most to rehabilitate the figure of Patrick Brontë, showing that far from being an eccentric recluse, he was actively involved in social reform, and took a deep interest in the education of his children – indeed, he was remarkable for his time in giving his daughters access to uncensored reading. He was remarkable in many ways. Born in the north of Ireland in 1777 in considerable poverty, he raised himself by his own efforts to become a minister in the Church of England.

At each stage of his early career he was caught up in scenes of potential danger. In 1798 the punitive massacres by which the British army suppressed the rebellion of United Irishmen gave him a life-long horror of insurrection, which Charlotte came to share. As a student at St John's College, Cambridge, in an England in a ferment over the Napoleonic wars, Patrick aligned himself with law and order, striking out his Irish name, 'Prunty', and registering himself as 'Brontë', in homage to Lord Nelson, newly created 'Duke of Brontë'. He drilled under the young Lord Palmerston, and eagerly followed the Peninsular campaigns (1807-14) of Arthur Wellesley, later the Duke of Wellington. As a curate in West Yorkshire, he witnessed men from his parish take part in Luddite attacks.

Patrick undoubtedly spoke of these experiences to his children, and also encouraged them to read current journals, all of which meant that Charlotte Brontë was much less isolated from the world than she sometimes suggested. The 'little

books' which she and her siblings wrote as children were hardly childish in tone, since they copied their format and their preoccupations from the regular journals of the day, particularly *Blackwood's Magazine*. Gaskell did read some of the 'little books', but she was clearly bewildered and a little alarmed by them. 'They are the wildest & most incoherent things' she wrote to George Smith. All of them, she noted, 'purport[...] to be written, or addressed to some member of the Wellesley family'.<sup>27</sup> Indeed, the young Charlotte had followed her father in adopting as heroes first Arthur Wellesley, the Duke of Wellington, and then a fictionalised version of his son, also Arthur Wellesley. In the stories she created with her brother Branwell, these heroes establish an imaginary country called Angria in West Africa, and here Arthur's brother, Charles, becomes Charlotte's regular mouth-piece, appearing in one story after another as a cynical, frivolous man about town.

Although this work is normally described as 'juvenilia', Charlotte was quite grown up before she abandoned the Angrian saga. Heather Glen's recent anthology, *Charlotte Brontë: Tales of Angria*<sup>28</sup> includes five of Charlotte's 'novelettes' written when she was in her early twenties, and Glen demonstrates that the social milieu of this writing derives from the so-called 'silver fork' novels of the 1820s and 30s. Readers who are only familiar with Charlotte's later work will be astonished at the jaunty, dissipated tone and racy slang of novelettes like 'Stancliffe's Hotel' (1838) and 'Henry Hastings' (1839).

It was a wrench for Charlotte to give up the over-coloured world of Angria, but she recognised that if she was to gain an audience outside her own family, she must address the world in its everyday form. In *The Professor*, therefore, she took as her hero and narrator a man who would 'work his way through life as I had seen real living men work theirs – that he should never get a shilling he had not earned – that no sudden turns should lift him in a moment to wealth and high station'. Ironically, publishers rejected it because they 'would have liked something ... more consonant with a highly wrought fancy'.<sup>29</sup> The irony is the greater in that *The Professor* derives from Charlotte's time in Brussels, the most 'highly wrought' period of her life, and it was to keep sentiment under control that she adopted a male persona with something of the worldly Angrian tone.

*Jane Eyre*, by contrast, speaks openly not only of its heroine's emotional deprivation as an unloved orphan, but also of her indignation at her lot. "'Unjust! – unjust!'", Jane's reason cries to her as a child,<sup>30</sup> and as a lonely governess she protests that women 'suffer from too rigid a restraint, too absolute a stagnation, precisely as men would suffer'.<sup>31</sup> Jane is notably anxious about the prospect of marriage, even to her beloved Rochester, and resists the status of a 'kept woman', whether inside or outside marriage. Their final union comes about only when their economic, physical and emotional standing has been equalised by her inheritance and his disability. Margaret Oliphant, writing in 1855, credited Charlotte Brontë with having created a new kind of relationship between men and women, in which their



'furious love-making' is 'but a wild declaration of the "Rights of Woman" in a new aspect'; she finds Jane Eyre 'a dangerous little person, inimical to the peace of society'.<sup>32</sup> It is an aspect of Charlotte's writing which Gaskell does not emphasise, and it is possibly the novel's intense self-centredness that left the Unitarian uneasy.

In *Shirley* (1849), Charlotte did attempt a wider social scene, and though she distanced her new novel by setting it in the past, in the Luddite years 1811-12, these events offered clear parallels to recent Chartist activity. She was therefore dismayed when, well into her new work, she read Gaskell's *Mary Barton*, which deals specifically with a Chartist hero in contemporary Manchester. *Shirley*, however, is a very different book from Gaskell's impassioned account of working-class suffering. The main male character is not a working man but an exiled Belgian manufacturer, Robert Gérard Moore, the master of Hollow's Mill, and Charlotte's treatment of the workers themselves is almost dismissive.<sup>33</sup> Their local spokesmen are worthless men<sup>34</sup> while the more serious demagogues are 'strangers: emissaries from the large towns'.<sup>35</sup> Only one worker, William Farren, is treated seriously,<sup>36</sup> and, like Dickens' Stephen Blackpool, he is shown as a special case.

The social problem which attracts Charlotte's passionate engagement, in fact, is not that of industrial workers but that of unmarried women, represented by Caroline Helstone. Caroline contemplates the life of old maids in her district and concludes that the place allotted to them 'is to do good to others, to be helpful whenever help is wanted'. This is 'a very convenient doctrine for the people who hold it' but, she asks, 'Is this enough? Is it to live? Is there not a terrible hollowness, mockery, want, craving, in that existence which is given away to others, for want of something of your own to bestow it on?'<sup>37</sup> This protest might be a response to many of Gaskell's short stories, where single women find fulfilment through caring for other people's children. Charlotte's faith in the possibilities of marriage itself had also waned since *Jane Eyre*. Although Caroline does marry Robert Moore in the end, Charlotte does not imagine the reciprocal married life which Gaskell foresees for Margaret Hale in *North and South*.<sup>38</sup>

Charlotte's last novel, *Villette* (1853), returns to the theme of single women. It is one of the most intense representations of loneliness ever written, and although Gaskell found it to some extent 'morbid', she acknowledges that 'it reveals depths in her mind, aye, and in her heart too which I doubt if ever any one has fathomed. What would have been her transcendent grandeur if she had been brought up in a healthy & happy atmosphere no one can tell.' Gaskell attributes Charlotte's 'morbid' to 'her life of monotony and privation of any one to love',<sup>39</sup> and Thackeray went further, writing that 'rather than have fame, rather than any other earthly good or mayhap heavenly one she wants some Tomkins or another to love her and be in love with'.<sup>40</sup>

Yet Charlotte does not deserve this patronising tone. In a letter to Ellen Nussey, she is precise: 'The evils that now and then wring a groan from my heart – lie in position – not that I am a *single* woman and likely to remain a *single* woman – but because I

am a *lonely* woman and likely to be *lonely*'.<sup>41</sup> Charlotte's need to escape solitude was complicated by her fear that marriage comes at the price of lost independence. *Villette* ends with its heroine established in a successful single life, while her promised husband may or may not have perished at sea.<sup>42</sup> Charlotte's triumph here is to use fiction to give her heroine two rewards which in reality she feared were incompatible – on the one hand the precious consciousness that for one other human being she was the 'dearest, first on earth',<sup>43</sup> and on the other hand, the equally precious gift of 'scope and work'.<sup>44</sup>

Elizabeth Gaskell and Charlotte Brontë were very different women. Gaskell was a generally happy, optimistic wife and mother, member of a hopeful and rationalistic community, courageous in the defence of the suffering poor but sure that a woman's destiny, whether married or single, lay primarily in the care of others. Brontë by contrast felt impotent when faced with large social problems but was radical in claiming 'scope and work' for single women. While craving the acknowledgement of love, she was dubious about the married state and (with the exception of Gaskell's daughters) disliked children. What drew the two together was perhaps their mutual recognition that, in the words of Wordsworth, whom they both admired, 'we have all of us one human heart'.<sup>45</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Jenny Uglow, *Elizabeth Gaskell: A Habit of Stories*. London: Faber & Faber, 1993, p.249.

<sup>2</sup> J. A. V. Chapple and Arthur Pollard (eds), *The Letters of Mrs Gaskell*. MUP, 1997, No.55, p. 90.

<sup>3</sup> *Gaskell Letters* No. 57, p. 93.

<sup>4</sup> Juliet Barker, *The Brontës*. London: Weidenfeld and Nicolson, [1994] 1995, p. 627.

<sup>5</sup> *Gaskell Letters* No. 79, p. 129.

<sup>6</sup> to Catherine Winkworth, to Charlotte Froude, to Tottie Fox, and to two unknown recipients,

<sup>7</sup> *Gaskell Letters* No. 75.

<sup>8</sup> Margaret Smith (ed), *The Letters of Charlotte Brontë*. 3 Vols, Oxford: Clarendon, 1995 - 2004, Vol. 2 p. 450.

<sup>9</sup> Alan Shelston, *Elizabeth Gaskell*. London: Hesperus Press, Brief Lives series, 2010, p. 67.

<sup>10</sup> *Brontë Letters*, Vol. 3 p. 104.

<sup>11</sup> *Gaskell Letters* No. 166, pp. 243-7.

<sup>12</sup> *Gaskell Letters* No.232, p. 336.

<sup>13</sup> Barker, p. 780.

<sup>14</sup> Quoted in Barker, p. 780.

<sup>15</sup> Barker, p. 780.

<sup>16</sup> *Gaskell Letters* No. 241, p. 345.

<sup>17</sup> Quoted in Barker, p. 782.

<sup>18</sup> Quoted in Uglow, p. 397.

<sup>19</sup> *Gaskell Letters* No. 314, p. 418.

<sup>20</sup> Elizabeth Rigby (Lady Eastlake), *Quarterly Review*, December 1848, Vol lxxxiv, pp. 153-85; quoted in Miriam Allott (ed), *The Brontës: the Critical Heritage*. London: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1974, p. 111.



- 21 *Brontë Letters* Vol I, p. 379.
- 22 Quoted in Uglow p. 429.
- 23 *Gaskell Letters* No. 166, p. 245.
- 24 He even laughed over the scandalous article in *Sharpe's Magazine*. Barker, pp. 781, 803.
- 25 Quoted in Barker, 803.
- 26 Quoted in Barker, p. 808.
- 27 *Gaskell Letters* No. 297, p. 398.
- 28 Heather Glen (ed), *Charlotte Brontë: Tales of Angria*. Harmondsworth: Penguin, 2006.
- 29 Charlotte Brontë, *The Professor* [1857]. Ed. Margaret Smith and Herbert Rosengarten. Oxford: Oxford World's Classics, 2008, p. 3.
- 30 Charlotte Brontë, *Jane Eyre* [1847]. Ed. Margaret Smith, Intro. Sally Shuttleworth, Oxford: Oxford World's Classics, 2008, p. 15.
- 31 *Jane Eyre*, p. 109.
- 32 Margaret Oliphant, 'Modern Novelists—Great and Small', *Blackwood's Magazine* lxxvii (May 1855), 557-9; in Allott, *The Brontës*, 312.
- 33 Charlotte Brontë, *Shirley* [1849]. Ed. Herbert Rosengarten and Margaret Smith, Intro. Janet Gezari, Oxford: Oxford World's Classics, 2008, p. 53.
- 34 *Shirley*, pp. 114-6, 532.
- 35 *Shirley*, p. 322.
- 36 *Shirley*, p. 117.
- 37 *Shirley*, p. 149.
- 38 *Shirley*, p. 541.
- 39 *Gaskell Letters*, No 154, pp. 228-9.
- 40 Quoted in Barker, p. 719.
- 41 *Brontë Letters*, Vol 3, p. 63.
- 42 Charlotte Brontë, *Villette* [1853]. Ed. Margaret Smith and Herbert Rosengarten, Intro. Tim Dolin, Oxford: Oxford World's Classics, 2008, p. 496.
- 43 *Villette*, p. 491.
- 44 *Shirley*, p. 330.
- 45 Gaskell quotes this line from 'The Cumberland Beggar' in *North and South*, p. 419.

## Elizabeth Gaskell and Honoré de Balzac

### John Greenwood

Alas, I am no Gaskell specialist but a recent article from a Gaskell specialist has encouraged me to take up Helen Smith's invitation in her Editor's Letter in the last issue of The Gaskell Society Newsletter (Spring 2013 – No.55) to submit some item on Gaskell. The article, appearing in the same Newsletter, is by Barbara Hardy: "Elizabeth Gaskell and George Eliot" (pp 9-16). She considers the kind of influence Gaskell (as the earlier writer) had on Eliot. The article begins by referring to the

Jo Pryke/Shirley Foster talk on the possible plagiarism of Gaskell's *The Moorland Cottage* (1850) by Eliot in her *The Mill on the Floss* (1860). Hardy then goes on to consider further resemblances, such as *Ruth* and *Adam Bede*, then *North and South* and *Middlemarch*. Hardy is surely right in rejecting blatant plagiarism but accepting that "there are affinities, echoes, multiple associations" (p.12). There is "the affinity between the two great novelists... several echoes...unconscious memories, some coincidences... all show similar preoccupations and affinities" (p.14). This most stimulating article justifiably concludes with the assertion that "*North and South*, *Cousin Phillis* and *Wives and Daughters* played a part in the making of *Middlemarch*, and stand comparison with it" (p.16). I am reminded of a similar assessment made by Patricia Thomson in her *George Sand and the Victorians* (1977) where she deals with (among many other English 19th century novelists) the close connection between Sand's *Mauprat* (1837) and Emily Brontë's *Wuthering Heights* (1849): "The parallels and connections are there in profusion and I have little doubt that *Mauprat* formed part of the literary experience on which Emily Brontë drew. The fact that she was able to produce a totally different and much greater book simply emphasises her remarkable powers of assimilation and transformation as well as her originality and creative power." (p. 89)

In short, a creative artist in painting, music, literature and other art forms is aware of, and often draws on, previous work in that particular art form, which is quite definitely not plagiarism. Very shortly after reading the Hardy article I read (I confess for the first time) Gaskell's *The Manchester Marriage*, written in 1858. My first impression was how similar in many ways it was to Balzac's *Le Colonel Chabert*, written first in 1832, then an enlarged version in 1835. The most obvious similarity between the two short stories is the common theme of the returning husband (a soldier in Balzac, a sailor in Gaskell) after many years to his wife and home. What kind of a reception will he get? Is he making true or false claims? Is he really who he claims to be? Of course, this theme is as old as the hills. Ulysses is welcomed back by faithful Penelope, after 20 years of resisting marriage offers, while Agamemnon is killed on his return by his wife Clytemnestra for having sacrificed their daughter Iphigenia. In France in the 1820s there were many accounts (often in fictional form) of the difficulties experienced by soldiers who fought under Napoleon but were ostracised under the restored Monarchy. Rebecca West's first novel, *The Return of the Soldier* (1918), is a very moving and sensitive account of the effect of a returning shell-shocked casualty on three women very close to him. In our own time Vietnam and Iraqi veterans from UK and USA have had similar treatment. Furthermore, Gaskell herself often uses the theme of the loss or absence and then return of a husband, lover or brother, e.g. Peter in *Cranford*, Frank Wilson in *The Manchester Marriage*, Frederick in *North and South*. Nevertheless, I was intrigued by the possibility that Gaskell had read and was influenced by *Le Colonel Chabert*, for not only is the common theme *one* of a returning husband, but also in both works the situation involves a wife who remarries when she thinks her absentee husband is dead, only for the first husband



to reappear years later; thus, the wife enters into a bigamous situation. After all, Gaskell did know French, there were quite a few dramatisations of *Chabert* over the years and Gaskell could have seen the play at a Paris theatre on one of her many visits when she stayed with her friend, Madame Mohl. Does she mention this in any of her letters?

In both works the preliminary exposition is fairly long so that the reader is in no doubt as to the problem. In *Le Colonel Chabert*, Chabert recounts to a sympathetic lawyer, called Derville, his adventures as a successful soldier under Napoleon, whom he worships, only to be thwarted when he returns to claim his wife and property; whereas in *The Manchester Marriage* Gaskell narrates briefly the first marriage between Alice and Frank, then a much longer - and amusing - portrait of Alice's second husband, Mr Openshawe. It is made quite clear by both writers that now the story is ready for action. Gaskell actually concludes this first section with a one-sentence paragraph: "This was the previous history of the Lancashire family who had now removed to London". Another similarity is the fate of the two first husbands: Frank commits suicide and Chabert ends up a pauper in an asylum, thus allowing the second marriage to survive in both stories.

However, by the time I had finished reading Gaskell and re-reading Balzac I had changed my mind about the possible influence Balzac had on Gaskell. In spite of the similarities mentioned (and others) my reaction was that either Gaskell had not read the Balzac story or, if she had, she had deliberately ignored its most important aspects; and in my view this was a pity. The difference lies mainly in the treatment of the various characters. In Balzac the main characters are

- i. Chabert, the returning first husband;
- ii. La comtesse Ferraud, his wife and wife of le comte Ferraud;
- iii. Derville, the lawyer representing both Chabert and his wife.

Le comte Ferraud, the second husband, plays a very minor role and never meets Chabert. Derville acts as the go-between in this very tricky situation, trying to establish a compromise solution, satisfactory to both parties. He arranges meetings between Chabert and his wife who therefore have the opportunity to discuss in detail their respective positions and to judge each other's motives and personalities after so many years. Chabert's feelings for his wife change from still loving her and hoping to "regain" her when he first re-appears in Paris to finally (after many face-to-face confrontations) despising her and realising her true personality, i.e. a selfish worldly socialite. There is, as usual with Balzac, superb dialogue, often bitterly satirical, indicating a negative outcome. Derville tries to bring reason and compromise to the problem, but fails - though provides ample input to the intractable situation. To Chabert's simplistic "no problem" attitude, Derville warns him: "Things just aren't like that in the judicial world... It's your word against theirs, and they have two children and you have none." Thus Balzac produces

an in-depth treatment of a known social and personal problem. As so often with Balzac, the personal, public, financial and judicial sides of life are all of a piece. In Gaskell's story the main characters are

- i. Mr Openshawe, the second husband;
- ii. Norah, the loyal servant

Alice, wife of the two husbands, and Frank, the first husband, play minor roles. In fact, Alice is kept out of things by her second husband, Mr Openshawe, so that she will be saved anxiety and remorse. Frank appears briefly at the Openshawe's house while only Norah is there, so the first husband never sees his wife nor his replacement. Thus Gaskell does not allow any direct contact between the principal parties, no discussion, no attempt at resolving an admittedly insoluble problem. Norah's main concern, while showing sympathy for Frank ("... the desolation of the poor man who had so lately gone forth in lonely despair"), is to get Frank out of the house before Alice and her second husband return. Instead of developing a situation where this very real problem of an unintentional bigamous second marriage could be thrashed out, if not resolved, Gaskell focuses (very successfully in itself) on the character of Mr Openshawe, the typical self-made and hard-working Manchester businessman in contrast to the "fine lazy people" of London. Gaskell is able to convince the reader by the end of the story that Openshawe has become a changed man, now much more sensitive, less confident but more humane as a result of discovering two things: Norah, the servant, is honest and no thief; and Frank has committed suicide. Fine, but I feel Gaskell, having set up the specific situation of a bigamous marriage resulting from the return of the first husband, fails to tackle it head on, as Balzac did.

My point has been that I feel in this case, if Gaskell had indeed read the Balzac story, she has not followed the "affinities and echoes" mentioned in the Hardy article. However, she wrote *The Manchester Marriage* in 1858, and only 5 years later in 1863, appeared *Sylvia's Lovers* where her study of a not exactly similar but allied situation was so superbly treated. Balzac would have been proud of her!

## 'Trawling Private Accounts out to the Public Gaze': Answers and Problems

Angus Easson

Last December, fittingly at Plymouth Grove, Irene Wiltshire introduced her invaluable edition of the Letters of Mrs Gaskell's Daughters. In the lively discussion afterwards, despite Meta Gaskell's objections to "our private accounts" being exposed to public gaze in Mrs Chadwick's Homes, Haunts, and Stories



(Wiltshire, ed., p.249), the ever-interesting topic was raised and pursued: where did the money come from that allowed Meta and Julia to "keep house" at Plymouth Grove after their mother's death in some style (pheasants, and champagne on the side) - and indeed not only keep house but, looking to further questions, build a cottage, the Sheiling, at Silverdale, and buy in 1900 for £3,500 not only the freehold of Plymouth Grove, but also four properties adjacent to it for charitable purposes (Janet Allen, "The Gaskells' Bequests", GSN, Autumn 2001, p.4).

A number of answers were offered during the Plymouth Grove meeting: profits from the Warrington sail-making manufacture that the Gaskell family was engaged in (see Barbara Brill, William Gaskell: A Portrait, 1984, p.3); posthumous royalties from Elizabeth's works; from the rent of The Lawn at Holybourne. There were also, though I think no one mentioned them, shares that Elizabeth had, for example, in the Katherine Dock, the dividends from which she was, in August 1865, anxious to hear of ("I want them sadly"), taken up as she was with her grand scheme of house-buying (Gaskell Letters, p.936).

Certainly, it is clear that William Gaskell was well-to-do if not wealthy by the end of his life. Meta provides evidence about the sail-making, noting that £400 or £500 a year had been inherited by William from the business (Wiltshire, p.249; Meta in 1910 is noting corrections to Mrs Chadwick's Homes, Haunts, and Stories). Janet Allen, in her important "The Gaskells' Bequests" (GSN, Autumn 2001, pp.2-4), shows that in his will William, after leaving all his household effects to Meta and Julia, divided the rest of his property equally between his four daughters. On his death in 1884 his net estate was declared as £46,103 (and odd pence), and was divided, since Florence had died on 1881, three ways, Meta and Julia each inheriting £15,367 (Allen, p.3). The sum is surprising if we only think of William's stipend, astonishing even, however difficult to convert into modern terms. Still more surprising, perhaps, are the estates of Julia and Meta. In 1908, Julia left, after nineteen legacies had been paid, £28,300 to Meta (Allen, p.3). Eight years later, Meta's estate was valued at £50,223.

William's will had made no mention of freehold property, "and 'no leaseholds' is noted on the probate document" (Allen, p.3), yet Meta's will makes clear that The Lawn had been kept in the family and that the freehold was owned jointly by Marianne, Julia, Meta, and Charles Crompton as the widower of Florence (Allen, p.4). William Shaen reported, within days of Elizabeth's death, that William Gaskell "wishes as far as possible to carry out just what [Elizabeth] has planned, and has taken to the place" (quoted Jenny Uglow, Elizabeth Gaskell, 1993, pp.610-11; letter dated 15 Nov 1865). So whether William's will failed to mention freehold possession or whether he had already settled the freehold on his daughters, The Lawn and any rent from it, remained in the family.

We will come back to The Lawn by way of another suggestion made in that

discussion last December. Royalties were mentioned. Early in her career, at least, Gaskell had preferred to sell copyrights rather than rely upon royalties. If more wary later about the possible returns from reprints, from selling early proofs to American publishers, from translations, and from Otto Tauchnitz's English language editions, for sale only on the Continent, she sold copyrights to George Smith of Smith, Elder, her publisher from *The Life of Charlotte Brontë*. Indeed *Wives and Daughters*, as serial and volume issue, was to go some considerable way towards buying The Lawn. The whole issue for Gaskell of payment and copyright could still be explored. The evidence about royalties after Gaskell's death, though, is thin and they would probably not have been all that spectacular. Smith, Elder was acquired by John Murray, and its archive which might bear examination for royalty payments, is now in Edinburgh.

All this, though, raises another question, a puzzle I have thought about from time to time, but not yet resolved. Notoriously, until the 1870 Married Women's Property Act (with further acts in 1882 and 1893), a married woman's income and earnings were not hers but her husband's. The necessary legal provision, if a woman about to marry was to keep control of her money or property, was a trust set up before the ceremony and agreed to by both prospective partners. Charlotte Brontë did this, so that Nicholls could not touch any of her money (Juliet Barker, *The Brontës*, 1994, pp.755-6) - such agreements or provisions are exploited by Wilkie Collins's *The Woman in White*, in Sir Percival Glyde's machinations against Laura.

Legally, all Gaskell's earnings belonged to William - she laments at one point that William "composedly buttoned up" £20 earned for *Lizzie Leigh*, though he promised to let her have some for the Refuge (GL, p. 113). Actually, as was often the fact, William, like other husbands, at a time when married women, noticeably in literature and journalism, were increasingly earning significant sums, allowed his wife to have free use of her money, even if much clearly went into the everyday expenses of the household. The law and the practicalities of everyday life are often adrift. Nonetheless, in the house-buying scheme, William Shaen was holding £600 "towards the nest egg for the house" (GL, p.740; 6 December 1864). Gaskell expected £1,000 from *Wives and Daughters*, or more likely £1,600, since it was to appear as serial and volume, whereas *Sylvia's Lovers*, only in volume issue, paid £1,000 (GL, p.967).

But, and it is a big but, even if Gaskell could enter into contractual agreements with her publishers and these stand, because not challenged by husband or law, how did she buy The Lawn? From at least 1864 she was planning to buy a retirement home for herself, William, and unmarried daughters. By December 1864 she could lament already having let the East Grinstead house "slip through my fingers" (GL, p.740). Shaen held money for the purpose, Smith was to pay well for *Wives and Daughters*. The Lawn was to cost £2,600, the gap of £1,000 was made up by an "equitable mortgage" advanced by Smith (GL, p.774).

Gaskell always refers specifically to herself, in intention and in fact, as buying the house. Once The Lawn was bought, she set about finding a tenant. Yet, she could not herself legally buy a house or take out a mortgage or set up a tenancy agreement. It would beside be risky (to put it no more strongly) to enter into agreements open to legal challenge. William might be content as things stood at home, but involve third parties and they could well question Gaskell's status or at least reveal what she was up to.

So what went on? A "mortgage" with Smith, though without legal validity, could depend upon the trust and friendship established since the Brontë biography, but a house sale, involving strangers - the original owner, lawyers, others who might know and question the status of the new "owner" - was a legal transaction and therefore liable to upset. Yet Gaskell was confident in her plans. Since William Shaen was involved, he as a lawyer presumably knew both pitfalls and possible solutions. It may be, though I have no evidence, that Shaen himself bought the house on the understanding that it was Gaskell's (might this be regarded in law as a conspiracy?). Certainly, the house passed without question to William on Gaskell's death.

So out of craddies raised at Plymouth Grove last December some answers can be provided - and yet, more craddies remain. What did the royalties amount to after Gaskell's death? and more urgently perhaps, how, legally, was The Lawn bought? The Land Registry (now on-line) or the title deeds might provide clues, answers, or a dead end. I hope though that some alert researcher may pursue these questions - and hope that answers are found.

## The Uncertainty of Endings

Alan Shelston

Elizabeth Gaskell invariably had trouble with her endings. In *North and South* she fell out with Dickens when she asked for more instalments to build up the approach to the coming together of Margaret Hale and Mr Thornton, for her a priority equal to that of the novel's industrial agenda. For Ruth Hilton, of course, there could be no happy ending, so she is made to sacrifice herself nursing Mr Bellingham, her erstwhile lover, in a cholera epidemic. In *Sylvia's Lovers* Gaskell adopted Charlotte Brontë's recurrent pattern of a pair of contrasting lovers for her heroine, Sylvia Robson: the final pages complete a sequence of deaths which is the only way in which this 'saddest story I ever wrote' can be concluded.

These things are never easy. Most of the Victorian novelists had difficulty at some point in providing a satisfactory 'sense of an ending', as the critic Frank Kermode called it. In *Jane Eyre* for example it is usually assumed that when Charlotte Brontë

records her heroine's triumphant cry 'Reader, I married him!' that will be the end of the matter: Edward Fairfax Rochester, the brooding monster of the early part of the novel, is now domesticised - maimed and blinded in fact - and Jane will achieve both domestic happiness and independence in looking after him. But the last words of *Jane Eyre* are not the ones uttered by Jane at this triumphal moment but those of the missionary St John Rivers, dying far away in India, who has written to Jane informing her of his impending death: 'Amen, even so, come, Lord Jesus!' Is Mr Rochester aware that Jane is still carrying on a correspondence with the other man in her life? In *Villette* Lucy Snowe's lover and potential husband Paul Emmanuel never makes it back home, being apparently lost at sea, an ending to which Patrick Brontë objected. Men in Charlotte's novels are never safe; in her fiction Charlotte was expert at having the cake and the halfpenny.

George Eliot called the last book of *Middlemarch* 'Sunset and Sunrise' and she opens her final chapter ('Finale') in *Middlemarch* with the observation that 'every limit is a beginning as well as an ending.' But after giving a short account of the future lives of her characters - 'Dorothea has a little boy', etc - she concludes the complete novel with a reference to 'the number who lived faithfully a hidden life, and rest in unvisited tombs', after which, in the first edition, come the words 'The End'. Throughout her novel her readers have paced themselves through the beginnings and ending of chapters, as we all do, and of individual 'books' - eight of the latter in all. These are not accidental: every one has been worked out by the author and to be aware of them is an essential part of the reading experience. Now the element of finality is absolute. One further example, and then I turn to Gaskell's novels. Dickens, in *Great Expectations* contrived a famously ambiguous ending, when Pip, his first person narrator, tells us of his future with Estella in the final sentence: 'I saw no shadow of another parting from her.' Well, did Pip and Estella live happily after? Or was there a parting, with its shadow to come, unanticipated by Pip at the point of uttering that final sentence?

Gaskell's difficulties in concluding her novels remained throughout her career. In *A Dark Night's Work* the plot is manipulated so that a loyal servant, who has been blamed for a murder that he has not committed, may escape the shame of the gallows. For *Cousin Phillis* she supplied her publisher, George Smith, with two endings to choose from: a long one involving Phillis, now grown to adulthood, looking after her widowed mother, supervising the supply of clean water to the village (Gaskell at this time had trouble with the drains at Plymouth Grove) and adopting twin orphans. Gaskell would have preferred this version but it would have required a further instalment. In her letter to Smith outlining all this she wrote 'on the other side you will find the ending that I suppose *must* do if you want it to end this year.' Smith did want it to end that year, and so we have the ending as it now stands with Phillis's final statement: '...we will go back to the peace of the old days. I know we shall; I can and I will.' (*Further Letters*, pp. 259-60) Gaskell was disappointed, but Phillis's words, however courageous, are a statement of intent, and such is

the subtlety of the story that she may well speak more in hope than in certainty. I certainly prefer the ambiguous ending as we have it: it acknowledges the fact that we cannot tell what the future may hold. I am reminded of Henry James's conclusion to his novella *Washington Square*, where another vulnerable young woman has been betrayed by a lover: 'Catherine, meanwhile, in the parlour, picking up her morsel of fancy-work, had seated herself with it again — for life, as it were.' I am reminded too of Meta Gaskell's breakdown and recovery after the collapse of her engagement to Captain Hill. In life, as in literature, it was 'for life as it were'.

But it is a recent re-reading of *Wives and Daughters* that has led me to these random thoughts. In this final case of course the novel was effectively terminated by the death not of any of its characters, but of its author. Elizabeth Gaskell had only a few pages to write when she so suddenly died. This was a fear that threatened all producers of instalment fiction. As one of Gaskell's obituarists wrote: 'it is an odd thing, surely, to think how many readers, who begin to read any novel in numbers, must die before the word "finis" is written at the door.' (cit., Linda K. Hughes, *Victorian Publishing and Mrs Gaskell's Work* p. 33) This must apply even more to the author. Anyway, an ending was supplied in those few pages by Frederick Greenwood, her editor at the *Cornhill Magazine*. Greenwood wrote that 'it is useless to speculate upon what would have been done by the delicate strong hand which can create no more Molly Gibsons' but this is somewhat contradicted by his own strong argument for the marriage of Molly Gibson and Roger Hamley after Roger's return from Africa. This has always satisfied readers of the novel and it follows the thrust of the narrative. But those who saw Andrew Davies's adaptation for the BBC some years ago will remember his marvellously inventive solution whereby Molly was shown in a fetching pair of jodhpurs looking out with Roger over the sunlit African plains. Davies clearly thought that after so long a story Molly, not to mention his audience, needed more for this most likeable of Gaskell's heroines than a life as a dutiful wife tidying Roger's scientific papers so he deliberately chose the romantic route. But there remains a further possibility. *Wives and Daughters* is subtitled 'an every-day story.' And it is characteristic of the every-day that it should be unpredictable: Gaskell's tragic death alone should remind us of that. The final illustration of the novel is entitled 'The last turning': it shows Roger looking back in the pouring rain to give one last wave to Molly as he departs on his African journey. In forecasting a happy ending Greenwood wrote with considerable confidence, saying that 'we *know* that Roger Hamley will marry Molly, and that is what we are most concerned about' (my italics). But Africa was a dangerous place, particularly in the nineteenth century: as Doctor Spooner was said to have remarked of a clergy widow in Oxford: 'Poor dear lady, her husband was eaten by missionaries.' Roger's mission was a dangerous one and it is certainly legitimate to remember that there must be a frisson of anxiety created by that last illustration. That of course is to confuse the logic of literature with the possibilities of life, but that has always been the problem for the realist novel. It is a staple, incidentally in French cinema, where the recent film *In the House* played endlessly - the appropriate term

- with the issue. Oscar Wilde once wrote that 'anybody can write a three-volume novel. It merely requires a complete ignorance of both life and literature.' This goes some way to resolving the problem, but so too does the uncertainty of endings.

## Book Notes

### Christine Lingard

North and South. New edition with afterword by David Stuart Davies, London: Collector's Library, 2013.

Female gothic histories: gender, history and the gothic by Diana Wallace.

Gothic literary studies, University of Wales Press, Cardiff, 2013. Available as hardback and ebook: 9780708325759

A wide ranging study of gothic and historical fiction from the eighteenth century Sophia Lee's *The Recess* to Vernon Lee and Daphne du Maurier and Victoria Holt, from the early twentieth century to the contemporary novelist Sarah Waters. It contains an essay - *Be-witched and Ghosted: Elizabeth Gaskell's Gothic historical tales*.

Transnational Gothic: literary and social exchanges in the long nineteenth century, edited by Monika Elbert (Montclair State University, USA) and Bridget M. Marshall, (University of Massachusetts, Lowell, USA), Ashgate, 2013. Also available electronically 9781409447719 (PDF) 9781409473480 (ePUB)

A collection of essays discussing the treatment of the Gothic by a wide range of unusual British and American authors such as Mary Rowlandson and Bram Stoker, Frances and Anthony Trollope, Louisa May Alcott, Elizabeth Gaskell, Theodore Dreiser, Rudyard Kipling, and Lafcadio Hearn, as well as the actors Edmund Kean and George Frederick Cooke on their American tours.

Romanticism, Revolution and Language: The Fate of the Word from Samuel Johnson to George Eliot / John Beer Emeritus Professor of English at the University of Cambridge. Cambridge books online, Cambridge University Press, 2009 and also ebook 9780511720055

A collection of essays on the repercussion of the French revolution on English literature - both poetry and fiction especially Languages of memory and passion: Tennyson, Gaskell and the Brontës. It also deals with Hazlitt and Jane Austen.

Down the Belliard Steps : Discovering the Brontës in Brussels by Helen MacEwan. Brussels Brontë Editions, 2012 ISBN 9780957377202

This book arises out of Charlotte and Emily Brontë's links with Brussels, and tells the story of the foundation and development of the Brussels Brontë Group – written with much enthusiasm, lavishly illustrated and very readable.

Charlotte Brontë by Patsy Stoneman, Emeritus Reader in English, University of Hull and Vice-President of The Brontë Society. (Writers and their work series) Tavistock: Northcote House, 2013. ISBN 9780746308561

This succinct volume covers a brief biography, analyses the novels and concludes with the chapter, "Readers and reproducers".

North and South [DVD] Starring Rosalie Shanks, Patrick Stewart, Robin Bailey, et al. (2013)

## Keeping in Touch

Jean M Layton

On a chilly morning in May a group of Friends of Plymouth Grove met at Manchester Art Gallery for a tour of some of the treasures of the Gallery's collection of Chinese artefacts. (It was to have been a tour of the Silver, but that is a different story).

This was part of the Keeping in Touch strategy - a means for Friends of Plymouth Grove to meet whilst the Gaskell House is closed for renovation, and we have Pat Barnard to thank for arranging it all.

Our guide took us up to the exhibition hall on the second floor with the collection of artefacts from all countries, and many centuries.

The room was once a small theatre and still retains some of the original features. It is painted in pale cream and filled with beautifully lit display cases. We stopped at several of these where our guide picked out eight items that represented Chinese art and craft through the ages.

The first item was a libation cup, made out of rhino horn, beautifully carved and coloured, and the last one a life sized carving of a goddess made out of a single piece of wood. So relaxed she looked, one leg across the other and with a small child at her side. Although was not particularly old, it had a timeless quality. In between we were shown fine examples of enamelling, glassware, pottery and a magnificent ivory tusk from Canton, beautifully carved and depicting the story of one of the sources of Chinese wealth – the production of tea. My absolute favourite though was a large blue and white ceramic ginger jar illustrated with charming little children at play.

We all admired the wonderful craftsmanship of the Chinese, producing fine items through the ages, so far ahead of the western world. One of the questions asked though, was: "How did these items get here? How did seventeenth & eighteenth century (and earlier) items from China come to Manchester?" Most of them, we were told, came from wealthy Manchester business men, private collections bequeathed to the Gallery, but it still begged the question, who was importing them, were there agents involved?

We did learn a little of the donors though, notably the Blair brothers who between them collected 40000 assorted objects. These were offered to the Gallery when the last brother died. Sadly it could only accept about 400. Other benefactors mentioned were bankers, businessmen and industrialists, reflecting not only the wealth of the city in the nineteenth century and early twentieth century but also the generosity of its citizens.

Once again grateful thanks to Pat Barnard for organising the visit with her usual quiet efficiency.

## Idyll and Reality: a Weekend with George Eliot 13-15 September 2013

Readers might be interested to know that Howard Gregg is due to lead a weekend discussion group entitled 'Idyll and Reality', and relating to George Eliot's *The Mill on the Floss* and Gaskell's *Wives and Daughters*.

This will take place 13th to 15th September 2013. Accommodation is at The Green Man Hotel in Old Harlow, Essex. The weekend will start with dinner on Friday evening followed by a lecture given by Howard.

We then have discussion sessions and readings from the two books, with Saturday afternoon free. The weekend concludes after Sunday lunch.

Fees, which include full board, are: single £268; shared twin or double £228 per person. Non-residents pay £145. A free taxi service will collect participants from Epping underground station.

More information from 01992 572510, e-mail: johnmarilyn2000@yahoo.co.uk or by post: Marilyn Taylor, Wansfell College 2, 17 Amesbury Road, Epping, Essex CM16 4HZ.

## Autumn General Meeting

**Saturday, September 28, 2013 Methodist Church, Knutsford.**

**10.30 am** Tea and coffee

**11.00 am** Elizabeth Williams will give the Joan Leach Memorial Lecture:  
*Elizabeth Gaskell and Gossip*

**12.30 pm** Lunch  
(approx)

**2.00 pm** Dr Sandie Byrne : Elizabeth Gaskell in Context

**3.30 pm** Finish  
(Approx)

Cost £12-50 to include lunch (£5 without lunch)

**Sunday September 29 (203<sup>rd</sup> Birthday of ECG)**

**10.45 am** Placing of flowers on the Grave at Brook Street Chapel

**11.00 am** Service Brook Street Unitarian Church

## North-West Group

### Manchester Meetings

The Manchester meetings will be held at 1.00 pm on the first Tuesday of the month (October to February excluding December) in Cross Street Chapel, Manchester (across from The Royal Exchange). The Chapel will usually be open from noon for lunch (bring your own, coffee available) in the Percival Room where the lectures will be given at 1.00 pm.

**Tuesday, October 1, 2013**

Ron Thorn: The Diary of Tryall Holcroft

Ron is Honorary Librarian of Macclesfield Silk Museums.

Tryall Holcroft was a contemporary of Elizabeth Gaskell and a real life John Thornton. This 200,000-word diary, 'being a brief account of remarkable transactions and changes occurring to him through life' is a view into the world of a mid-19th century, Manchester-based textile manufacturer.

**Tuesday, November 5, 2013.**

Anthony Dawson: William Gaskell and the Crimean War.

Anthony was a post-graduate researcher at the University of Leeds 2010-2013

(graduating with an M.Res.) studying the perception of the Crimean War from soldiers' letters sent home. His interest in Gaskell stems from studying the Crimean War as seen on the "home front" particularly by the churches - and, especially the Unitarian response.

**Tuesday, December 3, 2013**

Bill Hutchings: Jane Austen

Bill is a National Teaching Fellow and a Research Fellow at the University of Manchester. He is a regular lecturer for the Jane Austen Society and a specialist on eighteenth century poetry. We can look forward to an entertaining lecture and discover whether Gaskell ever read Jane Austen!

**Tuesday February 4, 2014**

Christine Musgrove: Mrs Gaskell, Art and Manchester

Christine is an art historian (Edinburgh University) with extensive experience as a teacher in Higher Education

**Tuesday March 4, 2014**

Elizabeth Williams: Fanny Trollope

Elizabeth is a former F.E. lecturer, who regularly gives entertaining Gaskell-related talks to the Society and elsewhere. She also leads the discussions at the Knutsford meetings. Fanny (Frances) Trollope, mother of Anthony Trollope was a novelist in her own right.

For further information about events held at Cross Street Chapel is available visit the website: <http://cross-street-chapel.org.uk>

### Knutsford Meetings

These meetings held in St John's Church Centre will resume on Wednesday 30 October and continue on the last Wednesday of each month (excluding December) until April. Buffet Lunch (£8, please pay on arrival; if not having lunch, please pay £2) available from 12.15 with literary talk and discussion led by Elizabeth Williams at 1.30. We shall be studying *Sylvia's Lovers*.

## The Gaskell Society South-West

**Sunday, 1 September 2013, 12.30 pm.** Bring and Share Lunch at Kate and Alec Crawford's house, Valley View, Norton St Philip. The arrangements for this will be made soon. Please phone Elizabeth Schlenther for more information.

**Saturday, 12 October 2013, 2.30 pm.** Elizabeth Williams, Vice-Chairwoman of the national Gaskell Society, will speak to us on 'Gaskell and Gossip' – a most intriguing topic. Elizabeth has been with us before, so we know we have a good afternoon in prospect and very much look forward to her being with us. The lecture will take place at the BRLSI, Queens Square, Bath, and there will be a charge of £2 for members of the Gaskell Society and the BRLSI and £4 for non-members. Coffee and tea will be available after the lecture.

Our book for discussion in February and March next year will be Mrs Gaskell's *Biography of Charlotte Brontë*. The dates for the discussion groups will be announced nearer the time.

Any queries to Elizabeth Schlenther, 14 Vellore Lane, Bath, BA2 6JQ, Tel: 01225 331763.

## London and South-East Branch

**Saturday, 14 September, 2013.** Alison Lundie: 'Domestic Arts in *Mary Barton* and *North and South*'

Alison Lundie, a founding member of the London Gaskell Reading group, is studying for a PhD at Roehampton. Her talk will focus on shawls and needlewomen in *Mary Barton* and *North and South*. Objects in Victorian fiction and the idea of the domestic arts are a current academic theme.

**Saturday, 9 November, 2013.** Janet Allan: A progress report on The Gaskell House 84 Plymouth Grove

As you will be aware the house is currently closed for renovation and development thanks to Janet's successful efforts to secure a lottery grant. We have already heard from Ann Brooks about her plans for the garden; this time we shall learn more about the house!

**Saturday, 8 February 2014.** Dr Ann Brooks: the Gaskell Marriage

Ann Brooks and Bryan Haworth (who came with Ann this year to speak about the Portico Library) have researched a paper and have some ideas about the Gaskell marriage. As we all enjoy biography this subject will make an interesting afternoon.

**Saturday, 10 May 2014.** Dr Fran Twinn: 'Writer', 'tiger parent', 'shopaholic', 'socialite' and 'control freak': the many 'Me's' of Elizabeth Gaskell.

Fran will speak and then lead a discussion. She is aware there are many other aspects to Mrs Gaskell's personality but she will focus on these and hope that in discussion members will be able to contribute others!

Sandwich lunch will be available from 12.45 pm. Meetings begin at 2 pm and tea and cake will be served after the meeting. Usually the formal part of the meeting finishes about 3.30 pm for those needing to catch trains.

Venue: Francis Holland School, Graham Terrace, London.

The entrance is via doors on Graham Terrace, please ring the bell marked 'RECEPTION' loudly to gain entry. For security reasons the door must be locked until opened from inside.

The school is a three minute walk from Sloane Square tube station which is on the District and Circle lines and about a 15-20 minute walk from Victoria. There are also buses from Victoria. (Please check running of the tubes as they often carry out engineering work at weekends).

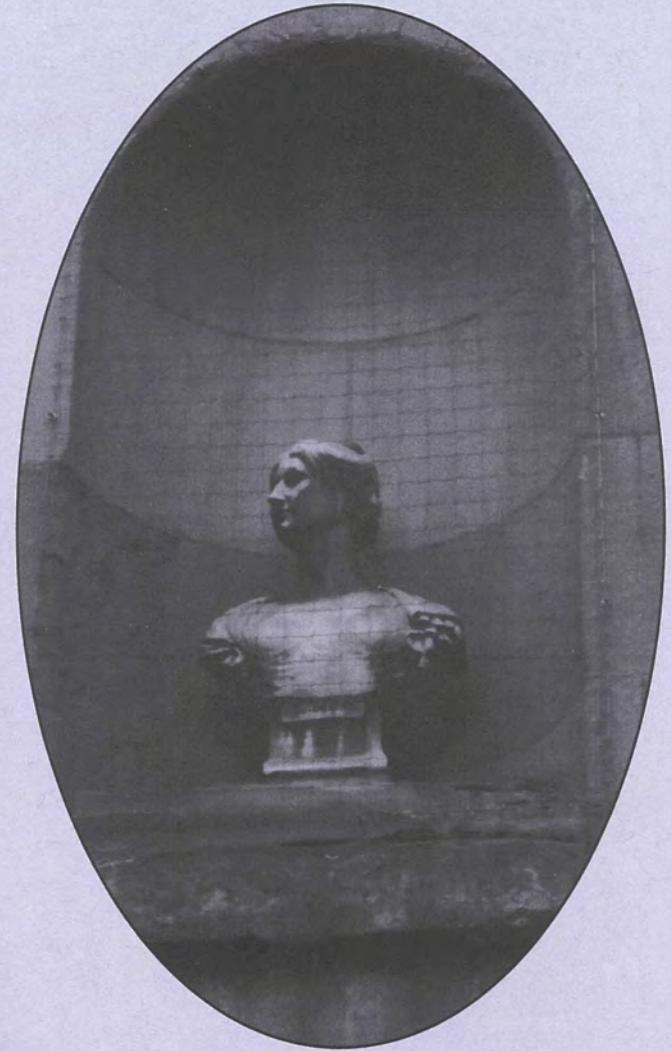
Book stall: We have a 'bring and buy' book stall the proceeds of which go to the renovation of the Gaskell House in Plymouth Grove Manchester. Please bring unwanted books and buy replacements!!

Meetings are £5.00 payable on the day.



Notes

# The Gaskell Society



THE GASKELL SOCIETY HOME PAGE has all the latest information on meetings.  
<http://gaskellsociety.co.uk>

If you have any material or suggestions for future Newsletters, please contact Mrs. Helen Smith,  
11 Lowland Way, Knutsford, Cheshire, WA16 9AG.  
Telephone - 01565 632615 E-mail: [helenisabel@ntlworld.com](mailto:helenisabel@ntlworld.com)

**Treasurer:** Clive Heath, 39 Bexton Lane, Knutsford, Cheshire, WA16 9BL

**Membership Secretary:** Miss C. Lingard, 5 Moran Crescent, Macclesfield SK11 8JJ

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NEWSLETTER  
Spring 2014 - Number 57



## Editor's Letter

Helen Smith

Happy New Year to one and all, and a very warm welcome to our Spring 2014 Newsletter.

On 15 January we held the New Year lunch at The Cottons (a hotel to the north of Knutsford). After an excellent lunch (which ECG herself would have relished!) Nick Redman (former archivist with Whitbread Brewery and member of the Arnold Bennett Society) entertained us with tales of whalebones (used for umbrellas and corsets in the past; gateposts and fences in tree-less areas of the world). Thanks to Greenpeace and the invention of plastic, whales are no longer hunted for these purposes and their bones are well-documented in four books by Nick who has travelled the world to photograph these very bones. (Many thanks are due to Janet Kennerley for her highly successful organising of this event.)

And now to the whaling community of Monkshaven (Whitby): with help from Elizabeth Williams we are learning to appreciate the details and intricacies of *Sylvia's Lovers* ('the saddest story I ever wrote') at our monthly meetings in Knutsford. We are still sadly aware that it will all end in bitter tears. Fiction / faction, now popular again in the twenty-first century, is strongly in evidence in this powerful nineteenth century work. The heavy hand of the Old Testament is more apparent in this novel than in any other work by Mrs Gaskell.

Exciting news on the Internet front: The Gaskell Journal is going online, but fear not: we shall all continue to receive our paper copies. To learn more, do please read the article by Nancy Weyant in this Newsletter. Incidentally there are no plans for the Newsletter to enter the cyber-age.

There are plans afoot however for a study tour in Italy to include Florence, Siena and elsewhere in mid-September. For a taster, do read Christine Lingard's article later in the Newsletter. For further details, please contact Ann O'Brien (e-mail: Ann O'Brien [annbobrien@hotmail.com]; snail mail: 5 Warwick Court, Firwood, Manchester M16 0JG). This study tour will be organised by Anthony Coles organiser of, and guide for, the highly successful educational visit to Rome in 2006.

Work has also started on the Conference for 2015. The dates will be Friday 17 - Monday 20 July 2015 and the venue, Cober Hill (post code YO13 0AR) which is situated on the Yorkshire coast between Whitby and Scarborough. The planned theme of this event is the year 1865 which, as every good Gaskellian knows, is the year of Mrs Gaskell's death.

We have heard the sad news of Robin Allan's death on 5 January of this year. Robin was a gentleman of considerable charm, a man of letters, an artist, an actor and a

skilful adapter (of works by ECG which some of us remember Robin and others perform at 84 Plymouth Grove), but most of all, Robin was a humane and kindly human being. We shall miss him. To Janet and family we extend our deepest sympathy.

We are also sorry to report the recent death of Brenda Colloms. Brenda was a popular guest speaker at the Knutsford AGM in the days when it was held at the Royal George. Professor JAV Chapple recalls Brenda and her work in the early stages of the Society in his article in Newsletter No 55.

Manchester Historic Buildings Trust, which owns the Gaskell House in Plymouth Grove, informs us that restoration work is progressing well and the re-opening is on schedule for later in the year.

A correction. The Editor apologises for an error in the Conference Report in the last Newsletter. Celia Crew introduced the speakers on the first morning (20 July) and Gwen Clark chaired the questions and discussions which followed. On Sunday 21 July, Rosemary Marshall introduced the speakers and Mary Kuhlman chaired the question session which followed the lectures.

And so, thank you to all who have written for this Newsletter. It is exciting to have our first venture into verse, by poet member, Rosemary Donaldson. Please continue to write in prose, or in verse if so inspired. We tend to have a bias towards North West England, but we should love to hear from members in Japan, USA, and Europe as well as here in the UK. As ever, we give grateful thanks to Rebecca Stuart for all her hard toil at Lithotech, her family's printing firm here in Knutsford.

Next deadline: 21 July 2014.

Front Cover: Mrs. Gaskell on her Memorial Tower, Knutsford.

## Asya and Phillis : Comparisons and Contradictions

Ian M Emberson

'Small is beautiful' according to the economist Schumacher, and a similar consideration seems to apply to certain writers – in particular Ivan Turgenev and Elizabeth Gaskell.<sup>1</sup> It is of course a sweeping generalisation, but the shorter their writings, the more perfect they become. Both devoted much energy to the novel, yet none of their works in this genre appear to be quite without blemishes. Take things down a scale and we come to the novella, and here they both showed a mastery which it would be difficult to equal.

How do we define a novella? There have been various attempts based on such things as the number of words. Obviously any definition will be somewhat vague. All that can be said is that the novella is a hybrid between the novel and the short story,

and its relative brevity imposes certain limitations. There may be some portrayal of setting, in both space and time, but the lavish use of background beloved by such novelists as Sir Walter Scott, is clearly out of the question. Likewise there is unlikely to be anything in the nature of a sub-plot. Most novelle have a relatively simple story-line, and focus on the activities of a small number of characters. In this essay I want to investigate how Turgenev and Gaskell adjusted to these limitations, and in particular to compare two of their novelle: Ivan Turgenev's *Asya*<sup>2</sup> and Elizabeth Gaskell's *Cousin Phillis*.<sup>3</sup>

In both novelle the setting is important in itself, and symbolical of the whole emotional feeling of the story. *Asya*, although written by a Russian, is actually set in Germany – by the banks of the Rhine. The hero and narrator, who is only identified as N N, is living on one side of the great river; his friend Gagin, and Gagin's half-sister Asya, live on the other. The narrative is punctuated by crossings and recrossings via the ferry – akin to the fluctuating emotions of the three main participants. Hope Farm, the setting for most of *Cousin Phillis*, is located somewhere in rural England – we don't know exactly where.<sup>4</sup> It has once been an isolated spot, but all that is being changed by the coming of the railway. It penetrates the erstwhile peaceful countryside, just as Edward Holdsworth is about to penetrate the tranquil world of Phillis Holman's emotions. Afterwards things can never be quite the same. The young girl has had her feelings churned up to the point of a life-threatening fever: the peace of the woods and fields has likewise been shattered by the puffing rhythms of those infernal engines.

The plots of the two novelle are likewise very similar, in that nothing much happens. No one is murdered, seduced, or driven to suicide. The narratives are almost entirely concerned with emotions – primarily the emotions of the two heroines. Thus Asya falls in love with N N much as Phillis falls for Edward Holdsworth. And in both cases the impediments to fulfilment don't lie in outside forces, but within their own personalities. The two heroes are by no means inconsiderate rogues – far from it, but they lack resolution – they cannot grasp the opportunity when it arises. Their feelings are fickle and inadequate. The heroines are capable of much stronger emotions – but their ultimate fate is one of emptiness – with the merest hint of recovery on the last page of *Cousin Phillis*.<sup>5</sup>

But the heroines' backgrounds constitute one of the great contrasts in the two novelle. Asya is illegitimate – no doubt with all the stigma attached to this in the mid -nineteenth century.<sup>6</sup> Her half-brother Gagin seems to be the only person who now takes a protective interest in her – although her late father certainly did. She is insecure. Briefly she is capable of wild gaiety – as when she runs around the old castle watering the wild flowers which have taken root in its crumbling walls. But it is a fragile gaiety – the least twist of fortune will destroy it. Phillis on the other hand is emotionally secure – in fact too secure. Being the only surviving child of her parents' marriage, all their love and ambition is lavished on her. Furthermore they

cannot realise that she is now a woman. This last is a common theme in literature. Charlotte Brontë touches on it in *Villette* with the relationship between Paulina and her father. But the dilemma is quickly resolved, and by the end of the chapter entitled 'Sunshine', Paulina is sitting on a bench in the Bois l'Etang with her father on one side, and her lover (Dr John) on the other.<sup>7</sup> Not so with Phillis Holman. The overprotective kindness (particularly of her father) proves to be cruelty in disguise. The conflict cannot possibly end in a happy conclusion.

There is also something of a contrast when it comes to the application of detail – Asya using this ingredient of story-telling far less than *Cousin Phillis*. There are a few examples: the little statue of the Madonna, with a child-like face and a crimson heart stabbed through and through with swords on her exposed breast; there are also the descriptions of the vineyards and of the student revelry – likewise the ruined castle with its crooked trees and cracked masonry overgrown with ivy, a perfect romantic background for this realistic tale. But the predominant visual image left on the reader's mind is of the River Rhine; in the early evening with the flaxen-headed urchins scrambling over the sides of a grounded boat; when the ships glide slowly down-stream with slack sails; and as the strains of a waltz played by the town band greet N N's ears (p.21). Or later on when the moon has risen and its beams play over the great river and 'the wind dropped as if folding its wings and died down; and a fragrant nocturnal warmth rose from the ground' (pp.27-28). The details may be scant - but they are always telling and significant.

By contrast *Cousin Phillis* is lavish in its use of detail. This extends to all aspects of the narrative: dress (the heroine's childish pinafore – eventually discarded); furniture (the white hard-wood dresser on which Paul's father draws his plan of a turnip-cutting machine with a charred stick – much to Cousin Holman's consternation); and personal appearances ('the bright colour of Phillis's hair, as the afternoon sun fell on her bending head'). But more memorable than any of these are the minutiae of farming life – no doubt gleaned from Elizabeth Gaskell's memories of Sandlebridge. The story is slow moving – but it never stops. Its steady adagio pulse is always guiding the reader forward to the next dilemma – and this moving forward passes through a series of delightful but realistic vignettes of agricultural life. Thus Ebenezer Holman (who is both farmer and minister) rises at three, prays in his room, calls the men to milking, gives the horses and hogs their feed, and writes his food orders for man and beast (pp.230-231). When it comes to gathering in the last load of hay, Paul goes out to the field which has two holly bushes in the middle, and finds : 'a heavily laden cart ; one man on top of the great pile ready to catch the fragrant hay which the others threw up to him with their pitchforks; a little heap of cast-off clothes in a corner of the field (for the heat, even at seven o'clock, was insufferable), and a few cans and baskets, and Rover lying by them panting and keeping watch' (p.268). All this is not just colourful decoration, neither is it some attempt at portraying a rural idyll. One feels that the men will sweat and curse as they load up the hay (and not just the men, for Betty

the maid is out there helping). Then they will go home with their hands cut and calloused from the hard day's work.<sup>8</sup>

And that word 'work' brings us to the greatest contrast of all in the two novelle. What is the source of income for the main characters in Asya? The matter is left vague. Presumably they have one, since there is no mention of starvation. But their activities seem quite unrelated to earning their bread and butter. N N appears to do precious little except mooch around observing life. Asya does a little needlework, and that is all. The idea of going amongst strangers as a governess doesn't enter her thoughts. As for Gagin, he is an artist – in his own opinion at any rate. His activities are described thus:

Gagin was in one of those fits of frenzied artistic ecstasy which suddenly descend upon amateurs, when they fancy that they have contrived, as they express it, to 'catch nature in the moment of flight'. He stood before his canvas, dishevelled and paint-stained, and nodded to me almost savagely. Then, having given a sweeping flourish to his paint brush over the canvas, he stepped back, narrowed his eyes, and once more fell upon the picture (p.54).

Thus Gagin pretends to be a worker.

How different is *Cousin Phillis*! There is no pretence at being a worker here – every character, major or minor, is the genuine thing. The work of the farm has already been touched on. It embraces everyone – at times Betty and Phillis are out there in the fields working alongside the men. Even the leisure time activities sound like feats of labour. Reading Virgil in the original isn't the obvious way to relax after a hard day's work – yet Latin is apparently saved for the evening as a sort of treat!

However agriculture isn't the only labour portrayed in *Cousin Phillis* – there is also the building of the railway. We don't get so much detail about this – perhaps simply due to Mrs Gaskell's lack of knowledge. But it is always there in the background. Paul, the narrator of *Cousin Phillis*, bears some resemblance to N N the narrator of *Asya* – they are both rather dreamy observers of life, and a trifle spineless. But at least Paul earns an honest living, whilst his friend and superior, Edward Holdsworth, is clearly the go-ahead entrepreneurial type.

So – we have these two novelle, published within six years of each other, the one by the Russian aristocrat, the other by a middle-class Unitarian Minister's wife. Very different backgrounds – but the products of their pens have so much in common. This comes out most markedly in the exquisite depiction of their heroines. One feels them physically. When N N waltzes with Asya his 'hand retained the sensation of contact with her slender waist for many hours, and it was long before I could forget the sound of her rapid breathing so near me, the dark, still, half-closed eyes in the pale face, so vivid in its frame of curls' (p.52). Paul of course never gets his hand

around Phillis's waist. He can only appreciate her as would a bystander, when she dashes out in the storm to save Holdsworth's theodolite from damage.

Before we could have any warning, she had rushed out of the shelter and collected various things .... She came running back, her long lovely hair floating and dripping, her eyes glad and bright, and her colour freshened to a glow of health by the exercise and the rain (p.271).

No doubt every literary genre has its own especial possibilities. Ivan Turgenev and Elizabeth Gaskell could adjust to limitations, and thereby display their most perfect skills at story-telling. In *Asya* and *Cousin Phillis* they do it with a sort of Mozartian grace – fleshing out what Henry James called 'the beautiful and blest novelle'.<sup>9</sup>

1. The purpose of this essay is to make comparisons, not to infer influences. How ever perhaps one should mention that there was a vague link between Turgenev and Gaskell via Mary Mohl. See Jenny Uglow *Elizabeth Gaskell: a Habit of Stories* (London: Faber and Faber 1993) p. 531.
2. All references are to *Asya / First Love / Spring Torrents* translated by Ivy and Tatiana Litvinov (Moscow: Progress Publishers 1974).
3. All references are to *Elizabeth Gaskell Cranford / Cousin Phillis* ed. by Peter Keating (London: Penguin Books 1986 reprint).
4. It seems fairly safe to assume that Gaskell was thinking of Sandlebridge. See Joan Leach In *Cousin Phillis Country* The Gaskell Society Newsletter No 7 March 1989 pp. 2-6.
5. Apparently this was not Gaskell's original intended ending. See her letter to George Smith of 10/12/1863 – reprinted with a brief introduction by John Chapple in The Gaskell Society Newsletter No 17 February 1994 pp.12-13. See also Brenda Collins *Second Thoughts on Cousin Phillis* in The Gaskell Society Newsletter No 16 August 1993 pp. 2-12.
6. For the background to this see David Magarshack *Turgenev : a Life* (London: Faber and Faber 1954) p. 130.
7. *Charlotte Brontë: Vilette* (Oxford: Oxford University Press 1998 reprint) p. 545.
8. For a further discussion of Gaskell's use of the novella, and the links with Turgenev see Barbara Hardy *Cousin Phillis : the Art of the Novella* The Gaskell Society Journal Vol. 19 2005 pp. 25-33.
9. Henry James, *The Art of the Novel* (New York: Scribner 1962) p.220.

Editor adds: Unfortunately Ian Emberson died suddenly on 4 November 2013. Ian had been elected to the Gaskell Society Committee at the AGM in April 2013 and he had proposed the vote of thanks at the Cross Street Chapel meeting on 1 October 2013. Earlier in the year Ian had himself given one of the Cross Street lectures; entitled 'The Three Quartets', in which he discussed the four children in each of the three multi-talented families, the Mendelssohns, the Rosettis and the Brontës.

Ian was a talented artist, a Pennine Poet and had been Music Librarian in Huddersfield until retirement.

Ian met his wife Catherine at the Gaskell Society. As a couple they came faithfully to Cross Street meetings. We shall certainly miss Ian and we very much hope Catherine will feel able to continue to support the Society.

We extend our deepest sympathy to Catherine.

## Gaskellians

Rosemary Donaldson

We belong to an auspicious society,  
Reading books, mostly, of Gaskell variety.

We began with all due sobriety

*Mary Barton* and *Cranford* of some notoriety

Much read by all local folk,

Read by past generations of gentlemen too,

Lords Stanley, Egerton and Stamford

To name the select few.

**So... Let Us Get Reading Now...**

**Cranford... Cranford... Cranford!**

Some Gaskell novels are of social reform,  
They must **NOT** sit on shelves, bookcases to adorn.  
Our social consciousness we are seeking to swell  
As we ponder **these** books we now know rather well.  
We **HAVE** to read about Ruth, a seamstress forsooth,  
Who has fallen quite down in her innocent youth.  
Her salvation to gain, she will rise once again  
In full grace, Upon Death. Whilst at rest, Behest,  
To us, in Trust, and for the world at large  
**LOOK!** Her singular bequest - **The noble lad Leonard.**  
Akin to Ruth, Leonard gradually matures into  
One Pillar of Goodness, and Truth.

*North & South* is the next book to read,  
Ideas from her mind, via her pen, sow the seed.  
Heal divisions between mill-owners and workers  
Let's get rid of the shirkers! In this book  
ECG seeks to bond humankind  
Into manifest oneness:  
Through a sensitive fingertip, her own singular penpoint  
Records each and every pulse- beat, of,  
John Thornton and Margaret Hale.  
Their heart rates quicken harmoniously...  
An awakening awareness spans the novel's frond.  
From a developing friendship...Lovers must unite.  
Within the workplace; Mill owners and workers,  
No shirkers! No shirkers!  
As one heartbeat, all in rhythm, Masters and Workers somehow should  
Strive together for the common good.



We now approach Whitby.  
 Contours of coastline Come into view, from whence came  
 The historical novel, *Sylvia's Lovers*.  
 Yes, Indeed, The saddest book she ever did write,  
 With hardly a chink of light in sight.  
 Whalebones guard many doorways, then, as now,  
 Press Gangs were ashore, and...so,.. so much more!  
 Kinraid sent a message.  
 For selfish gain, Philip deceived Sylvia.  
 Alas! Poor Sylvia received no message.  
 Must I read again and again of that lie served with knowledge?  
 Of the pain, of the pain, which ensued from that lie?  
 Deceit is as a tourniquet tight  
 Squeezing,.. squeezing.. out truth from joyous life  
 Any possible beauty stunted in fright.  
 No use, a dam, as a barrier, deceit is rife,  
 Arresting all, save sad, emotional, strife.  
 Dank Darkness does the deceiver send, all through  
 This wrench of a book, from beginning to end.

Let us move ourselves on into the day,  
 Free ourselves from, 'The saddest story I ever wrote' and  
 Travel into a microcosm of the whole human race  
 As portrayed by a Minister's wife. Only a Minister's wife  
 Could produce the wholehearted joy, her book,  
 Her own Masterpiece, *Wives and Daughters*.  
 It is, in a sense, 'The Last Post', her life's work encapsulated .  
 Each of so many characters illuminated in discerning brightness.  
 More clearly lit than the world usually permits us to see.  
 We meet Molly Gibson. She is unselfish, enduring, patient and kind  
 A more deserving character in a novel, you never will find.  
 Eventually, Molly won Roger's love, her own heart's desire,  
 She was placed in that novel, like a parable of sorts, us to inspire.  
 For all time, in no way stark, the mark has been made.  
 Go to the Knutsford Gate of Tatton Park  
 Touch **THOSE** stones as you walk through **THAT** archway.  
 Look through a magnifying glass at the sandstone grains  
 The story and detail of that archway will never come asunder  
 At The British Library it is forever held, with its unique ISBN number.  
 So, We Gaskellians must quicken our pace,

And bring Mrs Gaskell to the whole human race.  
 As many as possible must learn of her being.  
 She gave her creative life force to us all in her books

Heartfelt thoughts, in so many tracings, on paper, making impressions, No less  
 than an ECG, Electrocardiography, in tracings of heartbeats.  
 The initials are the same, Elizabeth Cleghorn Gaskell, ECG,  
 Every energy force comes from the source, every book from a nib.  
**Only Connect to Elizabeth's Centre of Gravity and Reach out Everywhere.**

And, in conclusion, taking the famous Gaskell quote; "I am myself, and nobody  
 else, and can't be bound by another's rules" (Which is exactly why the above  
 poem does not rhyme, sorry folks!!)

## The Power of Fiction

Doreen Pleydell

The other week I was in the kitchen while John my husband was in the sitting  
 room listening to an audio tape of *Sylvia's Lovers*. I had not been listening as I find  
 the story too tragic to bear. When John joined me, I asked him a simple question.  
 Instead of answering, he looked at me as if he didn't recognise me, He was like a  
 sleepwalker and I then realised that he was still in the land of fiction, in Monkshaven  
 with Sylvia, Philip and the story's other characters. It took John some time to come  
 back to reality.

In many discussions of novels, plays, and television programmes, we talk about  
 characters as if they are real people. The better the story, the more powerfully it's  
 painted. I wonder why this should be - is it because our lives are so humdrum that  
 we need the escape into fantasy? 'Tomorrow, and tomorrow, and tomorrow, creeps  
 in this petty pace from day to day.' For some people Macbeth's words may be very  
 true.

Some of us need our weekly fix by way of television soaps. Whether *Eastenders*,  
*Coronation Street* or the other favourites, each episode is eagerly awaited and  
 nothing must stand in its way. *The Archers* on the radio was one of the first modern  
 soaps: using one's imagination by listening is more rewarding than just watching a  
 screen.

Since Victorian times it has been so - the readers of Dickens's *Household Words*  
 awaited each story eagerly, very cleverly put in serial form. No wonder he was so  
 annoyed with Elizabeth 'My dear scheherazade' Gaskell when she failed to deliver  
 each weekly episode!

Some of Dickens's readers even attempted to influence the course of a story. When  
 he was working on *The Old Curiosity Shop* some of his readers wrote to plead  
 'Don't let Nelly die!' They must have been very disappointed when he did!

Perhaps it is only escapism, but lovers of fiction gain huge enjoyment from their immersion in another world - long may it be so.

## To Tuscany with Murray

Christine Lingard

Visiting Italy was one of the most exciting experiences of Elizabeth Gaskell's life. In 1857, with the manuscript of *The Life of Charlotte Brontë* finally dispatched to the publisher, she packed her bags and embarked with daughters, Marianne and Meta, and her friend Catherine Winkworth, via Paris, Avignon and Marseilles, on the short sea voyage to Rome. Here she renewed her acquaintance with the American art critic, Charles Eliot Norton, who accompanied them on the rest of their holiday, through Umbria, Tuscany to Venice, which was idyllic. It was to be a lasting friendship, not just for Elizabeth but for Meta too. She repeated the journey in 1863 with Meta and Julia, spending longer in Tuscany than in Rome.

Less is known about the time spent in Tuscany than the other places visited. The journey between Florence and Venice was made by train, but much of the rest was by road, requiring several overnight stops, allowing splendid opportunities for sightseeing. Though we don't have complete details of their itinerary there are enough clues to piece it together. In Rome they hired, for 65 Scudi, their own private vetturino – the driver of a vettura, a four horse carriage for four people inside and two outside – to take them to Sienna (as the Gaskells usually spelled it), staying 'at half-barbarous places' as Meta described them to Sara Norton, half a century later. They went via Ronciglione, (near Lago di Vico), Viterbo, an Etruscan centre with the 12<sup>th</sup> century cathedral of San Lorenzo; Cortona, one of the oldest hill towns in Tuscany and San Quirico (near Pienza).

And so to Florence – there is no record of their sightseeing or visits to any of the great galleries, though for this culturally minded family it would have been the main purpose of the visit. It was also the home of Dante, a poet greatly admired by both Gaskell and Norton. We do have accounts of a round of social engagements. The city was a Mecca for Britons and Americans. She took tea with Lady Charlotte Locker, Isa Blagden, the eccentric friend of the Brownings, Charlotte Cushman, the actress, and Emma Stebbins, the American sculptor. The Gregs of Styal and Lady Stanley of Alderley were also there. But the highlight, in 1857, was to be received by Robert and Elizabeth Barrett Browning at their apartment, Casa Guidi, near the Pitti Palace. The two women had a mutual admiration for their respective books, *Aurora Leigh* and *Ruth* and had exchanged correspondence, but the meeting, as described by Catherine Winkworth, proved difficult:

I really only saw Mrs Browning, for she scarcely spoke...Mrs Gaskell talked chiefly about Miss Brontë, in which I acted chorus.

The poets Walter Savage Landor, and Arthur Hugh Clough (cousin of Florence Nightingale), and the sanitary reformer Thomas Southwood Smith, friend of Dickens and grandfather of Octavia Hill, were other expatriate Britons whom she may have encountered.

For her second visit, she took advice on etiquette from a Mrs Sargent. Was this the American lady whose son, born in the city in 1856 was to become one of the greatest portrait painters of the Edwardian age, - John Singer Sargent? They took lodgings in the Casa Sandrelli, (which I have not yet located) but her compatriots were in much grander accommodation – the Brights were staying at the Hotel Grand Bretagne, a hundred room establishment on the Lung'Arno with at view of the Ponte Vecchio, much favoured by Ruskin. They were also able to meet the Trollopes. The elderly novelist, Frances Trollope, her travel writer son Thomas and his wealthy wife had a richly decorated residence in the Piazza dell'Indipendenza, known as the Villino Trollope. Her more famous younger son, Anthony was impressed by, but not envious of, its opulence.

For both their visits they made use of Murray's celebrated guide book. This is not only helpful for sightseeing but endorses Meta's opinion of the local accommodation:

Chiusi, where there is a tolerable inn (but where, in consequence of the cheating propensities of the owner, it is necessary to come to an understanding as to prices beforehand)...Orvieto (Inn Locanda, dell'Acquila, where the coach stops, and near the gate, indifferent; there is said to be a better one, belonging to the same proprietor.)

Her copy of the 1861 edition of the *Guide for Travellers of Central Italy* (which unfortunately does not include Florence) is preserved in the collection of the Manchester Central Library. Tucked in the back pocket are number of interesting manuscript notes: a list of art teachers and ateliers in copper-plate handwriting (probably for the art-loving Meta's benefit), a check list of essentials for the journey – 'passeport [sic], straw slippers, and chocolate', the address of a blacksmith and that of a Rev John McNab, a Unitarian minister from Ayrshire who was buried in the Protestant cemetery in 1870, who could provide English lessons.

Most interesting of all is a route from Rome to Siena that William had written out for them, with many artistic and archaeological treasures including:

Civita Cavelane, Spoleto, resting at Terni, or Narni, Foligno, Assisi to S. Maria dei Angela & Perugia not forgetting Spello (for frescoes), one day at least at Perugia, to Chiusi, Citta della Pieve, the Etruscan museum at Porsenna; from Chiusi to Ficuli by rail, carriage to Orvieto, Sienna, in particular the Church of St. Maria della Neve, (for a picture by Matteo dei Sienna), the Church of S. Domenico (St. Catherine painting), and choir books in the library, Duccio.

This is an intensive and exhausting itinerary. They were concerned that they would not be able to include it all. Elizabeth was particularly anxious to see Perugia. With the help of a Mr Charles Perkins, an American, they were able to organise their plans successfully and Meta confirms that they managed to see Assisi. But it was Orvieto and its magnificent gothic cathedral, started in 1290, that impressed them most. Norton sent them a copy of his book *Notes of Study and Travel in Italy*, which they made much use of. Giovanni da Pisa who executed the bas-reliefs on the façade and the frescoes come in for particular attention. This is a surprising choice. Luca Signorelli's altar piece of the Day of Judgment is a dramatic composition, regarded as the first depiction of the nude figure in art and could well have offended some. It was a great influence on Michelangelo's altar piece in the Sistine Chapel, a point that was not lost on Meta:

How very beautiful Orvieto is! I think we cared for the Gior da Pisas more than anything on our journey - The Signorellis are magnificent too. How much of M. Angelo and Raphael are drawn from their masters.

When looking at the choice of painters they intended to see, it is easy to detect the influence of John Ruskin. The great Victorian art critic was highly regarded by both Elizabeth and Charlotte Brontë. Norton wrote that he had once asked her to name her 'desert island book' and she replied *Modern Painters*. He is known for championing a group of young Victorian artists, now known as the Pre-Raphaelites, who aimed to emulate a style of art practised in the fifteenth century by painters such as Perugino and Pinturicchio, the original pre raphaelites. He particularly disliked the work of the Renaissance master, Raphael, whose work Elizabeth Gaskell had been keen to see in Rome, especially the Deposition in the Borghese Gallery.

Siena was the most important port of call en route. In Murray's Guide there are faint pencil marks indicating some of the works of art in the Istituto delle Belle Arte, especially those by Duccio di Buoninsegna, the foremost Sienese painter of the thirteenth century. He was a particular favourite of Elizabeth. She had encountered his work in the 1857 Art Treasures Exhibition in Manchester and had berated Norton for not mentioning him in his accounts of the Exhibition.

Ruskin loved Siena, preferring it to Florence, though there was much he loved in that city, and spent a lot of time sketching and copying its art treasures.

This town is worth fifty Florences: larger and more massy buildings in *general*...A noble square with a delicately carved fountain in white marble [by Jacopo della Quercia]...[The Cathedral] is, the most striking church I have yet seen in Italy.

Their host in Siena was the American sculptor, William Wetmore Story, who had also entertained them in Rome. During the summer months he rented a villa, two miles from the city centre, where he is also known to have entertained William Gaskell in 1864. His daughter described it:

In the late fifties the Villa Belvedere Marciano, near Siena, became for five years our summer house. From the terrace garden, looking across a valley of olives and vines, we could see the grim square Villa Alberti where the Brownings lived.

#### Further reading

Chapple, J.A.V. & Pollard, A. (eds) *The letters of Mrs Gaskell*, 1966.  
 Evans, J. & Whitehouse, J.H. (eds) *The diaries of John Ruskin*, 1958.  
 Johnston, I. *The life, manners & travels of Fanny Trollope: a biography*, 1979.  
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## Nineteenth-Century Education: Parity for the Sexes? Angus Easson

The 2013 Gaskell Conference focused on women's education in Gaskell's time and on towards the twentieth century. Only once, that I remember, and that in discussion, was the question raised of equal education for girls with boys. Equality of education, we do well to remember, is one thing; quality, in terms of what boys were getting and by what means, quite another. The field of education widened considerably in the nineteenth century for both girls and boys, but certain images remain dominant, of private schools and, exclusively for boys, public schools. To look at the educational experience of three Victorian literary figures and at the most successful of all novels about public school life, is to exclude much else in the field and in people's experience, but may serve to show how lucky girls were to escape some aspects of Victorian education and how the very concepts of what education might be have changed.

In looking briefly, at Charles Dickens, Anthony Trollope, and William Makepeace Thackeray, we can see how private school could be run by the unqualified and how public schools were appallingly inadequate as places of education. It is necessary, of course, to take account of both the family circumstances of these three writers and their exceptional talents in representing their experiences, but they all reveal what boys' education could be and how undesirable for boys, let alone girls.

Dickens (1812-70) never went to public school, though his father, chronically in debt and something of a fantasiser, led him to expect schooling that would lead to university and specifically Cambridge. John Dickens, unable to cope financially, was imprisoned for debt, while Charles, far from being educated, was sent to work in a blacking factory. Even when things were on a more stable footing, the

education Dickens received was inadequate. This is not a question of the Yorkshire schools, to which Dickens travelled to gather material for his grotesquely comic attack on Dotheboys Hall in *Nicholas Nickleby*. But anyone, qualified or not, could set up a school, and Dickens was sent, with the family on a steadier footing, to Wellington House Academy in Mornington Place, since gone under the railway (John Forster, *The Life of Charles Dickens*, 1872-4, ed. J.W.T. Ley, 1928, p.39). The school was kept by a Welshman, Mr William Jones, whose tombstone, still to be seen in the churchyard of Old St Pancras Church, a little north of St Pancras Station, sets out 'The inflexible integrity of his character and the social and domestic virtues which adorned his public life' (*A Walk in the Past: A Churchyard Tour of St Pancras Old Church*, published by the church). Jones, though, was characterised by one of Dickens's fellow pupils as 'a most ignorant fellow, and a mere tyrant: whose chief employment was to scourge the boys' (Forster, p.43), while Dickens himself in 1857 described him as 'by far the most ignorant man I have ever had the pleasure to know', the school being 'a pernicious and abominable humbug altogether' (*The Speeches of Charles Dickens*, ed. K.J. Fielding, 1960, pp.240-1). Creakle and his school in *David Copperfield* are drawn largely from Jones and Wellington House Academy. In educating his own children, Dickens showed a certain eclecticism. True, his eldest son, Charley, was his father's surrogate in going to Eton, though afterwards more practically he went to Germany to learn the language. Amongst the boys, some went to the private school of Mr Brackenbury, a clergyman, infinitely superior to Jones; one was prepared for a cadetship in the Indian Army, another went into the navy, and one was trained at an agricultural college, reminders of alternatives to public school for boys in the nineteenth century.

If Dickens hankered after the public school he never went to, both Anthony Trollope and Thackeray, who did go to public schools, spoke of them and of preliminary education at private schools with a mixture of disgust and outrage. Anthony Trollope (1815-82) wrote on his *Autobiography* (1883; ed. David Skilton, 1996) that his boyhood was 'as unhappy as that of a young gentleman could well be', arising from 'a mixture of poverty and gentle standing on the part of my father' (p.7). Trollope senior, a man ambitious for his children but hopeless in his own affairs, had been at Winchester and New College, Oxford, and was determined these were the destination of Anthony and his brothers. Fortunately for some of the family, his wife, Frances Trollope, was of tougher stuff, taking off to America, where she set up a store, and capitalised on return by publishing *Domestic Manners of the Americans* (1832), an immense success, followed by other travel writings and novels. Meanwhile, Trollope senior, having abandoned his law practice, bought a farm near Harrow (in which he failed miserably), and at seven years Anthony was sent to Harrow School, where he endured the humiliations of a day pupil at a largely boarding school. Once, Trollope encountered the headmaster in the street, a man wont to flog the boy constantly, and who yet seemed not to know him: "Perhaps", Trollope remarks wryly (or slyly, since the man would be more familiar with Trollope's rear when flogging him), "he did not recognise me by my face" (p.9).

At twelve Trollope went to Winchester, where much of the tuition of the younger boys was in the hands of older boys (as elsewhere: the masters at public schools then seemed to have had as little as possible to do with the boys). One such older boy was Trollope's elder brother, who 'as a part of his daily exercise...thrashed me with a big stick' (p.11). Anthony was returned to Harrow, where he learnt nothing 'for I was taught nothing' (p.14), a statement marginally contradicted later when he stated that 'no attempt had been made to teach me anything but Latin and Greek, and very little attempt to teach me those languages' (p.17). He had no memory of lessons in writing or arithmetic, and certainly was taught neither French nor German. Girls at decent school or under tutors might gain some knowledge of history, literature, music, drawing, composition, a modern foreign language - not all girls, of course, but their education was wider and more interesting than Winchester's or Harrow's at this time. Trollope might note that he was a fair Latin scholar, but 'the knowledge which I have, I have acquired since I left school' (p. 18) - what public schools impressed on him was snobbery between social classes, inferiority of day boys to boarders, no teaching, constant flogging.

Unlike Dickens's false expectations from his financially feckless father or the consequences to Trollope of his father's agricultural incompetence, Thackeray suffered not from parental neglect, but rather from separation (sent home from India by his parents) and the general savagery of education in England, however well-meaning his parents and relatives. In the *Roundabout Papers*, essays written 1860-62 for the *Cornhill Magazine*, Thackeray recalled the 'cruel smart' of separation between parent and a child despatched to school ('On Two Children in Black'). More bitter are the glimpses of his own schooldays - 'consigned' to a school of which his 'deluded parents' had heard a favourable report, but 'governed by a horrible little tyrant' ('On Letts's Diary'); humiliated at public school as 'the Doctor' held you up 'to public scorn before the class, and cracked his great clumsy jokes upon you' ('Thorns in the Cushion'); and whipping by the schoolmaster ('On Screens in Dining-Rooms'). Thackeray went to Charterhouse ('Slaughterhouse' in his fiction), where Dr Birch and Dr Swishtail were supreme, and where he noted in a letter of 1847 the chief good he got 'was to learn to hate bullying & tyranny' (*Letters and Private Papers*, ed. G.N. Ray, 1945, II, 284). Thackeray's most detailed analysis of the evils of public school comes in *A Shabby Genteel Story* (1840), in the character of Mr George Brown (ch.2), whose father thought he would benefit from acquaintance with the great and sent him to Eton, 'at cruel charges upon a slender purse'. How much ruin has been caused 'by that accursed system which is called in England 'the education of a gentleman'. Selfishness, sporting activities, Latin hexameters and a smattering of Greek plays: what else has been learned? If your father is a grocer, to despise him, and 'to forget...the ties and natural affections of home.'

In the light of these experiences, *Tom Brown's Schooldays* (1857; 1898 reprint), Thomas Hughes's paean of praise for public schools in general, Rugby in particular,

above all Rugby under the guidance of Thomas Arnold, 'The Doctor' (1795-1842; headmaster 1828-42), can be read aslant, yet not merely maliciously, from Hughes's intention. Concerned with public schools, 'those much abused and much belauded institutions peculiar to England' (p.50), Hughes did recognise that they might prove either 'a noble institution for the training of Christian Englishmen, or a place where a young boy will get more evil than he would if he were turned out to make his way in London streets' (p. 136). Despite warnings to his son, Squire Brown seems unconcerned about consigning his son to a place where, if 'schools are what they were in my time, you'll see a great many cruel blackguard things done, and hear a deal of foul bad talk' (p.59).

Tom's arrival at Rugby is the opportunity to describe its physical conditions, which prove cold, dark, with cramped studies, and a school hall that is used for all classes simultaneously as well as for meals. Rugby, at Tom's introduction, is a place where physical exercise, football, cricket, and boxing, is exulted. Tom's friend East indeed boasts of the casualties at football: two collar bones broken already that year, a dozen 'fellows' lamed, and last year, a broken leg (p.79) - the football match itself, closer to a vulgar brawl than anything comprehensible from Hughes's description, involves most of the school on the pitch simultaneously.

And what of the teaching? Hughes declares that the 'object of all schools is not to ram Latin and Greek into boys, but to make them good English boys, good future citizens' (p.52), and most of that work must be done out of school hours. Except at classes and chapel, the Rugby masters are conspicuous by their absence - and the syllabus consists largely of ramming Latin and Greek into largely indifferent boys. Tom, aged 11 or 12, is in the Lower Fourth, a class of 40 boys aged 9-15, and their texts are some portion of Livy; Virgil's *Bucolics* (or *Pastorals*) - singularly uninteresting to the age group; and the *Hecuba* of Euripides. Later references are no less limited - part of Thucydides; Homer's *The Iliad*; and *The Clouds* and *The Knights* of Aristophanes. All works are 'ground out in small daily portions' (p. 131), of about sixteen or twenty lines, 'prepared' the night before. The only boy with any appreciation of literary quality is George Arthur, who is deeply affected by Helen's lament over the dead Hector (*Iliad*, bk.24). Apart from getting through their sixteen or twenty lines, the other exercise the boys have is 'the vulgus', a short composition in Latin or Greek verse on a subject, set three times a week (114 pieces during the school year), traditionally cribbed by the boys from versions passed down from year to year. There is no sign of modern history, geography, a modern language, modern literature (though Tom does read *Don Quixote* for his own amusement), mathematics, or science - some or all of which middle-class girls might have an acquaintance with (however slight). The only exception we see is Martin, who delights in natural history and conducts chemical experiments in his study, with explosive results. And Martin is marked out as 'one of those unfortunates who were. ...(and are...still) quite out of their places at a public school' (p.204). No hint is given as to what form of education *would* suit Martin, though his departure to voyage to the South Seas, of

which we learn nothing more, is not unreminiscent of Darwin on the *Beagle* and Gaskell's Roger in Africa.

To read or reread Hughes's novel can be immensely enjoyable, if only to take issue with a great deal that he claims or shows. His praise of Arnold is lavish, yet 'The Doctor' makes no pedagogic changes, in teaching method or syllabus, and oversees more closely the old system rather than rooting it out and replacing it with something better. To set Trollope and Thackeray against Hughes is to see their misery and educational deprivation shadowed in Tom Brown's schooling.

While the focus here has been largely on boys' experience of public schools, we should remember the increasing emphasis on education in the nineteenth century and the great variety - grammar (day) school; ragged schools; church schools; special institutions to prepare for the army, Indian service, the navy, agriculture; working men's institutes; University extension courses. And in all this, questions of equality of education for men and women became increasingly a matter of concern - girls' school established; University extension; University education (see, for example, H.G.Wells's *Ann Veronica*, published 1909 but reflecting the 1880s). But on the issue of equality, this sketch may serve as a reminder again that it is not just equality that is at stake in education, but its nature and quality.

Editor notes: Last winter we studied *Ruth* in detail with our able tutor and mentor Elizabeth Williams. By popular demand Elizabeth has now researched further and written up the fruits of her labours for the benefit of us all. Thank you Elizabeth.

## Ruth and the Governess Question

Elizabeth Williams

The governess was a stock figure in Victorian fiction - one estimate is that between 1814 and 1864, 140 novels were written featuring governesses <sup>(1)</sup>, the best known of these being *Jane Eyre*, by Charlotte Brontë, and *Agnes Grey* by her sister Anne. According to Katharine West fictional governesses fell into six categories - The Downtrodden, The Valued Friend, The Strict Instructress or Dragon, The Self-Seeking Adventuress, The Villainess and the Snob-Exhibit <sup>(2)</sup>. But it's the figure of The Downtrodden that loomed largest in fiction, and this seems to have been the case in real life as well.

The plight of the governess was a direct result of the problem of the 'redundant woman'. WR Greg wrote in 1862 'There is an enormous and increasing number of single women in the nation....a number which.... is indicative of an unwholesome social state, and is... productive ... of much wretchedness and wrong. There are

hundreds and thousands of women....scattered through all ranks, but proportionately most numerous in the middle and upper ranks – who have to earn their own living, instead of spending and husbanding the earnings of men...who are compelled to lead an independent and incomplete existence of their own.' He went on to estimate that in 1851 'there were, in England and Wales... 1,248,000 women in the prime of life... who were unmarried.' <sup>(3)</sup>

Greg suggested emigration as a solution to this problem, and even calculated the number of vessels required. It is interesting that he commented that female servants did not constitute part of the problem and went on to explain that this was because, 'They are in no sense redundant... they are fully and usefully employed... they fulfil both essentials of woman's being; *they are supported by and they minister to men*. We could not possibly do without them.' Mr Bradshaw in *Ruth* would undoubtedly have agreed.

There were few recognised ways for the redundant middle-class woman to earn a living without forfeiting the precious status of a lady. Ruth is a person whose status is debatable – her father is a respectable but failed farmer and her mother a curate's daughter. But the fact that she is apprenticed to a dress-maker, as is Kate Nickleby in *Nicholas Nickleby*, means that her guardian recognised her as being above the rank of a working-class girl who could have become a servant. Sewing was a desirable female skill, expected of all classes. So was nursing (although only within a circle of family and friends until the advent of Florence Nightingale) and so was teaching. These were all supposed to involve skills which came naturally to women. In the course of Mrs Gaskell's novel *Ruth* is involved in all three of these occupations.

If a woman decided to support herself by becoming a governess she could preserve her status as a lady, as her main function was to inculcate her young charges with suitably lady-like ideas of behaviour. The ideal governess came from a family with aristocratic connections which had fallen on hard times. In *Shirley*, by Charlotte Brontë, a rich young woman is reported as remarking, 'The daughters of tradespeople, however well educated, must necessarily be underbred, and as such unfit to be inmates of our dwellings, or the guardians of our children's minds and persons.' <sup>(4)</sup>

This gives us an idea of what was required in a governess among those with aspirations to be regarded as genteel. We could easily become enmeshed in discussions of the Victorian class system, where Mr Bradshaw (in trade) would never have been regarded as gentry, but this does not detract from the fact that he would have wanted a governess who was instantly identified as being 'the better sort of person'. To quote Katherine Hughes: 'A governess was concerned with the social and moral development of her pupils, as well as the simply academic, and her qualifications were not merely of the academic variety but were

rather part of her birthright as a lady.' <sup>(5)</sup> Hyacinth Kirkpatrick, in *Wives and Daughters*, has gained and retained posts on the basis of her superficial but genteel charm and is acutely aware of what is done in the better sort of household. Her academic qualifications are relatively unimportant; it is her ability to play the lady that counts. So we can see what a compliment Mr Bradshaw is paying to Ruth in offering her the role of a nursery governess and taking her into his family.

Charlotte, Anne and Emily Brontë all worked at different times as governesses and school teachers, and none of them were happy. Anne Brontë gives a vivid account of the unhappiness of the governess's life in her novel *Agnes Grey*, emphasising the loneliness. A governess could not mix with the servants because she was above them in status, but nor, unless she was exceptionally lucky, would she be expected to become part of the family. She gives an account of Agnes Grey going to church with her employer's family. 'As none of the before-mentioned ladies and gentlemen ever noticed me, it was disagreeable to walk beside them, as if wishing to be thought one of them, while they talked over me....It was disagreeable too, to walk behind and thus appear to acknowledge my own inferiority, for in truth, I considered myself nearly as good as the best of them.' <sup>(6)</sup>

This loneliness is emphasised in an article by Lady Elizabeth Eastlake entitled 'Vanity Fair, Jane Eyre and the Governesses' Benevolent Institution', which appeared in the *Quarterly Review* in December, 1848. In it Lady Eastlake describes the governess as a 'bore' to ladies and gentlemen and adds, 'the servants invariably detest her, for she is a dependent like themselves, and yet, for all that, as much their superior in other respects as the family they both serve. Her pupils may love her, and she may take the deepest interest in them, but they cannot be her friends.' Often the children were encouraged to see the governess as a social inferior, and this was not helpful when she tried to discipline them. In *Agnes Grey* Anne Brontë writes of the children spitting into the governess's workbag and throwing her writing desk out of the window.

The Brontës were not the only ones to write about downtrodden governesses. Jane Austen has Jane Fairfax in *Emma* describing her future prospects as a governess as a branch of the slave industry, although Emma's beloved Miss Taylor in the same novel has had much more the experience of the valued friend, becoming a member of the family in an even more complete way than Ruth does. Nonetheless, only Mr Woodhouse fails to recognise that Miss Taylor is much better off once she has become Mrs Weston. Dickens features the governess as a downtrodden figure in *Martin Chuzzlewit*, where Tom Pinch's sister (another Ruth) is exploited and treated with contempt by her employers.

Jane Eyre of course found Mr Rochester – a highly unlikely scenario in real life. The most that a real governess might aspire to was to marry the curate, but this was a rare piece of good fortune, and many of them carried on until they were too old or ill



to find work and then found themselves totally destitute. Kathryn Hughes states that servants and Governesses formed proportionately the largest occupational group in lunatic asylums<sup>(7)</sup>, the victims of overwork and inadequate pay. And the pay was low, with the majority of governesses receiving between £35 and £80 per year<sup>(8)</sup>, out of which they would probably be expected to pay for their own laundry, medical care and travel. Their position in the family meant that they were expected to dress well, and this was not cheap. Nursery governesses such as Ruth were sometimes offered no salary beyond bed, board and travelling expenses, and yet such posts attracted many applicants, who would be expected to work long hours. They might have had to share a bedroom with children, meaning that they were never off duty, and could be expected to spend their evenings doing needlework for the family.

Employers could get away with this sort of thing because there were simply too many women in the market place. If no Prince Charming came along, another dream of salvation was starting a school. Both the Brontë sisters and Charles Dickens's mother did this – plans were laid, brochures distributed and their homes made ready to receive boarders – but no pupils came. There were just too many schools.

So we can see that Mr Bradshaw is extending a genuine favour to Ruth when he offers to employ her as a governess. When we compare her terms of employment with those of our stereotypical downtrodden governess, they seem very favourable indeed. It is clear that she is paid a salary, and Mr Bradshaw's love of patronising others means that it will probably be a generous one. Ruth mixes freely with the family, is offered affection and respect, and is free from undue interference in her duties. Mothers were particularly prone to intervening between the governess and her charges, often stemming from a fear of being supplanted by the governess in the children's affections, but Mrs Bradshaw's weak and passive nature means that Ruth is remarkably free to use her own judgement and to form natural and affectionate relationships with the children. If Charlotte Brontë's unhappy experiences came from a combination of difficult employers and an inappropriate temperament, we can see that Gaskell gives Ruth the good fortune to find reasonable employers while possessing a character that enables her to become valued within the Bradshaw family.

Mr Bradshaw is in many ways an unattractive character, but I think that readers of the time would have related to his fury at the discovery of Ruth's past far more easily than we do. As I hope I've shown, he extends a genuine favour, or even a privilege to Ruth when he offers her the job of nursery governess to his younger daughters. Also, when we consider just what the job signified, we can see how entirely Gaskell is challenging the ideas of the time by putting Ruth into a position that identifies her as lady-like. One of Katharine West's six categories of fictional governesses is that of the Snob-Exhibit. We can find one of these in the figure of Miss Wirt in 'A Visit to Some Country Snobs', chapter XXV of Thackeray's *Book of Snobs*. Miss Wirt plays

the piano magnificently and tells admiring visitors about one piece of music, 'When I lived with the Dunsinanes, that was the dear Duchess's favourite... It was while hearing Jane play that, I remember, that dear Lord Castletoddy fell in love with her; and, though he is but an Irish Peer, with not more than fifteen thousand a year, I persuaded Jane to have him.'

Mr Bradshaw may not have had ambitions to employ a Miss Wirt, but he certainly wanted someone who had qualities of gentility. The quality of the governess reflected the status of the family, and to discover that the moral and social development of the children had been entrusted to an unmarried mother would have been unacceptable to most Victorian households, even if they weren't as fiercely righteous as Mr Bradshaw. It is Ruth's becoming a governess that makes Mr Benson increasingly aware of the consequences of his lie. The first he knows of it is after his sister has accepted the post on Ruth's behalf. His perturbation at the news hinges on the fact that while he has chosen to accept Ruth into his household and to protect her from the outside world with a lie, Ruth is now moving back into the outside world under the shelter of that lie. She is entering a family home (that holy of holies to the Victorians) and taking a position which is theoretically reserved only for women of the highest moral integrity.

Mrs Gaskell encourages us to mentally reject Mr Bradshaw's arguments when he discovers the truth about his governess and accuses her of contaminating his innocent girls. It's easy to disagree with him now, but when the book was written such feelings on the part of the reader would have implied that the fallen woman could be redeemed to the point where she was fit to be the guardian of children's innocence. The governess was right at the heart of society, responsible for children who their ambitious parents would perceive as the ladies and gentlemen of the future. Such responsibility brought power, and this is why the bad governess was a creature to be dreaded. You may remember that two of the six categories of fictional governess were those of women who exploited their positions for their own ends – The Female Adventurer and the Villainess. We could think of Becky Sharp in *Vanity Fair* as an example of the first, or of Lady Audley or Miss Jessel in *The Turn of the Screw* as the second – all parents' nightmares. To Mr Bradshaw it must seem that those nightmares have come true and that he has been harbouring an unscrupulous adventurer. Nowadays, just as insecure, we are justifiably neurotic about child abuse and anyone dealing with children has to be vetted.

In Mrs Gaskell's time the concerns were different, but even so, allowing a stranger access to one's home and children was a worrying prospect. Childhood is a time of innocence, but also a time when habits of mind and behaviour are taught, and a time of vulnerability. The absence of caring adults is a major factor in Ruth's downfall, and her own defence is, 'I was so young'. It is significant that when Richard's dishonesty is discovered, Mrs Bradshaw sits weeping in the nursery; Richard was innocent in his nursery days. If he'd had someone like Ruth as a

governess, would he have been better? Leonard, the bastard, is presented as the hope for the future because he has been trained in love and care. *Ruth* can be perceived in many ways as a novel about education.

It's also a novel about gentility – a term that has become debased but which should relate to some innate purity and graciousness. Ruth's lady-like air and dignity are stressed throughout the book, and indeed, as I've mentioned, it is these that inspire Mr Bradshaw to employ her in the first place. The fact of Ruth's becoming a governess, that token of a family's respectability and gentility, poses a very difficult question – can the fallen woman be forgiven to the extent of gaining a place as the guardian of innocence? Posing the question was a courageous gesture.

1. Kathryn Hughes, *The Victorian Governess* (London and Rio Grande: The Hambledon Press, 1993), p. 2.
2. Katharine West, *A Chapter of Governesses* (London: Cohen and West, 1949), p. 13.
3. W R Greg, *Why Are Women Redundant?* (London: Trubner, 1862)
4. Charlotte Brontë, *Shirley*, (London: The Folio Society, 1968), p. 285.
5. Hughes, p. 40.
6. Anne Brontë, *Agnes Grey*, (London: The Folio Society, 1969), p. 93.
7. Hughes p. 163.
8. Hughes p. 155.

## Lionizing Elizabeth Gaskell: The Gaskell Journal Goes On-line Nancy Weyant

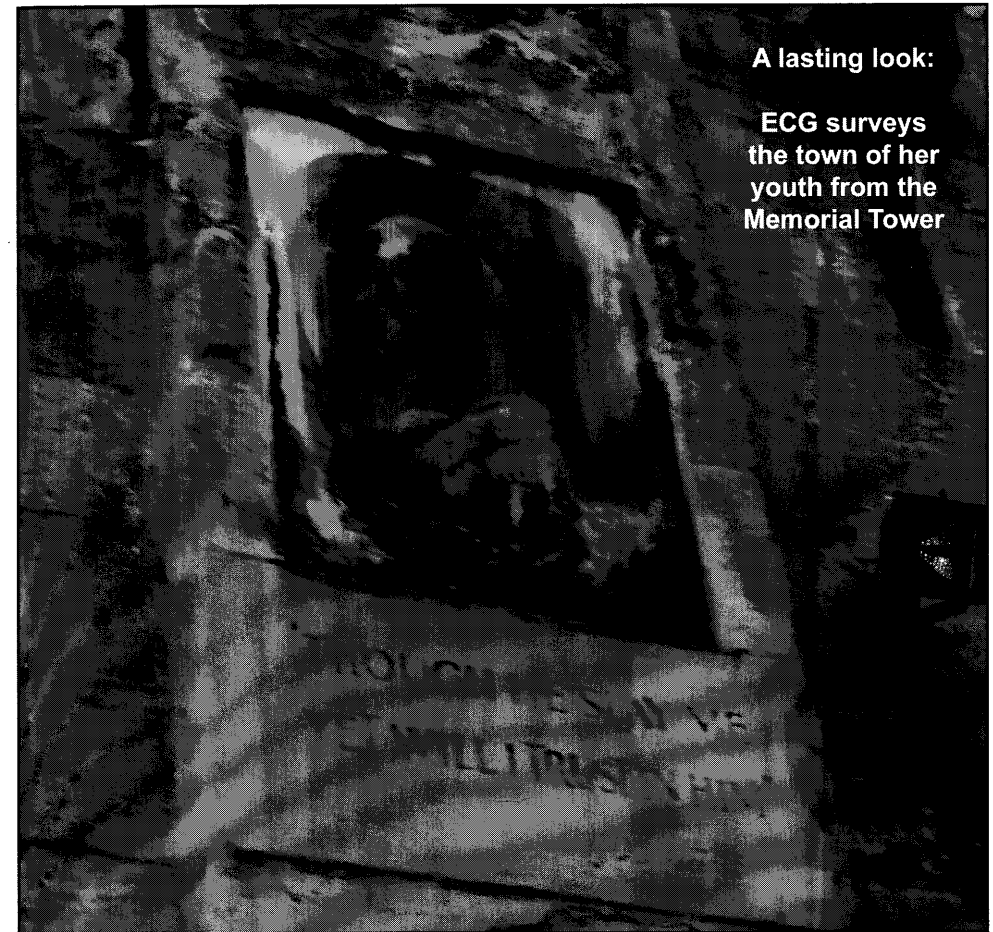
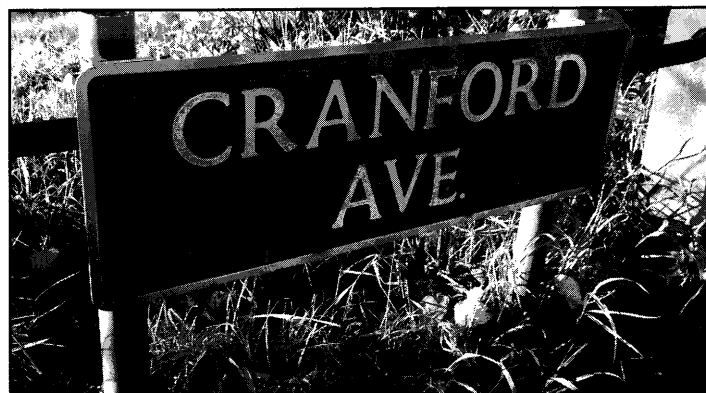
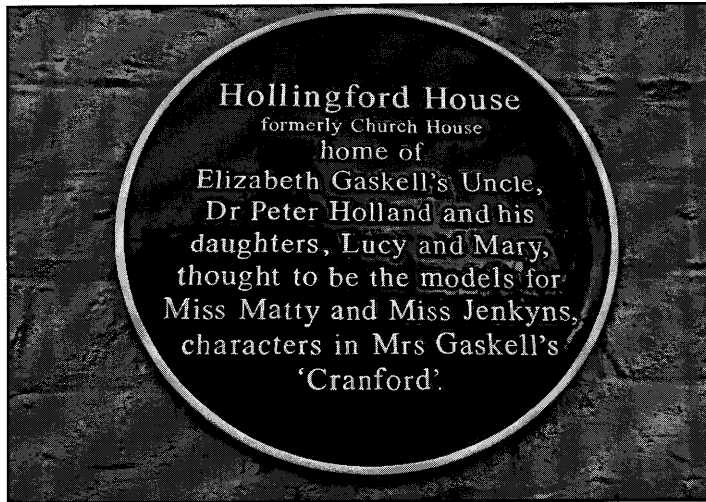
As many members of the Gaskell Society know, for over two years, officers of the Society, the editor of the *Gaskell Journal* and several members of the Editorial Board of the *Journal* have been engaged in a dialogue regarding the benefits of contracting to have the articles published in the *Journal* included in one or more full-text journal databases. Last summer, the Society entered into an agreement with ProQuest, an electronic publisher, to have them provide full-text access to the *Journal*. The title of the publication in which *Journal* articles will be made available is *Literature Online*, popularly known to college and university students as *LION*. When and how did making journal articles available via computer happen? More significantly, what are the benefits gained, to The Gaskell Society and to future Gaskell scholarship, by our entering into this agreement with ProQuest? Hopefully, this article will provide the answers.

In an article I wrote for the Autumn 2011 issue of the *Newsletter*, I traced the ever-growing presence of Elizabeth Gaskell on the Internet. She continues to have a strong presence in cyberspace. Among the tens-of-thousand Internet sites on Gaskell, there are free copies of ALL of Gaskell's works, plot summaries of her

novels and short stories, biographies of varying lengths, photographs, references to PhD dissertations and MA theses, vita of Gaskell scholars and blogs by Gaskell scholars and enthusiasts alike. There are commercial sites as well: sites that will sell you new and used copies of her works; mugs, magnets, bookmarks, and Christmas ornaments with quotes from her writings; and, sadly, businesses that will even sell you term papers, theses and dissertations on Gaskell's life and works. While the immense volume of information on the Internet has triggered discussions about the possible benefits of creating two tracks of Internet information (popular/commercial and scholarly), that division has not yet happened. Until the issue of whether there *should* be multiple Internets is resolved, scholars (both established and neophyte) will continue to be dependent on one or more commercial electronic publishers to help them identify articles on specific topics.

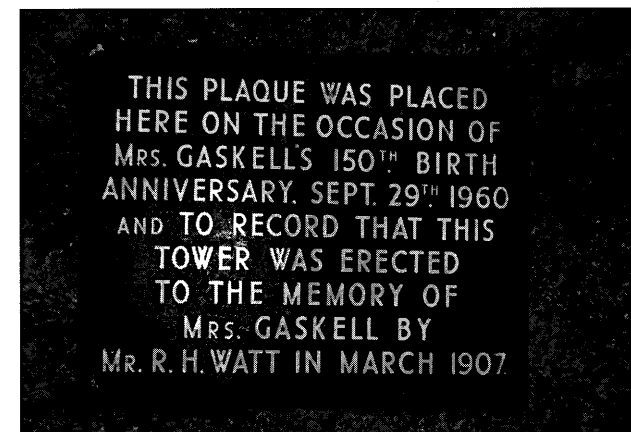
Furthermore, while there are a number of electronic journals that are just 'published' on or accessed via the Internet, the vast majority of scholarly journals continue to be published in paper by major academic publishing houses, universities and, societies OR are published in paper by these entities and electronic versions with the electronic version being marketed by an established, fee-based database vendor. From its inception in 1987 through 2013, *The Gaskell Society Journal*, *The Gaskell Journal* since 2008, has been published just in paper. However, beginning in 2014, articles published in all past and future volumes will be available in both paper and electronic formats. Members of the Society will continue to receive the paper version and anyone authorized to use one of the hundreds of libraries that subscribe to Literature Online (LION) will have access to the electronic version of our Journal. To understand the implications for our Journal and our Society, it might be useful to review the evolution of electronically accessible journals.

One of the challenges faced by the vendors of electronic databases that emerged in the 1990s was that the publishers of the long-established paper indexes (like the MLA International Bibliography that indexes *The Gaskell Journal*) understandably wanted to control how their indexes were computerized. Additionally, researchers found that while electronic indexes dramatically increased the speed with which they could identify what had been published, the traditional way of actually acquiring the article or book chapter itself if their library did not own the item continued to be a time-consuming process. Accordingly, a new group of fee-based indexing services emerged – indexes that did not have paper antecedents but rather began as online indexing services. Because an ever-growing number of magazines and journals had begun using computers to produce their paper versions, the publishers of these new indexes saw that they had the opportunity to use the computer versions that were being used to create the paper versions to transform not just how researchers learned about a publication but also how they could actually acquire articles in that publication. Simply they approached the publishers of the magazines and journals they were indexing and negotiated agreements to include the articles themselves in their indexes.



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## THE ERA OF FULL-TEXT JOURNAL RETRIEVAL HAD ARRIVED!

This new publishing model had a major impact on researchers and on libraries. Full text databases quickly became staples of undergraduate research around the world. Academic libraries enthusiastically embraced them for several reasons. By subscribing to one or more of these, they greatly enhanced access to articles in two ways. First, they allowed for both precise subject searching as well as what is called 'keyword' searching. For example, one could enter 'Lois the Witch' as a subject phrase and locate articles that focused primarily, if not exclusively, on that work OR one could enter that title as a keyword phrase and any article that mentioned it, even just tangentially, would be quickly identified. In short, it became much easier to identify virtually EVERYTHING written on a topic or an author or a work. Secondly, and more significantly, if the publisher of the magazine or journal had contracted to have their articles accessible full-text, a simple click on the appropriate link would result in the immediate display of the entire article and, upon scanning the article, give one the option of immediately printing that article. Dependency on inter-library loan to obtain that article was therefore eliminated – a reality appealing to students, independent researchers, faculty and library directors alike.

Lastly, libraries choosing to subscribe to one or more of these full-text databases reduced the costs of processing the paper versions of newspapers, magazines and journals and the cost of providing shelf space for those ever-expanding publications. Everyone seemed to benefit by embracing full-text databases.

Certainly, one question to be asked is: WHAT exactly is the benefit to the publishers or sponsors (notably societies like ours) of the journals that agree to allow one of the electronic database publishers to provide instant access to their articles? Firstly, monetary remuneration is part of the agreement – not enough to significantly alter the solvency of the issuing entity, but some financial remuneration, nonetheless. Secondly, and in many ways more importantly, it increases the exposure of the journal AND the sponsoring society to a greatly expanded number of scholars. Many scholarly journals are published in BOTH paper and online formats. Significantly, single-author focused journals (like ours) tend to be published either just in paper or, where the author is considered a significant figure, published in both paper and online formats. Clearly, Elizabeth Cleghorn Gaskell is no longer constrained by David Cecil's characterization of her as a 'minor author' whose writings are determined by her gender.

By contracting with ProQuest to include the articles published in The Gaskell Journal in LION, the Society's officers have strengthened the exposure of both the Journal and our Society to new generations of Gaskell scholars and enthusiasts alike.

## Who was Louy Jackson?

Jenny Keaveney

Louy Jackson is mentioned more than twenty times in Mrs Gaskell's letters between 1856 and 1863. First described as 'Meta's friend' and then as 'a very dear young friend of mine', Louy visits the Gaskells and is visited by them, travels to Germany with them, writes letters – but remains little more than a name. The story behind this name is fragmented but not without interest and incident.

Louisa Victoria Jackson (often referred to as 'LVJ' in Gaskell's letters) was born in 1838, the youngest child of Henry Augustus Jackson, an officer in the 5<sup>th</sup> Dragoon Guards, and his wife Mary. She and her sister Anna Maria were pupils at Rachel Martineau's school in Liverpool, where their aunt, Jane Noble Pilkington, was a teacher. Meta Gaskell joined this school in 1853 and the three girls became 'great friends'.

All the information about Louy that we learn from Mrs Gaskell herself comes from one letter, in which she describes the terrible blow that struck the family in 1856:

Meta is in London: she has been there ever since Feb 1st. She went to see two girls who had lost both father and mother in one fortnight; they were great friends of Meta's, who had also received much kindness from Colonel & Mrs Jackson. The latter was dying of cancer, the former was a strong handsome healthy man. But he dropped down dead in the street just a fortnight before his poor wife died after five years illness; and the only brother (an artillery officer) was ordered out to the Crimea the same week..... They are adopted by the Dean of Canterbury and are gone there now<sup>1</sup>.

A tragic story – but that last, almost throwaway, line leaps out at us: 'They are adopted by the Dean of Canterbury'. As minors, then aged 17 and 19 respectively, Louy and Anna Maria would have needed the protection of a guardian – but why such an august personage as the Dean of Canterbury? The Deanery at that time was occupied by Dr William Rowe Lyall: Clive Dewey<sup>2</sup> has described his custom of promoting his relatives to desirable posts in the Church of England, but mentions no such penchant for adopting orphaned young ladies.

There is, inevitably perhaps where Dr Lyall was concerned, a family connection, revealed in a letter written some years later by Philip Green, the son of the minister at Brook Street Chapel:

I had a very pleasant visit to Canterbury ... Meta Gaskell gave me a letter of introduction to the Miss Jacksons whose mother was as perhaps you know a Miss Pilkington and niece of the first Mrs Dr Brandreth.<sup>3</sup>

The Dean's wife, Catherine Lyall, was a daughter of that Dr and Mrs Brandreth, making her Mrs Jackson's first cousin. It is, in fact, probable that it was she who took the initiative to offer a home to the sisters, since the Dean himself had been an invalid for a number of years, following a stroke in 1852.<sup>4</sup>

Louy kept in contact with Meta after her removal to Canterbury, staying with her, Elizabeth and Florence in Heidelberg for nine weeks in 1858 and being absorbed into family life on a visit to Plymouth Grove the following March:

Meta and Louy are working hard at the dining-room table mending your [Marianne's] pink gown.<sup>5</sup>

In April 1859, Louy reached her twenty-first birthday and immediately celebrated her coming of age by taking 'the spirited step of engaging a great part of a furnished house' in the St Dunstan's area of Canterbury<sup>6</sup>. Elizabeth and Meta visited her here the following month, an added attraction of the visit being that Louy was now resident in the parish of Elizabeth's cousin Francis Holland. Philip Green's visit, mentioned earlier, took place in July of the same year when the Jacksons were able to use their Cathedral connection to gain him privileged access:

[The Miss Jacksons] were very kind & obliging in shewing me the cathedral which I should not have been able to see completely on the Sunday had not Louisa Jackson procured the key for me and conducted me through.<sup>7</sup>

We do not know how long Louy enjoyed her independent living but by 1861 she appears to have moved to Winchester with Mrs Lyall. This must have been somewhat dreary, if Elizabeth's account of a visit spent 'sitting in a warm back drawing room with blinds down all the day long, and seeing no one, and no newspapers coming, and no letters'<sup>8</sup> is typical of life with the elderly widow. It cannot have been a congenial role for Louy who, as we shall see, was an energetic and enterprising woman, and she may even have suffered from depression during this period:

L.V.J. is much altered 'selon moi' ... so quiet and indifferent about life in general and Gaskell's [sic] in particular.<sup>9</sup>

Following Mrs Lyall's death in 1863 Louy disappears from the Gaskells' story for a number of years. Since her correspondence is likely to have been chiefly with Meta, that inveterate destroyer of letters, it is unsurprising that no records seem to remain from this period. It is again a Green family letter that picks up Louy's story, in this case to Philip from his sister Isabella:

H Brandreth & Louisa Jackson are to be married on the 8<sup>th</sup> June ... He comes from his living in Norfolk in the middle of every week to see her (in Derbyshire

by a night train and back the same way), & she thinks it so bad for him & his parish that they are going to be married directly.<sup>10</sup>

Henry Brandreth was Louy's second cousin, the son of Mrs Lyall's brother Thomas Shaw Brandreth. He had taught mathematics at Eton and Rugby for five years before entering the Church in 1867 and had just been appointed to his first parish.

The wedding took place in Alton, Staffordshire and appears to have been quite a grand affair: it was conducted by the Dean of Bristol (John Pilkington Norris, another cousin of Louy's, the news of whose own marriage was communicated to Charles Eliot Norton by Elizabeth)<sup>11</sup> and Louy was attended by six bridesmaids, including Meta Gaskell.

Following a honeymoon in Switzerland the newlyweds returned to Henry's parish of Dickleburgh, a village in rural south Norfolk, where they would remain for the next thirty years.

Henry Brandreth was an ardent teetotaler and temperance campaigner and devoted much time and effort to keeping his flock out of the local hostleries by providing alternative diversions for them. One of the earliest of these, and the one in which he persisted the longest, was a reading room: his vision of this was set out in verse in the parish magazine:

A public-house, without the drink  
For sober recreation  
Where you may smoke, or read, or think  
Or join in conversation  
Discuss with loyal English hearts  
The prospects of the nation  
Or take a book and sit *apart*  
In silent meditation<sup>12</sup>

While many such reading rooms were set up for similar purposes during the latter half of the nineteenth century, Henry's proposal does recall the initiative for a similar project in Gibraltar taken some ten years previously by Louy's brother Pilkington, which had received support from Elizabeth Gaskell and Florence Nightingale:

I am in all the depths of perplexity at having a young artillery officer (whom I never saw,) writing to me from Gibraltar asking ME! to make a selection of books & periodicals to the value of 5£ for a 'soldiers reading-room' there which he has established at his own risk in order that they may have some place besides 'wine shops' in which to read news, play at draughts &c, &c.<sup>13</sup>

The Dickleburgh reading room opened in 1874 but did not have the beneficial effects that Henry Brandreth had hoped for. The rectory was situated too far from

the village for him to be able to visit the reading room regularly and some of the villagers took advantage of this lack of vigilance to make use of the facility for less wholesome pursuits than those for which it was designed. When the Rector learned that 'games were being played for money and for beer'<sup>14</sup> at the reading room, it was closed down.

During these early years at Dickleburgh, Louy was preoccupied with her family. The Brandreths' first child, Catherine Lois Rosalind, was born just under a year after the wedding (the first child, as Henry proudly noted, to have been born at the Rectory for 160 years) and christened on Whit Sunday, the church being 'very beautifully decorated with hawthorn for the occasion'.<sup>15</sup>

By 1875 Rosalind (as she was known) had been joined by two brothers, Ashton Byrom and Ernest Henry Augustus, but tragedy was to strike Louy once again.

'Last year', Henry wrote in the parish magazine, 'we might have been envied for three fine children; but we lost our eldest son, who was peculiarly dear to us for the sweet patience with which he had always borne all the treatment ... to set right the lame foot with which he was born. [Then] the whooping-cough attacked both our remaining children; and pneumonia, or inflammation of the lungs, having followed in the little boy's case, he lay at the beginning of April without much hope of recovery [and] on the morning of the 16th he was taken to better things'<sup>16</sup>.

Ashton had been two years old when he died: Ernest died two days before his second birthday.

Just as the loss of Mrs Gaskell's son had driven her to begin her career as a writer, the deaths of Ashton and Ernest may have given Louy the impetus to begin a new venture which was to occupy her for the rest of her time at Dickleburgh, and beyond.

This began when three young children in the parish were orphaned and, to keep them from being taken into the workhouse, an orphanage, Rose Cottage, was founded in the village. Although the records state that it was founded by both the Brandreths, Henry always refers to Rose Cottage and its sister home, Lee Cottage (opened in 1885), as 'Mrs Brandreth's Homes' and Louy took an active role in the management of both homes. Initially the homes were run privately and independently and although in 1888 they were transferred to the Waifs and Strays Society this did not diminish her involvement. Louy continued to have responsibility for their management and also as secretary and 'chief spirit' of the local committee, maintaining an untiring interest in the homes and taking a very practical role in their management, including sourcing such essential items as blankets, a sewing machine and umbrellas through appeals to the readers of 'Our Waifs & Strays' magazine.

Despite the name 'cottage', both homes were quite substantial buildings housing around twenty children, all girls, whose ages ranged from as young as three years old up to fifteen. They attended the village school and, outside school hours, were trained in housework, needlework and laundry, with the aim of preparing them for a career in domestic service<sup>17</sup>.

This may sound as though the homes were merely grimly utilitarian vocational training schemes, but the reality seems to have been gratifyingly different. Louy's philosophy was that 'loveless surroundings' had a 'deadening effect' on children, who would 'eagerly ... respond to love and care'<sup>18</sup> and the regular reports of the Waifs & Strays Society demonstrate how this was put into practice. One of these notes 'how eager the children were for a kind word or look from Mrs Brandreth ... they evidently looked to her as their best earthly friend'.<sup>19</sup>

Other reports give an insight into the activities of the home – days out at the seaside in Lowestoft, with buckets and spades and goat-cart rides provided, the dolls, toys and rocking horse available for the children and some positively Dickensian descriptions of Christmas festivities:

At twelve o'clock the doors of the playroom were thrown open and the crowd of eager children admitted. The Christmas-tree – covered with flags, ornaments and crackers - was brilliantly lighted and placed in the centre of a perfect wall of toys, dolls, work-boxes and scrap-books. After the singing of some pretty carols, the distribution of the presents began .... Great was the excitement and pleasure depicted on all the faces as dolls and toys were distributed ... each child received no less than four gifts.

We had roast beef, plum-puddings, and rice-puddings for dinner. After dinner, we all played a great many games, had oranges, and had some crackers; at five o'clock we sat down to a beautiful tea ... tarts, buns, fancy biscuits, cake, and gingerbreads, and went to tea with the caps on which came out of the bon-bons, and we all sung after we had finished tea ... two of the girls dressed up in 'Father Christmas' clothes and when the children saw them they did really scream.<sup>20</sup>

These festivities were not only for the forty-odd girls resident in the two cottages but children from the local Union were also invited, leaving 'with their pinafores full of presents'.

Girls who had moved on could, and frequently did, return to the cottages for holidays or 'when in need of care or rest' – during the Brandreths' last summer at Dickleburgh twenty girls returned to visit - and Louy's interest in her protégés continued even after she left the village. A number of letters in the archives of the Children's Society relate to Louy's meeting with 'E', a former resident of Rose



Cottage, in 1904 and her efforts to obtain medical assistance and respite care for 'E' through appeals to Edward Rudolf, the founder of the Waifs and Strays Society.<sup>21</sup>

By this time, Henry Brandreth had resigned his living at Dickleburgh. He and Louy had moved to Cambridge at the end of 1899, where Henry died in 1904. Louy then took up residence in Essex, where she was living with her daughter Rosalind at the 1911 census and where she died in 1915.

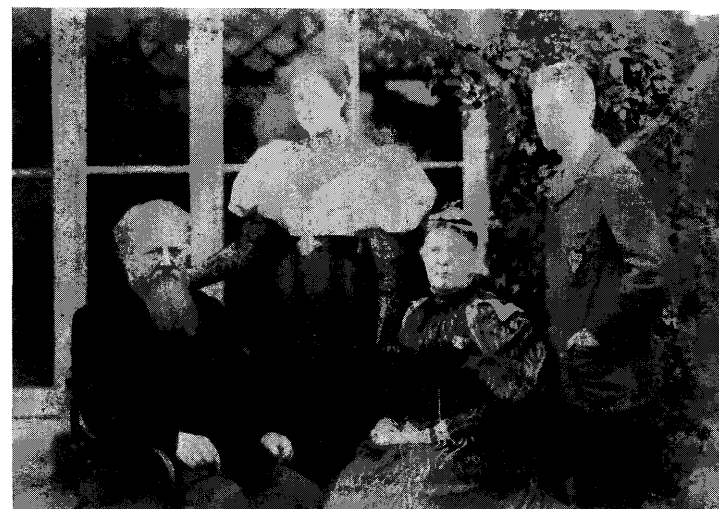
A valedictory piece written for 'Our Waifs and Strays' magazine in 1900 asserted that 'To those who have known Dickleburgh and Rose Cottage the names of her husband and herself will always be connected with the memory of the village and Home'.<sup>22</sup> Rose Cottage ceased to be a children's home in 1912 but the Brandreths are indeed still remembered in Dickleburgh. They left another memorial to the village on their departure: an 'iron house', moved from the Rectory to a site opposite Rose Cottage to serve as a reading room. The villagers seem to have been no more receptive to this than to Henry's initial efforts but the building was appreciated and put to use for other purposes: as a snooker club, table tennis club, cinema, village hall and community centre. Despite falling into disrepair in the 1980s, the building was rescued and restored by the Dickleburgh Village Society and today houses an archive of photographs and documents illustrating the history of the village.

Louy Jackson may have played only a minor role in the Gaskells' lives, and it has only been possible to flesh out a few details of her own life: she remains a somewhat shadowy figure. However, these details are enough to show a strong and determined woman in her own right and one whose life had a positive and lasting impact on over a hundred children.

I am grateful to Brian Baker for arranging access to the Dickleburgh reading rooms and archive, especially the parish magazines.

1. Further Letters p.156
2. The Passing of Barchester, Hambledon Press, 1991
3. Green-Jamison letters JPG/203, 12 July 1859
4. Benjamin Harrison: Charity Never Failing – a sermon preached on the death of WR Lyall 1857
5. Letters, 422, March 1859
6. Letters, 424a, 20 April 1859
7. Green-Jamison letters JPG/203, 12 July 1859
8. Letters, 457, March 1860
9. Letters, 484a, March 1861
10. Green-Jamison letters, JA/1G/16/1871
11. Letters, 418, March 1859
12. Dickleburgh parish magazine, February 1876
13. Letter 443, October 1859
14. Dickleburgh parish magazine, June 1877
15. Green-Jamison archive, Mary Ellen Green, 31 May 1872
16. Dickleburgh Parish Magazine, May 1877
17. <http://www.hiddenlives.org.uk/homes/DICKL02.html>

18. Our Waifs and Strays, March 1895, p. 43  
[http://www.hiddenlives.org.uk/cgi-bin/imgfind.pl?pageno=43&project=hiddenlivespub&refid=1895\\_I](http://www.hiddenlives.org.uk/cgi-bin/imgfind.pl?pageno=43&project=hiddenlivespub&refid=1895_I)
19. Our Waifs and Strays, September 1894, p.135  
[http://www.hiddenlives.org.uk/cgi-bin/imgfind.pl?pageno=135&project=hiddenlivespub&refid=1894\\_I](http://www.hiddenlives.org.uk/cgi-bin/imgfind.pl?pageno=135&project=hiddenlivespub&refid=1894_I)
20. Our Waifs and Strays, February 1899, p. 4  
[http://www.hiddenlives.org.uk/publications/waifs\\_and\\_strays/188902\\_I\\_1.html](http://www.hiddenlives.org.uk/publications/waifs_and_strays/188902_I_1.html)
21. <http://www.hiddenlives.org.uk/cases/case6351.html>
22. Our Waifs and Strays, March 1900, p.53  
[http://www.hiddenlives.org.uk/publications/waifs\\_and\\_strays/1900\\_I\\_45.html](http://www.hiddenlives.org.uk/publications/waifs_and_strays/1900_I_45.html)



**Louisa, née Jackson, and Henry Brandreth  
with Roland and Rosalind in the late 1890s.**

Photograph reproduced with the kind permission of Dickleburgh PCC

## Elizabeth Gaskell and Thomas Glover Pauline Kiggins

A good head and good heart are always a formidable combination. But when you add to that a literate tongue or pen, then you have something very special

Nelson Mandela

Mrs Gaskell's 'good heart' prompted her in her busy lifetime to many kindly acts aimed at helping people in need. We know already about her charitable work in Manchester during the 'Cotton Famine' her appeals to fellow novelist Charles Dickens (and, through him, to Angela Burdett-Coutts) for help in assisting stricken women in need of moral and material support. I now outline some recent research (inspired by references in Mrs Gaskell's Letters), which has brought to light the

instance of another charitable act, set in motion by a 'good heart' and managed by a 'good head'.

This story begins at a holiday tea party in the summer of 1858.

In a letter to Charles Eliot Norton, written on 25th July 1858, Mrs Gaskell wrote (coming to the end of a six-week stay in Silverdale)

Oh we are getting so sorry to leave Silverdale. [...] Last Tuesday we had a party of boys & birds & girls... We had a tame magpie and a tame jackdaw (/ the latter/ belonging to a little dwarf-child we picked up on a wild common one night) said dwarf - and three children of a drowned fisherman. The birds fought for precedence but the children were very good & nice, - not flippantly clever like town children, but solidly-thinking with slow dignity. The birds sate at tea on the heads of their respective owners, occasionally giving a plug or a dig with their beaks into the thick curly hair in a manner which / should not have liked, but it did not seem to disturb the appetites of the owners. It was very funny, & picturesque in the old quaint kitchen here.

Mrs Gaskell's 1858 reference to the 'three children of a drowned fisherman' is the key to the story. The eldest of the three was called Thomas Glover, as we find out from a letter that has survived as a fragment only - its recipient unknown. In it Mrs Gaskell is appealing for help to enable her to find work for Thomas Glover.

Her letter reads:

I am afraid I cannot give the exact dates but I will put down as much as I can remember about Thomas Glover (,) (I have added the comma to aid the sense) and the clergyman at Silverdale - (The Revd Alfred Hadfield, Silverdale nr. Lancaster) would send every particular, and would. I am sure, speak very highly of the boy.

His father was a fisherman, drowned by the coming up of the tide on the sands five or six years ago. He left a widow, 3 children, two girls besides Thomas, who must now be 14. Mrs (altered word) Glover is very much respected & liked. She has had a hard struggle to live - 'has been welly hungered to live many a time' - but owing to the kindness of Peggy Hatton, a washerwoman, she has pulled through, though she is often hard put to it in the winter, when there is much less to do. A gentleman whose name I forget offered to pay for Thomas's schooling and he has profited well by the privilege. He writes well, is a great way on in arithmetic: and is generally an intelligent, quiet and gentlemanly boy, - with a kind of thoughtful dignity about him, that comes, I should think, from his having been his mother's confidant & comforter during all her hard days. About Silverdale there is very little work, even of an agricultural kind, people

live on fish, and their potatoe grounds in a kind of primitive fashion; and there is nothing much done in the winter; and low wages in the summer. Besides the boy's talents & acquirements fit him to be something more than a labourer; and I want him to earn money somehow, so as to be able to help his mother. Apprenticeship costs money, & though that might be got over yet there would be his living to be found all the time he was an apprentice. I should be very much obliged to anyone who would help him to employment, & I feel pretty sure that he would do me credit.

The next written reference to Thomas Glover of which we are aware was probably written in August 1859. (Letter 439a), Mrs Gaskell was writing to a fairly 'new' friend, Charles Bosanquet, (planning to visit 'the Lake Country' for the first time, from his home in Northumberland). In the middle of her letter recommending people and places to visit, Mrs Gaskell breaks off and writes:

That reminds me! I have been laying traps all over England for a place for Thomas Glover this year past - and I have 'bagged' two places for him last week. One agricultural, one Manchester. And he is here, staying with us for a week, in order that I may find out which will suit him best - and I feel so grand having a choice when so long I have been a beggar.

It is interesting to note that she refers without explanation to 'Thomas Glover', which implies that Mr Bosanquet would have known straight away whose story she was telling.

From this date on, I have found only two further incidental references to Thomas Glover and one of these confirms that Thomas did pursue the plan for a 'place' in Manchester. In March 1860, just over six months after Thomas had stayed with the Gaskells at Plymouth Grove, Mrs Gaskell wrote from Cambridge Square in London to Marianne at home in Manchester in response to news that just received concerning the sudden death of Mr Jackson (employed by the family to look after the garden and the animals).

We are so shocked and sorry to hear about poor Jackson. [...] I am so sorry and cannot think what will be best to be done for poor Mrs. Jackson. Tommy Glover I suppose had better go and live with the Moore's. (Ruth Moore, the dressmaker to the Behren's mother. Hannah B. knows all about them.

It would seem that Tommy had been living with the Jacksons but in the upset of the bereavement would now change his lodgings. A further letter to Marianne, who was obviously still looking after the household in her mother's continuing absence, instructs 'See about Tommy's dinner' probably a reminder to feed the Gaskell pony (also called Tommy).

In reading through the Chapple and Pollard collection of the letters I finally came again upon Letter 376a - a letter from Mrs Gaskell in Seascale to Marianne. This letter contains a fascinating account of the failure of the travellers to find accommodation in Silverdale, after they had left Manchester without making prior arrangements. When I had read it before, I had been struck by the slightly unusual name of 'Glom'.

Then we went to Mrs Glom who said Arnside town Farm was full & repeated what she had sent word through Tommy about every place being engaged.

It suddenly dawned on me that 'Mrs Glom' could be a misreading of 'Mrs Glover', and of course the 'Tommy' named would have been Tommy Glover! Several other points arise here. Firstly, I suggest that there is no such place as 'Arnside town Farm' and that this place-name should have read 'Arnside Tower Farm'. (Type this name into Google and some lovely photos are available). But this misnomer, added to the previous one, would seem to emphasise the difficulties in getting a correct reading of the original. A further and most interesting point arises, out of all this, with reference to the dating of the letter. The editors had obviously found this a problem, as the lengthy footnote shows. But the above sentence does open up a couple of scenarios. One point to be made is that if Chapple and Pollard's date, 1857, was correct this would seem to suggest that the Gaskells had known Tommy Glover and his mother quite well in the summer before the above-mentioned tea party in the kitchen, which took place in 1858. It may suggest that Mrs Glover worked as a washerwoman for the Gaskells during their stay at the Tower House, Silverdale, and that is how she and her children came to be known to the visitors. But could it be that Tommy had actually passed on the message from his mother, about the lack of accommodation in Silverdale, when he himself received it in answer to a query that Mrs Gaskell had earlier asked him to make when he wrote to her? This implies that Tommy had been with the Gaskells in Manchester, and put the date to 1859 or later.

There is no further mention of Thomas Glover in the Letters. We now know that Thomas was only twelve years old when he left home in 1859. Mrs Gaskell died suddenly in 1865, only six years after she had invited him to Plymouth Grove. Did the Gaskells maintain a relationship with Tommy Glover after the death of Mrs Gaskell? It is likely that they did. We do know that Marianne, the eldest daughter, had been charged by her mother with looking after the practicalities of his care. In consideration of the well-known philanthropy of the Gaskell daughters in Manchester, they may well have helped him over many years. Meta and Julia were the two sisters whose love of Silverdale prompted them to build a second home, The Shieling, there later. They may perhaps have kept in contact members of Tommy's family in Silverdale.

So - what did become of Tommy? On-line census and other records have made

it possible to find some facts. I have gone right back to details of his father, John Glover, and will now report them here, beginning at the year 1819.

John Glover, son of Thomas and Frances Glover, was baptised on 7th February 1819 beside the ancient font of St. Bridget's Church in the village of Bridekirk (north of Cockermouth in the county of Cumberland, now known as Cumbria).

The census of 1841 shows John Glover as the eldest of six. He was a bachelor still living with his parents, one brother (a mail cart driver) and four sisters in Main Street, Kirkby Lonsdale. John's father, Thomas, is recorded as an agricultural labourer and John as a carpenter.

John is next shown in the records to be living in Over Kellet, Lancashire, where on 28th May 1846 at St. Cuthbert's Church he married Eleanor Bolton. His occupation is described as joiner.

In 1847 their first child was born. At his baptism on 18th July at St Cuthbert's they named him Thomas James and this is the Thomas Glover later befriended by Mrs Gaskell.

By the time of census, in 1851, John Glover is dead, Eleanor is a widow and the family is fatherless.

John had been buried on 28th May 1850 (the fourth wedding anniversary of John and Eleanor Glover). There were now two children - Thomas, aged three, his younger sister and a third child was on the way.

John's death was registered in Ulverstone, (written then with a final 'e') across the sands on the other side of Morecambe Bay. An inquest had taken place over the sands too, at the Kent's Bank Hotel, close to the scene of the tragedy in the Bay: verdict 'Accidentally drowned'.

By the time of the 1851 census on 30th March John's widow is to be found with her three children (the baby was six months old, born four months after her father's death). They were living with Eleanor's older sister and the sister's daughter in North Road Preston. In the 'Occupation' column of the census Eleanor (or Ellen, as she here named herself) had written 'Parish relief. Servant', and her sister Jane named 'House Servant' as her occupation.

By 1861 Thomas Glover was living in Chorlton-upon-Medlock as the lodger of Samuel Oaks and his wife. There were five Oaks children. Mr Oaks was a groom. By this time Thomas is aged 13 and is recorded as being an office boy.

In the same census of 1861 Thomas's mother, Ellen, is recorded as living back

with her own mother and father (the Boltons) and one daughter, (Jane Eleanour) in Silverdale. Ellen's occupation is noted as 'Laundress'.

At the age of 23, in 1871, Thomas was still living in Chorlton-upon-Medlock as one of the two lodgers of widow, Mrs Worthington and her son, another Thomas. Thomas Glover's occupation is noted as 'Commercial Clerk'.

By the time of the 1881 census Thomas, aged 33, is living in Ardwick, Manchester, with his wife Harriet, son Frank of 6 and daughter Ethell of 3. Thomas still has his occupation recorded as 'Commercial Clerk' but now qualified by the words 'Leather' and a second word, probably 'Skins'.

Ten years later, in 1891, the family has moved to Rusholme and is living at 12, Slade Grove. Son Frank had already begun work as a commercial clerk, and Thomas now describes himself as 'Manager leather factor Agent'.

Before the 1901 census there had been another house move, to 17 Rushford Avenue, Levenshulme. Both children are still living at home with their parents, and Thomas, now 53, describes his occupation as 'Hide/Fur & Leather Factor'. He had it recorded that he is working on his 'Own Account'.

Thomas died in 1909.

I shall add a brief word about the leather industry. When Thomas Glover arrived in Manchester to begin work in 1859, there were many different manufacturing industries offering employment. He became involved in the leather trade and this may possibly have a link to the accident involving his father. The following information comes from a booklet called A Morecambe Bay Tragedy written by Simon Williams. The occurrence was widely reported in the press in the following week. The account in 'The Standard', London, dated May 29th 1850, read:

#### Melancholy Accident and Loss of Life at Morecambe Bay

Several families resident in Manchester have been thrown into great distress by the tidings of a most painful and fatal occurrence, at Morecambe Bay. [...]

A large party of ladies and gentlemen had left Manchester to spend the Whitsuntide holidays at a watering place in the neighbourhood of Morecambe Bay, and on Friday morning a boating party was formed to cross the water from Silverdale to Grange, consisting of five gentlemen, five ladies, and two manservants. The names of the ladies I have not ascertained, but the gentlemen were Mr. John Morris, solicitor, Manchester; Mr. North, land and building agent, and Mr. North, jun., his son; Mr. Alfred Coates (son of Mr. Coates, late cotton merchant, and now resident in Plymouth-grove), and Mr. Porter, also of Manchester.

In the afternoon, Mr. Morris and Mr. North, sen. returned with the ladies to Silverdale, crossing the sands at low tide in a car, but the gentlemen determined to wait till the tide served in the evening, and recross the Bay in the boat. It would be high water at 11 o'clock, and it is supposed that the gentlemen attempted to cross the water at that time. Their friends, however, at Silverdale, remained in painful suspense till the following morning, without tidings of them, and at daylight intelligence was brought them of the boat having been found capsized on the sands, with the dead bodies of Mr. Coates, Mr. North, jun., and Mr. Porter lying near it. It is said that there were two other bodies near it.

Unlike the above article, the article in the June 1st issue of the local newspaper, the 'Lancaster Gazette', does report the names of the boatmen, although there seems to have been some confusion about the number of children in each family. The article reports:

Smith, Mr Morris's servant, was a man 28 years of age, and has left two children and a wife far advanced in pregnancy. Glover, a joiner, who resided at Silverdale, has left a wife and three children. We understand both parties were entirely dependent upon the deceased, and consequently by this sad bereavement are thrown unprovided for upon a merciless and cold unfeeling world.

This last comment was taken up subsequently by various agencies, including Mr Morris of Know Hill Lodge, Silverdale (and Plymouth Grove, Manchester), the gentleman from whose house the boat trip had originated. Morris wrote:

Smith and Glover have left widows and five small children comparatively destitute. A few benevolent persons are assisting to raise a fund for them by subscription, may I beg the favour of your assistance through the medium of your widely circulated paper. The Rev. A. Hadfield, the incumbent of Silverdale, has kindly consented to act for them, and will along with myself, John Hewitson Esq., Thomas Rodick, sen., Esq., J.P., of Challen Hall, Thomas Rodick, jun., Esq., of Moor Cain Cottage, Arnside, Robert Rodick, Esq., of Woodclose, Arnside, gladly receive the smallest subscription on their behalf.

On June 29th 1850 the 'Lancaster Gazette' reported:

We are happy to be able to announce that the sum now collected for the use of widows and orphans of the men who drowned at Kent's Bank, a few weeks ago, amounts to nearly £80. The Rev. A. Hadfield shortly proposes calling a meeting of the principal subscribers to decide upon the manner it ought to be laid out, to be of most advantage to those for whom it has been so liberally subscribed.

When in 1858 Mrs Gaskell was trying to 'find a place' for Thomas, she wrote,

referring to Thomas's earlier years, 'a gentleman whose name I forget offered to pay for Thomas's schooling'. Her comment is intriguing. Could it have been one of the gentleman named above who had stepped in to support his education? Perhaps she had not forgotten the name but was choosing not to reveal it. Perhaps money to assist with Thomas's schooling may have been part of that fund subscribed for the families. With regard to his subsequent employment, could any of the Manchester men whose own lives had been affected by the tragedy, have been instrumental in pointing Thomas towards the leather trade in Manchester? One of the other victims had been the young Alfred Jackson Coats, who, it was reported, was in the 'Manchester leather trade'. Had Mrs Gaskell known, or known of, these families who came from Plymouth Grove? (Morris himself died at Know Hill Lodge in 1854.)

In the final analysis, Mrs Gaskell's intervention on Thomas Glover's behalf seems to have been a bold move. It appears to have been successful in starting him out on a respectable career which would have been considerably more remunerative than anything he could have achieved if he had followed in his grandfather's or father's footsteps as an agricultural labourer or as a joiner. She appears to have thought carefully about it, (using her 'head' as well as her 'heart!'), and to have considered the young boy's abilities and aptitudes, and recognised the steadiness and application that he did go on to show in his future years. He appears to have worked regularly and he founded a family of his own.

Thomas's mother Eleanor (or Ellen as she was known) was from the Bolton family. There are members of that same Bolton family still living in Silverdale today, and Mr Michael Bolton, (b.1958), is currently researching his family tree. Michael's great-great-grandfather was James Bolton (1779-1863) who was married to Jane Burrow (1786-1864). James and Jane had eleven children, of whom Eleanor was the 9th.

Michael's great-great-grandfather was Richard, (third child), so an older brother of Eleanor, who died in 1872.

I would like to thank Michael Bolton, Simon Williams, and Jenny Ager for helping with my research.

## A Distant Connection

Pam Griffiths

Last year at this time I was in New Zealand (NZ) on a visit to my three-month-old granddaughter and her parents in Auckland. However on hearing that my trip would include a brief visit to Wellington, my dear friend, Janet Kennerley, set me - what would prove to be a delightful challenge - to find: the location of the shop built

by Charlotte Brontë's dear friend, Mary Taylor; and the street named in honour of Mary's brother William Waring Taylor, who had been a successful businessman in Wellington.

The day before my departure from Manchester, Janet had delivered a large envelope containing reading matter for the journey to aid my quest. The homework had begun!

Since meeting at Roe Head School, Mary Taylor, Ellen Nussey and Charlotte Brontë had been close friends who regularly visited each others' homes after leaving school in 1832. Mary's family lived at Red House, Gomersal, West Yorkshire (visited on a Gaskell outing with Joan Leach several years ago) Charlotte used the Taylor family as a model for the Yorke family in *Shirley*. Mary seems largely to have approved of Brontë's portrayal. The family are said to be 'peculiar, racy, vigorous, of good blood and strong brain'.

After Mary's father died in debt in 1840, the Taylor family broke up. Mary considered moving to NZ where she believed she would fare better. (According to Charlotte Brontë, Mary 'cannot and will not be a governess, a teacher, a milliner, a bonnet-maker nor a housemaid!'). Mary's youngest brother William Waring Taylor arrived in Wellington in 1842. Mary reached Wellington in 1845. By then Mary had already spent several years studying music, French and German, as well as having done some teaching, in Belgium and Germany. Charlotte approved of her decision to emigrate but described her personal loss: 'To me it is something as if a great plant fell out of the sky.' They were never to see each other again.

Mary would have been attracted by the idea of more freedom of movement in a new colony. After initially living with her brother in a house in Herbert Street Te Aro, Mary bought a house in Cuba Street which she let for 12 shillings a week and she managed to earn some more money by teaching the piano. Fearing that Mary's circumstances were worse than they actually were, Charlotte sent £10 with which Mary bought a cow and started cattle trading! Mary was also writing articles for English magazines (none of which appears to have been published); and she referred to writing 150 pages of a novel, *Miss Miles*, and to another novel which she hoped would revolutionise society (this material may have appeared in later articles on the position of women).

In 1849 Mary's cousin Ellen Taylor joined her in Wellington. With financial help from Mary's two brothers in England, the two women built a small house of two storeys on the corner of Dixon Street and Cuba Street. They decided to open a drapery and clothing shop at the front of the house while they lived at the back and above. Mary enjoyed all the manual work involved. The necessity of work for women as a guarantee of independence was one of the central beliefs of Mary's life. The shop expanded from a drapery, listed in 1853 as a 'principal store', to a major Wellington department store in the 1990s.

After only two years in NZ, Ellen Taylor died of tuberculosis. Having nursed her cousin through this fatal illness, Mary was deeply grieved by the loss of her dear friend and companion, but she continued alone with the shop which was proving to be very successful. Mary extended the premises and engaged an assistant. Relatives and friends supplied goods from England and Mary appears to have been the first person to import a sewing machine to Wellington.

Some years later the shop was becoming less profitable and Mary began to consider leaving NZ. The shop had served its purpose as a means of providing Mary with financial independence which a middle-class woman could not have done in England. After 15 years, in 1860, Mary sold the shop to her assistant and returned to Yorkshire where she spent the rest of her life. She published feminist articles and her feminist novel *Miss Miles* appeared in 1890. Mary died at the age of 76 in 1893.

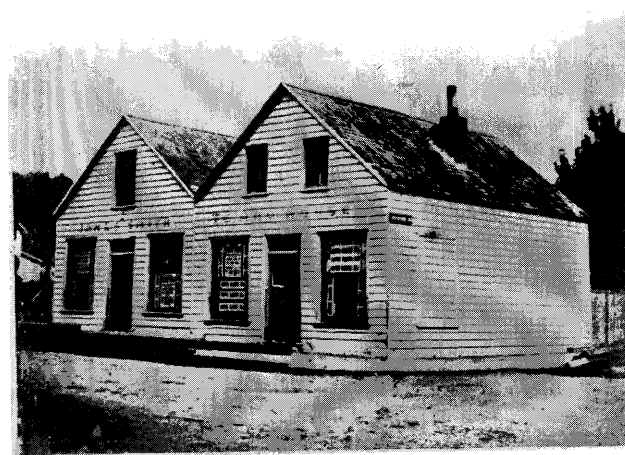
And where does Mrs Gaskell fit in this tale? After Charlotte's early death in 1855, Mary Taylor heard from Ellen Nussey that a biography of Charlotte was planned. Mary was then able to supply Mrs Gaskell with a lively account (in letters) of her friendship with Charlotte. Mary wrote to Ellen 'Mrs Gaskell seems far too able a woman to put her head in such a wasp nest as she would raise about her speaking the truth of living people. How she will get through it, I can't imagine.' When the biography was finished, Mrs Gaskell wrote to her publisher George Smith: 'I ought to send a copy to Miss Mary Taylor, Wellington, New Zealand'.

After the publication Mary was supportive of Mrs Gaskell's narrative. She wrote to Ellen Nussey, 'Mrs Gaskell seemed a hasty, impulsive sort of person and the needful drawing back after her warmth gives her an inconsistent look...As to the mutilated edition that is to come, I am sorry for it. Libellous or not, the first edition is all true.'



**Mary Taylor**

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**The Shop**

**Alexander  
Turnbull Library,  
Wellington, New Zealand**

Ref: 1/2-003732-F

## Book Notes

**Christine Lingard**

Francesco Marroni. Come Leggere: Jane Eyre. Edizioni Solfanelli (Chieti).

Professor Marroni, Vice-President of the Gaskell Society, has written an important study of Jane Eyre. The book is in two sections – the first a biographical study of Charlotte Brontë, with extensive textual notes making much use of *The Life of Charlotte Brontë*. There is also particular reference to Charlotte's juvenile writings. The second section is a detailed analysis of Jane Eyre.

Sylvia's lovers. Oxford University Press, 2014. First published in the World Classics edition in 1982 the novel has now been reissued in the same series with notes and introduction by Francis O'Gorman, Professor of Victorian Literature and head of the School of English at the University of Leeds.

Editor adds: When on holiday in France last October, I acquired *Les Amoureux de Sylvia* in a new translation by Françoise du Sorbier, (Fayard 2012) This version was made from Oxford World's Classics, OUP 1982

At the front of this volume I observed:

Du même auteur:

Cranford. L'Herne, 2004  
La Sorcière de Salem. Corti, 1999  
Lady Ludlow. Ombres, 1999



Charlotte Brontë: biographie. Editions du Rocher, 2004  
Femmes et Filles. L'Herne, 2005  
Nord et Sud. Fayard, 2005  
Confessions de M. Harrison. L'Herne, 2010  
Ma cousine Phillis. L'Herne, 2012

This twenty-first century revival in translations of Madame Gaskell is a very different picture from that presented by Caroline Arnaud (The Gaskell Society Journal Vol 13 1999) when 'no translations of her works whatsoever [are] ... currently available for the time being'.

## Alliance of Literary Societies

The 2014 AGM of the ALS will be hosted by the Christopher Marlowe (1564-93) Society in Canterbury, May 31-June 1.

Further details may be viewed on the ALS website.

All Gaskell Society members are automatically members of the Alliance of Literary Societies (which was founded in 1973 and now has 125 member societies).

Gaskellians may recall that the Gaskell Society hosted the ALS AGM week-end in Mrs Gaskell's bicentenary year 2010.

## Forthcoming Events

### Annual General Meeting

**Saturday, 12 April 2014 at Cross Street Unitarian Church, Manchester, M2 1NL**

All members are welcome

**10.00 am** Tea and coffee (NB early start time)

**10.45 am** AGM

**12.00 noon** David Sekers will deliver the Daphne Carrick Memorial Lecture on Hannah Greg, a woman of compassion, courage and conviction, and her circle from Mrs Gaskell's perspective.

David was Museum Director at Quarry Bank Mill, Styal and has recently published *A Lady of Cotton: Hannah Greg, Mistress of Quarry Bank Mill*.

**1.00 pm** Buffet Lunch

**2.30 pm** Geoff Scargill on Sir Edward Watkin, a contemporary of Mrs Gaskell, known as 'the nearly man of Manchester!'

Geoff, a former teacher at Chetham's School of Music, is a well-known public speaker in and around the Manchester area.

## Autumn Meeting

**Saturday, September 27, 2014**

Knutsford Methodist Church

Further details TBA

## North-West Group

### Manchester Meetings

These meetings are held at Cross Street Unitarian Church. The lecture begins at 1.00pm and we usually have a (bring your own) picnic lunch there beforehand.

**Tuesday, February 4, 2014**

Christine Musgrove: *Mrs Gaskell, Art and Manchester*

Mrs Gaskell's novel *North and South* contrasts life in southern rural Hampshire with working life in industrial Manchester. Her concerns, as described in the novel, were mirrored in the rise of a new social realism in art.

This lecture will compare the issues raised in *North and South* with those expressed by Mrs Gaskell's her artistic contemporaries.

Christine Musgrove has a MA in art history from the University of Edinburgh. She is an experienced lecturer in higher and adult education.

Christine has curated exhibitions and organised study tours at home and abroad, and is currently a MANCENT lecturer.

**Tuesday, March 4, 2014**

Elizabeth Williams: *Fanny Trollope*

Fanny (Frances) Trollope, mother of Anthony Trollope was a novelist in her own right.

Elizabeth is a former FE lecturer, who regularly gives entertaining talks on Mrs Gaskell to the Society and throughout the UK. She also leads the discussions at the monthly meetings in Knutsford.

### **Knutsford Meetings**

Meetings are held on the last Wednesday of the month (October to April, excluding December) in St John's Church Centre, Knutsford. An excellent buffet lunch is served at 12.15 (£8, pay on the day). At about 1.30pm Elizabeth Williams addresses us and then leads the ensuing discussion. Meetings end about 3pm.

These meetings resume on 29 January when we shall continue to study *Sylvia's Lovers*.

A summer outing is planned for May. Further details TBA

## **The Gaskell Society South-West**

### **Saturday, 8 March 2014, 2.15 pm**

We will hold our discussion group on Elizabeth Gaskell's biography of Charlotte Brontë. This year there will be only one session, and it will be held at Elizabeth Schlenther's house, 14 Vellore Lane, Bath. Please note there will be a charge of £4 for the session, and numbers will be limited to 12 participants. Please phone Elizabeth (01225 331763) if you would like to come.

### **Saturday, 12 April, 2014, 2.30 pm**

Dr Patsy Stoneman will come to talk to us on 'Such a life...Elizabeth Gaskell and Charlotte Brontë.' Dr Stoneman is a well-known expert on Gaskell, and we very much look forward to her lecture.

It will also tie in very well with our discussion the month before – a further reason for pleasure at her coming.

Details about the summer lunch party, held either in August or September, will be forthcoming when definite plans are made.

Any queries to Elizabeth Schlenther, 14 Vellore Lane, Bath, BA2 6JQ, Tel: 01225 331763.

## **London and South-East Group**

### **Saturday, February 8, 2014**

Dr Ann Brooks: the Gaskell Marriage

Ann together with Bryan Haworth who came with her this year to speak about the Portico Library have researched a paper and have some ideas about this marriage. Knowing how much we all enjoy biography I thought this subject would make an interesting afternoon.

### **Saturday, May 10, 2014**

Dr Fran Twinn: 'Writer', 'tiger parent', 'shopaholic', 'socialite' and 'control freak': the many 'Me's' of Elizabeth Gaskell

Fran will speak and then lead a discussion. She is aware there are many other aspects to Gaskell's personality but she will focus on these and hope that in discussion members will be able to contribute others!

Sandwich lunch will be available from 12.45pm.

Meetings begin at 2pm and tea and cake will be served after the meeting. Usually the formal part of the meeting finishes about 3.30pm for those needing to catch trains.

Venue: Francis Holland School, Graham Terrace, London.

The entrance is via doors on Graham Terrace, please ring the bell marked 'RECEPTION' loudly to gain entry. For security reasons the door must be locked until opened from inside.

The school is a three minute walk from Sloane Square tube station which is on the District and Circle lines and about a 15-20 minute walk from Victoria. There are also buses from Victoria. (Please check running of the tubes as they often carry out engineering work at weekends).

Book stall: We have a 'bring and buy' book stall the proceeds of which go to the renovation of the Gaskell House in Plymouth Grove Manchester. Please bring unwanted books and buy replacements!!

Meetings are £5.00 payable on the day.

## Notes



# The Gaskell Society



HOTEL STEINBOCK - PONTRESINA  
C. Saratz-Badrutt, Propr.

THE GASKELL SOCIETY HOME PAGE has all the latest information on meetings.  
<http://gaskellsociety.co.uk>

If you have any material or suggestions for future Newsletters, please contact Mrs. Helen Smith,  
11 Lowland Way, Knutsford, Cheshire, WA16 9AG.  
Telephone - 01565 632615 E-mail: [helenisabel@ntlworld.com](mailto:helenisabel@ntlworld.com)

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**Membership Secretary:** Miss C. Lingard, 5 Moran Crescent, Macclesfield SK11 8JJ

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NEWSLETTER  
Autumn 2014 - Number 58



## Editor's Letter

Helen Smith

'And summer's lease hath all too short a date'

As it was in the sixteenth century, so is it now. Welcome to the Autumn Newsletter! Important reminders and dates for diaries:

There are still places available on the Italian study tour: 'In the Footsteps of Mrs Gaskell', 20-25 September 2014. Details from Anthony Coles: email him on [arctc@btinternet.com](mailto:arctc@btinternet.com) or write to 18 Maresfield Gardens, London NW3 5SX.

The Autumn Meeting will be held as usual in Knutsford Methodist Church on Saturday 27 September. On the following day, Society members are welcome at the Brook Street Unitarian Chapel morning service at 11 o'clock. Flowers will be placed on Mrs Gaskell's grave before the service. (Booking form for the Autumn Meeting is enclosed with this Newsletter.)

2015 AGM will take place on Saturday 18 April.

The 2015 Conference will be held at Cober Hill (post code YO13 0AR) 17-20 July. Some excellent speakers have already been engaged. Final details and booking forms will be sent out with the next Newsletter.

Exciting news on the home front! Manchester Historic Buildings Trust, the owner of 84 Plymouth Grove, plans to re-open the former home of the Gaskell family in an official event on Thursday 2 October. The House will also be open on Saturday 13 September as part of the Heritage Open Days week-end. Some of us have already visited the renovated house. After the twenty-first century eye adjusts to designed (fitted) carpets, wallpaper in a different design, chintzy soft furnishings, we can easily slip back into the mid-nineteenth century. Once the boudoir grand (a Broadwood, on loan, I believe) and more furnishings are installed, the house will be ready for visitors to call upon Mr and Mrs Gaskell. (How very different from the current fashion for minimalism and informality). Ladies, please remember your bonnets.

Cri de coeur from Geoffrey Scargill who gave the afternoon lecture on Sir Edward Watkin (1819-1901) 'the nearly man of Manchester' at the AGM on 12 April. In the memorabilia he brought for us to look at, was a small booklet which had belonged to Edward Watkin in childhood, entitled *The Cries of London* or *London Cries*. It was in a small brown envelope. This has not been seen since that day. If any member who attended the AGM knows anything about this missing booklet please get in touch with Geoff on either 0161 432 6992 or 07970 877636.



Correction to page 42 in the last Newsletter: the street in Wellington named after William, the brother of Charlotte Brontë's dear friend Mary Taylor is Waring Taylor Street. The Editor apologises for misinforming the readership.

To all who have contributed in any way to this Newsletter, may I express my sincere thanks. We shall include an article about Marianne, a report on the Italian Study Tour, in the next Newsletter, and much more if YOU will but write. I shall happily suggest subjects if you are in doubt as to what to write about (better grammar than this please!); no one has yet taken up my offer to ghost-write.

To Rebecca Stuart at iPrint, as ever, our most grateful thanks for the finished product and for her patience in the, at times, painful process.

**Next deadline: 22 January 2015**

## Primitive, Cheap and Bracing: the Gaskells in the Alps

Christine Lingard

In 1851 Albert Richard Smith climbed Mont Blanc. Champagne was drunk, a quadrille danced and the 'Marseillaise' sung on the summit. Back in London he staged a lavish magic-lantern show. Audiences were enthralled by his accounts of following in the footholds carved by his young guide, Michel Devouassaud, while enjoying chocolate brought to them by St. Bernard dogs! It was tremendously popular. The young Edward Whymper, most celebrated of Victorian climbers, was one influenced by it. It was the beginning of the Victorian fascination with mountaineering. Between 1854 and 1869 – 'the golden age' – 39 alpine peaks were climbed for the first time, all but eight of them by British parties. The Alpine Club, the world's oldest, was founded in 1857.

It is not known whether any of the Gaskells saw the production, but they had long had an interest in Switzerland. Manuscript music books compiled by Elizabeth Stevenson at school included Swiss and Tyrolean songs, which were fashionable in the 1820s. She annotated one: 'a song or rather National Air of the Swiss – it is forbidden to be played by the French as it caused the desertion of the Swiss Guard.' Her choice of costume for a fancy dress ball was a Bernese shepherdess. Despite his dislike of foreign diet her husband went on a walking holiday in Switzerland in August 1855. No details are known except a mention of the French resort of Chamounix [sic].

In April 1860 a tonsillectomy forced daughter Meta to decline an offer from 'a middle-aged lady friend' to go on a two-month sketching tour to the Pyrénées and

Pampluna [sic]. New arrangements were made – so instead of accompanying the rest of the family to Heidelberg:

On the 6<sup>th</sup> of May Meta set out for Paris, Lyons, Avignon, Nice, Mentone, over the Col di Tenda, Turin, Val d'Aosta, [Arona] Maggiore, Orta & Varallo, Lugano, Val Anzasca, over the Simplon, La Vallée, Lake of Geneva, Champéry, [sic] & Diablerets, Thun, Grindelwald & home by Berne, Strasburg, Nancy[,] Paris. There! You can imagine her route, taken with an oldish Miss Darwin (sister of Mr Chas Darwin) in quiet respectable luxury, stopping where they liked, – and sketching. <Letters p630>

It made a great impression – on her return Meta is found engrossed in Tyndall's *Glaciers of Switzerland*. Her mother first visited in 1863, on the return from Italy 'via Verona...Milan, Bellinzona... Inn at top of St. Gothard, [Schweizer-Hof], Lucerne, and then the 18½ hour train journey via Bâle to Paris'. <Letters p702>

1864 was a year of great stress for the family. Gaskell was under pressure from George Smith, publisher of *The Cornhill Magazine*, for the next instalment of *Wives and Daughters*. The engagement of her eldest daughter Marianne to her cousin, Thurstan Holland, was the cause of friction in the family. His father was threatening to stop his allowance if the marriage went ahead. Meta was still suffering from the strain of her tireless efforts during the cotton famine. She yearned for 'glacier-air' – it had done her so much good in 1860 – so a visit to Switzerland, where they could live 'au pension', was decided on. Even so her mother had to ask Smith for a £100 advance to finance the trip. William borrowed *A Summer Tour in The Grisons and Italian Valleys of The Bernina* by Mrs Henry Freshfield, from the Portico Library, and their plans were made:

Last autumn I dare say you know, she [Florence] and Charlie and Thurstan too for that matter, went with us to Pontresina in Switzerland. We had but very little money to spend so our object was to go to cheap healthy places and live there without moving about, and for me to settle to my writing whilst there. We found our two places, Pontresina and Glion (up above the Lake of Geneva) where we lived for 3-4 a day and I think never did such a party go to Switzerland and travel about less. We never saw Mt Blanc nor the Jung frau nor Monte Rosa nor the Matterhorn nor Vevay (4 miles from us at Glion), nor Lausanne, Geneva, Interlacken [sic], Lauterbrunnen, etc., etc. <Letters p559>

Glion is described by *The Rough Guide to Switzerland* as 'an eyrie of a village perched among fields of narcissi directly above Montreux, with jaw-dropping views over the lake and the Rhône'. The area had been popular with British tourists since Byron's visit to the Castle of Chillon in 1816. It was still undeveloped in Gaskell's time – no large hotel till 1869. Pontresina is in the Upper Engadine valley, near St. Moritz. Gaskell described it as '6,000 feet above the level of the sea – primitive,



cheap and bracing'. It has long been popular with foreign tourists. Hans Christian Andersen was there in 1862. Other visitors have included Tennyson, Richard Wagner, Matthew Arnold and Arthur Sullivan. A regular visitor, Mary Taylor, friend of Charlotte Brontë, described the friendliness of the locals in her book *Swiss Notes*.

Most visitors stayed at the grand Krone (Crown) Hotel. The Gaskells preferred the more modest family run Hotel Steinbock. The holiday however did not have its desired effect. Meta's health did not improve.

There she had a very bad attack of headache, - (bewildering, whirling headache is the kind-) and a Mr (later Sir John) Erichsen a great famous London surgeon (University College Hospital) was staying in the hotel, & prescribed for her with such good effect that she has continued under his care. <Letters p744>

Marianne North, in her book *Recollections of a Happy Life* (1894), wrote of travelling to Pontresina in 1864 with her father and sister, Catherine, where they stayed in 'that paradise for Alpine climbers The Old Crown Inn'. She continues:

Mrs Gaskell was also at Pontresina at that time and had taken a quiet room outside the village to work peacefully. There she finished a great part of her last story *Wives and Daughters*... She was very beautiful and gentle with a sweet-toned voice and particularly well formed hand.

Marianne (1830-90) was a celebrated botanical artist who travelled extensively. There is a gallery devoted to her work in Kew Gardens. She was half-sister to Lady Kay-Shuttleworth, whose husband had introduced Gaskell to Charlotte Brontë. Her sister Catherine (1837-1913) married John Addington Symonds (1840-93), whose many books include *Renaissance in Italy*. 'Mr Symonds took the Newdigate, & a double first, but he might be dull for all that; only he is not', said Gaskell. He wrote in his *Memoirs*:

Well, I set off alone, early in August 1864, to overtake the Norths, I was going in search of Catherine... on the morning of 10 August, I found myself at the Hotel Krone (then only a modest inn...) Loitering in the entrance before lunch, I met Catherine... And every day we walked together... There is a bridge above the stream at Pontresina; and this became our meeting place; and here, one afternoon, when snow was falling in thin flakes, I asked her to be my wife... We were married in Hastings on 10 November 1864.

Hence Gaskell's delight on 6 December 1864:

Do you know two very clever people have made one? i.e. John Addington Symonds who took no end of honours at Oxford, - is witty, clever, really brilliant, - and Catherine North, daughter of the M.P. for Hastings even more full of genius. <Letters p739>

She was innocently unaware that the wedding was a sham - designed to hide his homosexuality and was not happy.

The Alps became a favourite destination for Meta and her sister Julia - including the 1871 Oberammergau Passion Play. You have only to look at the list of paintings in Plymouth Grove to see their love of lakes and mountains. And when they built a holiday home in Silverdale, what style of architecture did they choose? - a Swiss Chalet. It is evident that many of these trips were energetic:

*What a trouble one's travelling trousseau is! Good gracious, how tired I am of planning skirts and bodies and panniers, each of which is to combine rightly with all the others - And then boots are such a plague! <Meta - July 1871>*

It is notable how many of their friends were climbers. An early member of the Alpine Club was Stephen Winkworth, as regular a visitor to Plymouth Grove as was his sister, Catherine, who ended her days in Geneva. His wife, Emma Thomasson, was the first woman to climb the Jungfrau. Presidents of the Club included Virginia Woolf's father, Sir Leslie Stephen (1832-1904) and Mrs Freshfield's son, Douglas (1845-1934), who had accompanied her on her travels. He also climbed in the Caucasus, with another member of that celebrated family of French guides, François Devouassoud. In the 20<sup>th</sup> century came John Norman Collie (1859-1942) son of Selena Winkworth. Leslie and Douglas had something else in common - they were both brothers-in-law of Thackeray's daughter, Anne Ritchie (1837-1919), a good friend of the Gaskells, - Leslie married her sister, Minny - Douglas, her husband's sister, Augusta. Leslie apparently knew Thurstan Holland. Lady Ritchie writes of a visit from Gaskell just after her father's death: 'Our conversation was interrupted by Leslie Stephen and Thurstan Holland coming arm and arm into the garden'.

Meta's obituary states that they were the first ladies to cross the Moming Pass, a difficult but not dangerous pass linking Zermatt to Zinkel, which is rarely attempted. This cannot be verified. They certainly weren't the first. Lucy Walker had that honour, in 1865, only a year after Stephen Winkworth had been prevented by illness from joining Whymper's successful attempt. Leslie Stephen did refer to Meta as a 'brilliant performer', after he had taken her on a 12-hour walk over a glacier pass, and was impressed by her endurance. Whymper's *Scrambles in the Alps*, graphically describing avalanches en route, was one of Meta's most treasured possessions, and finally, Michel Devouassoud, guide du Lirets, Chamonix, received £25 in her will.

### Acknowledgment

I am grateful to Mrs Diane Conrad, whose husband's grandfather, Claud Saratz, was a member of the family which owned the Hotel Steinbock in the 19<sup>th</sup> century, for supplying much of the information and the picture of the Hotel. She will be



organising an exhibition in 2016-17, on Pontresina's distinguished 19<sup>th</sup> century British visitors and the church they built. Full details will be given when available. For further pictures see [www.hotelsteinbock.ch](http://www.hotelsteinbock.ch).

### Further Reading

Bicknell, John W. (ed.) Selected letters of Leslie Stephen, vol. 1, 1864-1882, 1987.  
Chapple, J.A.V. Elizabeth Gaskell: the early years, 1997.  
Chapple, J.A.V. & Pollard, Arthur. (eds.) The letters of Mrs Gaskell, 1997.  
Grosskurth, Phyllis. (ed.) The Memoirs of John Addington Symonds: the secret homosexual life of a leading nineteenth-century man of letters, 1984.  
Ritchie, Anne Thackeray. Blackstick Papers, 1908.  
Wiltshire, Irene. (ed.) Letters of Mrs Gaskell's daughters, 1856-1914, 2012.

## Corrections

Edwin Stockdale

Charlotte Brontë's existence becomes divided into two parallel currents – her life as Currer Bell, the author; her life as Charlotte Brontë, the woman. There were separate duties belonging to each character – not opposing each other, not impossible, but difficult to be reconciled.

Elizabeth Gaskell, *The Life of Charlotte Brontë* (1857)

Elizabeth writes in her dining-room,  
doors closing and opening around her.  
She carries on, undisturbed.

Catch the Midland Railway to Keighley,  
take a trap over the moors to Haworth –  
church, graves and parsonage dominate the skyline.

Some pages flow untouched;  
others are heavily scored,  
insertions scribbled on the back.

Charlotte paces the parlour  
as frost curls its iron fist at the casement.  
She's indelible under moonlight.

Elizabeth closes her manuscript  
in a firm fast hand,  
hardly a word erased.

On a day of hawthorn blossom  
Charlotte marries, watched by tree sparrows  
beneath the rim of those hills.

## Railways

This article is written to celebrate the naming of a railway engine after Elizabeth Gaskell, by the Chancellor of the Exchequer, Rt Hon George Osborne, MP at Manchester Piccadilly station, 28 March 2014.

## The Naming of the Train

Alan Shelston

Elizabeth Gaskell's adult life virtually coincided with the early years of the British railway system. In October 1830, when the first passenger railway train went on its celebratory journey from Liverpool to Manchester, Elizabeth, then a young woman of 20, was familiar with both cities. She liked 'Liverpool and the Mersey and the accent and the people very much' as her letters to her friend Harriet Carr make clear. Manchester was less attractive but it was, as she said, where her work with her husband called her to be.

As the railway system expanded so the Gaskells made increasing use of it. Following the success of the line between the two cities lines were established along the Lancashire coast and through central Lancashire to the north, and the family took advantage of them. Thus Elizabeth writes to Mary Howitt in 1838 after a stay at Rivington 'This morning we were off at half past 8 for Bolton, home per railroad (Gaskell Letters, p.19); in the same letter she makes her famous reference to Mrs J J Tayler's 'impromptu baby at Blackpool... Bathing places do so much good.' The new railway lines allowed bathing places on the Lancashire coast and then North Wales to develop rapidly in the 1830s. In 1846 she takes the children to Poulton-le-Fylde to get them away from the threat of an outbreak of scarlet fever. In 1858 we find her giving instruction to a friend about how to reach Silverdale: 'Meta has looked out your Liverpool trains... leaves L'pool 4-10 p.m./Reaches Preston 5-15/leaves Preston 5-18/ Lancaster 6-14.. I think you take your ticket to Lancaster; then to Carnforth (two stations beyond – ) then change trains for our dear little Silverdale – where you arrive 5m. to 7.'

Regular visits to London and to the south of England through the 1840s and '50s were facilitated by the gradual expansion of the system nationwide: as the railway network expanded so too did Elizabeth's social connections, although for some time travel to London from Manchester involved switching between the services



of two companies and a journey of more than five hours. The merging of the London and Birmingham railway with the Grand Junction and the Manchester and Birmingham railways in 1846 made the journey easier, but not as straightforward as Charlotte Brontë's direct journey from Leeds to the capital in 1849 would be. Events like the 1851 Great Exhibition drew Elizabeth to London, as did her daughter Marianne's schooling there from 1850. Fortunately by then the quality of the carriages had improved from the original use of converted horse-drawn road vehicles, but it was not until 1888, long after Elizabeth's death, that a direct line of the GWR would significantly reduce the journey time from Manchester to London.

The rapid expansion of the railway system quickly facilitated the movements of individuals throughout the country in the mid-nineteenth century. It was also of great benefit to the novelists. Dickens travelled from London to Birmingham by stagecoach in 1839, but returned to London by train a few weeks later. Gaskell, Dickens, Braddon, later Hardy, all have novels in which railway travel figures as an instrument of plot; Margaret Braddon's *Lady Audley's Secret* reads at times like *Bradshaw's Railway Guide*. For the novelists, reference to the railway is always an expression of mood. Such reference is invariably intensely dramatic; railway journeys in Victorian novels are rarely relaxed. In *North and South* the Mr Hale and his daughter make their way 'on the little branch railway', towards the gloom of Milton-Northern (the fictional city standing for Manchester) as if to a prison sentence. In what is perhaps a glancing reference to the massive viaduct at Stockport Elizabeth writes that 'they were whirled over long, straight hopeless streets of regularly built houses'; the viaduct, built of 11 million bricks and completed in 1840, was not far from the Gaskell home in Plymouth Grove. (Ch 7) Later in the same novel the heroine's brother, unjustly pursued by the law, escapes from pursuit late at night from an isolated railway platform of which he is the single occupant: the scene is predictive of the similar use of such circumstance by the film directors of the next century.

Cranford, somewhat surprisingly given its reputation, begins with the violent death of Captain Brown as he tries to snatch a child from the path of an oncoming train. Despite Cranford's reputation as Knutsford fictionalised, this idea must have been an invention by Elizabeth Gaskell: there was no station at Knutsford at the time when she wrote her novel. For that Knutsford had to wait until 1862. In *Cousin Phillis*, written a decade later than *Cranford* and another Cheshire story with a strong autobiographical dimension, the engineering work under the supervision of Mr Holdsworth is more efficiently conducted. Holdsworth has been involved in railway building in Italy, a detail which is also factually accurate, since British engineers did work on the developing continental systems at this point in time. But Elizabeth's most successful fictional account of railway travel is surely to be found in that first novel, *Mary Barton*, written when the novelty of her early Manchester-Liverpool journeys, could still have been in her mind. Here she takes her heroine on a visit to Liverpool to save her lover from certain death as he stands in the dock

accused of murder. For Mary it is a desperately anxious mission, and she regards it with very mixed feelings: 'Common as railroads are now in all places and especially in Manchester, Mary had never been on one before; and she felt bewildered by the hurry, the noise of the people, and bells, and horns; the whiz and the scream of the arriving train.' Nevertheless, and despite her anxieties, 'The very journey itself seemed a matter of wonder.' Mindful perhaps of the various illustrated accounts of the journey that had appeared, like I. Shaw's *Views of the most interesting scenery on the line of the Liverpool and Manchester railway*, first published in 1831, Elizabeth goes on to describe the beauties of 'Chat Moss and the picturesque old houses' that can be seen from the train: The whole chapter is an example of how rail travel opened the landscapes of the mind. (Ch 26)

I end on a personal note. Attending Gaskell meetings in Knutsford I always enjoy my short ride on what is known in our family as 'The Chester Flyer.' And as we trundle along I take in the view over the green Cheshire plain - Hale, Ashley, Mobberley, Knutsford. Edward Thomas remembered Adlestrop: 'Yes, I remember Adlestrop. The name.' Well I remember Mobberley - the name. For Gaskell followers to have the named train on that line has something very appropriate about it. May the flyer long continue its stately progress - until it is beyond Knutsford at least.

## John Geoffrey Sharps B Litt, M Ed, MA, B Th Heather Sharps

Many Gaskell Society members have shown an interest in my late husband's life and achievements, so I shall outline his academic career which was varied and stimulating. He was born in Cheshire in 1936 and died in Scarborough in 2006 aged 69. During the last years of his life, he suffered from lung trouble; one lung had virtually collapsed and he had to use an inhaler constantly. However his mental faculties were always clear and alert.

I met Geoffrey at the Queen's University of Belfast at the end of my four years of study there (mainly English Language and Literature, with French and German subsidiary). A fellow student introduced me to Geoffrey, who in turn, invited me to accompany him to the graduation ball. I accepted his invitation, and, as a result, we met on several occasions before the 'big' event. We found that we had a lot in common (we were both 'only' children, we also enjoyed good literature, the theatre, the cinema and sight-seeing). Geoffrey had a number of university degrees; an MA in literature from the University of Edinburgh; a B Litt from Oxford - this degree included Elizabeth Gaskell's works; and when I first met him, he was about to be awarded an M Ed. Furthermore, when he 'retired' from academic life, he studied and qualified with a Bachelor of Theology from the University of Hull. The main drawback was the distance between us when Geoffrey returned to his home in



Cheshire. We corresponded frequently by letter and made many 'phone calls, but despite the distance we met on about four occasions per year from 1963 and 1966.

Shortly after graduating, I was fortunate enough to be appointed to teach English, French and German in a grammar school in Belfast (1963 until 1967). Geoffrey and I married in Belfast in 1966, and a year later, I joined him in Scarborough where I held a teaching post for two years. Geoffrey lectured in a College of Education in Cheshire until he went to Scarborough where he lectured and taught at a Teacher Training College (Psychology and Education) under the auspices of the University of Leeds. I joined him in Scarborough in 1967 and was fortunate to find a 'good post' in the Scarborough High School for Boys. After two years I was encouraged by Geoffrey to apply for a teaching post as Head of English in Hunmanby Hall, a Methodist Girls' Boarding School. I taught there for two years, but I found driving strenuous, as shortly after joining the staff of the school I had an unfortunate road accident, which caused constant stress on my part. For this reason, I taught for only two years at the school.

Geoffrey stayed diligently at the North Riding College in Scarborough, until he took early retirement and so he could be fully immersed in the Gaskell Society. We were fortunate to be able to attend many meetings of the Society, and we often travelled over the Pennines to the John Rylands Library and Plymouth Grove. Geoffrey introduced me to every facet of Elizabeth Gaskell's life and work - most of her novels, her family situation and the Unitarian connection. Geoffrey's proximity to Knutsford and other towns and villages (as well as Manchester) obviously influenced his choice of author.

One of his most memorable 'colleagues' or 'mentors' was A Stanton Whitfield, who wrote the foreword for Geoffrey's book. He encouraged Geoffrey in every way he could. He had a 'quirky' sense of humour: for instance, his house in Wales was known as 'Wuthering Heights'.

In addition to revealing her Cheshire background, Elizabeth Gaskell displays a great knowledge of human nature - humour, tragedy, atmosphere good and bad. Geoffrey was a dedicated scholar; he was knowledgeable about his subject and generous in his praise of others who held Mrs Gaskell in high regard. It is through Geoffrey that I came to value Elizabeth Gaskell's insight and gift for story-telling.

**Editor adds:** Geoffrey and Heather Sharps always made a forceful presence at meetings during the first twenty years of the Gaskell Society's existence. I vividly remember Geoffrey with his puns (variable in quality but always abundant in quantity) and his tape recorder (what an aural archive!). We are delighted that Heather comes over from Scarborough to join us when she can.

Fortunately Geoffrey's masterpiece, *Mrs Gaskell's Observation and Invention: a study of her non-biographic works* is still available. This is an invaluable reference tool for all Gaskell scholars. If any of our members have not yet acquired a copy, this work is available from Mrs Heather Sharps, Sarda Lapis, 25 Cornelian Drive, Scarborough, North Yorkshire, YO11 3AL at a bargain price of £5 for Gaskell Society members.

## The Murillo Trail of 'Woman Drinking'!

Pat Barnard

In the year 2007 Manchester Art Gallery hosted a splendid exhibition Art Treasures in Manchester: 150 years on. 1857 saw a unique Mancunian achievement with the Manchester Art Treasures Exhibition (MATE) being the largest temporary display of art ever mounted in the world.

We know from her letters that Elizabeth Gaskell was busy hosting friends attending the exhibition. The following letters posed an interest in one of the paintings: 'Woman Drinking' and what was it?

### 1. From The Further Letters, Tuesday September 22<sup>nd</sup> 1857 to William Stirling

My dear Sir,

Lady Hatherton has asked one of my daughters to make a sketch for her in water colour of your Murillo 'Woman Drinking'. She went accordingly, yesterday, but was very properly refused (now one thinks of it) to make even a small imperfect sketch without your written permission. May she have it? Meta Gaskell by name, - fond of drawing but not likely to endanger the value of your painting by anything like too faithful a replica.

Yours very truly

E C Gaskell

William Stirling was the leading expert on Spanish art at the time. His interested started in 1840-41 when he toured Spain with George Holland. George Henry Holland, Gaskell's cousin was an exact contemporary of William Stirling at Trinity College Cambridge so it is highly likely that this is the George Holland who accompanied William Stirling.

### Letter 373, September 26<sup>th</sup> 1857 to Mr Deane (one of the organisers of MATE)

Mrs Gaskell presents her compliments to Mr Deane and begs to inform him that Miss Meta Gaskell has received permission to copy any of Mr Stirling's



pictures that she wishes. She therefore begs to remind him of his kind promise to admit her and the friends staying at her house, who come from a distance tomorrow(Sunday), and as it would be pleasanter for Miss Gaskell to copy before the Exhibition is open to the Public, Mrs Gaskell would be extremely obliged to Mr Deane if he would allow her daughter to have permission to enter at 8 o'clock.

Letter 374 September 28th 1857 to Charles Eliot Norton

-----Meta really did get up this morning to a seven o'clock breakfast, and went, before I was down, to the Exhibition to try and make a water-colour sketch of that Murillo Study-- a woman drinking,---for Lady Hatherton, who asked Meta to do it for her.-----

From The Further Letters October 10<sup>th</sup> (1857)

My dear Sir,

I seem to myself to have been very ungrateful in not having sooner thanked you for your very kind permission to allow Meta to copy your 'Woman Drinking'. I suppose I have a fresh afflux of obligations to you, now I see how successful she has been. She finished her copy yesterday. Thank you very much.

2. Manchester Art Gallery was approached to throw some light on this painting. We were investigating with the title 'Woman Drinking' by Murillo and nothing came up in the research.

3. Dr Waagen (director of the Royal Gallery of Pictures, Berlin) wrote a book *Art and Artists in England* which was a source for The Art Treasures Exhibition. I searched through the volumes at The Portico Library but the mystery remained intact. Emma Marigliano suggested an on-line search but all to no avail. We were searching under 'Woman Drinking'!

It was suggested that Cheetham's Library may assist.

4. An appointment with Cheethams Library was made indicating our request in advance so that when Ann Waddington and myself arrived, volumes associated with MATE were ready for our perusal. Sitting in the seats once occupied by Engels and Karl Marx we had something of a eureka moment! There was reference to Woman Drinking - detail of Moses Striking the Rock. (The reference did not include a copy of the painting.) However was this the 'Woman Drinking' that Meta had been asked to make a copy of?

5. A hand-out provided by Professor Matsaie Matsumara of the Art Treasures Exhibition 150 years on, did not provide titles but noticed one was of a woman drinking. I emailed the Professor in Japan and he confirmed that this was the

detail that Meta had been asked to copy and that *any library would have a copy of it!!!!*

6. Few weeks later Bramhall library managed to loan a book on Murillo, with relevant painting, from Southend-on-Sea. I later, via Amazon, was able to purchase the Royal Academy of Art Exhibition Catalogue 1983 on Murillo which also included Moses Striking the Rock.

Photos were taken of the painting ready for poster presentation on The Art Treasures Exhibition 150 Years On, For Plymouth Grove Display.

Of course although the detail was now established further interest in Murillo and why the detail was important to Lady Hatherton intrigued, so read on!!

7. Murillo was commissioned to execute paintings on the theme of Mercy in 1670 as found in the Gospel according to Matthew (chapter 26 verse 35,36) for The Hospital of la Caradid, Seville.

- (a) Miracle of the Loaves and Fishes. I Was Hungry And Ye Gave Me Meat.
- (b) Moses Striking the Rock. I Was Thirsty and Ye Gave Me Drink.
- (c) Abraham and the three angels. I was a Stranger and You Took Me In.
- (d) Return of the Prodigal Son. I Was Naked and You Clothed Me.
- (e) Christ healing the paralytic. I Was Sick and Ye Visited Me. (Now in the National Gallery London)
- (f) The Liberation of St Peter. I was in Prison and Ye Visited Me.

8. Why was Lady Hatherton interested in the detail Woman Drinking? Lady Davenport was a friend and admirer of Cobden, before and after her marriage to Lord Hatherton. In 1853 ECG wrote to Cobden:

I saw Mrs Davenport just before her marriage. She showed a packet of congratulations, and then said 'I think I would have given half of these up for a line or two from Mr Cobden.' Your picture hangs up among her 'heroes' in her bedroom.

Christine Lingard provided the following information. Richard Cobden spent 14 months touring the continent with Salis Schwabe and came back a fervent admirer of Murillo. It has been suggested but not confirmed that the Schwabes brought back several copies of Murillos.

Could it be that Lady Hatherton commissioned the copy for Cobden to add to his collection, as an intermediary or as a gift?

Copies of The Works of Mercy are in the Palace of Aranjuez near Madrid. These were created for the 300<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the painter's death. Marshall Soult took



most of the original Works of Mercy during the Napoleonic era. Christ Healing the Paralytic is now in the National Gallery London.

Perhaps you already knew all this and know where the water-colour sketch is now housed. Is it with descendants of Lady Hatherton or Cobden or even the Gaskells??

I, too, have now become a fervent admirer of Murillo and hope to visit the Palace of Aranjuez but would hope at some stage to visit Seville *on an artistic tour!*

## A Very Modern Marriage

Ann Brooks and Bryan Haworth

(This article is based on a talk given by the authors to the London Gaskell Society in February 2014.)

[Note: In text: L refers to Chapple and Pollard eds., *The Letters of Mrs Gaskell* (Manchester, 1966); F.L. refers to John Chapple & Alan Shelston eds., *Further Letters of Mrs Gaskell* (Manchester, 2003, paperback edition)]

Though Elizabeth Gaskell is well known, she was half of a very unusual couple for the times in which they lived. It has been said that it is 'not easy to understand Gaskell's relationship to William'.<sup>1</sup> Part of the difficulty is that none of the letters between the two has been preserved, and very few of William's at all. Their family and friends would have expected a traditional marriage dedicated to family, the Unitarian church and its incumbent social responsibilities.

On their marriage Elizabeth must have seemed an unlikely prospect for a Minister's wife. It was said of her that 'she had scandalously proved to be a good waltzer' at a party given by the Sydney Potters.<sup>2</sup> She herself seemed sceptical as she wrote to Harriet Carr on 3 May 1832 '... and the day before yesterday another friend of mine has *wedded* (for really '*married*' is becoming too common a word.)'. (F.L. p. 17) Later on 8 August she wrote again with talk of 'wedding-gowns' and added 'I fancy to learn obedience is something new - to me at least it is.' (F.L. p. 19) Aunt Lumb commented 'Why Elizabeth how could this man ever take a fancy to such a little giddy thoughtless thing as you!' <sup>3</sup> For William it seems to have been a *coup de foudre*. On 27th March 1832 he wrote to his sister saying: 'You can't imagine how lonely I feel without her. I must get over to Knutsford again next week! for one day at least! I am now writing with her rings [?ring] on my fingers ... And with her likeness lying before me, if likeness it can be called.'<sup>4</sup>

Were they really so incompatible? They certainly had very different upbringings - the country versus the town.<sup>5</sup> William was born in Warrington in 1805 into a notable

Unitarian family, and spent the rest of his life in various towns and cities. Graduating from Glasgow University, he trained at Manchester College, York, and was appointed assistant minister at Cross Street Chapel, Manchester in 1828. In contrast Elizabeth's experience was much less settled. Elizabeth was born in London in 1810. Her mother died a year later whereupon her aunt, Mrs Hannah Lumb, took her to live in Knutsford, Cheshire. From age 11, she was educated in Warwick and then Stratford-on-Avon. Aged seventeen she returned to London to live with her father who died two years later. The next two years were spent in Newcastle-on-Tyne with the family of Rev William Turner, a Unitarian Minister. This was to be the connection that brought her to Manchester and William.

When the couple settled into their new life, William's ministerial duties continued as before but for Elizabeth it must have been a considerable readjustment. As to her new role she would have had plenty of advice to call on. For example the Rev Turner had written to his daughter on her marriage listing the duties of the wife of a Unitarian minister.<sup>6</sup> These appear daunting today. 'She must not engage in the gaieties of the day but should be grave ... sober and faithful in all things. She must meet her husband's expectations, be discreet, respectable in appearance, affect frugal housekeeping with no needless expense for herself. The family must set an example for religious duties and actively participate in educating the lower classes of the congregation. She should be cheerful and have no meddling gossiping habit'. This was in contrast to the views of her father, William Stevenson, on the role of women, expressed in *The Westminster Review*, January 1826. 'When women are regarded and treated as they ought to be, then will manners be what they ought to be; and what is of greater moment, both sexes will co-operate, though by different means, towards the advancement of society in knowledge and happiness.' He continued that women should 'bestow their approbation only on those men who regard and treat them as equal to themselves in their capacity for knowledge and usefulness.'<sup>7</sup> She seems to have successfully combined these conflicting pieces of advice. She actively engaged in William's work as a Minister's wife together with caring for their growing family. In pursuit of both 'knowledge and happiness' she began to follow her own literary interests as was shown by their joint poem discussed below.

The contemporary descriptions of conditions in Manchester make grim reading:

There was ... Bear-baiting, dog-fighting, pitch battles of men leading to drunkenness, fighting, obscenities, and misery. ... The dram-shops, Tom and Jerry shops [low class beer-houses], and public houses swarm the Lord's Day over and overflow at night by the addition of these gamblers, and multitudes of females, lost to all sense of shame, and totally destitute of every virtue that makes a woman lovely and respectable ... the depravity of large numbers in Manchester exceeds aught I ever saw before; and the Police use but little power to prevent it.



This is an extract from the 1833 *Report of the Ministry to the Poor*, by The Manchester Domestic Mission Society.<sup>8</sup> A *History of the Society* describes William as a man 'so much honoured and beloved, one who, in later years, together with his talented wife, wielded an enormous influence for good in Manchester and the surrounding district ...'.<sup>9</sup> They captured this world in the poem written together, and published in the January edition of *Blackwood's Edinburgh Magazine*, 'Sketches Among the Poor, No. 1.', 1837.<sup>10</sup> Throughout the marriage they were both involved in educational and charitable work including teaching at Lower Mosley Street Sunday School and at the Manchester Unitarian Sunday School.

Both William and Elizabeth continued to have work published after 'Sketches Among the Poor'. His commitment to education for the workers was summed up by a verse in one of his many hymns:

Child of labour lift thine head  
Think not meanly of thy state  
Let thy soul be nobly fed  
Thine shall be a noble fate.

William had handwritten the hymn into his personal copy of his friend John Rely Beard's, *A Collection of Hymns for Public and Private Worship* (London and Manchester, 1837).<sup>11</sup>

He had specific requirements whilst writing, no scribbling while moving around the house as Elizabeth did. William required peace and quiet when teaching, composing his sermons and conducting church business. The family were forbidden to disturb him at such times. At Plymouth Grove he had his own large, sacrosanct study though now he had an outside door for visitors. So total was his seclusion that his wife's existence was doubted by at least one student.<sup>12</sup> William published *Temperance Rhymes* in 1839. Elizabeth sent a copy to John Pierrepont in June 1841, pointing out Wordsworth had commended the work and Mary Howitt had said 'This is true poetry'. (F.L. p. 24) Elizabeth herself wrote, 'You blame me for not having told you of my husband's poetical talents ... I have the same feeling of modesty in praising my husband that [I] should have in praising myself.' (F.L. *ibid.*) At the same time Elizabeth was an anonymous contributor on local customs to Howitts' *Rural Life in England*, 2nd. ed., 1840.<sup>13</sup> They then published her piece 'Clopton Hall' in *Visits to Remarkable Places*, also in 1840.<sup>14</sup> That Elizabeth had never stopped writing is supported by a request from Mary Howitt in 1849. She wrote asking for an emergency piece of work, suggesting to Elizabeth '... I presume it is already written and is one of the *many* manuscripts which lie in a certain drawer.' [our italics]<sup>15</sup>

In October 1844, a son William was born. On holiday in Ffestiniog in August the following year he died after contracting scarlet fever. Both William and Elizabeth

were devastated and William, as an antidote to her grief, encouraged her to consider writing a novel. William's response to the tragedy becomes understandable in the light of what is known of both their writing lives. William's suggestion, that writing could act as a solace for grief, was the key to unlocking her literary talent in a new and unrestricted direction. William continued to act as her editor and agent. He sent further examples of her work to *Howitt's Journal*; two stories were published in 1847 and one in 1848.<sup>16</sup> Her first novel, *Mary Barton*, was published anonymously by Chapman and Hall in London 1848 but Elizabeth was soon acknowledged as the author. Local opinion differed, some feeling she had slighted the mill owners and manufacturers. The *Manchester Guardian's* review commented: 'It sinned generally against truth in matters of fact either above the comprehension of the authoress or beyond her sphere of knowledge.'<sup>17</sup> Another review complained of her 'morbid sensibility to the condition of the operatives'.<sup>18</sup> Elizabeth began her practice of leaving Manchester whenever a book was published to regain her strength.

William was a strong support throughout all this and his role continued through her authorial career. His knowledge of dialect was renowned and his wife recognised this, and his help, by including his series of essays on the subject as an addendum in her 1854 edition of *Mary Barton*. He also acted as translator from the French of two stories in *Household Words; Bran* (pp. 179-81, Oct. 22 1853) and *The Scholar's Story* (pp. 32-34, Christmas 1853) He can also be credited with help in her research. Records in The Portico Library's Borrowing Book show that between November 1859 and May 1860, he accessed three books by William Scoresby on Whale fishing and the Arctic regions. Elizabeth could not take these out herself as women could not be members.<sup>19</sup> Also in 1859, Walter White's *A Month in Yorkshire* (London, 1858) was in William's possession; chapter twelve is titled Whitby. It was in 1859 that Elizabeth Gaskell visited Whitby when researching her material for *Sylvia's Lovers* (Published 1863). He was especially protective after the furore about *Ruth* (1853) and most importantly dealing with the threat of libel after the publication of *The Life of Charlotte Brontë* (1855). William succeeded in fighting off the libel action while Elizabeth and her daughters enjoyed their now famous holiday on the continent.

It was on this tour that Elizabeth met Charles Eliot Norton in Rome, an encounter which has since generated much heat and little light. In her letter to Norton on her return she wrote of the hectic life of Manchester and contrasted it with 'Oh! the delicious quiet and dolce far niente of Italy!' But she was also concerned for William; 'I wish you could persuade him to go to America with you ... He wants change and yet hates leaving home.' (L. 349 3 June 1857) In all her correspondence to him, she addressed him as My Dear Mr Norton, friendly but formal. In July 1857, when he was unable to visit them she wrote: 'We are so sorry - all of us and each of us separately - sorry for your not coming .... No! Now you won't see Flossie and Julia nor Hearn.' (L. 360 p. 459) It is perhaps significant that Norton also began a correspondence with her two eldest daughters after the holiday in Rome. In offering



them the friendship of an art expert on the peregrinations around Rome, he was a fascinating companion to them all. Did she see him simply as a young and intelligent friend and knowledgeable guide? She wrote to him on 25 October 1859 'If good intention were deeds it's about five months since you ought to have heard from me.' (L. 444 p. 579) Time perhaps in which she could reflect on her holiday, though through this time he continued to correspond with the girls. On 9 January 1860, in a letter relevant to this discussion, she wrote to Norton that 'It is perhaps strange to write to you; but I am so perfectly sure you understand me that I have no scruple in doing it; and you will never refer I am sure to anything in your replies, which I tell to you, as to a *brother* of my girls.' (L. 453 p.598) Could this thirty year old have brought a thought of what it would have been like if her son William had lived? Her last letter to him was in September 8, 1865, addressed jointly to him and his wife Susan; William was in Scotland, and she told him confidentially in detail about buying her house in Hampshire - a trustworthy friend indeed. (L 583 p. 774)

Perhaps their holiday arrangements are the one area which is most surprising for a modern reader. For many years they travelled separately as well as together. As a Minister of Cross Street Chapel, William had a month-long paid holiday in August each year, a time he had used to holiday away from Manchester, often in Europe, walking with friends. Elizabeth comments in a letter to the Storys in 1861, 'He cannot meet with a companion (his own women kind wd any of them, be thankful to go with him, but he says he needs 'entire freedom from responsibility ...').' (L. 490, p. 659) This seems cold on both sides and yet in the same letter she was at great pains to make sure he would be well treated. 'It is your bright charming *companionship* I want for him so that if he has a lodging near you it is everything, and he is only too simple in his tastes and wants and wishes.' (*ibid.*) But this was not the whole picture. A different scene emerges when we see him holidaying with the family. One of their favourite holiday destinations was Silverdale on the edge of Morecambe Bay.<sup>20</sup> On 4 May 1852, she wrote to Marianne who had asked to take a friend, Miss Banks, 'I find Papa does not like the idea of having a *stranger* in the house in holiday time when you know when he likes to play pranks, go cockling etc. etc. and feel at liberty to say or do what he likes, I think you may fancy how Papa would feel constrained and obliged to be proper.' (L. 122a, p. 850) She continued this theme in the letter to the Storys quoted above, '.... he is very shy, but very merry when he is well, delights in puns and punning and very fond of children.' (L. 490, p. 660)

It is clear that Elizabeth had total access to her earnings. It should be remembered at this time that any money earned by a wife was, by law, considered her husband's property. William seems to have had no inclination to exercise his rights in this matter. The letter dated 8 September 1865 confirms this when she confided in Norton the details of the purchase of her house in Hampshire. 'I have not money enough to pay the whole two thousand pounds; but my publisher (Smith and Elder) advanced the one thousand pounds ... and I hope to pay him off by degrees. Mr Gaskell is *not to know till then*.' (L. 583, p. 773)

One final comment is perhaps called for. William has always been portrayed as the stiff, unbending Minister but as Elizabeth illustrated in many of her letters he had another side to his nature. He possessed a sense of humour, demonstrated by Elizabeth's descriptions of their family life. Perhaps, also, by his response to another seeming rumour - William's involvement with one of the Winkworth sisters whom he tutored. In 1851 Susanna Winkworth had published a greatly respected translation of *Niebuhr* and Elizabeth felt she herself snubbed by Susanna as a result. In a letter to Eliza Fox c. May 1852 Elizabeth wrote that '...S.W. is so funny and cock a hoop about *Niebuhr*, she snubs me so, and makes much love to William he says 'my life is the only protection he has - he *knows* she would marry him. I wish you could hear him thus in a meek fatalist kind of way.' (L.124, p. 190) Surely an ironic comment that amused them both. In one of the only scraps of his surviving correspondence, William wrote to Marianne after a train journey 'my three fellow passengers like true Englishmen never opened their lips or the windows ...'.<sup>21</sup> If only more of his letters had survived they might have revealed more of his playful nature.

When considering the couple's marriage, it is notable how busy each of them was, both together and separately; Elizabeth with family, house, charities, writing and travelling; William with his ministerial duties and public activities.<sup>22</sup> From the start of the marriage their reported level of domestic and social work activity was remarkable. They were surely both people born with exceptional levels of energy. This allowed them to embark on a scale of activity that for many people was, and is, inconceivable. Could this have been the factor that drew them together? William recognising in the free-spirited young woman, the same intelligence, drive and energy that he himself possessed. The letters demonstrate their continuing devotion to the family and each other. In 1846, in a letter to Miss Barbara Fergusson (their governess) from Southport, Elizabeth showed concern for William, 'Just a line to ask you how you think Mr Gaskell *really* is.' William had fainted in church on the Sunday. There followed detailed instructions on how to look after him; '*Milk* I think he likes best for a constancy; and not too much bread in it; but *always* to take something up. I wish you would make Marianne attend to taking an egg beaten up with a little warm milk and sugar every morning ...'. She added 'I would much rather come home.' (F.L. p.31) Her visit to Southport shows William's concern for her as he had sent her to the coast to rest during the latter stage of her new pregnancy after baby William's death. They were a very close and loving couple and all the evidence suggests this pervaded the whole marriage despite their seemingly divergent lives. In effect this can be regarded as a very modern marriage even though Mrs Gaskell was proud to be Mrs Gaskell and Mr Gaskell was proud to have such a wife.

- 1 Bonaparte, Felicia, *The Gypsy-Bachelor of Manchester*, (Charlotteville and London, 1992), p. 264
- 2 Chapple, John, *Elizabeth Gaskell, The Early Years* (Manchester, 1997), pp. 413-4
- 3 Chapple, *ibid.*, p. 419
- 4 Chapple, *ibid.*, p. 453
- 5 See: Brill, Barbara, *William Gaskell 1805-84 A Portrait* (Manchester Literary and Philosophical Publications Ltd., 1984); Uglow, Jenny, *Elizabeth Gaskell A Habit of Stories* (London, 1993)



- 6 William Turner to Mary Robberds, Newcastle, 29 January 1812, Appendix III, Chapple, J.A.V., and Wilson, Anita, *Private Voices The Diaries of Elizabeth Gaskell and Sophia Holland*, p. 115. This advice was not just confined to Unitarians. 'Hints to a clergyman's wife or female parochial duties practically illustrated (London, 1832) was dedicated to the Rev Charles Bridges M.A., Vicar of Old Newton, Suffolk. The clergyman's wife is counselled that 'Let none be able to say that private or personal feelings influenced any part of her conduct', p. 10
- 7 See: Review by William Stevenson, Article III, 'The History of Chivalry, or Knighthood and its Times by Charles Mills Esq. Author of the History of the Crusades 2 Vols., 8 vo. 1825' in *The Westminster Review Vol. V. 1826 Jan - April* (London, 1826), pp. 59-101, extract pp. 80-81.
- 8 Perry, Rev. Herbert E., *A History of the Manchester Domestic Mission Society, 1833 -1933* (Manchester, 1833), p. 7-8. The Society, established on January 1st, 1833, was one of the many charitable organisations that the Gaskells were connected to. William became Secretary in 1838 (a post he held for the rest of his life).
- 9 *ibid.* p. 8
- 10 Blackwood's *Edinburgh Magazine*, January 1837, pp. 48-50. See also: Uglow, Jenny, *Elizabeth Gaskell: A Habit of Stories* (London: Faber and Faber, 1993), p. 101
- 11 Brill, Barbara, *William Gaskell 1805-84 A Portrait* (Manchester Literary and Philosophical Society, 1984) p. 49
- 12 The student, George Fox, thought Gaskell was a myth because they never saw her. See: Smith, Leonard (ed.), *Unitarian to the Core* (Unitarian College, Manchester, 2004), p.61.
- 13 See: George A. Payne, *Mrs Gaskell A Brief Biography* (Manchester, 1929), p. 40
- 14 See: Chapple, J.A.V., and Wilson, Anita (eds.), *Private Voices The Diaries of Elizabeth Gaskell and Sophia Holland* (Keele, 1996), p.46, fn. 32
- 15 Uglow, Jenny, *Elizabeth Gaskell: A Habit of Stories* (London: Faber and Faber, 1993), p.173
- 16 'The Sexton's Hero', *Howitts Journal*, No. 2, 1847 and 'Christmas Storms and Sunshine', *Howitts Journal*, No. 3, 1848
- 17 Uglow, Jenny, *Elizabeth Gaskell: A Habit of Stories* (London: Faber and Faber, 1993), pp.215-218, p.224
- 18 Quoted in Briggs, Asa, *Victorian Cities* (London, 1963), p. 103
- 19 See: Foster Shirley, 'We sit and read and Dream our time away': Elizabeth Gaskell and the Portico Library', *The Gaskell Society Journal*, Volume 14, (2000), pp. 14-23
- 20 See: 'Silverdale Tower - Elizabeth Gaskell's Lancashire Inspiration' at <http://lancashire.greatbritishlife.co.uk/article/silverdale-tower>
- 21 Uglow, Jenny, *Elizabeth Gaskell: A Habit of Stories* (London: Faber and Faber, 1993), p. 612
- 22 1100 people gathered for a soiree at Manchester Town Hall on 10 October 1878 to honour William Gaskell's fifty years work for the city. Each organisation he had belonged to were allowed five minutes to make their contribution. Eleven charitable and religious societies and churches took part and they did not include The Portico Library and The Manchester Literary and Philosophical Society. See: *Manchester Guardian*, 11 October, 1878; Cross Street Chapel Archives, October 1878.

## In Praise of the Independent Singleton

### John Greenwood

Towards the end of her article on Elizabeth Gaskell and Charlotte Brontë in a previous Newsletter<sup>1</sup>, Patsy Stoneman deals with the situation of the unmarried or single woman. In this article I intend to develop this topic by referring to a few novels and short stories of the 19<sup>th</sup> century. My choice is obviously arbitrary and readers will no doubt have their own preferred works to refer to. Stoneman focuses on Brontë's *Shirley* and *Villette*, stressing the precarious and lonely situation of

such women; however, Stoneman is careful to point out (by quoting Brontë herself) that the problem is not so much being single as being lonely.

By the end of the 19<sup>th</sup> century the position of women (both married and unmarried) had radically changed from the situation in, say, the 1850s, though there was still much to be done. In a recent review of a book on the literary and cultural life of Victorian clubland the reviewer writes: '... a large number of women-only clubs flourished in the 1890s... These homes-from-home, such as the *Pioneer*, the *Alexandra*, and the *Empress*, offered the lady-shopper respite from the bustle of Oxford Street, and provided the sporting or culturally-minded lady with opportunities to enjoy her favourite pursuits and ... to make independent professional connections. The Victorian gentleman may have searched for 'a room of his own' ... but by the end of the century clubs enabled women, too, to escape from domestic confines.'<sup>2</sup>. Needless to say, such facilities were restricted to those women with money and time at their disposal. What was called the 'Woman Question' became the women's liberation movement from the early 20<sup>th</sup> century onwards. Olive Schreiner's *The Story of an African Farm* (1883) was probably the first literary work in England to focus on the *New Woman* figure. Other writers like Meredith, Shaw and Gissing soon followed, and in 1909 Wells published *Ann Veronica*.

Just to take three articles from the *Guardian* in 2013, much has changed (even since the early 1900s, let alone the mid-1800s) in attitudes and activities in the field of Women's Lib. For example:

(i) ...in a single weekend in October (2013), you could have attended a feminist freshers' fair in London, the North East Feminist Gathering in Newcastle, a Reclaim the Night March in Edinburgh, or a discussion between different generations of feminist activists at the British Library.<sup>3</sup>

(ii) Times have never been better for single women. Long gone are the days when they needed a man to pay the bills and protect them, with a social status dependent on their spouse....There are single people of all ages out there going about their business and enjoying themselves, and the word spinster has been pretty much outlawed.<sup>4</sup>

(iii) Bridget Jones was at least a singleton again, but it was still disappointing that a character who had always been defined by her status as a single woman could only be truly happy when attached to a man.<sup>5</sup>

(iv) Why must the character who is a single woman also be the one who is a failure and obsessive and increasingly odd? It is not as if the single woman is a statistical oddity; the census reveals that the number of single-person households is on the rise. Are the women in these flats and houses all desiccated or loopy or permanently furious or desperately sad? Does the



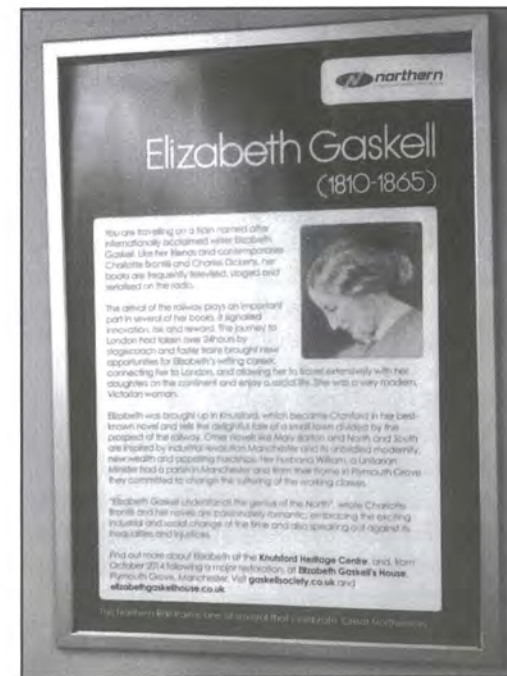
# Reflections on Elizabeth Gaskell



**'Good choice of name'**

**Tatton MP George Osborne concludes his remarks as he unveils the train's name.**

**Manchester Piccadilly, 28 March 2014**



**The Inside Story**

**NB. Portrait of ECG by daughter Meta**



**Members of the Gaskell Society and railway buffs gather on Platform 11, at Manchester Piccadilly to celebrate the naming of a train.**



thought ever occur that some of them might be happy and fulfilled, with jobs that they love and an understanding of the term family that may extend beyond the word husband or baby?<sup>5</sup>

The typical portrayal of a single woman in 19<sup>th</sup> century novels was negative; a sad and lonely figure, such as an unappreciated governess or a withdrawn aunt. However, without benefiting from the re-assurance arising from the situation now prevailing, as indicated in the quotations above, there are interesting examples of single women depicted by 19<sup>th</sup> century novelists as independent and determined to make their own decisions. I have chosen four works by Gaskell: *Ruth* (1853), *Half a Life-Time Ago* (1855), *Sylvia's Lovers* (1863) and *Cousin Phillis* (1863) and one by George Gissing: *The Odd Women* (1893).

The heroine Ruth shows an independence of mind and will on two crucial occasions. The first is when she is confronted by Bellingham, now using the name of Donne, in North Wales. As well as being in a seemingly weak social position with little prospect of any escape from it, and also still unable to obliterate completely her former feelings for him ('His voice retained something of its former influence. When he spoke, without her seeing him, she could not help remembering former days.' <sup>7</sup>), she counters his very tempting offer of marriage and acceptance of Leonard as his legitimate son and heir:

I will save Leonard from evil. Evil would it be for him if I lived with you... I do not love you. I did once....I could never love you again... We are very far apart... You shall have nothing to do with my boy, by my consent, much less by my agency... If there were no other reason to prevent our marriage but the one fact that I would bring Leonard into contact with you, that would be enough.<sup>8</sup>

Such a forthright rejection of her former lover and father of her child shows admirable independence and resolution as to what she thinks is her duty to herself as well as to her son, but it is at a price:

Oh! If I had not spoken so angrily to him – the last things I said were so bitter – so reproachful! – and I shall never, never see him again!<sup>9</sup>

The second occasion when she shows strong determination to have her own way, in spite of much opposition by her doctor, Mr Davis, is her decision to nurse Bellingham, who has caught the dreaded fever raging in the town:

I don't think I should love him, if he were well and happy – but you said he was ill – and alone – how can I help caring for him?... He is Leonard's father... but let me go – I must go.<sup>10</sup>

And, of course, go she does, saving Bellingham but not herself. A sad and even

unacceptable ending to most readers, but in her situation as a single woman she must surely feel relieved, highly satisfied, at her independent decision.

Two years later (1855) Gaskell wrote the short story *Half a Life-Time Ago*. There are certain parallels between this story and *Ruth*. Both heroines have to make extremely difficult decisions which are, in their view, necessary and just, even if painful. The heroine, Susan Dixon, has survived the typhus fever that raged in the village, and so has her brother, William, but 'his speech became slow, impeded, and incoherent. People began to say that the fever had taken away the little wit Willie Dixon had ever possessed, and that they feared that he would end in being a 'natural', as they call an idiot in the Dales.'<sup>11</sup> Susan loves and is engaged to Michael, who unfortunately cannot bear Willie and often mistreats him. Furthermore, Susan promises her mother on her deathbed that she will always look after her brother. When Willie asks her whom she prefers, she quite rightly admonishes him: "You should not ask such questions. They are not fit for you to ask, nor for me to answer."<sup>12</sup> However, she immediately re-assures her brother that he has nothing to worry: "Lover nor husband shall come betwixt thee and me, lad."<sup>13</sup> Susan has the courage and intelligence to confront Michael with the problem in the hope that she can persuade him to help her by accepting joint responsibility for Willie when they marry. To her dismay he refuses, so she has to decide between brother and lover:

"Thou wilt not bide in the same house with him, say'st thou? There's no need for thy biding, as far as I can tell. There's solemn reason why I should bide with my own flesh and blood, and keep to the word I pledged my mother on her death-bed; ... If thou marry me, thou'll help me to take charge of Willie. If thou doesn't choose to marry me on those terms - why, I can snap my fingers at thee, never fear... Willie bides here, and I bide with him."<sup>14</sup>

Like Ruth and her son Leonard, Susan has made her stand independently; she knows her duty towards her brother is paramount. But again, like Ruth's decision, it is at an enormous personal cost, for (unlike Ruth's changed feelings towards Bellingham, she still deeply loves Michael) she is greatly tempted to regret her brave decision:

Then she would wonder how she could have had strength, the cruel, self-piercing strength, to say what she had done; to stab herself with that stern resolution, of which the scar would remain till her dying day. It might have been right; but as she sickened, she wished she had not instinctively chosen the right. How luxurious a life haunted by no sense of duty must be! And many led this kind of life; why could not she? O, for one hour again of his sweet company! If he came now, she would agree to whatever he proposed.<sup>15</sup>

However, the very next sentences Gaskell writes are: 'It was a fever of the mind.



She passed through it, and came out healthy, if weak. .... She acknowledged to herself that he [Willie] was to be her all-in-all in life.<sup>16</sup> Susan is fully aware of the consequences; she will remain a single woman. On the death of Willie, 'there was no one to love her. Worse doom still, there was no one left on earth for her to love.'<sup>17</sup>

In the persons of Ruth and Susan, Gaskell has thus created two personalities who, while not at first revealing any particular strong traits of character (so unlike Sylvia with her unforgiving nature often openly expressed) are placed in a most unenviable dilemma, requiring them to make their own independent decision. Neither turns to friend or family for advice at the crucial moment; both realise the consequences of their decisions. They act courageously as independent single women just as much as the New Women or the Feminists of 20<sup>th</sup> and 21<sup>st</sup> century novels.

As to Sylvia Robson in *Sylvia's Lovers*, her experience is far more complex than that of either Ruth or Susan. I mention her in order to contrast her with the other two. While to a certain extent she shared their 'singlehood' status by being denied union with the man she loved (Kinraid) and abandoned by the man she reluctantly married (Hepburn), she lacked their independence of action. After Philip Hepburn's disappearance she is uncertain what to do apart from vague 'notions of the possibility of a free country life once more', so she goes to Jeremiah Foster for advice: 'She was too much a child, too entirely unaccustomed to any independence of action, to do anything but leave herself in his hands.'<sup>18</sup> She also lacks their confidence in making a decision: 'After she had learnt that Kinraid was married, her heart had still more strongly turned to Philip... But across all this relenting came the shadow of her vow... How should she decide? What would be her duty, if he came again, and once more called her 'wife'? She shrank from such a possibility, with all the weakness and superstition of her nature.'<sup>19</sup> By the end of the novel there is surely much sympathy and understanding for Sylvia's plight, but she is not the strong independent 'singleton' we find in Ruth and Susan.

In *Cousin Phillis* we read the sad story of the unrequited love of Phillis for somebody who declares to a friend his love for her, yet goes off to work in Canada and there marries somebody else. This leaves Phillis devastated, but resigned to fate. Throughout the story Gaskell depicts Phillis as very passive, rarely taking the initiative. Holdsworth, the man she secretly loves, describes her thus: "Love her! Yes, that I do. Who could help it, seeing her as I have done? Her character as unusual and rare as her beauty! ... God keep her in her high tranquillity, her pure innocence... She lives in such seclusion, almost like the sleeping beauty."<sup>20</sup> On discovering her love is hopeless, she is deeply grieved but says nothing. The narrator advises the servant Betty: "Don't let us show her we guess that she is grieving; she'll get over it the sooner,"<sup>21</sup> and later he comments: "Yet all I could do now was to second the brave girl in her efforts to conceal her disappointment and keep her maidenly secret."<sup>22</sup> So a very different personality to Ruth and Susan, it

seems. However, right at the end of the story Betty (a typical Gaskell creation: no-nonsense but sensitive servant like Gaskell's own Hearn) gives Phillis a piece of her own mind: "Now Phillis! We ha' done a' we can for you, and the doctors has done a' they can for you, and I think the Lord has done a' He can for you, and more than you deserve, too, if you don't do something for yourself. If I were you, I'd rise up and snuff the moon."<sup>23</sup> In a letter to her publisher Gaskell proposes a more detailed conclusion, rather than the rushed one submitted to reach a deadline. She outlines a plot which shows Phillis much more active, determined and independent as a single woman: typhus fever in the village; putting into practice engineering skills she learnt from Holdsworth by draining the village to get clean water; and adopting two child orphans (similar to Susan Dixon's action at the end of *Half a Life-Time Ago*). So potentially, Phillis joins this happy breed of single women who have few of the advantages later singletons will benefit from.

To conclude, I now jump forward to 1893 with the publication of George Gissing's *The Odd Women*. During this interval of three decades much had changed in England for the single woman. In Gaskell's time, when it was estimated there were about 50,000 single women in England, it was possible for the 'spinster' (often unfairly ridiculed as 'old maids' in literature as well in real life) to find protection, for example, in large families where she could help out with domestic duties. By the 1890s this number is estimated to have risen to almost one million in London alone. So the marriage market had become much more competitive. Two of Gissing's *Odd Women* represent the situation of educated but impoverished unmarried genteel women who struggle to maintain respectability (indeed, one of them hides an alcoholic problem). Their sister, Monica, enters into a disastrous marriage for financial reasons - a not uncommon occurrence at the time. However, it is the characters of Rhoda Nunn and her friend, Mary Barfoot, who are Gissing's main concern. These two Odd Women do not seek their future as financially and socially secure wives but as competent and hopefully successful women following feminist aims. They set up a business school in London for training women to participate in public life. A major element of the plot is the conflict for Rhoda between this activity and her love for Mary Barfoot's cousin, Everard Barfoot. This conflict of interest seems to me as tense and painful as that experienced by Gaskell's Ruth and Susan and with the same decision taken, however painfully, to opt against marriage but for an independent single life:

Will! Purpose! Was she not in danger of forgetting these watchwords, which had guided her life out of youth into maturity? That poor creature's [Monica] unhappiness was doubtless in great measure due to the conviction that in missing love and marriage she had missed everything. So thought the average woman, and in her darkest hours she too had fallen among those poor in spirit, the flesh prevailing. But the soul in her had not finally succumbed. Passion had a new significance; her conception of life was larger, more liberal; she made no vows to crush the natural instincts. But her conscience, her sincerity should



not suffer. Wherever destiny might lead, she would still be the same proud and independent woman, responsible only to herself, fulfilling the nobler laws of her existence.<sup>24</sup>

As confirmation of her having taken the right decision in rejecting Everard, Rhoda exclaims on the final page of the novel, when asked if her work is successful: 'We flourish like the green bay-tree. We shall have to take larger premises. By-the-bye, you must read the paper we are going to publish... Miss Barfoot was never in such health and spirits - nor I myself. The world is moving.'<sup>25</sup>

My intention in writing this article was to refute Thackeray's cynical and supercilious remark '*Is the single woman destined to misery?*' Rather, I would agree with Harriet Martineau's comment when reviewing Brontë's *Villette*: 'All the female characters, in all their thoughts and lives, are full of one thing...love. It is not thus in real life. There are substantial, heartfelt interests for women of all ages, and under ordinary circumstances, quite apart from love.'<sup>26</sup> And we must never forget that the trait of independence in a person is not to be confused with either selfishness or irresponsibility. I have already referred to Cousin Phillis' decision to adopt two orphans in Gaskell's alternative ending. Susan Dixon 'took Michael Hurst's [her former fiancé] widow and children with her to live there, and fill up the haunted hearth with living forms that should banish the ghosts.'<sup>27</sup> Gissing ends his novel with Rhoda sharing the responsibility for looking after Monica's baby. Gaskell and Gissing have so much in common as novelists that it puzzles me why he is not as well known and read as she is – but dealing with that puzzle needs another article!

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## F E Bache: a Brief Life

John Chapple

In a letter of 22 November 1852 Elizabeth Gaskell suggested to Marianne that 'Helen Tagart & perhaps Ed. Bache with her ... or Emily Shaen' might help choose a piano at Broadwood's. Francis Edward Bache (1833-1858) was a musical prodigy - violinist, pianist organist and composer - the son of an important Unitarian minister in Birmingham. He was also friends with an employee of John Broadwood & Sons, A J Hipkins. Hipkins, a distinguished authority on keyboard instruments, was trusted to tune the Broadwood pianos used by Chopin on his visits to England.

Helen Tagart was the wife or perhaps the daughter of a prominent Unitarian minister in London, Edward Tagart, a friend of Dickens. Emily Shaen, née Winkworth, had not long before married William Shaen, the Gaskells' lawyer and close friend, William Gaskell himself officiating at the ceremony.

Samuel Bache (1804-1876), Francis Edward's father, was the minister of the Unitarian 'Church of the Messiah' in Broad Street, Birmingham. He had been educated at Manchester College, York in 1826-9. William Gaskell, who had entered the college a year before, would have been a fellow student in the modest and learned Dissenting College just outside Monkbar.

Three of Samuel's seven children were notably musical: Francis Edward, Walter and the youngest daughter, Constance. Constance, who outlived both Francis and Walter, published a memoir in 1901, entitled *Brother Musicians: reminiscences of Edward and Walter Bache* (available on [openlibrary.org](http://openlibrary.org)) and dedicated to A J Hipkins.

Amongst the truly remarkable applied art collections in Birmingham City Art Galleries is a stained glass window rescued from Samuel Bache's church when it was eventually abandoned in the cause of city development. The window is a Victorian Gothic memorial to Francis Edward Bache. The money to pay for it had been raised by a performance of Mendelssohn's once popular oratorio *St Paul*, on 1 October 1863 (BM, p. 101).



F E Bache, a pupil of Sterndale Bennett, became an organist, teacher and composer of piano pieces in London, Leipzig, Dresden and Paris. In his sadly short career he even managed to publish a number of musical items. Some years ago Hyperion recorded Howard Shelley and the BBC Scottish Symphony Orchestra playing a piano concerto by Bennett and one by Bache (CD67595). Though Bache's concerto may never have been performed in his lifetime, it is flowing, tuneful and fresh, with brilliant passages for both soloist and orchestra.

Bache's hectic life, full of original promise, was afflicted by poor health. In January 1856 he went to Algiers to alleviate the symptoms of consumption, but the heat drove him away in April. By December he was settled in Rome (BM, p. 91), where he joined the artistic circle of English and American friends that included Catherine Winkworth, Mrs Gaskell and two of her daughters, Marianne and Meta. Catherine Winkworth stayed with Emma Shaen, an invalid, the Gaskells in the Via Sant'Isidoro with the sculptor William Wetmore [sic] Story and his wife Emelyn. As we know from Gaskell's nostalgic letters to Emelyn Story, it was a supremely happy time. But when Catherine Winkworth came to hear Bache play, she thought that though he played beautifully, he looked 'wretchedly ill' (S Winkworth, ed. *Letters and Memorials*, I.121). In fact, he had not long to live.

The Roman climate and houses 'with their marble floors and absence of fires' became too cold for him. Despite a successful concert in April that gained him £60 net, in May he fled back to his home in Birmingham. A stay in Torquay for the winter, where once again he managed to give a successful concert to a crowded audience in February 1858, did not result in a cure. He returned to his home in Birmingham and arranged a farewell concert. In this he was too weak to play, so a friend had to take his place at the piano. Bache died a few days later, on 14 August.



Left:

Two portraits  
of F E Bache

## Elizabeth Gaskell and Henry James

Alan Shelston

In heaven there'll be no algebra,  
No learning dates or names.  
There's only playing golden harps  
And reading Henry James.

(Popular rhyme cited by admirers of Henry James)

Less than six months after the untimely death of Elizabeth Gaskell in September 1865, a review of her interrupted final work, *Wives and Daughters*, appeared in the American journal, *The Nation*. It was written by the young and upcoming novelist, Henry James, who was then cutting his teeth as a reviewer. Gaskell's novel had first appeared in serial form in the United States in a less distinguished magazine, *Littell's Living Age*, and was finally published there in two volumes only a few days after her death.

The publication of British fiction in the United States was a consequence of a process whereby new novels published in England were rushed across the Atlantic for immediate publication by one of the various competing publishers in the major American cities. Where novels were concerned instalment publication obviously helped the process since copy could be printed month by month in anticipation of the work's completion. All of Gaskell's novels, her *Life of Charlotte Brontë* and a number of her stories attracted American publishers; she herself once wrote that she was considering publishing only in America. She was of course an Amerophile, with a number of American contacts, but Meta Gaskell was relieved when her mother gave up this idea. Dickens complained of piracy by American publishers, but in fact on occasion he had received quite considerable sums for the publication of his work in America. As in England the circumstances surrounding the completion of *Wives and Daughters* must have presented problems for the publisher but these seem to have been surmounted. James's article appeared in the American journal *The Nation* on 22nd February 1866, the two volume edition of the novel having been published by Harper & Brothers of New York on February 2<sup>nd</sup> of that year.

James's reviewer's teeth, were already very sharp. Reviewing Dickens's *Our Mutual Friend*, for example, also in *The Nation* and at the same time (21 December 1865), he attacked Dickens's latest works with vigour: '*Bleak House* was forced,' he wrote, '*Little Dorrit* was laboured; the present work is dug out with a spade and pickaxe.' If the acknowledged master of English fiction was to receive this kind of treatment what hope might there be for Elizabeth Gaskell's more restrained and provincial art?

But *Wives and Daughters* was to be a different story. In his reviews James always wrote for effect and he begins his article with fulsome praise for Gaskell the author: 'There is no sign of haste and immaturity about any of her novels... her word-painting was perfect of its kind.' He expresses his admiration for *Cranford* (nevertheless defining it as 'a work of quite other pretensions') and then praises the distinctive realism of what he admits is a very long novel: 'we are on speaking terms with all the personages of "Wives and Daughters," we can see the Gibsons and Hamleys, and Brownings, as well as if we had called upon them yesterday.' James clearly knows his Gaskell; he follows his opening remarks with a résumé of her work and argues that 'Mrs Gaskell's genius ... was so obviously the offspring of her affections, her feelings,, her associations' that he concludes that her 'genius' was little more than a peculiar play of her personal character.' The writer, in other words was the woman and she herself was exceptional. The article is part criticism, part obituary and, as Dr Johnson remarked, 'in lapidary inscriptions a man is not upon oath.' However James's hyperbole comes out of his knowledge of the novels: the only work about which he has reservations is *The Life of Charlotte Brontë* where 'her fine qualities, of affection, of generosity of sympathy of imagination' betray her into a 'want of judgment.'

When James goes into detail about *Wives and Daughters* his comments become more specific and in one respect more surprising. 'The book is very long 'and of an interest so quiet that not a few of its readers will find it dull.' Furthermore 'even a very well-disposed reader will be tempted to lay down the book and ask himself of what possible concern to him are the 'clean frocks and the French lessons of little Molly Gibson.' However these are the details that 'have educated him to a proper degree of interest in the heroine'. In other words the very quietude of the novel's provincialism is the key to Molly's 'homely *bourgeois* life.' and that is true also of those 'strongly marked, masculine middle-aged men' like Doctor Gibson and Squire Hamley, who are 'so forcibly drawn as if a wise masculine hand had drawn them'. James had no inhibitions about gender distinction. He would later review George Eliot's *Middlemarch*, and praise it for the intellectual power of its organisation and its characterisation. *Wives and Daughters* though is a very different case: it inspires affection for the world and the characters Gaskell has created, rather than the rigour of organisation that is at the core of George Eliot's 'study of provincial life'.

In a later essay, his 'Preface' to his novel *The Portrait of a Lady*, James wrote of the way in which Victorian novels focussed upon their heroines, 'the wonder being how absolute, how inordinately [they] ... insist on mattering.' He listed examples: 'Hetty Sorrel and Maggie Tulliver and Rosamond Vincy and Gwendolen Harleth' – all of them from George Eliot as it happens. And the drift of his argument in his essay on Mrs Gaskell is that the reader becomes over-familiar with Molly who, while unquestionably lovable, lacks the complexity, as distinct from the affection, normally to be encountered in a fictional heroine: 'it may be said that no young lady is a heroine to one who, if we may so express our meaning, has known her

since she was "so high." The argument is specious, but James, who was himself to write novels where the analysis of character and situation can fairly be said to arrive at the point of inertia, turns his admiration of Mrs Gaskell's skills to a character who has the complexity of interest and motive that he is seeking, and that is Cynthia Kirkpatrick: 'Molly Gibson, we repeat, commands a slighter degree of interest than the companion figure of Cynthia Kirkpatrick.', he writes, whereas Molly's clean frocks and French lessons apparently leave him with nothing to add. But Cynthia's mother, Hyacinth Clare, is 'the best drawn character in the book: Touch by touch, under the reader's eye, she builds herself up into her selfish and silly and consummately natural completeness.' When it comes to the men they are 'less successful than her women,' while Osborne Hamley is 'a much more ambitious figure than Roger' - i.e. ambitious on his creator's part – 'and ambitious as the figure of Cynthia is ambitious'.

When we consider Gaskell and James together there are some surprising similarities. In their lives both enjoyed the privileges of country house week-ends in fine houses. Both became Italophiles; both had a liking for ghost stories: as Miriam Allott once suggested, Gaskell's 'Old Nurse's Story' can be said to anticipate James's more powerful 'The Turn of the Screw'. They both focussed their novels on 'frail vessels' – that ironic Jamesian term for the heroines who bore the brunt of the story. And it is the frailty of the vessels that both exposes and fortifies them. Ruth Hilton, Sylvia Robson and Phillis Holman are examples from Gaskell, while James gives us the heroines of the early novellas, Daisy Miller and the Catherine Sloper of Washington Square, both of whom have a limited knowledge of the world and are thus vulnerable to the carelessness of attractive and more experienced young men. Catherine Sloper, immured in her father's house in Washington Square, is heiress to a fortune. Disregarded by her father she is initially a somewhat timid young woman when, rather like Phillis Holman, she is surprised by the entry into her life of a more worldly young man, Morris Townsend. Townsend however abandons her when he realises her father will never grant him access to her wealth. In stories such as these the heroines are acted upon rather than acting for themselves and the moral outcomes depend upon how they respond rather than on the choices that they make. Gaskell was uncertain how to end Phillis Holman's story after Holdsworth has left for Canada; in *Washington Square* James deliberately left his heroine 'for life, as it were' after a final meeting with the lover who has deserted her, a phrase as telling as Hamlet's 'the rest is silence.' Or to come back to the novel form it is as if Captain Wentworth had NOT returned to claim Anne Elliot, and had left her bereft, like her Victorian sisters. Marriages famously conclude novels, but Elizabeth Gaskell and Henry James seemed on occasion to have taken a more dry-eyed view of human relationships.

Henry James did not take up permanent residence in England until after Gaskell's death and so would not have known her personally. Like Elizabeth, he too proved to be a prolific letter-writer and in 1878 he wrote to his sister Alice, 'I have gone on



dining out ... with Mrs Crompton, daughter of Mrs Gaskell [and] with Leslie Stephen etc.' Stephen, who was to become editor of the *Dictionary of National Biography*, was accompanied by his future second wife 'the charming woman, (Mrs Duckworth by name) who had 'by a miracle, consented to become, matrimonially, the receptacle of his [i.e. Stephens] ineffable and impossible taciturnity and dreariness.' The Duckworth family, possessed of a cotton fortune, were known to the Gaskells and as Stephen's second wife Mrs Duckworth would become stepmother to Virginia Stephen, aka Woolf. There is some irony in the fact that the daughter famously described by her mother as a child as having no talent should have made these distinguished literary connections. And in a later letter we learn that in the same year Meta, who as we know had many years previously been left 'for life as it were' by a faithless lover, joined James and Florence at dinner and proved herself to be 'a most pleasing, amiable, sympathetic woman.' Their mother would surely have looked down on them with approval.

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## Book Notes

### Christine Lingard

*Interdisciplinary perspectives on aging in nineteenth-century culture*, edited by Katharina Boehm, Anna Farkas, and Anne-Julia Zwierlein of Regensburg University, Germany. Routledge studies in nineteenth-century literature.

A study which provides frameworks for the understanding of old age that continue to be influential today. It aims to bring about fresh readings of texts by Charles Dickens, Elizabeth Gaskell, Anthony Trollope, Thomas Hardy, Henry James and others.

*British women writers and the short story, 1850-1930: reclaiming social space* by Kate Krueger. Professor and Coordinator of Women and Gender Studies at Arkansas State University. Palgrave Macmillan, 2014.

A discussion of traditional feminine occupations, as depicted in a wide range of nineteenth and twentieth century short stories. Chapter one is entitled 'The Spinster Re-Drawing Rooms in Elizabeth Gaskell's *Cranford*'. It also discusses the stories of Rhoda Broughton, Mary Elizabeth Braddon, George Egerton, Charlotte Mew,

Evelyn Sharp, Barbara Baynton, Katherine Mansfield, Virginia Woolf, and Jean Rhys.

*Giving women: alliance and exchange in Victorian culture* by Jill Rappoport, Associate Professor of English at the University of Kentucky. Oxford University Press, first published in 2012, and now reissued.

A discussion of altruism and charity giving in the Victorian age. Chapter 3 discusses Conservation in *Cranford*.

*Mr Harrison's Confessions*: a new reprint, Hesperus Classics

## Gaskell Study Tour to Worcester, Bromyard and surrounding areas - 20 to 22 May, 2014

Jean Alston

The purpose of this study tour was to visit the area in which Marianne Holland, the Gaskells' eldest daughter, spent her later years. Her husband, Thurstan Holland, died in 1884, at the age of 48, (also the year of William Gaskell's death). During their married life, Marianne and Thurstan, apart from a short spell at 9 Woburn Square, Bloomsbury, had lived at 1 Sunnyside Wimbledon. By the time of Thurstan's death, Marianne had given birth to seven children, only three of whom survived to adulthood. Our study tour also considered the three grown up children: William Edward, Florence Evelyn and Bryan Thurstan, who all spent their later years in the areas of Bromyard, Worcester and Malvern.

Twenty-four members and friends of the Gaskell Society joined the tour. We began with a visit to Hanbury Hall, Droitwich, where we listened to an introductory talk, toured the William and Mary period hall, and had lunch. Our next call was at Boughton House (now Worcester Golf and Country Club), home of the Isaac family in the 19th Century and where Gaskell and her children visited cousin Charlotte, who had married John Whitmore Isaac. Marianne would have visited Boughton House on several occasions and was later to marry Thurstan, Charlotte's nephew, and son of Sophia (née Isaac), who had married Edward Holland of Dumbleton. We believe we were able to identify portrait paintings of Thurston's (Isaac) grandparents.

In December 1850, a letter from Elizabeth, headed *Boughton House near Worcester* to Lady Kay-Shuttleworth, describes her plans for Marianne's education at a Mrs Lalor's school in Hampstead, and in August, 1856 she wrote to George Smith from Boughton about various aspects of the biography *The Life of Charlotte Brontë*. From Boughton House, we travelled to the Bank House Hotel, where we were to enjoy excellent, newly refurbished accommodation and very good food.



After dinner, many members read from Elizabeth Gaskell's letters and also from those of her daughters. The selection of letters and newspaper extracts referred to Gaskell's management of Marianne as a child, her choice of education for her as a teenager and her concern when Marianne expressed her doubts about the Unitarian faith. The newspaper cuttings described a garden party held by Marianne at Birchyfield and a mishap when her daughter Florence escaped serious injury by jumping from the carriage as the horses became out of control and galloped towards the town of Bromyard. We were later able to see the New Road hill and Queen's Arms Hotel where the horses had eventually crashed through the windows.

Wednesday, 21 May, proved to be a beautiful warm and sunny day when we visited the areas where Marianne persisted in her enjoyment of rural life, which must have been very similar to that of her maternal grandparents in Sandlebridge, Cheshire. We first visited the Church of St Mary Magdalene at Alfrick, where Michael Hood, Churchwarden, showed us Marian's burial record, written in September 1920. This is a beautifully located church with early features such as a twelfth century window and barrel-shaped roof. Unfortunately, there is no evidence of Marianne's grave as most grave inscriptions have been eroded with time.

From the church, we travelled to nearby Alfrick Court, where we were given a very warm welcome by the present owner Maria Fitch. This is a most beautiful house, with fine garden and currently about ten acres of land. The 1911 Census shows Marianne, aged 76, living at Alfrick Court with Florence Evelyn (39) and Bryan Thurston (35), accompanied by a cook, a waitress, two housemaids, a kitchen maid, a groom, a retired governess (visitor) and a six year old boarder.



**Alfrick Court**

Our lunchtime visit was to Lower Brockhampton NT Estate, where we were given a tour of the moated grounds and a specially arranged preview of more rooms of this 14/15 century manor house (to be opened to the general public later in the year). There was a reference to Dumbleton, which will give us a further task if we attempt to establish links between Lower Brockhampton and Dumbleton Hall, where Thurstan grew up.

The visit to Birchyfield, Avenbury, near to Bromyard, was to the farm occupied by Marianne before she moved to Alfrick Court. Mrs Sue Stephenson, the present owner, welcomed us and allowed us to walk in the garden and field where Marianne had held her garden party to raise funds for the Bicentenary Fund of the Society for the Propagation of the Gospel in 1901. The house had been built in the 1830s and members commented on several features which are similar to those in the Gaskell house at Plymouth Grove. The report from Birchyfield in the *Bromyard News and Record*, 20 April 1899 about Marianne's daughter Florence and her carriage escapade had been read by us the previous evening at the hotel.

The remainder of the day was spent in Bromyard, where Marianne's family's household shopping and outings would have taken place. Members were able to visit the church and identify many buildings of very early architecture; very little demolition and replacement of buildings had occurred in the last few centuries in Bromyard town centre. A coach drive over Bromyard Down, with a pause for views and short downland walks to observe the magnificent scenes so familiar to Marianne and her children, completed the day's outing.

Thursday, 22 May, our last day, was filled with further visits. We began at Leigh Court Tithe Barn (a few miles from both Boughton House and Alfrick) built in 1340s for the tithes of the monks of Pershore Abbey. This is the largest tithe barn in England with a nine cruck oak structure which would surely have been known to Marianne and family and probably to ECG herself. We then travelled to Kempey, where we visited the two village churches. St Mary's was built early in the 12<sup>th</sup> Century and has Norman frescoes. It was sobering to realise that the frescoes, still in very good condition, were completed sixty four years after William the Conqueror arrived in England. A mile away in the same village is the Arts and Crafts Church of St Edward the Confessor, built to replace St Mary's, now under the guardianship of English Heritage, where only occasional services are currently held. The new church has contributions from Gimson, Ashbee and Barnsley, all Arts and Crafts designers of considerable repute.

After lunch in Ledbury, we travelled back to Cheshire and Greater Manchester. We had enjoyed our stay in an excellent hotel, had been very fortunate with the weather, had benefited from the good companionship that the Gaskell Society always manages to engender, but we were rather tired and ready for home - until the next Gaskell foray!

Editor adds: Many thanks to Jean for organising this amazing study tour with her usual good humour and weather. To Christine Lingard we offer many thanks for her meticulous research. And thanks are also due to Pam Griffiths for her efficient administration.

## A Note of Thanks from Rosemary Donaldson

Rosemary would like to thank everyone for the beautiful flowers that were delivered personally by Pat Heath on Sunday 25 May. These flowers are much appreciated by Rosemary following her untimely accident of the previous week whilst on a short Gaskell study tour. Rosemary had ample opportunity to study Worcestershire Royal Hospital where she received excellent care. Rosemary is now recuperating at home.

Editor adds: Rosemary goes off on a study tour and returns plastered. Well, well! We send Rosemary our very best wishes for a successful recovery after the double fracture to her right arm.

## Alliance of Literary Societies, AGM Canterbury 30 May-1 June 2014 Janet Allan

The ALS AGM week-end was hosted by the Marlowe Society in Canterbury.

The sun shone on the sixty people who gathered together at The King's School, Canterbury (as old as the Cathedral itself). Marlowe was a chorister at the Cathedral; later he went to the School and then on to Cambridge. His literary output, including seven plays, contrasts with his a very dodgy life as a spy which ended in his death in a tavern brawl – unless this was a sham and he actually escaped to the Low Countries and pretended to be Shakespeare.

Those of us who had come from afar met on Friday night to enjoy a drink with our President, Jenny Uglow. On Saturday morning we all assembled for a welcome by the Marlowe Society's Chairman George Metcalfe, followed by former Chairman Valerie Colin-Russ who spoke on the colourful life of Marlowe. Professor Richard Wilson then delivered a lecture on 'The Work and Genius of Christopher Marlowe'. A short walk in the sun took us to the statue of a scantily clad (but classical!) female outside the Marlowe Theatre. Here three colourful wreaths were laid by the Sheriff of Canterbury Mr Austen, Christopher Miles on behalf of the Society, and Tim Armstrong for the School. This combination of intellectual and physical exercise

left us in need of the excellent buffet lunch, which was followed by a commendably brief ALS AGM.

During the afternoon the Archivist, Peter Henderson, had arranged a display of the School's Walpole Collection of English Manuscripts, which included MSS from Charlotte and Emily Brontë, Ellen Nussey's description of Charlotte Brontë, a watercolour by Thackeray of Becky Sharp with Jos Sedley, and autographs by Wilkie Collins, T.S. Eliot, John Betjeman, Nelson, Dylan Thomas et al. Keith Carabine gave us a very interesting talk about another Canterbury resident, Joseph Conrad.

After a suitable interval we met for dinner at The Parrot restaurant, in an upstairs room of what may have been a Kentish longhouse in the time of Marlowe. An excellent meal was followed by the traditional readings from various members.

The following day we had a special mention at the 11 o'clock morning service in the Cathedral. Other delights included the Museum with exhibits on Marlowe, Conrad and Mary Tourtel, the creator of Rupert Bear, a river trip, the Canterbury Tales Experience or coffee and cake in the sun.

The whole weekend was a delight and I must record special thanks to the Marlowe Society, in particular, to their Membership and Social Secretary, Frieda Barker, who had worked so hard to make everything flow smoothly. She certainly deserved the bouquet which was presented to her at the dinner!

NB ALS AGM 2015 will be hosted by the Trollope Society in York, 30-31 May.

## A Week-end with Mrs Gaskell and Mr Dickens 12-14 September 2014

Howard Gregg will be leading a discussion group on two historical novels: *Sylvia's Lovers* and *A Tale Of Two Cities*.

Venue: The Green Man Hotel, Old Harlow, Essex. From Friday 12th evening until after lunch on Sunday 14th.

Cost: single room: £300; shared twin or double: £260 pp; non-resident £175.

To book or for more information please contact: Marilyn Taylor, 17 Amesbury Road, Epping, Essex CM16 4HZ, tel: 01992 572510  
e-mail: johnmarilyn2000@amesbury17.eclipse.co.uk



## Forthcoming Society Events

### Autumn Meeting

**Saturday, September 27, 2014 Methodist Church, Knutsford.**

**10.30am** Tea and coffee

**11.00am** Fran Twinn will deliver the Joan Leach Memorial Lecture: The Many 'Mes' of Mrs Gaskell

**12.30pm** approx. Lunch

**2.00pm** Geoffrey Scargill: Father and son, Absalom and Edward Watkin

**3.30pm** approx. finish

Cost £15 to include lunch, (£5 without lunch)

**Sunday September 28**

**10.45am** Placing of flowers on the Gaskell Grave at Brook Street Chapel

**11.00am** Service at Brook Street Chapel

### North-West Group

#### Manchester Meetings

The Manchester meetings will be held at 1.00pm on the first Tuesday of the month (October to March excluding January) in Cross Street Chapel, Manchester (across from The Royal Exchange).

The Chapel will usually be open from noon for lunch (bring your own, coffee available) in the Percival Room where the lectures will be given at 1.00pm.

**Tuesday 7 October**

Robert Poole: *The Pendle Witch Trials*

**Tuesday 4 November**

Paul Ross: *Attitudes of Victorian travellers and explorers towards Africa and Africans*

**Tuesday 2 December**

TBA

**Tuesday 3 February**

Karen Laird: *The Life of Charlotte Brontë*

**Tuesday 3 March**

Simon Rennie: *Ernest Jones and Chartism*

The Gaskell Society is running a day school on *Mary Barton* at 84 Plymouth Grove (written in 1847 before the Gaskells moved there) on Saturday 8 November. Angus Easson, Alan Shelston and Mike Sanders will deliver lectures.

After lunch, poet Edwin Stockdale and balladeer Jennifer Reid will offer entertainment.

Details of this and the following event will soon be on the new website:  
[www.elizabethgaskellhouse.co.uk](http://www.elizabethgaskellhouse.co.uk)

Before this major day there will be a book launch on 14 October. Carolyn Lambert author of *The Meanings of Home in Elizabeth Gaskell's Fiction* (Victorian Secrets, 2013) will sign her book in the Gaskell home.

#### Knutsford Meetings

These meetings held in St John's Church Centre will resume on Wednesday 29 October and continue on the last Wednesday of each month (excluding December) until and including April.

Buffet Lunch (£10, please pay on arrival; if not having lunch, please pay £3) available from 12.15 with literary talk and discussion led by Elizabeth Williams to follow, at about 1.30. Meetings end around 3.00.

In October we shall be studying *A Hard Night's Work*.

After this small 200 page volume, we shall move on to *The Moorland Cottage* followed by *Libbie Marsh's Three Eras*, if time permits.

#### New Year Lunch

Wednesday 14 January 2015. Further details TBA.

### Annual General Meeting

**Saturday 18 April 2015, Cross Street Unitarian Church, Manchester. Further details TBA**

# The Gaskell Society South-West

## **Sunday, 7 September, 2014, 12.30 pm**

We will hold our Summer Lunch party at the home of Boyd and Elizabeth Schlenther, 14 Vellore Lane, Bath, and as usual it will be a Bring and Share event.

If you wish to come, please phone Veronica Trenchard (01225 852155), who will confirm your booking and ask you what you would like to bring.

## **Saturday, 15 November 2014, 2.30 pm**

We welcome back to Bath Elizabeth Williams, Vice-Chairwoman of the national Gaskell Society, to talk to us about Fanny Trollope, another interesting Victorian author. The meeting will be at the usual venue of the BRLSI, Queen's Square in Bath, and we look forward to seeing as many of you as possible there.

The cost will be £2 for members of the Gaskell Society and the BRLSI and £4 for all others. Coffee and tea will be available after the lecture.

As a 'taster' for next year, our book for discussion in February will be *Cranford* and the date will be announced later.

Any queries to Elizabeth Schlenther, 14 Vellore Lane, Bath, BA2 6JQ, Tel: 01225 331763.

# London and South-East Group

## **Saturday, September 13, 2014**

Train Trip to Plymouth Grove to see Mrs Gaskell's newly refurbished home.

## **Saturday November 8, 2014**

Dr. Rebecca Styler Editor of the Gaskell Journal. 'The Maternal Image of God 1840 to 1920'. The talk will reflect Mrs Gaskell's work.

## **Saturday February 7 2015**

Dr. Ann Brooks and Bryan Haworth. 'The other side of Manchester.' Ann and Bryan will put Manchester in a social context. Their research has focused on Manchester so they are knowledgeable about the city in Mrs Gaskell's time.

## **Saturday May 9, 2015**

Dr Irene Wiltshire. 'The letters of Mrs Gaskell's daughters 1856 -1914'. These

letters have been compiled and edited by Irene and were published in 2012 by Humanities – Ebooks. She will talk to us about her work and the letters.

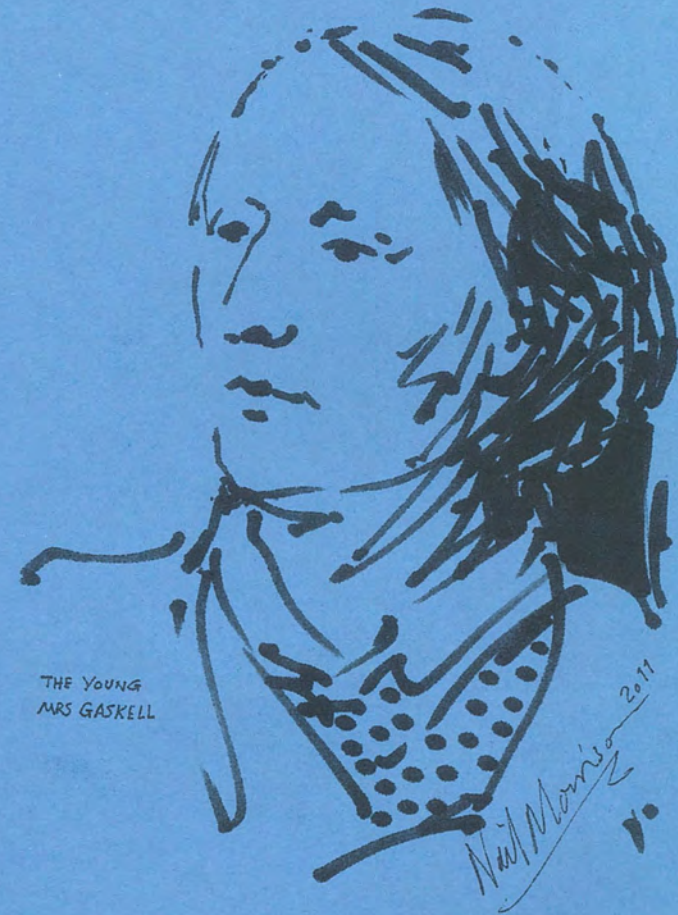
Venue: Francis Holland School, Graham Terrace, London

This is the provisional programme for 2014-2015. Domestic arrangements will be as usual.

# Notes



# The Gaskell Society



THE GASKELL SOCIETY HOME PAGE has all the latest information on meetings.  
<http://gaskellsociety.co.uk>

If you have any material or suggestions for future Newsletters, please contact Mrs. Helen Smith,  
11 Lowland Way, Knutsford, Cheshire, WA16 9AG.  
Telephone - 01565 632615 E-mail: [helenisabel@ntlworld.com](mailto:helenisabel@ntlworld.com)

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NEWSLETTER  
Spring 2015 - Number 59



## Editor's Letter

Helen Smith

Welcome to Spring 2015 Newsletter and a Happy New Year to one and all.

It will be one hundred and fifty years in November since the death of Mrs Gaskell. And it is the year of our biennial Conference, to which we hope to welcome many from home and from abroad. Details of this major happening and of the AGM are enclosed with this Newsletter. Please peruse, digest and reply.

Thinking of the home front, we are all thrilled and really excited that Mrs Gaskell's house has re-opened – it really has ... 'It certainly is a beauty.' Congratulations to Manchester Historic Buildings Trust which owns the building and to all who have contributed to this re-creation. Mrs Gaskell would be amazed at the central heating, electric lights, wonderful drains and even a lift. She would probably be deafened by the traffic passing outside and the screeching ambulances with blue flashing lights as they speed to A&E at the nearby hospital.

(See [www.elizabethgaskellhouse.co.uk](http://www.elizabethgaskellhouse.co.uk) for full details of opening hours and events)

We thank Janet Kennerley for organising the New Year lunch on 14 January, at Cottons, just north of Knutsford, the same popular venue as last year. After an exceptionally fine meal, Rosemary Donaldson recited four choice extracts from Shakespeare which were probably known to Mrs Gaskell. Christine Lingard then entertained us with amusing reminiscences from the Society's first 29 years. Many thanks to Rosemary and Christine.

It has been suggested that the Gaskell Society with its branches and many members world-wide might hold simultaneous (time zones permitting) tea parties on Saturday 14 November 2015 which is the Saturday closest to the actual anniversary of Mrs Gaskell's death on 12 November 1865. Do please bear in mind the Cranford principle of elegant economy, and no vulgarly ostentatious rivalry between branches will be tolerated. Seed-cake and Savoy biscuits should be appropriate fare on these occasions. No further guidelines will be issued.

... all that live must die,  
Passing through nature to eternity.

In early October 2014 Marjorie Cox died after a short period in a nursing-home. Marjorie was a fine academic historian who always preferred research to teaching and a talented violinist who greatly enjoyed playing chamber music. Marjorie contributed to the Newsletter in the past. She had long been a leading light in her local history society and was very much liked, and will be very much missed, by all who knew her. Our condolences to her family-in-law as she no longer had any living blood relations.



On 23 October 2014 Doreen Pleydell reached the end of her very long and very active life. I am deeply moved that she dictated the article for this Newsletter only four days before her death in hospital.

Doreen and her husband John were regular attenders at all Gaskell events since the Society began in 1986. Doreen served on the Committee (hosting the meetings), entertained members from home and overseas and had latterly become a regular contributor to the Newsletter. We shall sorely miss Doreen with her pertinent remarks at the Wednesday meetings, and at all times we shall miss her positive, forward- and outward-looking attitude to life. We send our deepest sympathy to John and to the family. We look forward to John's continuing presence at our local meetings.

The words written by William Gaskell for his dear wife's memorial (which survived the air attack in 1940) in Cross Street Chapel (which did not survive) ... [she was] 'endeared by her rare graces of mind and heart to all by whom she was known' could equally be applied to our departed friends.

To all alive or dead who have contributed to this Newsletter, I offer grateful thanks. Please keep writing. Christine Lingard has written an article on Marianne for the Autumn Newsletter and there will also be a report of the Conference. As ever, we appreciate Rebecca's painstaking diligence at iPrint down the cobbles in Red Cow Yard here in Knutsford.

Deadline for Autumn Newsletter: 22 July 2015.

## Charitable Works

Doreen Pleydell 19 October 2014

In 1862 it was the height of the American Civil War between the North and the South. As a consequence, the flow of raw cotton supply to England was interrupted. Many people in the cotton industry in the North West of England were without work. With no welfare support, people risked destitution, even starvation, so Mrs Gaskell decided to act. A prolific letter writer, she did not hesitate to ask both friends and acquaintances for help. She approached Charles Dickens with a request to be put in touch with Angela Burdett-Coutts, a famous philanthropist. He duly obliged. She gave generously.

Elizabeth also called upon her friends to assist in more modest ways. They were asked to provide cloth to make cloaks to protect the unemployed workers from the winter chill.

When the American Civil War ended the cotton trade resumed and the workers were re-employed. Mrs Gaskell's attention moved to other pressing social issues.

Editor adds: Doreen was on oxygen in Macclesfield District General Hospital, when she dictated this article to her son-in-law, David Rushforth. Doreen died peacefully four days later. RIP dear Doreen.

## Domestic Medicine: with Some Notes about Mercury Treatment

Angus Easson

'There was a tailor had a mouse  
(Hi teedle tum tum teedle)  
They lived together in one house...  
The tailor thought his mouse was ill...  
He gave him part of a blue pill...'

So the tailor of Ramsey treated his mouse (who died); so Elizabeth Gaskell treated one of her ducks, which, cured, went 'quacking about like a respectable, well-behaved fowl' (*Letters*, p.188; hereafter, all simple page refs are to *Letters*). What were blue pills and what was another popular medication of the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, calomel? Both pills and power are probably familiar names to modern readers of the literature of the period and the present investigation is prompted by Elizabeth Williams's talk on Mrs Frances (Fanny) Trollope, mother of Anthony. Referring to Fanny's husband, Anthony Snr, Elizabeth touched on his treating severe headaches with calomel (described by his son, Thomas Adolphus, in his autobiography, *What I Remember*, 2 vols, 1887) and briefly outlined calomel's nature – based on mercury, as were blue pills. Both were dangerous if taken incorrectly (they were often self-ministered), as Mrs Gaskell observes of a mutual acquaintance, who having been overdosed, passed into salivation (a common result of mercury) and her complexion entirely ruined.

Up until the 1860s at least, when drugs began to be more strictly controlled, many medicines and medical ingredients were readily available and many households prepared their own pills and draughts and lotions and ointments, often with ingredients, which today are unused or regarded with a certain horrid fascination. Domestic Medicine was taken for granted and guides, both medical and domestic, gave directions for preparation and use. Widely known was William Buchan's *Domestic Medicine*, first published in 1769, reaching a fifteenth edition by 1797, though seen as decidedly old-fashioned by the 1850s when Dickens gently mocks it in *Little Dorrit*: when the Meagleses are abroad, their housekeeper sits in

the window with Buchan's volume, but never reading a word (ch.16). For the mid-century, decidedly more reliable was Thomas Andrew's encyclopaedic *Domestic Medicine and Surgery* (1849). How *domestic* such medical aids were is underlined by Isabella Beeton's *Book of Household Management* (1861), which includes sections on nursing and nurses, medical advice ('The Doctor') with a list of drugs necessary to carry out instructions, and what to do in cases of poisoning from such 'domestic' items as arsenic, opium, prussic acid, and mercury.

What was the domestic medicine of the Gaskell household like? And did they resort to blue pills or calomel? Reading the letters, necessarily the main source of information, might well give the impression that the chief enemies were stomach upset and related problems of indigestion, 'liverishness' (William 'not well with his liver'; p.635), and bowels – the results in part at least of diet and a sedentary life. Mrs Gaskell herself refers to taking 'little doses of medecine', pills, and a tonic (all unspecified; e.g. pp.594, 906-7, 938). More particularly she refers to the rum and peppermint given her by a friendly girl in a Mannheim confectioner's shop as good for the headache (p.519), with the subsequent embarrassment of trying not to breathe rum over Charles Bosanquet. Not that she was adverse to alcohol as a remedy or consolation. When Meta was about to have her tonsils out and the doctor had recommended she have 'a glass of sherry at one o'clock' (p.919), her mother adds 'I think Mrs Gaskell will have one too'. Sherry was often used to boost cookery: Mrs Beeton will note that a glass of sherry improves a recipe and Mrs Gaskell in 1865 was pleased Hearn seemed very well: she was giving her sherry every day, twice (p.781). In a different way, Meta's health contributed to Mrs Gaskell's getting a good night's rest, 'owing to Meta's b—y bottle!!' (p.755), a bottle clearly for brandy, Mrs Gaskell thinking she needed more of the 'mysterious fluid' to replace Meta's store. Less heady was Mrs Gaskell's advice to an unknown lady correspondent to take a cup of hop-tea every morning (p.694).

Out and about, visiting, Mrs Gaskell clearly carried supplies, since having some with her, she could dose Mrs Littlewood's daughter with a Gregory Powder: another proprietary medicine of the period – calcined magnesia (compare our Milk of Magnesia), powered rhubarb, and ginger – a gentle laxative and 'stomachic' given in doses of one to four teaspoons 'in a little peppermint water' (Thomas Andrew: entries in *Domestic Medicine* are alphabetical). Specific remedies that Mrs Gaskell used herself sound more disturbing: she and Meta both in 1860 were 'scarified raw' by mustard plaisters (p.603). More disturbing because of poisonous qualities are Mrs Gaskell's use of aconite and of prussic acid. Aconite or monkshood (Andrew has it first in 8 finely etched and hand-coloured plates of poisonous plants), 'virulent as a poison', says Andrew, though used in the cure and relief of several diseases. Mrs Gaskell followed a process that Andrew describes for tic douloureux, she recommending it also for neuralgia in the form of an ointment – attributed by Andrew to Dr. Turnbull – Mrs Gaskell calls it viratria ointment ('viratria' is unknown to Andrew and the *OED*). Mrs Gaskell was recommended it by her

physician cousin, Henry Holland: a pin's head quantity on flannel rubbed externally on the skin where 'the agonized nerve shoots up'; she also had it rubbed on her temple (pp.250-1). The 'pin's head' suggests the caution necessary in using aconite. Yet more disturbing given its reputation is Mrs Gaskell's reference to prussic acid.

In 1860, suffering from a dreadful headache brought on by thunder, she had needed to lie down and have 'my prussic acid medicine made up' (p.912). Prussic acid, or hydrocyanic acid, is 'one of the most powerful poisons derived from the vegetable kingdom' (Andrew), notorious for its use in detective fiction and the smell of bitter almonds by which even the amateur sleuth can identify it. And yet, says Andrew, 'this most virulent poison, in the hands of a skilful physician, may be the means of snatching many a victim from an untimely grave' (Andrew, under 'hydrocyanic acid'). Mrs Gaskell's headache did not place her on the brink, but Andrew has no mention of its use for headaches, though he sets out possible uses in consumption (T.B.), cholera, and a range of less desperate illnesses, as asthma, whooping cough, hiccups, indigestion and tic douloureux. 'Affections' of the nervous system, under which headaches might be classed, could be treated by prussic acid, but no directions are given in Andrew's *'Domestic Pharmacopeia'*, since he insists it should only be prepared for medical use by a professional. Thunder, as a cause of headache, is well known and one might also note Mrs Gaskell's sensitivity, not excessive surely, to paint smells when Plymouth Grove was being redecorated, to the foul drains of the house, and most noticeably to the depressive effect, experienced particularly in Manchester, of darkness and cloudy skies (p. 745), perhaps an early example, under Manchester smoke, of SAD.

Mrs Gaskell was necessarily concerned about her children's health and we find her pressing Marianne to keep up with her steel (or iron) pills (p.297), often recommended as a strengthening pill in cases of chlorosis (the 'green sickness'), associated with female debility, including flatulence and dyspepsia, at the onset of puberty. The pills, which had iron filings as the active ingredient, were clearly preventative for Marianne, rather than cure. Meta was more of a problem or else we have more evidence from the letters. Besides tonsils and the mustard plaisters already mentioned, her mother made her take aloetic pills (p.518), a laxative made up from aloes (the Barbadoes and the Cape aloes were used only by veterinary surgeons and farriers; the Socotorine aloes for humans). By 1865, Meta was suffering severely from a painful back, which constantly threatened to bring on bouts of hysterical crying (p.741). She was prescribed meat and bitter beer, while in late 1864, at Brighton, warm sea-water douches were tried (p.744).

And so back to mercury treatment, in the domestic resources, whether for mouse, duck, or humans. Mercury was widely used and indeed until late in the nineteenth century was the chief remedy for syphilis – Restoration comedy has numerous 'sly' jokes linking spitting and the disease, since mercury brings on salivation. Indeed,

it was often suggested by later observers (no doubt a mark of their boldness!), of anyone recorded to have taken mercury in any form that syphilis was the reason. So Keats was said to be a sufferer, but while he undoubtedly took mercury in some form, it was used for a range of conditions (see W.J.Bate, *John Keats*, 1963, p.219 & fn, for a brisk refutation of the slur). Nor has anyone suggested Charlotte Brontë was syphilitic, though she declared she had a 'sharp medical discipline to undergo', clearly calomel or the blue pills. This was for 'derangement of the liver' (*Life of Charlotte Brontë*, ed. Easson. 1996. p.398) and various stomach disorders. Calomel was commonly used as a 'corrective' or 'alterative' for stomach and bowels: hence the importance of mercury-based remedies in the domestic pharmacopeia.

What then were calomel and the blue pill? In both cases the active ingredient is based on mercury, as an oxide or chloride, since pure mercury, the liquid metal, could not be taken directly. Calomel, as Isabella Beeton notes in her section on the domestic pharmacopeia, was a 'heavy white powder, without taste, and insoluble in water' (para.2658), administered in small quantities, often combined with other purgative medicaments, such as rhubarb. (How small is a small quantity? Andrew recommended, as an anti-bilious medicine, 3 to 5 grains, small indeed when 680 grains make one ounce.) Blue pills were based on mercury beaten (Andrew admits) with conserve of roses, so that the metal oxidises, and the pill then made up with 'pill mass', a variable non-active ingredient to give the pills solidity. Both calomel and blue pill were regarded as 'alteratives' for stomach and bowel disorders, settling disgestion, with mild laxative effects.

In both forms they were in general domestic use (the nearest modern parallel might be aspirin or paracetamol), often presumably with little understanding of their effects, despite warnings. Andrew cautions against the salivation that might result from too frequent or over-dosing, as with Mrs Gaskell's acquaintance. Blue pills, at hand for mouse or duck, were presumably amongst the remedies for stomach and bowels in the Gaskell household. Which leads back to Anthony Trollope Snr and his headaches. Dr Andrew deals, under Headache, with varieties of the condition, including the Nervous. Nervous headaches arise, he suggests, from a sedentary life, particularly amongst advocates, barristers, clergymen, and maiden ladies. For these classes of people, lack of exercise combined with want of a proper diet, often to dire effect. Andrew's various recommendations, apart from exercise and proper eating, include 'mercurials' – calomel or blue pills. Hence the failed lawyer and failed farmer, Trollope Snr, brooding on his wrongs and his sons' educational short-comings, developed nervous headaches and so had recourse to calomel. In what doses he took it or how frequently is unknown, but he is more than likely to have over-dosed, and in the end, without any real occupation, seeing his unreasonable aspirations for his sons frustrated, without exercise, the effects are likely to have been adverse rather than beneficial.

Endnote: A friend, to whom I mentioned this article, said that his mother in the 1940s used to dose him with calomel pills, for liverishness.

## Elizabeth Gaskell and Charles Thurstan Holland – another Liverpool connection

AJ Lerner

Elizabeth Gaskell was a descendant of the Holland family through her mother, Elizabeth (1764-1812). The wide ramifications of the Holland family extended to Liverpool, in the shape of her maternal grandfather Samuel Holland (1734-1816), as has been documented by Christine Lingard.<sup>1</sup> It also encompassed relatives qualified in the medical profession, including her maternal uncle Peter (1766-1855) and, perhaps most notably, his son and Elizabeth Gaskell's cousin Henry (1788-1873), later Sir Henry Holland, 1<sup>st</sup> Baronet,<sup>2</sup> from whom she may on occasion have received medical advice, for example for the treatment of headaches with sal volatile.<sup>3</sup>

In my work as a doctor in Liverpool, with an interest in medical history, I was fascinated to learn of Dr Charles Thurstan Holland (1863-1941), whose portrait by Copthall hangs in the Liverpool Medical Institution (where I currently hold the position of Honorary Librarian). Knowing something of Elizabeth Gaskell,<sup>4,5</sup> and of her Thurstan Holland relatives, perhaps most notably Edward Thurstan Holland (1836-1884) who married her eldest daughter Marianne (1834-1920), it seemed to me inevitable that Charles Thurstan Holland must be related to the author, and so it has proved to be, albeit the relationship is a distant one.<sup>6</sup>

Their common ancestor would appear to be John Holland of Mobberley (1656-1712/3). He was the father of sons, John and Thomas, both born in 1690 and possibly twins. John Holland (1690-1770) was the father of Samuel Holland, Elizabeth's maternal grandfather. Thomas Holland (1690-1753) initiated a line of Thomas Hollands (born 1725/6, 1760, and 1794), the latter being the Reverend Thomas Crompton Holland (1794-1861), who was the father of William Thomas Holland, the father of Charles Thurstan Holland.<sup>6</sup> Hence, Charles Thurstan Holland's great-great-great-grandfather was the great-great-uncle of Elizabeth Gaskell.

Charles Thurstan Holland was born in Bridgwater, Somerset, and trained in medicine at University College in London, qualifying in 1888. He became a general practitioner in Liverpool, based in fashionable Princes Street, and also worked as one of the senior assistants to Robert (later Sir Robert) Jones (1857-1933), an orthopaedic surgeon who held a free Sunday clinic in Elson Street. It was here that Thurstan Holland's interest in X-rays, which was to shape his whole subsequent career, first developed.<sup>7</sup>

Robert Jones was consulted about a boy who had shot himself in the hand. When the pellet could not be detected on surgical probing, the possibility of using the

new-fangled X-rays was considered, and the help of the head of the physics department at the University of Liverpool, Oliver Lodge (1851-1940), was solicited.<sup>8</sup> Thurstan Holland was present when the X-ray was undertaken on 7th February 1896, locating the bullet embedded in the third carpo-metacarpal joint, as subsequently reported in *The Lancet* on 22<sup>nd</sup> February.<sup>9</sup> From this beginning, Jones purchased X-ray apparatus and asked Thurstan Holland to operate it, initially from quarters in the basement of the Royal Southern Hospital in Liverpool, moving to the Royal Infirmary in 1904 where Thurstan Holland stayed until his retirement in 1923. In 1896 alone, Thurstan Holland undertook 261 clinical radiological examinations, as well as, on 23<sup>rd</sup> October 1896, that of a mummy bird. This took a three-minute exposure and Thurstan Holland apparently said that it was 'a relief to have something to examine that would keep still and which was not frightened by our apparatus, the sparks, and so on'. This study effectively initiated the application of radiological techniques to the study of ancient antiquities.

During the First World War Thurstan Holland held the rank of Major in the Royal Army Medical Corps, and was Consultant Radiologist to Western Command. His very first radiological experience proved useful, as he developed a depth finder to assist in the radiological detection of bullets in injured soldiers.

Thurstan Holland had a distinguished career in radiology, publishing over 100 papers in the national and international literature, twice serving as president of the Roentgen Ray Society (1904 and 1916) and then of its successor society, the British Institute of Radiology in 1929. He was President of the first International Congress of Radiology in London in 1925. Some of his radiological apparatus is on display at the Victoria Museum, Brownlow Hill, in Liverpool.

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## Victorian Women Novelists, Gossip and Creativity

Brenda McKay

In a paper on Elizabeth Gaskell and Gossip, as yet unpublished but delivered to the Gaskell Society, Elizabeth Williams concludes: 'I could never refute the idea of Mrs Gaskell as a gossip – her letters provide far too much evidence to the contrary' (p10). This is a sentiment with which one readily agrees. But, as Mrs Williams also shows, a love of 'news' and 'stories' (though occasionally malicious) is bound up with the art of story-telling. This art of course requires other ingredients, like accurate research and imaginative reconstruction. Mrs Gaskell's female peers also were much addicted to gossip as, arguably, most creative writers are. On hearing that Tottie Fox was about to marry an unknown man in Italy, Mrs Gaskell wrote to her much-loved friend's father: 'My dear Mr Fox,/ ... *Do be a woman* and give *all possible details*...[:] my, our curiosity CAN'T [wait]... [Y]ou can't write enough'.<sup>1</sup>

In this letter Mrs Gaskell concedes her passion for unconstrained, easy chat about persons and social incidents, especially about someone well-known to her – all food for the imagination. She also suggests, half-jokingly, that scandal is a female aberration, and that Mr Fox needs to 'be a woman' to relay very detailed information; Mrs Gaskell here nods playfully to the myth of women being, quite simply, gossips – an attitude quite prevalent among many educated men roughly between 1770 and 1900. This bias implied that education should be closed to women, since whereas intellectual men were 'by nature' philosophers, women would taint philosophy and rigorous thought into back-biting.

Heaven forbid that we should buy into this misogynist myth! After all, the pleasures of gossip are hardly altered by gender or cultural background. Nevertheless, this paper – to be presented in instalments due to lack of space – will show that almost all these accomplished Victorian women writers enjoyed 'talk' (just like their male counterparts): George Eliot, Charlotte Brontë, Harriet Beecher Stowe, Jane Welsh Carlyle and Harriet Martineau: and the last two were certainly the most spiteful. We revere certain writers as icons, and don't like mean comments about them. We shall, however, look at some of these, since bitters are said to be wholesome. And why, we might well ask, did Jane Carlyle think, bizarrely, that Mrs Gaskell was actually a 'dangerous' distorter of information?

Of course each wrote many available details about female (and male) writers, whom they would have seen either as role models, competitors, or irritating imitators. But it must be stressed that all these women were also exemplars of 19<sup>th</sup>-century earnestness, eager to do good and contribute to the wealth of humanity. So far from matching the myth that 'educated' women debased intellectual discourse, I hope to show that lapses into aggressive tongue-wagging was – at times – a process by which scandal, related eagerly, led to guilt and consequently to re-assessment, and a new engagement with details in an attempt at understanding human action.

Gossip could crystallise into art. Or, occasionally, it led simply to guilt followed by retraction, or quarrelling such as happened when Charlotte Brontë fell out permanently with Harriet Martineau over the latter's public criticisms of *Villette* as (frankly) too obsessively erotic – this despite earlier vows of 'eternal friendship' (*G.L.*, p.96). George Eliot could write pleading letters to friends begging for discretion after indulging in gossip – for instance about Agnes Lewes, her beloved partner George Henry Lewes's legal wife. And typically, Mrs Gaskell wrote after a letter containing racy details about the 'very vain' Effie Gray (who took steps to annul her marriage to Ruskin on the grounds of non-consummation; Ruskin himself 'forgave her many scrapes in Venice'): 'Oh! Mr Forster, if you don't burn my letters as you read them I shall never forgive you!' (*G.L.*, p288). This particular letter – which Elizabeth Williams quotes in detail, and shows to be nuanced with shifts in tone and attempts to be fair, and even sympathises with Effie's difficult situation – nevertheless ends thus: 'She [Effie] really is very close to a charming character; if she had had small pox she should have been so. I'm sure you'll not repeat what I've said...' (ibid). This is a *bon mot* worthy of Thackeray's comment that Becky Sharp would have been a good woman on £10,000 a year. As Mrs Gaskell conceded to a correspondent in March, 1860: 'I still consider you as a perpetual fount of literary gossip; for which I feel rather thirsty, having had none for a long time' (*G.L.*, 604). Naturally Mrs Gaskell was aware of the dire consequences of indiscretion – as she shows in *Wives and Daughters*, when Mrs Gibson is found to have been listening behind the door to her doctor husband's confidential discussion with a patient, and doesn't have the intelligence to quite grasp that she has done wrong by repeating what she had heard.

There were times when gossip could be extremely judgemental, in line with narrow, strict 'Victorian morality'. One might wonder who was behaving *least* ethically: the victim or the gossip? Some artists were deeply wounded by cruel talk; but, as Charlotte Brontë commented in her Preface to the Second Edition of *Jane Eyre* after some poison darts had been shot at her by reviewers, 'Conventionality is not morality. Self-righteousness is not religion, [...] and appearance should not be mistaken for Truth'. Gossip is itself on occasion misused in an attempt to whitewash acts of malicious aggression as in the case of Miss Rigby's notorious review of *Jane Eyre*. Certainly, also, scandal could cement friendships between women, especially when they shared the same prejudices; piquant information also bonded people even when it cut across a wide spectrum of social attitudes. Awareness that gossip could stereotype – and only told one version of a story, which in itself was impossibly crude and condemnatory – certainly was an element that sparked creativity in these artists. Bare facts that were rigid and conformist were in fact insufficient to give a rounded picture. Creative thinking and empathy were needed to delineate the whole anecdote comprehensively.

Like Shakespeare himself, many of these women writers also, of course, utilized older histories, or tales in current circulation. That most stately of novels, *Sylvia's Lovers* (1863), was a combination of topographical study, research, interviews,

gossip, and a myth-making project, all going back in historical time, and transmuted by the novelist's fecund imagination into a fine work of art. The narrator intimates as much about the complexity of narrative in the concluding Chapter, 45: '[T]he memory of man fades away. A few old people still tell you the tradition of the man who died in a cottage somewhere about this spot, – died of starvation while his wife lived in hard-hearted plenty not two stones-throw away. This is the form in which popular feeling, and ignorance of the real facts, have moulded the story. Not long since a lady went to the Public Baths ..., and had some talk with the bathing woman; and, as it chanced, the conversation fell on Philip Hepburn and the legend of his fate'.

"I knew an old man when I was a girl," said the bathing lady, "as could niver bide to hear the wife blamed... [H]e used to say as it were not fit for me to be judging; that she had her own sore trial, as well as Hepburn hisself."

To what extent this itinerant narrator is Mrs Gaskell herself, and how factual such pictures are, we can never be certain; they may be disingenuous inventions of the author's, to give her story verisimilitude. What Mrs Gaskell would definitely have heard on her visit to Whitby were details about the 1793 riots in that town – a public outburst of rage at the tragedies caused to families by the harsh practices of the Press-gang. As a consequence, an old man of 70, William Atkinson, was hanged by judicial process at York castle – an event which Gaskell used in *Sylvia's Lovers*. Mrs Gaskell in fact lodged with old Atkinson's descendants while in Whitby. The daughters of the family remembered 'with distinctness their grandmother, Mrs Huntrods,... being closeted day after day with Mrs Gaskell at 1 Abbey Terrace', for the novelist to ascertain all she could about the affair, so certainly some elements of these chats were put into the story: Mrs Gaskell's gregariousness and ability to be class-mobile benefited her greatly in such encounters.<sup>2</sup> Mrs Gaskell also applied to the Admiralty for accurate information about attacks on the Press-gang's headquarters and did research in the British Museum. She also chatted to a well-known Whitby character, 'Fat old Fish Jane' (ibid). This mixture of gossip, painstaking research, the author's private, unknown and *personal* experiences, and imagination tells us something about the creative process; and the *modus operandi* used here was certainly also utilized for research into Charlotte Brontë's *Life*. Of *Sylvia's Lovers* George Eliot wrote that she hoped it was 'finding a just appreciation. It seems to me of a very high quality, both in feeling and execution'.<sup>3</sup>

A similar reinterpretation from local narrative, embroidered by the imagination from local myth, came to George Eliot as inspiration for her 'difficult' novel, *Romola* (1863). This historical romance, set in late 15<sup>th</sup>-century Florence, has a particularly exceptional, even remarkable character, Eliot's 'Macchiavel', Tito Melema, who brings the novel into great vividness whenever he appears. Tito's role in the book is that of a beautiful, amiable young man's psychology – his slow descent into corruption and evil, until he inflicts terrible betrayals on his adoptive



father and everyone else he comes into contact with. The germ of his story derived from a narrative of 'noble vengeance' told to Eliot by an old German general, which she recorded in her Journal:

A man of wealth in Rome adopted a poor boy he had found in the street. This boy turned out a great villain and having previously entered the church managed by a series of arts to possess himself of a legal title to his benefactor's property, and finally ordered him to quit his own house, telling him he was no longer master. The outraged man killed the villain on the spot. He was imprisoned, tried, and condemned for murder. When in prison he refused to have a confessor. He said, "I wish to go to Hell, for he is there, and I want to follow out my revenge."<sup>4</sup>

The novel itself ends where the adoptive son, having been stalked by his betrayed and abandoned father for years, is captured by the old man near the river. Exhausted by age and suffering and intense excitement, the old man himself dies after strangling his son. The two are found dead, inseparable, with the father's hands still clutching his son's throat and neck. In her Journal Eliot wrote: 'Killed Tito in great excitement!' <sup>5</sup> The Nemesis is here completed.

About 6 years earlier, Mrs Gaskell had been profoundly moved by her reading of Eliot's *Scenes of Clerical Life* (1857) and *Adam Bede* (1859). She experienced disquiet at the news, after much ramification of rumour, that the writer was actually the 'notorious' Marian Evans, about whom there was considerable scandal (as 'a translator of atheistic books from German, the open lover of the already-married George Henry Lewes, and the erstwhile Editor of the radical *Westminster Review*'). But Mrs Gaskell ultimately re-assessed her initial, rather hostile views on Eliot; and, agog for information, wrote to George Smith, lamenting the family's 'isolation from the usual sources of gos[sip]':

Curiosity comes before friendship ... send us PLEASE a long account of what she [George Eliot] is like &c &c &c &c, – eyes nose mouth, dress &c for facts, and then – if you would – your impression of her, – which we won't tell anybody ... Oh! Do please comply with this humble request (G.L., 586-7).

To Eliot, Mrs Gaskell had written a few admiring letters, finally writing:

Since I have heard, from authority, that you are the author of [*Clerical Scenes* and *Adam Bede*], I have read them again; and I must, once more, tell you how earnestly fully, and humbly I admire them. I never read anything so complete, and beautiful in fiction, in my whole life before. I said 'humbly'... because I remembered Dr Johnson's words (G.L., 592).

Dr Johnson's words had been addressed to Hannah More, a writer whose

unremitting, fulsome flattery provoked him: 'Dearest lady, consider what your flattery is worth, before you bestow it so freely.'<sup>6</sup>

Though perhaps writing, in part, tongue-in-cheek to Eliot, Mrs Gaskell still self-effacingly places herself, metaphorically, at the feet of a woman she considered a literary giant. This is too modest. As Barbara Hardy has justly asserted, '*North and South*, *Cousin Phillis*, and *Wives and Daughters* played a part in the making of *Middlemarch*, and stand comparison with it'.<sup>7</sup> Mrs Gaskell added that she rated Eliot's novella, *Janet's Repentance*, above all – a work of fiction somewhat controversial when it first appeared. In some respects based closely on knowledge of and gossip about people Eliot knew in her youth, it is about a wife-beating, drunken lawyer, and his noble wife's desperate efforts to overcome her own alcoholism – a theme that alarmed Eliot's publisher, Blackwood. The redoubtable Harriet Martineau was pleased to proclaim this work as pervaded with 'a moral squalor as bad as Dickens's ugliness'.

Those familiar with the large-hearted tolerance of Eliot's novels might be surprised at her occasional severity of judgement and mordant wit when turning to her fine journalism, written mostly before she embarked on fiction-writing. Also, the letters written before the self-conscious days of her fame, but after her abandonment of the Calvinist Evangelicalism which blighted her youth, are often extremely lively. To a correspondent she wrote about the novelist, playwright, abolitionist and religious fanatic, Hannah More (who had annoyed Dr Johnson):

I am glad you detest Mrs Hannah More's letters. I like neither her letters nor her books, nor her character. She was that most disagreeable of monsters, a blue-stocking – a monster that can only exist in a miserable state of society, in which a woman with but a smattering of learning or philosophy is classed along with singing mice and card-playing pigs' (G.E.L., 1, 245).

The point made – delineated with more sophistication in her later essay, 'Silly Novels by Lady Novelists' – is that incompetent writings by badly-taught women increased prejudice against female education as well as against women as artists, who in consequence tended to be judged 'incapable by nature' and not quite 'respectable'; worse, 'to have written well – for a woman'. Initially resentful of Calvinist writers like More, who had adversely influenced her when young, Eliot had come to enjoy 'the bracing air of independence', once liberated from being 'chained to the wretched giant's bed of dogma' on which her soul 'had been racked...' (G.E.L., 1; 125, 162). The freed, still youthful Eliot tended to react angrily toward some authors of an extreme religious bent, though she was to gain poise and objectivity after a time.

An excellent and denunciatory article which provoked some talk was written by Eliot in January, 1857, on the 18<sup>th</sup>-century poet Edward Young, much of whose verse she, as a pious girl, had learnt by heart. We might now call it *tabloidesque* because

of its sensationalist opening, followed by dramatic re-assessment of Young. The imagery is always powerful, and the piece is characterized by considerable depth. It is part of the controversy over religion and agnosticism typical of its time, which preoccupied the Victorians as much as sex has done in our own age, and was a species of gossip despite its finished elegance. It would have interested Mrs Gaskell, who as a Unitarian was tolerant of dissent of various kinds, and she noted that Eliot was the translator of Strauss.

Young's belief that decency ends with the abandonment of religious belief ('virtue with immortality expires') was an idea that infuriated Eliot. She writes: 'If it were not for the prospect of immortality, he [Young] considers, it would be wise and agreeable to be indecent, or to murder one's father; and it would be extremely irrational in any man not to be a knave'.<sup>8</sup> This article reconsiders, in a spirit of controlled rage, his character: 'an unmistakable poet' with 'a real spark of promethean fire' (*ibid*, 338) – who sees religion as a stepping-stone for worldly ambition: he feels 'something more than private disgust if his meritorious efforts in directing men's attention to another world are not rewarded by preferment in this'; he clothes 'his astronomical religion and his charnel-house morality in lasting verse, which will stand, like a Juggernaut of gold and jewels, at once magnificent and repulsive' (338); he 'believes in cambric bands and silk stockings as characteristic attire for "an ornament of religion and virtue"' (*ibid*). Boswell had thought Young's *Night Thoughts* 'a mass of the grandest poetry human genius has ever produced' (cited in *ibid*, 335); Eliot considered it vicious rhetoric, 'a clay compounded chiefly of the worldling and the rhetorician' – written by a known rake but, exceptionally, 'a pious and moralizing rake' (*E*, 340). The critique of this mixture of the 'sycophant and the psalmist' is interesting alike for its astute analysis of the dark, self-betraying, *unconscious* subtexts in his poetry and, rather unusually for its time, it's a plea for the humane treatment of animals, whom Young refers to superciliously as 'the brutes'. It is a precursor of the self-deceived men in Eliot's fiction whose religious fervour cloaks unscrupulous self-interest. It also anticipates the delightful depictions of 'animals enjoying life' characteristic of the later fiction. According to J.W. Mackail, Eliot's 'able and acrid' essay 'dealt what was for a time a fatal blow to [Young's] reputation' (cited in *ibid*, 335).

On a more mundane level, Eliot had a strong aversion to royalty, and when she mentioned kings and queens it was in a tone of ridicule: Victoria was 'our little humbug of a queen' and George I was simply a 'royal hog', and she is scathing about Young's 'lunatic flattery of George ... , attributing that royal hog's late escape from a storm at sea to the miraculous influence of his grand and virtuous soul...' [*E*, 344]. 'Certainly our decayed monarchs should be pensioned off; we should have a hospital for them, or a sort of Zoological Garden, where these worn-out humbugs may be preserved. It is but justice that we should keep them, since we have spoiled them for any honest trade. Let them sit on soft cushions and have their dinner regularly' (*GEL*, 1, 252-6). Such sentiments were unlikely to inspire high art,

although some rather cruel fun is had at the expense of the invading French King's feet in *Romola*, on both of which he had 6 toes instead of 5, and his soldiers had to wear misshapen shoes and thus run around very clumsily during the 1496 invasion of Florence, to keep the King in countenance, until his curious abandonment of his role as 'the new Charlemagne' and his about-turn back to France. The parallel with Louis Napoleon, described at the opening of 'Brother Jacob' as an 'idiot', is clear. Mrs Gaskell, by contrast, was neutral about royalty.

Thus it can be shown that idle gossip didn't prevent women from 'considering serious deliberations'. They could transmute tales and scandal into fine writing. They certainly, also, acted and wrote generously on behalf of others most of the time. And, via chatter, a little blood-letting was very likely essential to the corporate body's health.

[To be continued. Next time we shall consider, amongst other things, why Jane Carlyle so disliked Mrs Gaskell – why she'd write: '[I] can't usually *be at the trouble* to hate people ..., but... it was with a sensation wonderfully like pleasure, that I heard [of]... a prosecution commenced against Mrs Gaskell [by Lydia Robinson]'.]

#### Notes:

1. J.A.V. Chapple & Arthur Pollard (Eds.), *Letters of Mrs Gaskell*, p.540; emphasis added. Further references to be noted in text as G.L.
2. I am indebted to the late John Geoffrey Sharps for this information. See also *Mrs Gaskell's Observation and Invention* (London: Linden Press, 1970), 373-8.
3. Gordon S. Haight (Ed), *Letters of George Eliot* (London: Yale U.P., 1954-78), 11 vols, VI, 79. Referred to in the text as G.E.L.
4. Cited in Gordon S.Haight, *George Eliot: A Biography* [1968] (Middlesex: Penguin, 1985), 352.
5. *Ibid*, 365.
6. James Boswell, *Life of Dr Johnson* [1791] (O.U.P., 1980), 1328.
7. Barbara Hardy, 'Elizabeth Gaskell and George Eliot', *Gaskell Society Newsletter*, 55, 2013, p. 16.
8. 'Worldliness and Other-Worldliness: the Poet Young' in Thomas Pinney (Ed.), *Essays of George Eliot* (Columbia U. P., 1963), 338. Referenced as E in the text

## The Gaskell Broadwood Piano of 1853

Tim Austin

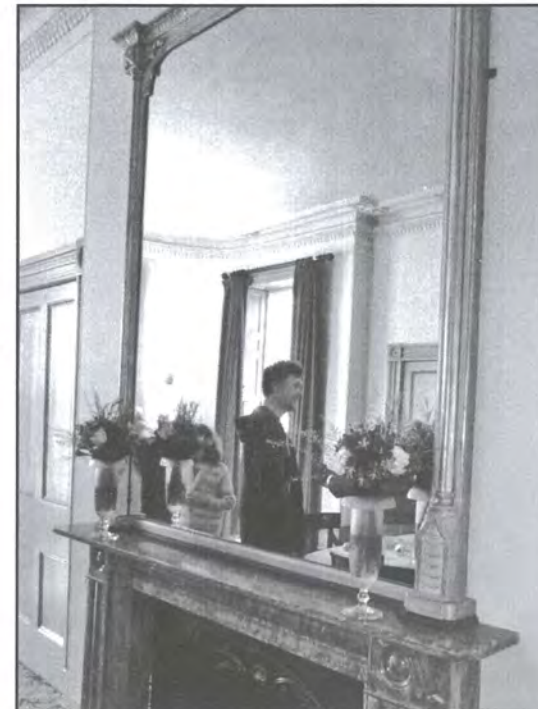
On 22 November 1852 Elizabeth Gaskell wrote to her eldest daughter Marianne, 'Polly':

My dearest Polly,  
...we are going to get a piano at Broadwood's. Who are we  
to get to choose it? ...

## 84 Plymouth Grove in 2014

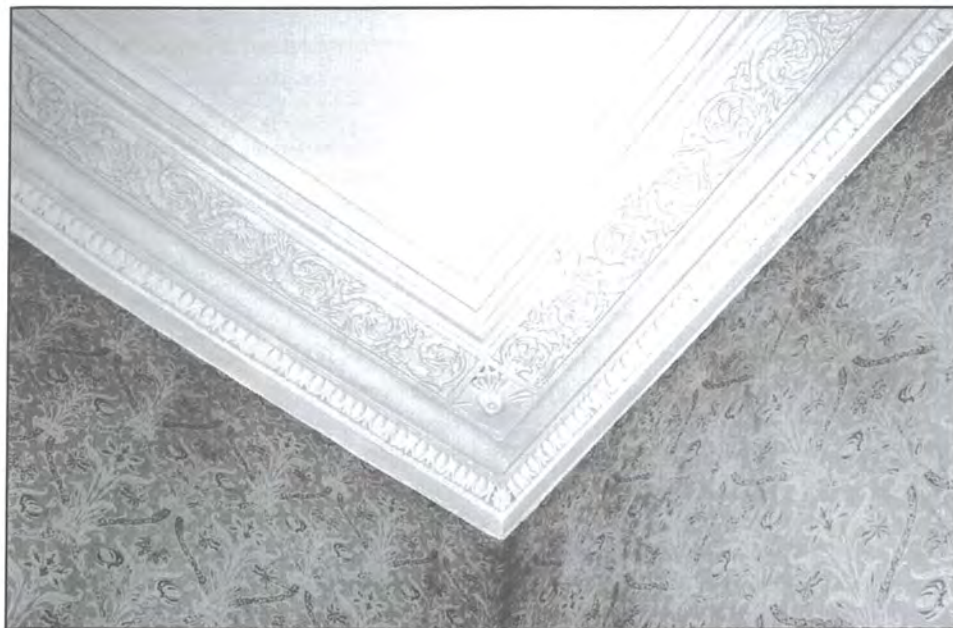


The drawing room



Through the  
dining room mirror

A corner of the drawing room



Mr Gaskell's Study



Later, at the end, she writes: '... Papa wishes Mr Bennett wd choose our piano, but as your Uncle Langshaw is to have the trade reduction of price, he might not like to do it ...'

This letter of Elizabeth sets off the order of the Broadwood piano (Boudoir Grand) which, based on the company records, was made soon after. The account record of the trade buyer shows an order entry for 3 January 1853, with the main payment being made on 5 February.

J. & S. Langshaw High St. Lancaster	
1853 Jan 3	Alfred Gaskell cash paid to Broadwood's £84 10s
1854 Feb 5	By discount £10 0s
	Balance £74 10s

Account record

The customer is given as the Revd W Gaskell and the cost to the Gaskells was 110 guineas with an extra £2 10s for a case, with the trade buyer receiving a commission of about 28%, giving an overall income to Broadwood's of £84 10s.

The trade buyer was indeed 'Uncle' Langshaw, James Pearson Langshaw, of Lancaster, then a surgeon, but who was also an organist, and had been an organist at the Lancaster Priory Church, like his father John and grandfather John before him (overall from 1772-1835). The two Johns had been commercial 'friends' of Broadwood's for some time, possibly initially personally when the first John had lived and worked in London from c1745 to 1772, and then later when his son John had trained there from 1778 to 1784. The first surviving record of Langshaw business is on 4 October 1784. The Langshaw account was Broadwood's first dedicated piano business conducted through an individual organist musician outside London (*country friend*). (John Broadwood had joined Burkat Shudi as a journeyman in 1761, becoming a partner in 1771 as 'Shudi & Broadwood'. The firm became 'John Broadwood & Son' in 1795 and 'John Broadwood & Sons' in 1808).

Elizabeth and William were friends with Pearson through his wife Emily Sharpe who was a childhood and long-term friend of Elizabeth from their Knutsford days, and still in the 1850s a regular correspondent. Emily and Elizabeth – by different family branches – were 'nieces' of Dr Peter Holland. Their children were also friends and they all met up from time to time at Manchester, Lancaster and Silverdale. Emily stayed at Plymouth Grove, for example, in April 1851.

## Marianne and her family in Worcestershire

Jean Alston

On 20-22 May, 2014, twenty four members and friends of the Gaskell Society visited the areas of Alfrick and Avenbury near Bromyard, where Marianne and her three grown-up children had lived. The details of this visit are reported in The Gaskell Society Newsletter Number 58. Although we were shown a record of Marianne's burial at Alfrick, there was no apparent evidence of the grave. Indeed, most of the graves that remained had little or no legible lettering.

Following the visit, on a morning in August, Mr Michael Hood, Churchwarden, telephoned me to say that the grave had been found. After our visit, Mr David Fowler, Editor of the Parish Magazine had written a report and stated that there was no evidence of Marianne's grave. Mrs Joyce Cooper, David's neighbour, contacted him to say that her mother had shown her the grave and that she was able to locate it. The grave was, in fact, next to the porch where we had all been standing but was obscured by ivy, valerian and other growth, as well as the script being obscured by lichen.

On 18 September 2014, accompanied by Hugh Clow an able photographer, I once again visited Alfrick Church. We were met by Michael and Bridget Hood, David Fowler and Joyce Cooper who had helped to locate the grave. Joyce also possessed several parish magazines which had records of Marianne and her family's involvement in the area. With enlargement and greater contrast of photographs, the lettering on the grave is deciphered as follows:

To the memory of Marianne widow of E Thurstan Holland of Wimbledon and daughter of Rev Wm and Mrs Gaskell of Manchester who died at Alfrick Court on September 17 1920 aged 86.

Thine eyes shall see the king in his heaven

(The Gaskell Society Committee has asked permission to place a commemorative plaque next to the grave, so that the record of Marianne's death will not be lost to future generations.)

The Parish Magazines from the 1890s revealed much further information. They reported that Marianne, William, Florence and Bryan had lived at Grove Hill, Suckley prior to the move to Birchyfield, Bromyard and that they were very active and appreciated in the parish.

Christmas 1893 is recorded in the January 1894 magazine as follows:

A very pleasant evening was spent at Suckley School Room on Christmas Day. Mrs Holland kindly presided at the pianoforte and under her able direction her Bible Class sang a number of carols in a very spirited manner, while Mr and



Miss Holland assisted, the first in playing a violin solo and the second in joining in several songs ... The Suckley Brass Band performed several pieces.

William Edward was living at Grove Hill, Suckley when he married Florence Evelyn Blanche Isdell on Wednesday 21 August 1895. There is evidence that the bride was the sister of one of his college friends.

The Parish Magazine records as follows:

... members of the Suckley Cricket Club presented the captain, Mr William E. Holland, Grove Hill, with an electro-plated stand, four cups and spoons and a toast rack.

Hearty cheers were given for Mr Holland and his bride.

The family was to leave Grove Hill in September 1895. The Rector, R. N. Kane, stated the following:

I am very sorry to have to announce that Mrs Thurstan Holland with her family are leaving Suckley at the end of the present month. They will not remove very far off, their future residence being in the neighbourhood of Bromyard, but not the less shall we miss their kind co-operation in all matters for the good of the Parish. Among these we may especially mention the Mothers' Meeting at Bachelor's Bridge, the Bible Class at Grove Hill on Sunday evenings during the winter months, and the Children's Services at the Schoolroom. Many in the Parish have also experienced very great kindness from Mrs Holland and her family in many other ways and I am certain that I am only expressing the feeling of Suckley generally when I say how much we shall all miss them ...

Marianne did not abandon Suckley. On December 30<sup>th</sup> 1995, although living at Birchyfield, Bromyard, she superintended the production of two plays *Silent Woman* and *The Area Belle* and acted as prompt on the evening.

The 1901 Census records Marianne, Florence and Bryan living at Birchyfield, Avenbury near Bromyard and William and his wife living at Froome Bank in Bromyard town. However, by 1902, Marianne, Florence and Bryan are recorded through the Parish Magazines to be well established at Alfrick Court. (Alfrick Court is approximately three miles from Grove Hill, Suckley.) In August 1902, at the celebration for the Coronation of Edward VII, Mrs Holland, of Alfrick Court gave ready consent for use of the granary, where there was '... a dinner for men, a meat tea for women and tea for children'. In 1903, Mrs Holland gave a donation of one guinea to the Clothing Club.

In 1905, before Holy Communion in Alfrick Church, a new oak reredos carved by Mr William Holland, a gift of Mrs Thurstan Holland and new altar rails, were dedicated by Rev. L. A. Fisher. The reredos and altar rails were admired during the visit of the Gaskell group in May 2014. However, we were not aware that the splendid carving had been carried out by Elizabeth Gaskell's grandson.

December 26, 1905 'Children at Alfrick School were entertained to tea by Mrs Holland. After tea each child was given a dip in the bran tub for excellent toys and ornaments given by Mr Bryan Holland. A happy afternoon and three cheers were given to Mrs Holland and Mr Bryan Holland.'

December 28, 1905 'Two concerts were given for wiping off the £5 debt incurred in furnishing the club room. Amongst those who gave assistance were Mrs Thurstan Holland and the Misses Holland.' (It is likely that, as well as Florence, the other Miss Holland was William's daughter Margaret (alias Daisy).

In 1909 the 'First Garden Fete was held at Alfrick Court. Miss Holland Secretary (Florence?) Amongst the stall holders, Mrs Thurstan Holland, Mr and Mrs W. Holland and Miss Daisy Holland.' (David Fowler, who is currently assisting us, suggests that the 1909 Garden Fete was the beginning of what is now Alfrick Show and which in 2014 attracted 4,000 visitors.)

Also recorded by the Rector R. H. Kane, 1910 'Mrs Thurstan Holland has become the Ruri-Decanal for the Deanery of Powyke.'

Records show that Marianne died whilst living at Alfrick Court and that she was buried at Alfrick St Mary Magdalene Church. In her will, she left £14,206/4/6d. Probate to her two sons, William and Bryan and to Francis Clayton Forde Esq.

In 1921, after Marianne's death, Bryan and Florence purchased Harrow Cottage, a house built in 1851 as a lodging house for visitors to the area. The views from this western side of the Malvern Hills are extensive and look out across the county of Herefordshire. The address is now 223 West Malvern Road, Malvern.

1927 18 May William Edward died whilst living at 17 Burghley Road, Wimbledon, leaving £15,734/15/7d

1933 20 January Bryan Thurstan Holland died, whilst living at Harrow Cottage, leaving £15,577/18/5d

1942 15 June Florence Evelyn Holland died, also at Harrow Cottage, aged 69, leaving £11,366/11/1d

I am informed that there is 'a small handful' of people living in West Malvern who remember Miss Holland.

There is the beginning of a literary trail in Malvern and surrounding area. The people concerned look forward to adding reference to Elizabeth Gaskell and her family. Boughton House (Worcester Golf and Country Club) was, of course, the home of Elizabeth Gaskell's cousin Charlotte; Elizabeth and her children visited Boughton House quite frequently and part of *The Life of Charlotte Brontë* was written there.



# Italy in the Footsteps of Elizabeth Gaskell

Christine Bhatt

Steps of many kinds there were in abundance for the hardy group of Gaskellians who travelled to the hill towns of Tuscany and Umbria in September 2014; but, if Elizabeth had Mr Charles Perkins (vide letter 541a), we had Anthony Cole. Not only did Anthony shepherd us with firm yet kind efficiency through a packed schedule, but he kept us well supplied with a variety of sweets, including some delicious chocolate 'Bacios' from Perugia, each containing a 'bon mot', like an Italian fortune cookie.

Thanks to Christine Lingard, we all had a copy of the route from Rome to Siena, which William had written out for the family and Christine had transcribed (vide Newsletter Spring 2014 'To Tuscany with Murray'). Elizabeth's itinerary was even more exhausting than our own, though we cannot know in detail everything that she and her daughters saw. We do know she possessed a copy of Charles Eliot Norton's *Notes of Travel and Study in Italy*, which contains quite a long piece on Orvieto, our last port of call. Gaskell's copy of Murray's handbook has marks in the margin of several pages, which may possibly have indicated artists whom Elizabeth was keen to see and include the names of Sodoma, Signorelli, Beccafumi and Pinturicchio. It is impossible, however, to know for certain when these marks were made and by whom.

Including Anthony, 18 of us gathered at Rome airport to take the coach to our base in Assisi. The first part of our journey was via the autostrada, not the old, slow road, which Elizabeth would have taken. We travelled north along the Tiber valley, past Terni, mentioned by William and where St Valentine is buried, then up the mountainside into Umbria, the green heart of Italy. We passed fields of sunflowers, their black heads now drooping in the early autumn sunshine; would Elizabeth have seen them in their bright brilliance earlier in the year, when she was here? She would probably not have stayed long enough to see the hedges of pyracantha with their bright red leaves and yellow berries... and most certainly not the fields of solar panels!

Though small, our group was split, in order to be accommodated in two of the modest hotels of Assisi, but we took our meals together in the large refectory-style dining room of Hotel La Rocca. The food was tasty and abundant, reflecting the fact that we were in Italy (lots of pasta), near Trevi, (a centre of olive oil production) and Norcia, (famous for salami). We needed such hearty sustenance in order to be ready to set off each morning at 8.00 or 8.30am into the surrounding regions.

The second day of our visit we explored Perugia, where William recommended spending a day at least. Regrettably, we had only half a day, since in the afternoon we took a local bus from Assisi to the nearby Basilica of Saint Mary of the Angels, mentioned by Elizabeth, where St Francis and his friends first lived for a time.

Our very efficient guide to Perugia, Rita, enabled us to make the most of our short visit: we marvelled at the deep Etruscan well, the Etruscan gateway, the wonderful stone fountain, surrounded by sculptures depicting seasonal activities throughout the year and the Piazza Italia where a fine sculpture of Vittorio Emanuela II looked down on us from horseback. We even found time for a brief visit to the Galleria Nazionale dell'Umbria, where one of the richest collections in Italy is housed. We made a point of viewing Duccio di Buoninsegna's 'Madonna and Child', Duccio being a favourite of Elizabeth's (vide Newsletter Spring 2014, 'To Tuscany with Murray').

Anthony had arranged a particular treat for us in the evening. A short walk brought us to the home of Roy Grant, a retired Englishman, living in Assisi, whose interests are medieval history and art. In his wonderful grotto of a home, built into the city walls, we listened to his telling of the story of St Francis, with a glass of wine in hand and exotic canapés on the table. Then we were allowed to examine the artefacts and paintings cramming his small dwelling. Many were suitably 'pre-Raphaelite', including a simple wooden crucifix, dating from 12<sup>th</sup> century.

On our way to Siena on the third day, we travelled along roads bordered by lavender and rosemary, passing by Lake Trasimeno, the fourth largest in Italy. Siena is one of many well-defended hill forts built by the Etruscans. Our enthusiastic guide to Siena, Maria Alberta Cambi, was a native of the city and keen to show us as much as possible. We learnt that Siena was famous for its banking families. We admired the vast and beautiful square, the Piazza del Campo, where the Palio takes place twice a year. Siena was a republic from the late eleventh century until 1555 and governed by the leaders of nine companies, each of whom had their own symbols. Everywhere one could see the flags and symbols of these companies, including the rhinoceros, porcupine and eagle, and there is still great rivalry between them. Maria took us to the Church of San Domenico, which holds the relics of St Catherine. We saw the fresco by the Siennese artist Francesco Vanni, who had met St Catherine around 1380. Was this the painting recommended by William? We also saw a painting of the Virgin and Child by Matteo di Sienna, dating from 1479. Maria explained that his work showed the first signs of a more natural style. Matteo is also mentioned by William. Our next stop was the Duomo, where we were very fortunate to find the beautiful marble floor uncovered. It is only open to view for two months of the year, since the building is very much in use as a church for the rest of the year. The magnificent carved pulpit, supported by lions, is by the same Nicola Pisano who carved the Great Fountain in Perugia in 1278, which we had already seen.

We could not, however, view the Maesta nor the stained glass window by Duccio, which Elizabeth would surely have seen, as they have now been moved to a museum. We did see the music books or 'choir books', large enough to be seen by many singers in the choir at once, and the frescoes by Pinturicchio. At the end of a very full day, we were somewhat revived by an almond 'dolce Toscana', distributed by Anthony in the coach on our way back.

After breakfast the next day, we walked through Assisi to the Basilica of Saint Francis, where one of the friars, our wonderful American guide, Michael, pointed out the main features of the lower and upper basilicas. The lower church was completed in 1230 and its side walls were frescoed in about 1270 by the so-called Master of St Francis. It was built in the Romanesque style and richly decorated with pictures or designs covering every inch. It was hard to take it all in, but Michael drew our attention to the famous picture of the Madonna and Child with St Francis standing to one side, by Cimabue. Climbing from the lower into the upper basilica with its soaring roof, high Gothic windows and a rose window facing almost due east to let in more light, we could imagine the wonder early pilgrims must have felt. After such spiritual delights, we were free to spend the rest of the morning wandering around Assisi to find excellent shops selling pastry, leather goods, wild boar salami and items made from olive wood, or to visit other churches or museums in the town.

After lunch our coach drove us to the church of Rivortorto, built over the site where St Francis first tried to settle. Nearby was the beautifully kept Commonwealth War Cemetery, its graves separated by marguerites in full bloom, which were attracting delicate blue butterflies. Elizabeth Gaskell's coach would have followed this, the main road in her time.

We travelled on to Spello, one of the smaller towns, where we were to visit the church of Saint Maria Maggiore to view the recently restored fresco cycle of 1501 by Pinturicchio. There was an interesting floor in the chapel, laid with tiles from Deruta, but an unusually large throng of visitors meant we had little time to take it all in.

In the evening, we were treated to a pizza supper at the Pizzeria Il Duomo in Assisi, where there seemed to be an inordinate amount of cream on the desserts. Some of us may well also remember the deep fried olives.

On Wednesday, our coach took us to the ancient Tuscan city of Cortona, one of the most important city states of the Etruscans. Important for us too, as it was the home of Luca Signorelli, whom we know the Gaskells admired. Our guide, Lisa Bidini, took us first to the church of St Margaret, where the body of the saint in her funeral sarcophagus was on display. The solemnity of the occasion was broken by the appearance of a small dog running into the church and watering the altar flowers, before running out again, obviously completely at home. Our final visit was to the Diocesan museum where we saw the painting of the Deposition by Signorelli and a beautiful Annunciation by Fra Angelico.

Our planned ferry trip to Isola Maggiore on Lake Trasimeno was abandoned since it had begun to rain in the afternoon. This gave us further opportunity to explore Assisi or time to prepare for our evening entertainment. After dinner, the group presented Anthony with a card and a leather document case, with our thanks for a wonderful tour of this beautiful region. Some of us then contributed readings, mostly

with an Italian theme. Janet Kennerley began with an appropriate extract from *A Dark Night's Work*, relating to the heroine's visit to Rome. Carolyn Lambert gave us a very enticing preview of her new book on the meanings of home for Elizabeth Gaskell. Gwen Clarke had already read the book and heartily recommended it. Gerard McCreesh amused us with three of his own poems and Christine Bhatt recited Wordsworth's poem 'On the Extinction of the Venetian Republic'. Jacqueline Tucker quoted the beginning of *Where Angels Fear to Tread* (Cortona is mentioned here). Finally Helen Shay recited her own expressive and lyrical poem dedicated to 'dear Scheherazade'.

Our final day dawned and we had yet to see the Duomo of Orvieto. 'With the exception of the Cathedral of Siena, there is no church in Italy in which the Italian Gothic appears in freer development of beauty than in this' (*Notes of Travel and Study in Italy* by Charles Eliot Norton). Our guide to the Duomo was Chiara Furiani, who explained the story of the miracle of Corpus Christi in 1263, which led to the building of the first structure in 1290. We had come to see the Cappella di San Brizio, the chapel which Fra Angelico was commissioned to decorate. In 1447 he had completed two of the eight sections of the vault, he was then summoned to Rome and did not return to Orvieto. In 1490, Luca Signorelli was called in to complete the work. Chiara pointed out to us two figures in black in the frescoes, depicting Fra Angelico and Signorelli. Artists were, for the first time, beginning to include themselves in their work.



Gaskell Society members in front of the Orvieto Cathedral, Umbria

After our visit to the Duomo, we enjoyed a convivial lunch, sitting under large umbrellas, fortunately, as there was a sudden heavy shower before the meal had ended. This gave us a good excuse to linger over our pork and truffles or shrimps and calamari, washed down with fine Orvietan white wine.

On our return to Rome airport, while trying to find the centre of Ronciglione so that we could follow Elizabeth's route more closely, our helpful coach driver found himself well and truly stuck. He had to reverse uphill, guided by two local men. We held up the traffic for some time, though no-one seemed to mind. ECG would have approved!

## North and South: an Experience

Helen Shay

Please forgive the informal and personal tone of this, my first article for the Newsletter. (For the next Newsletter, I have been asked to write upon the legal situation regarding copyright in the nineteenth century, for which I shall don my lawyer's hat and – given the nature of the topic – am likely to be apologising instead for being over-turgid.)

The impetus for offering this account arose from conversations during last autumn's excellent tour 'In the Footsteps of Mrs Gaskell' to Assisi, when it was suggested that it might be of interest to members. I have been in the Society for nearly twenty years (having a lifetime love of Elizabeth Gaskell's work, being originally a student of Alan Shelston at Manchester University when I took English as my first degree and fell in love with her writing). It therefore seemed natural to offer to present an event for York's inaugural 'Festival of Ideas' in 2013 – which happened to be on the theme of 'North and South' – based on Mrs Gaskell's book which ultimately took that title and which has always been my favourite novel. It is with as much delight that I now recount the experience – a sheer labour of love – to members.

The initial approach for this came through the University of York, where I currently work, via its Centre for Lifelong Learning, with whom I teach some drama-writing and who are keen to see their tutors represented in the Festival. In 2014 for the 'Order and Chaos' theme, I presented an evening featuring women's WW1 poetry. The Festival is a mixture of renowned speakers and smaller events, such as my own. At the 2013 Festival our President, Dr Shirley Foster, was amongst the former, alongside Heidi Thomas who dramatized *Cranford* for the recent TV series, and it was good to see the work of Elizabeth Gaskell featuring so prominently.

Because I have worked with several local actors around York, I knew that there was a pool of very able readers available and also a talented director, with whom I

had worked before. Therefore I decided to present a dramatized 'nutshell' version of *North and South*. Whilst I do not profess to be an Andrew Davies, it was hard to resist the temptation of an opportunity to work with Mrs Gaskell's wonderful text, which has in any event an insuppressible dramatic quality of its own, especially in her dialogue. Unfortunately Richard Armitage was unavailable to reprise his role as John Thornton, but I knew I would be well-served by my group of local actors.

I therefore set about telling the basic story of the book through several pivotal scenes, which especially illuminated the theme. One which had to be included was Margaret Hale's initial meeting with John Thornton and details such as the concern over the wallpaper at the family's new home in Milton Northern, which Gaskell uses so tellingly to convey character and environment. Similarly the tense first meeting with Mrs Thornton and the climactic scene at the mill during the strike had to be featured, along with other major incidents. I connected each scene read by the actors with interlinking narrative which I delivered in order to give an overview and also to touch upon relevant biographical links to Elizabeth Gaskell, until we reached the final happy ending, when Margaret's love for John can no longer be held back.

One of the most difficult aspects in the process of scripting this event was deciding on elements from the novel which had to be left out, when they are all deserving of dramatic exploration. However, 'Poor Frederick' had to be kept to one side, along with his troubles during his naval career, due to time constraints. I was loathe to do so, as it's a fascinating part of the novel and the theme of the lost brother seems so essential to the author. Having read with great interest and enjoyment recently Carolyn Lambert's *The Meanings of Home in Elizabeth Gaskell's Fiction*, I have come to realise even more the importance of this theme. However, as the event was to span no more than two hours, it was a case of needs must.

I was also keen to add an addendum to the presentation in the form of a completely new scene written by me, which looked at how a modern-day Margaret Hale and John Thornton might meet. In this, my own Margaret was transformed into a social work student from Hampshire, studying at a northern university, who goes on placement and meets her supervisor, the more older and more experienced John Thornton – a tough northerner who is a little cynical and taken aback at her idealism and outspoken vigour. This scene was used to touch upon modern issues relating to the north-south divide and to contrast with the situation in Victorian times. As the Festival happened to take place just after the demise of Margaret Thatcher (whose legacy in the North still causes controversy), the scene had an additional contemporary resonance.

The event concluded with an audience discussion session, in which many salient points were raised, such as the reversed situation today where the north is seen to lack the amenities of the south whereas in Mrs Gaskell's time it became the wealth engine of the country at the forefront of technology. The changing role of women

was also discussed, particularly regarding social attitudes to Margaret protecting John from the angry strikers and also in relation to the relationship between Margaret and Bessie Higgins.

Great feedback was received, perhaps also helped by the handing round of Pontefract cakes (to represent the North / John Thornton) and Parma Violets (which seemed appropriate for the South / Margaret's softer influence). The event had a form of dress rehearsal in that it was first presented at a dinner in Langwith Senior Common Room at York University, and then later to an audience of about a hundred at the Festival. (It might be possible to restage it in future, if anyone could suggest a suitable event.)

## Book Notes

Christine Lingard

Gli Innamorati di Sylvia, Jo March, 2014. A new translation of *Sylvia's Lovers* into Italian by Mara Barbuni, with an introduction by Francesco Marroni (Vice-President of the Gaskell Society.)

Novel craft: Victorian domestic handicraft and nineteenth-century fiction by Talia Schaffer, (Professor of English at Queens College and the Graduate Center of the City of New York) Oxford University Press, 2014 originally published 2011

A collection of essays exploring how the handicraft movement serves as a way to critique the rapidly emerging industrial capitalism of the nineteenth century taking as its examples Elizabeth Gaskell's *Cranford*, Charlotte Yonge's *The Daisy Chain*, Charles Dickens's *Our Mutual Friend*, and Margaret Oliphant's *Phoebe Junior*.

Odd women? Spinsters, lesbians and widows in British women's fiction, 1850s-1930s by Emma Liggins. (Senior Lecturer in English, Manchester Metropolitan University). Manchester University Press

A comparison of representations of spinsters, lesbians and widows in British women's fiction and autobiography from the 1850s to the 1930s, who previously had been marginalised. Women writers such as Charlotte Brontë, Elizabeth Gaskell, Ella Hepworth Dixon, May Sinclair, E.H. Young, Radclyffe Hall, Winifred Holtby and Virginia Woolf, began to feature such women as central characters.

Learning how to feel: children's literature and emotional socialization, 1870-1970. Ute Frevert [and others]. Director at the Max Planck Institute for Human Development Oxford University Press A collection of essays by twelve authors, which explore the ways in which children and adolescents learn not just how to express emotions that are thought to be pre-existing, but actually how to feel.

Chapter 1 is entitled 'Mrs Gaskell's Anxiety.'

The informed air: essays by Muriel Spark; edited by Penelope Jardine. New York: New Directions

A new collected edition of the essays of the distinguished Scottish novelist who died in 2006. It includes her essay on Mrs Gaskell and several essays on the Brontës – Emily Brontë – The Brontës as teachers – and My favourite villain: Heathcliff.

## Book Review

Helen Smith

Aventurine, by Edwin Stockdale (Red Squirrel Press, 2014, £6)

Aventurine is a slim volume of poems skilfully crafted by our young member Edwin Stockdale.

Mr Stockdale writes in unrhymed stanzas and uses the present tense. His language is minimalist but beautifully picturesque. He captures an atmosphere of serenity in his verse which we need in the bustle of the 21st century.

The essence of the opening of *Sylvia's Lovers* is contained in 'Monkshaven'.

'Snowdrops' distils *Ruth* into deeply moving vignettes. As in the original novel, nature colours the stanzas which vary in shape and number of lines. This is the saddest and longest of the poems.

'Stile' glimpses the beginning of *Mary Barton* and the sense of foreboding hangs over the whole poem

Weighted clouds loom over the indigo sky.

'Corrections' (published in the last Newsletter) pinpoints the different writing modes and very different lives of Mrs Gaskell and Charlotte Brontë.

*Jane Eyre* is recreated in a charming and powerful sequence of verses set in landscapes of northern England. The crisp choice of language sharpens our senses:

Jane takes the night air,  
black as a murder of crows.  
A nye of pheasants skulk  
in the bushes.

The concluding verse in this collection 'Gardens of Menabilly' links the Brontës, and Daphne du Maurier as the ghost of Rebecca emerges through the rusted gates of Menabilly (Manderley).

This is an enthralling volume for lovers of poetry and the nineteenth century authors whose works feature in the verses. Without prior knowledge of the works, the lines could almost stand alone as poetry of nature. I most warmly commend this volume to all our members and congratulate Edwin on this enchanting, engaging and moving volume.

## ~ Forthcoming Events ~

### Gaskell Society Annual General Meeting

**Saturday 18 April 2015, Cross Street Unitarian Chapel, Manchester**  
Please see enclosed leaflet for details and application form.

### Conference

**Friday 17 – Monday 20 July 2015, Cober Hill, YO13 0AR**  
Please see enclosed leaflet with details and application form

### Autumn General Meeting

**Saturday 26 September 2015, Knutsford Methodist Church**  
President Shirley Foster will deliver the Joan Leach Memorial Lecture on Elizabeth Gaskell and American Friends. Further details TBA

## North-West Group

### Manchester Meetings

These are held in Cross Street Unitarian Chapel, which will open at 12 noon for a bring-your-own lunch, followed by talk at 1.00pm.

The next two meetings 3 February (Karen Laird: *The Life of Charlotte Brontë*) and 3 March (Elizabeth Williams: *The Fallen Woman in Literature and Life*) will complete the winter season.

The Manchester meetings will resume on Tuesday 6 October. Thereafter on the 1st Tuesday of November, December, February 2016 and March 2016) Speakers and subjects TBA

### Knutsford Meetings

These meetings are held in St John's Church Centre on the last Wednesday of the month, ending on 29 April and resuming on 28 October.

Buffet lunch available from 12.15. Elizabeth Williams will speak and lead the discussion afterwards. *The Moorland Cottage* is the work to be studied.

## The Gaskell Society South-West

**Saturday, 21 February 2015, 2.15 pm:** We will hold our discussion group on *Cranford*, and there will be only the one session. It will be held at Bren Abercrombie's house, 12 Mount Road, Lansdown. The cost will be £3 per person, and we ask that the fee be brought on the day. Numbers will be limited to 12 participants. Please phone Bren on 01225 471241 to book your place.

**Sunday, 22 March 2015, 3.00 – 5.00 pm at St Mary's Church Hall, Bathwick**  
By popular demand, we will have another literary quiz with homemade cake and tea. The quiz will cover the years 1800 to 1920, and as last year, there will many many categories and much fun! The cost will be £7.50 per person, and we request that you bring the money on the day. Parking will be available. Please phone Elizabeth Schlenther on 01225 331763 if you would like to book a place.

**April Meeting:** There will be a meeting in April, but the date and talk are still being organised. More details TBA



**Summer Lunch: Details TBA**

Queries about any of our events to: Elizabeth Schlenther, 14 Vellore Lane, Bath, BA2 6JQ, Tel: 01225 331763 or via email: [eschlenthert@googlemail.com](mailto:eschlenthert@googlemail.com)

## London and South-East Group

**Saturday 7 February 2015**

Dr Ann Brooks and Bryan Haworth: 'The other side of Manchester'. Ann and Bryan put Manchester in a social context. Their research has focused on Manchester so they are knowledgeable about the city in Mrs Gaskell's time.

**Saturday 9 May 2015**

Dr Irene Wiltshire: The Letters of Mrs Gaskell's Daughters 1856-1914. These letters have been collected and edited by Irene and were published in 2012 by Humanities – Ebooks.

Venue: Francis Holland School, Graham Terrace, London  
Domestic arrangements as usual.

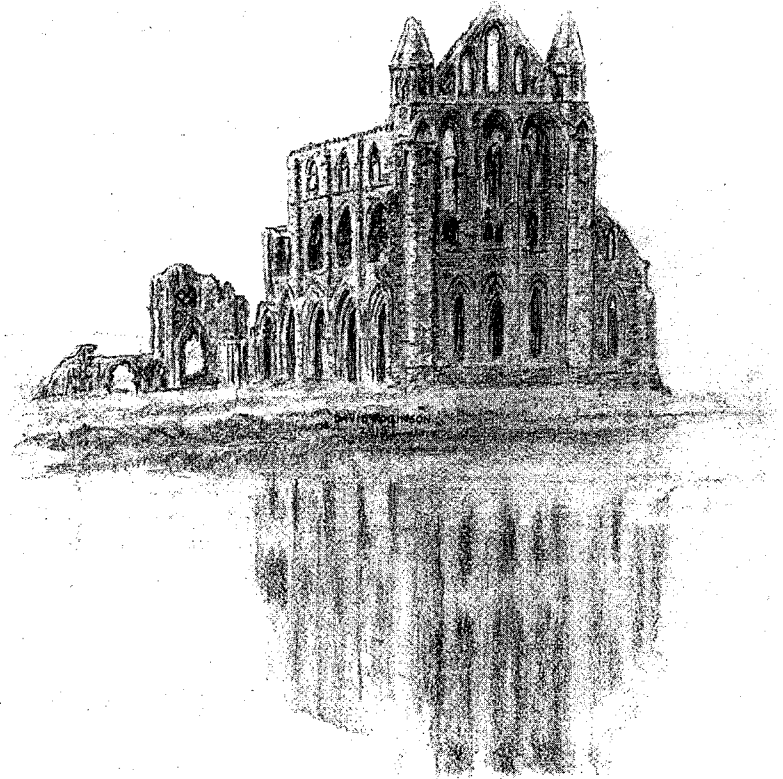
## Alliance of Literary Societies Annual General Meeting

The ALS AGM will be hosted by the Trollope Society in York, 30-31 May.

All Gaskell Society members are welcome.

(See website [www.allianceofliterarysocieties.org.uk](http://www.allianceofliterarysocieties.org.uk))

# The Gaskell Society



THE GASKELL SOCIETY HOME PAGE has all the latest information on meetings.  
<http://gaskellsociety.co.uk>

If you have any material or suggestions for future Newsletters, please contact Mrs. Helen Smith,  
11 Lowland Way, Knutsford, Cheshire, WA16 9AG.  
Telephone - 01565 632615 E-mail: [helenisabel@ntlworld.com](mailto:helenisabel@ntlworld.com)

**Treasurer:** Clive Heath, 39 Bexton Lane, Knutsford, Cheshire, WA16 9BL

**Membership Secretary:** Miss C. Lingard, 5 Moran Crescent, Macclesfield SK11 8JJ

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**NEWSLETTER**  
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## The Gaskell Journal Joan Leach Memorial Graduate Student Essay Prize 2016

**Deadline for submissions: 10th February 2016**

The Gaskell Journal invites submissions from PhD and MA students for its biennial Graduate Student Essay Competition.

The winning essay (6,000-7,000 words) will offer an original contribution to Gaskell studies, and will be published in The Gaskell Journal. Its author will receive £200 from the Gaskell Society, and a complimentary copy of the Journal.

Essays will be judged by members of The Gaskell Journal Editorial Board, with the final decision being made from a shortlist by a leading scholar in Gaskell studies.

**Please send submissions  
to the Editor, Dr Rebecca Styler: [rstyler@lincoln.ac.uk](mailto:rstyler@lincoln.ac.uk).**

**For stylesheet and application details,  
see: [www.gaskelljournal.co.uk](http://www.gaskelljournal.co.uk)**

## Editor's Letter

Helen Smith

Here we are on a high and hotfoot from the Conference – the best ever! Welcome to the Autumn Newsletter.

Our new website in glorious technicolour is now up and running:

**[www.gaskellsociety.co.uk](http://www.gaskellsociety.co.uk)**

This is the same address as before. We hope all members will be able to have access to it by some means.

The AGM held on 18 April was conducted with alacrity and efficiency by President Shirley Foster. Kate Smith and Helen Smith left the Committee. Carolyn McCreesh was elected to the Committee and all other serving members and officers were re-elected. Journal Editor Rebecca Styler delivered the Daphne Carrick lecture and gave us fresh insight into the divine image of God in female form. After lunch Frank Galvin (who has taken over from Janet Allan as Chairman of MHBT, the owner of 84 Plymouth Grove) traced the refurbishment of the Gaskell home and the redevelopment of the garden.

The Autumn Meeting in Knutsford on Saturday 26 September (see enclosure) will welcome our President, Dr Shirley Foster, to deliver the Joan Leach Memorial Lecture on Elizabeth Gaskell and her American Friends. After lunch Dr Robert Poole will speak about Mrs Gaskell, Mr Dickens, Samuel Bamford and the Preston Strike (1853 - 54).

On 30 June, Professor Mitsu Matsuoka's critical anthology honouring Mrs Gaskell on the sesquicentenary of her death, was published: *Evil and Its Variations in the Works of Elizabeth Gaskell: Sesquicentennial Essays* (Osaka, JP: Osaka Kyoiku Toshō, 2015). This volume is in English and Shirley Foster has written the preface. (Available to Gaskell Society members for £20, 33% discount from Grayswood Press – copies are now travelling over to Europe by sea.)

Another sesquicentennial book is *Place and Progress in the Works of Elizabeth Gaskell* (Ashgate, 2015) edited by Lesa Scholl, Emily Morris, and Sarina Gruver Moore. This is also a critical anthology of essays to commemorate the sesquicentenary of the death of ECG.

The North West group is eternally grateful to Elizabeth Williams for her patient and inspirational teaching as she takes us through the complete works of Mrs Gaskell. Next season Elizabeth will guide and help us as we study and interpret *Wives and Daughters* (published in parts in *The Cornhill Magazine* in 1864 and 1865, and then in 1866, in book-form by Smith, Elder and Co). Thank you, Elizabeth, for all your hard work on our behalf.

NB Change of venue for the Knutsford meetings on the last Wednesday of the month. We shall be meeting at the Brook Street Chapel Hall, formerly known as the School Room, on Adams Hill within yards of where the mortal remains of Elizabeth, William, Julia and Meta lie.

We are very happy to welcome several new members to our Society. Two have even co-authored a short message for this Newsletter. However it is with sorrow that we have had to bid a final farewell to Muriel Shepherd, née Holland. Muriel was a keen member of our Society and also of the National Trust, and was a regular attendee at our monthly meetings in Knutsford. She enjoyed the study tour to Worcestershire in May 2014. A Manchester graduate in geography she pursued a career in teaching and became head teacher at Stand Grammar School for Girls (now Phillips High School and comprehensive). Finally before retirement, Muriel worked at Peel College, Bury. And now, ashes to ashes, dust to dust, RIP Muriel.

Members may have observed in *The Independent* (Monday 13 July 2015) that Dr Jeremy Parrott has revealed that he now owns Dickens's own bound volumes of *All the Year Round*. This revelation was made in a lecture at the annual conference of the Research Society for Victorian Periodicals at Ghent University. Dickens himself has marked in the margins who wrote what. Mrs Gaskell now has two new articles on French song and poetry which had previously been attributed to the critic, Henry Chorley.

To all who have written for this Newsletter, very warm thanks. Please continue to contribute to our biannual publication. I should in particular like to thank my brother, David Robinson in Canada, for his pencil drawing of Whitby Abbey which is the cover illustration. Without members, the Society would flop; without writers, there would be no Newsletter. And as always, many, many thanks to Rebecca and family at iPrint in Red Cow Yard, tucked away in central Knutsford.

**Next deadline: Monday 25 January 2016 (Burns Night)**

## The Gaskell Society Conference 17-20 July, Cober Hill, near Scarborough Helen Smith

What a stunning rural setting within sight of the German Ocean (aka the North Sea)! We arrived on a glorious summer's afternoon. We were 85 in number and hailed from Canada, France, Greece, The Netherlands, the USA and the UK.

**Professor Angus Easson (Emeritus Professor of English, University of Salford)** Whitby and Scarborough: Nests of Singing Birds (title adapted from Dr Johnson)

Angus set the Whitby scene. He re-created for us the early religious establishment south of the watering place on the Esk, reminded us of the Synod of Whitby 664 when the date of Easter was established (in Northumbria) and very eloquently brought the poet Caedmon back to life for us. Angus then transported us to the 'Queen of watering places' (though 'not worth a guinea' according to Sheridan!) where Edith Sitwell (1887- 1964) was born to ultra-eccentric parents at their home Wood End (now Scarborough Art Gallery). Osbert and Satchereil followed. Both wrote extensively. Osbert's autobiography appeared in 6 volumes (1945-1962). Angus ended with a recording of *Façade* recited by Edith and sung by Peter Pears with William Walton's witty music (premiered privately in 1922).

After dinner **Dr Jean Alston** established us in 19th century Whitby at 1 Abbey Terrace (a 'new build' by George Hudson who financed the railway) where Mrs Gaskell, Julia and Hearn spent some 10 days chez Mrs Rose in November 1859, 'We do nothing but go out.' Mrs Gaskell also found time to write letters, absorb local colour and research the area for her next book, *Sylvia's Lovers*. Jean also showed us the Sitwell family portrait by John Singer Sargent painted in 1900.

Then **Dr Hugh Clow** brought us into the age of photography with atmospheric early photographs by Frank Sutcliffe (1853-1941) of the whaling town of Whitby.

On Saturday we awoke to sunshine and bird sound, if not birdsong, from sparrows, gulls, wood pigeons and the resident peahen.

After breakfast **Professor John Sutherland (Lord Northcliffe Emeritus Professor of Modern English Literature at UCL)** entertained us with a tour d'horizon of Victorian fiction (he has read 2,000 Victorian novels!) peppered with glimpses of facts and anecdotes from the 20th century.

**Professor Francis O'Gorman (Professor in the School of English, University of Leeds)** *Sylvia's Lovers* and the Histories of Loneliness

... though I go alone

Like to a lonely dragon ... (Coriolanus)

I wandered lonely as a cloud (To Daffodils)

These lines by Shakespeare and Wordsworth refer to the state of being one, and of being alone. That is not the intense inner agony of the soul experienced by the dying, sad and lonely men in the ballads written during and after the American Civil War. (Francis claims this meaning of the word 'loneliness' was first recorded in the OED in 1844.) The word and the feeling have developed together. Francis

emphasised the psycho-geography of Haworth, Lucy Snowe's longing for companionship in *Villette*, the sense of loneliness in great cities isolated in a bedsit.

We cheered up after a break for coffee in the sunshine.

**Dr Karen Laird (Writer and researcher in Victorian literature)** Searching for Anne Brontë

Anne died in Scarborough in May 1849 and in 2011, the Brontë Society gave her a new tombstone with corrected wording.

Karen listed the 5 stereotypes of Anne:

- 1 The littlest sister, 'considered the baby well into adulthood'.
- 2 St Anne, self-effacing, self-denying, long-suffering and rather didactic.
- 3 The Governess as in *Agnes Grey* (written before *Jane Eyre*)  
This is creative non-fiction. Poor Anne struggled and was burnt out as a teacher after 4 years. She wrote for therapy.
- 4 The Romantic Poetess

I will not mourn thee, lovely one

This verse was written after the death of her lover Revd William Weightman (1814-1842), her father's curate, who died of cholera.

- 5 The Radical Novelist  
The author of *The Tenant of Wildfell Hall* wished 'to tell the truth'.

Before lunch, questions to the panel were raised: on 'coarseness', Rousseau, loneliness, le flâneur, desert fathers, early Christians etc.

After lunch we were divided into 2 groups: one for Scarborough and the other for Whitby. On Sunday the groups swapped places.

Jean Alston and Hugh Clow had prepared maps and notes for us all. They had done much reconnaissance work and must be commended on their accurate timing as well as their meticulous research. Thank you, Jean and Hugh.

The group I joined visited Scarborough on Saturday. We visited Woodend, the home of the Sitwell family, now Scarborough Art Gallery. Within the house there is a replica of the Library at Renishaw, the Derbyshire home of the Sitwells. Our

second stop was at Anne Brontë's grave with its two gravestones and the outstanding panorama over the bay. An emotional moment for many of us.

We then moved out of Scarborough and through the beautiful Ryedale valley with stunning clear views over the Yorkshire landscape. We had tea at Downe Arms Hotel (where we glimpsed a wedding in full swing) in the village of Wykeham.

Afterwards we visited Brompton-by-Sawdon where, in All Saints Church in the year 1802, William Wordsworth married Mary Hutchinson. (We looked at a copy of their marriage certificate.)

We returned to Cober Hill for a delicious Conference Dinner. Afterwards we adjourned to the lecture theatre for readings from *Sylvia's Lovers* outlining the basic plot and final tragedy.

And so to bed.

Up betimes to rain.

**Professor James Drife (Emeritus Professor at the University of Leeds)** Coming to a Medical Conclusion

With tremendous humour and aplomb, James whisked us through the literature and history of the 19th century and then spent time on medicine. (He believes Mrs Gaskell suffered from high blood pressure. The first sphygmomanometer was not invented until 1881 - too late, alas, for Mrs G.)

Pasteurisation, antiseptics, chloroform and Queen Victoria (for her 8<sup>th</sup> and 9<sup>th</sup> children), 1st ovariectomy (1842) 1st hysterectomy (1863) puerperal fever (main cause of death: 1 in every 200 births; today 1 in every 10,000 births) all were covered.

**Dr Carolyn Lambert (Associate Lecturer at the University of Brighton)** Death and Variations in Elizabeth Gaskell's Fiction

Carolyn followed on very naturally from James and medical matters. Carolyn emphasised the role of death as a creative destruction and as a destabiliser. Mrs Gaskell compiled her diary as a memento for Marianne in case she herself did not survive. Evangelism prescribed a model for a good death. Unitarianism aimed for perfectibility in this life. William Gaskell maintained a rational approach to death and loss.

Carolyn had counted the deaths in *Mary Barton* – a member of the audience added another.



**Dr Josie Billington (Deputy Director of the Centre for Research into Reading, Society and Literature at the University of Liverpool)** *Wives and Daughters*: on not Concluding

Josie opened her lecture by reminding us that Frederick Greenwood (Editor of *Cornhill Magazine*) had finished *Wives and Daughters* with the predictable ending. Josie pointed out the similarities between *The Moorland Cottage* (character groupings) and *Wives and Daughters*. This produced a renewed beginning. Josie also drew a comparison with Turgenev's *Fathers and Sons*. Mrs Gaskell was completely at home with the minutiae of everyday life. Josie argued that *Wives and Daughters* is the epitome of practical inconclusiveness. Josie issued us with hand-outs to show us how to observe multiple thoughts and moods through close analysis of the text.

In the question session which followed, Angus Easson mentioned that Tristram Shandy had been delivered by forceps.

These scant summaries do not do justice to the outstanding, thought-provoking and stimulating lectures we heard in the course of the week-end.

By Sunday afternoon the rain had ceased and we sallied forth in sunshine. Whitby looked its very best. We started at the Abbey and entered the squat and higgledy piggledy St Mary's (the model for St Nicholas in *Sylvia's Lovers*) with its box pews and triple-decker pulpit. Outside we examined the Cross of Caedmon, an Arts and Crafts creation of 1898. We descended the 199 steps into downtown Whitby bustling with trippers. With the aid of our maps we could follow in the steps of Sylvia, Charley and Philip. We could ascend to Abbey Terrace and stand on the very steps where Elizabeth entered her lodgings. Later we returned to our coach and travelled slightly inland to visit the models of Moss Brow and Haytersbank (thanks to historian Jackie Tucker for her help with that).

And so we returned to Cober Hill for another excellent meal.

While we were gallivanting round the literary haunts of North Yorkshire, James Drife had been at Scarborough Railway Station to collect a friend (yes, yet another of these professors!) Walter Nimmo who had travelled down from Edinburgh. They had re-arranged the lecture theatre as a cabaret venue and had been getting their act together.

And what an amazing show they put on for our grand finale. We would have happily laughed all night. Never before has the Gaskell Society been reduced to tears of laughter. James creates the lyrics and Walter created the music which he plays on his guitar and ukulele and mouth organ at the same time. We look forward to a return visit.

En route back to the North West we visited Coxwold where Lawrence Sterne (1713-1768) was vicar for some years. Here we received further entertainment and much information (isothermal glazing etc) from **Patrick Wildgust, Curator at Shandy Hall**. On our arrival Patrick met us at the church where he gave us a brief history, showed us Sterne's grave (moved up from London and with a new tombstone, not unlike Anne Brontë's). We then entered the church where Patrick showed us Sterne's memorial - Alas poor Yorick - in the porch and then performed, from the pulpit, John Wesley's preaching instructions and one of Sterne's sermons without too much 'hand babbling'. Some of us then had afternoon tea for lunch and the others followed on an hour later. We toured Shandy Hall and admired the garden. No one asked if Mrs Gaskell had read *Tristram Shandy*.

This has been an outstanding Conference in every way. To all who have contributed we owe a huge debt of thanks. Cober Hill was an excellent venue with charming, helpful and caring staff. Jean even maintained her control over the weather. Our coach drivers were courteous, caring and careful at all times.

## A Post-Conference Note

Pat and Harry Ellis

Driving from coast to coast to our Conference at Cober Hill, we were reminded that we are never far from Mrs Gaskell.

Now that we have relocated from Prestbury in Cheshire to Arnsdale next to Silverdale in Lancashire we are glad to have managed a few of the monthly meetings at Knutsford and we thoroughly enjoyed seeing the wider Gaskell group at Cober Hill.

Here in Arnsdale, the local news mentions the Gaskell Hall in Silverdale frequently for it is the hub of many events including a coffee morning in aid of different charities every Saturday of the year. We were introduced to such an event on our 'first' Saturday by fellow Gaskellian Pauline Kiggins and we were amazed to find the hall heaving with people buying books and bric à brac and drinking delicious coffee.

All our visitors enjoy the tour to see Lindeth Tower (where the Gaskells stayed) which we are able to describe in detail as we had all enjoyed our exclusive visit to it en route from Penrith to Knutsford after the 2009 conference.

It is gratifying to find how many of the local people enjoy hearing about Elizabeth Gaskell. Now that we live here it is easy to understand why both Elizabeth and William enjoyed their retreat and how inspirational Elizabeth found the many stories which abound about the travellers who crossed the sands at Morecambe Bay.

## Lair Edwin Stockdale

'There was no breakfast to lounge over; their lounge was taken in bed, to try and keep warmth in them that bitter March weather, and, by being quiet, to deaden the gnawing wolf within.'

Elizabeth Gaskell, *Mary Barton* (1848)

'Ben Davenport's down wi' the fever,  
and ne'er a stick o' fire  
nor a cowl potato in the house.'

Women from their doors toss household slops  
into the gutter, overflow, stagnate.  
Heaps of ashes are stepping-stones.

Pick a way down steps slimed,  
the muddy wall opposite.  
Broken window-panes stuffed with rags.

Thick clammy air, foetid stench.  
Four little children roll on the brick floor  
like mops soaking up oozing moisture.

John Barton runs home, pawns  
his belongings for five shillings:  
his better coats, his one red-and-yellow silk handkerchief.

Returns with meat, a loaf of bread, candles, kindling.  
Davenport lies on mouldy straw tossing  
fro and to, covered by a thin piece of sacking.

Goes down London Road brilliantly lit  
by gas. Almost in the country he reaches  
Mr Carson's house to beg for an Infirmary order.

'Davenport – Davenport; who is this fellow? I don't know the name?'  
'He's worked in your factory better nor three years, sir.'  
'Very likely; I don't pretend to know the names of the men I employ.'

Leaves with an outpatient's-order  
and five shillings, dashes  
to Berry Street, opens the cellar-door.

Davenport's flesh sunk, features prominent,  
bony, rigid. His face clay-coloured;  
eyes open, begin to glaze.

## Elizabeth Gaskell (1810-65) and the Medical World J H Ross

### Summary

Elizabeth Gaskell had several relatives who were doctors, two of whom became well known, and she met many practitioners and specialists. This led to interesting portraits of doctors in her novels and also leads to speculation as to why she includes some real individuals and certain diagnoses and why she gave herself a poor prognosis.

### Introduction

In her excellent biography, Jenny Uglow<sup>1</sup> portrays the popular mid-nineteenth century authoress Elizabeth Cleghorn Gaskell (née Stevenson) as a very active wife and mother, emotional, intensely conscious of the depressed community around her, ready to befriend others and giving advice and practical help wherever possible; all this whilst writing six novels, numerous short stories, novellas and works including *The Life of Charlotte Brontë*. More than one thousand of her published letters<sup>2,3,4</sup> indicate she was in touch with a remarkable number of well-known and prominent persons in the mid-Victorian era including politicians, authors, scientists, artists and academics and she was capable of discussing their activities with them.

Her contacts with and comments on the medical world are interesting and her depiction of doctors in her novels particularly so; novelists can portray their characters as more true to life and as more honest representations of people than biographers and autobiographers who may omit adverse features. This was a time when doctors working as general practitioners were not considered 'upper class' and their capabilities were much varied.

Elizabeth Gaskell had medical contacts from an early age. There were two doctors in her family, an uncle, her mother's brother, Peter Holland and his son Henry Holland. Each was distinguished in his profession.<sup>5</sup>

### Uncle Peter Holland (1766-1855)

Peter practised in Knutsford, Cheshire, and is considered a pioneer in occupational medicine. He was employed to examine apprentices at a mill in Styal, Cheshire (and paid 12 guineas a year). This was the earliest recorded example of a commercial activity providing a health service. Elizabeth sometimes accompanied him on his rounds and must have learned much about general practice. Uglow wrote that he was an irascible man<sup>1</sup> and that he was accused of 'odious sneering' at those who could not answer back.<sup>1</sup>

### **Cousin Henry Holland (1788-1870)**

Henry was at school in Bristol with Richard Bright, and then they both became medical students together in Edinburgh. In 1810 Sir George Steuart Mackenzie<sup>6</sup> (1780-1848), a well-known mineralogist and the first to show the connection between diamonds and carbon, invited the pair to go to Iceland in 1810. They spent three months there collecting botanical, zoological and geological specimens and in the following year Bright wrote *Travels in the island of Iceland during the summer of the MDCCCX*. This included details of diseases, music, religion and education in that country as well as descriptions of their specimens. Bright made many of the drawings. He became a well-known Physician at Guys and was the first to describe glomerulonephritis.

Henry, at the end of his medical course in Edinburgh, presented a thesis in Latin on the diseases of Iceland. He then travelled extensively. He met some royal courtiers and must have impressed them and subsequently became Physician to William IV and in 1837 was appointed one of Queen Victoria's Physician Extraordinary to Queen Victoria. He cared for Prince Albert before his death and for many prominent people including six Prime Ministers. Uglow considered him a terrible snob and compulsive traveller and did not think Elizabeth liked him much.<sup>1</sup>

### **Brother-in-law Samuel Gaskell**

Elizabeth's brother-in-law, Samuel Gaskell was a General Practitioner; he was said to have been a cheerful man and a good friend to many. Elizabeth makes no comment about his work in her letters but surely he told her about his work.

### **Mr Harrison's Confessions**

Elizabeth Gaskell's only publication that wholly concerns a doctor is the novella *Mr Harrison's Confessions*,<sup>7</sup> published in 1851. Charles Harrison relates his experiences as a young doctor when he became attached as a partner to a cousin of his father, Mr Morgan, who had a country practice in Duncombe (fictional). Morgan is represented as 'an honourable, kind-hearted, fidgety, meddlesome old bachelor' who expects doctors to be smart and well behaved 'as befits a learned profession' but is very caring of his patients, Morgan gave Harrison 'hints' about doctors' manners, saying 'The great Sir Everard Home used to say "A general practitioner should either have a very good manner, or a very bad one. In the latter case he must be possessed of talents sufficient to ensure his being sought after"'.<sup>7</sup> Then, inexplicably he says 'Abernethy is a case in point'.

Why did Mrs Gaskell refer to Sir Everard Home (1756-1832)? Home was said to have been a brilliant surgeon at St Georges Hospital, author of many papers and books and who in 1808 became Sergeant Surgeon to the king. He married a sister of the famous surgeon John Hunter. However he was considered a 'vain and duplicitous charlatan despised by his peers' because of suspected plagiarism of Hunter's work. He described, in several papers for the Royal Society, the fossil

ichthyosaur discovered at Lyme Regis in 1812 by the simple girl Mary Anning. He was thought to have been very mean for failing to give any credit to her for finding it and for her careful cleaning and preparation of the specimen.<sup>8</sup> Abernethy presumably refers to John Abernethy (1764-1831) who became a surgeon at St Bartholomew's. It has been said that his lectures attracted crowds but his eccentricity and rude manners contributed to his celebrity.<sup>9</sup> Why did Elizabeth choose to refer to these two not very admirable men who had died twenty years before she wrote this story?

Elizabeth Gaskell also mentions Sir Astley Cooper (1768-1841), surgeon at Guys Hospital, in her novella; Harrison, who had been a student at Guy's Hospital, casually said something about him to Morgan and, within days, people in the town were saying that Harrison was a favourite pupil of Sir Astley's and might be retained by him to assist in his duties to the Royal Family. This completely untrue rumour was initiated by Morgan who wanted to display Harrison as an outstanding assistant. Unlike Home and Abernethy, Sir Astley was entirely respectable and famous for his work on aneurysms. He carried out the remarkable operation of tying the abdominal aorta to reduce an aneurysm in 1817. In 1820 he removed a sebaceous cyst from the head of King George IV and in 1827 became President of the Royal College of Surgeons.

### **Wives and Daughters**

Elizabeth Gaskell's most detailed portrayal of a doctor is that of Mr Gibson in *Wives and Daughters*<sup>10</sup> (published serially from August 1864 to January 1866 and in one volume in 1866 after her death in 1865). He could well represent all that she hoped a good practitioner should be and he certainly has none of the reported characteristics of her Holland medical relatives, their snobbery and bad tempers. But she did write a rather strange comment about him - 'He was not jovial ... [he was] sparing of his words, intelligent and slightly sarcastic. Therefore he was perfectly presentable'.<sup>10</sup>

Gibson, an Edinburgh graduate, came to the little town of Hollingford as partner to Mr Hall and later takes over the practice. He is a great success professionally and more accepted 'in society' (that is by Lord and Lady Cumnor and their friends) than Hall; perhaps this was because he not only had 'a genteel appearance and elegant figure' but because it was rumoured that his father 'must have been some person of quality'. Lady Cumnor invited Gibson, while he was still a partner, to dinner in order to meet Sir Astley Cooper, 'the head of the profession'.<sup>10</sup> Hall was also invited but could not accept because of gout and he never recovered from his disappointment. Hall usually ate in the Cumnors' housekeeper's room whereas Gibson, later, could lunch with the gentry any day, not that he often did as he was not interested in 'social gratification'.

Mrs Gaskell certainly represented Gibson as conscientious, always available to

his patients and with good medical knowledge – characteristics which she hoped to see in all the profession. She wrote about him 'He had rather a contempt for demonstrative people, arising from his medical insight into the consequences to health of uncontrolled feeling' – a commentator on the novel has pointed out that this was a widely accepted medical tenet stressed in *The Principles of Physiology* (1834) by Andrew Combe (1797-1847) a Scottish Physician and Phrenologist who was consulted about many cases of insanity and nervous disease.<sup>10</sup> (Phrenology is 'the detailed study of the shape and size of the cranium as a supposed indication of character and mental abilities').

Gibson's patient with the most interesting condition was Osborne Hamley, the local squire's son. He complained of ill health and Gibson was worried about him when he first saw him but it is not clear why. He did just say that he 'did not like his looks or his pulse'.<sup>10</sup> He was seen again by Gibson and Dr Nicholls, the much respected county physician.<sup>10</sup> Gibson's wife overheard their discussion and that Gibson had diagnosed 'an aneurism [sic] of the aorta'<sup>10</sup> and that Nicholls said 'his days are numbered'. Osborne died suddenly soon afterwards. Gaskell had written to her publisher George Smith (1824-1901) on 3 May 1864<sup>2</sup> saying I 'have made up a story in my mind' and she gave a good outline of *Wives and Daughters*, mentioning 'Osborne breaks a blood vessel and dies'. Few lay people can have known about aneurysms at that time. It is unlikely that she had read about them in a medical journal and perhaps she had met Sir Astley and learned about them from him; she mentions him twice in her novels but not in her many letters.



**Squire Hamley at the side of the body of his son Osborne who has died with a ruptured aortic aneurysm.**

**From *Wives and Daughters*, edition of 1912.**

## **Cranford**

Mrs Gaskell portrays Mr Hoggin in her novel *Cranford*<sup>11</sup> (the name of the town thought to represent Knutsford where Elizabeth grew up) as a typical 'general practitioner' her day – not 'upper class'. His patients consider him capable, hard-working and pleasant-looking but some ladies there agreed that 'As a gentleman, we could only shake our heads over his name and himself and wished that he had read Lord Chesterfield's Letters in the days when his manners were susceptible of improvement'.<sup>11</sup> Lord Chesterfield<sup>12</sup> (1694-1773) was an active parliamentarian, considered by some as selfish, calculating and contemptuous. In 1774 his son's widow published more than 400 of his letters in *Letters to His Son on the art of becoming a Man of the World and a Gentleman*. It is not surprising that Hoggin's patients were amazed when they heard he was going to marry the widowed Lady Glenmire.

## **Ruth**

Other doctors are portrayed sympathetically in Mrs Gaskell's novels but they appear only briefly. Mr Lewis, in *Ruth*,<sup>13</sup> is the most interesting, a kind man notable for his adoption of the illegitimate son of the heroine Ruth who had been seduced by one of the gentry. Poor Elizabeth Gaskell was much criticised for her portrayal of kindness to the 'innocent fallen girl'.

## **Gaskell's death**<sup>14</sup>

Ugnow relates how well Elizabeth had been looking in church on the afternoon of Sunday 12 November 1865 and how she enjoyed a happy early evening with her family but then suddenly she stopped speaking and with a slight gasp fell forward into the arms of her daughter Meta and did not recover. There was no post-mortem and the death certificate recorded the cause of death as 'disease of the heart'. There was no mention of pain by those present and a sudden cardiac arrest is most likely.

Three weeks after the death, Isabella Green, the daughter of a close friend of Elizabeth Gaskell, in a letter to her brother Phillip dated 3 December 1865,<sup>15</sup> wrote that Elizabeth's daughters had said 'her death was caused by the breaking of the medulla oblongata which is the upper part of the spinal chord [sic] and it becomes very brittle in people who have gout, as you know, she had several times'. It is not known who gave this bizarre diagnosis to the daughters. In the same letter Isabella Green wrote '... early this year she [Elizabeth Gaskell] said to Mrs Deane [a cousin] that she did not expect to live 'thro the year'. This is strange since she was aged fifty five and had had no symptoms or definite evidence of a disorder with a poor prognosis although there are mentions in letters and biographies of 'a weak heart', 'unwell on and off all the year', 'deadly feelings of fatigue', 'depression', 'weakness helped by medicinal brandy' and of episodes of back pain, dizziness, fainting and chest infection. All these conditions could have been associated with overwork and worry to which she admitted but not to a life with death at the age of 55 years. There

is no mention of exertion restricted by chest pain suggesting angina. She did have frequent headaches, probably migraine, as did three of her four daughters and she often describes them occurring in her literary characters.<sup>16</sup>

A cousin who heard about her sudden and unexpected death wrote that 'she had always wished and spoken of her wish to die a sudden painless death like this'<sup>17</sup> It is possible that she had met Sir Astley Cooper whom she mentioned in two novels and learned about aneurysms and their associated fatality from him and so later thought she had an aneurysm to foretell her early death.

### Epilogue

Elizabeth Gaskell had close contacts with some well-known doctors and her family practitioners. Her portrayal and evaluation of the profession, as it was in the nineteenth century, is therefore of interest. Her mention in a novel of two real doctors said to be eccentric and who died some years before she wrote the book, is curious. Her inclusion twice of Sir Astley Cooper in two novels and her use of the diagnosis of an aneurysm may indicate that she met him but there is no reference to him in her large correspondence.

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## Marianne Christine Lingard

Marianne Gaskell, known as Polly or Minnie, was born at Dover Street, Manchester on 12<sup>th</sup> September 1834, the eldest surviving daughter of Elizabeth Gaskell (the first daughter had been stillborn). She was the longest lived of the four daughters and the only one to have a family. She is well known to Gaskell scholars as the recipient of the majority of her mother's family letters. Her younger sisters had destroyed most of their correspondence.

From the age of six months, her mother kept a diary of her development and care. Most of her early education was undertaken at home by her parents and a series of governesses. She was particularly fond of music, and was taught piano by Charles Hallé, and singing by Sir William Sterndale Bennett. At the age of sixteen she was sent to a private school at Holly Hill, Hampstead, run by two sisters, Mrs Marianne Lalor and Miss Ruth Banks. At home she was often left to run the house when her mother was away and gave lessons to her younger sisters and to the servants.

In 1861 she went to Rome to spend the winter with a friend. There was great concern over her interest in the Roman Catholic Church and Cardinal Henry Manning. The following year she expressed her religious dilemmas with Charles Eliot Norton:

Unitarianism does seem to me not fully to embrace all that the Bible teaches us - it seems to me that Unitarianism tests everything too much through reason, and leaves nothing to Faith...since I came home I have been reading with Papa, as yet only the reasons against, Catholicism not reasons for Unitarianism.

For the rest of her life Marianne was an active member of the Church of England.

It was now evident that she had formed an attachment to her second cousin, Edward Thurstan Holland. Thurstan was born in 1836 at Dumbleton Hall, Gloucestershire, the eldest son of Edward Holland, MP for Evesham. He was educated at Eton and Trinity College, Cambridge and was currently reading for the bar at Lincoln's Inn. There was, initially, great opposition to this union, particularly from Edward, who was afraid that his wealth would be dissipated when divided up between his thirteen children, and was determined that his son should marry 'money'. He threatened at one time to cut off his allowance if they continued their relationship.

The couple persisted but did not marry until 14<sup>th</sup> August 1866, the year after her mother's death. Their first home was 1 Sunnyside, Wimbledon, but in 1874 they moved to 9 Woburn Square, Bloomsbury, which was closer both to Thurstan's chambers in Lincoln's Inn and to several philanthropic housing projects he was involved with in the Covent Garden area – Bennett's Court, Drury Lane and Thurstan and Holland Buildings, Newton Street, Holborn for example.



Married life could not have been easy. In eleven years she gave birth to seven children but only three of them – William Edward 'Willie' (1867), Florence Evelyn (1871), and Bryan Thurstan (1875) survived to maturity. Agnes Sylvia (1870) and John Ottys (1877) died as babies. In addition, the two eldest, Willie and Margaret Elizabeth 'Daisy' (1868) were born profoundly deaf – a consequence, it is thought, of the close kinship of their parents. Daisy (aged seven) and her two year old sister Julia Dorothea (1873) died of whooping cough, within twenty four hours of each other in February 1876. Willie, however lived a full life. He died in 1927 at the age of sixty, having married Florence Evelyn Isdell in Wimbledon in 1896, and had a daughter. He is described on the 1901 Census as 'of independent means' and on the 1911 as an 'amateur wood carver'. His work can be seen in Alfrick church. He has descendants living today.

In December 1876 Marianne put her unhappy memories of Bloomsbury behind her and returned to her 'beloved Wimbledon' – Cotswold, Lansdowne Road, but tragedy continued when in September 1884, the same year as his father-in-law, Thurstan died suddenly, aged 48. The couple were well regarded in the community. He was a benefactor of the local hospital and founded the St. Michael's Club for Friendless Girls. At All Saints' Church, Wimbledon, where he was a member of the church extension fund a memorial window was dedicated to him in 1893. Designed by the leading stained glass artist Charles Kempe and costing £200 it was paid for by Marianne. Thurstan Avenue was named after him. He left £18,193 13s 7d.

In 1891 the household included an 'adopted' daughter, Ethel Cockburn, (aged 20) whose family were in India. She married and died in Kenya at the age of 35. There was also a sicknurse but no indication is given of which of the family needed her services or whether this prompted the family's move to the country. Worcestershire was an area familiar to Thurstan from childhood. His mother, Sophy, was the daughter of the banker, John Whitmore Isaac, of Boughton House, near Worcester, now a golf club. Family links are extremely complicated. Mrs Isaac was Charlotte Holland, the sister of Edward Holland, senior. Elizabeth Gaskell often combined a visit to Boughton with a visit to Dumbleton, and found peace and solitude there to continue her writing. The walk from Bransford Bridge to Powick Bridge along the banks of the River Tene, which was a favourite of Edward Elgar, probably inspired her to include descriptions of the Malvern Hills in *Wives and Daughters*. She was also there in 1856 when working on *The Life of Charlotte Brontë*.

The family is first recorded at Grove Hill, Suckley in 1893 but they moved to Birchfields, Pencombe Lane, Avenbury, on the outskirts of Bromyard, in September, 1895. This is a Grade II stucco house of the 1830s, which was owned and extended by Frederick Robertson Kempson, one of Hereford's leading architects. He may have continued to own the house even when Marianne was a tenant. In 1901 her daughter, Florence and a friend, escaped injury by jumping clear

of their carriage when the horses took fright and ran out of control all the way down into Bromyard, crashing through the window of the Queen's Arms Inn.

Marianne was very active in charity work, especially those organisations concerned with the care of the deaf and dumb. She was a member of the governing body of the Training College for Teachers of the Deaf, founded by Sir Benjamin Ackers, MP in 1878 in Ealing. She was deputed to examine the oral work of the schools. Willie (aged 12) was living in Ealing in 1881 – probably in lodgings to enable him to attend a local school for the deaf as a day boy. She also supervised examinations at St John's Institution for Deaf and Dumb at Boston Spa (Yorkshire) and in 1895, participated in an inspection of the West of England Institution for the Deaf and Dumb.

Marianne moved to Alfrick Court, another Grade II building with parkland, three miles west of Worcester and in the same parish as Suckley, in 1902 and spent the rest of her life there with her other children. There were seven servants. The friendship with the Cockburn family continued. Ethel's niece, Katherine Sinclair, spent a lot of time at Alfrick, as her parents were in Zanzibar. She referred to Marianne as her grandmother.

Later she married Sir William Codrington, Lord Lieutenant of Rutland. The friendship may have started in Malta. Thurstan's stepmother, Fanny Hunter, was a native of Malta. Ethel's grandfather, John Cleugh, Archdeacon of Valletta, conducted the funeral of his half-brother Henry, in 1870. There are many references in Parish magazines to Marianne's musical activities - she gave music lessons at Suckley - and to her charity work - in 1896 she hosted a garden party at Birchfields for inmates of the local workhouse, and in 1901 a Garden Meeting. She organised concerts to wipe out the debt incurred in furnishing the club room, at Alfrick.

Marianne died on 7th September 1920, just short of her 86<sup>th</sup> birthday and eight years after her sister, Meta. She is buried in a prominent position near to the entrance of Alfrick church. She left £14,206 4s 6d. Her younger son, Bryan, a stock broker, wrote two novels - *A Certain Man* and *A Vagrant Tune*. He lived with his sister at Harrow Cottage, West Malvern, and died in 1933 aged 59. Florence died, unmarried, in 1942 aged 69. They are buried in St James's churchyard, Malvern.

### Further Reading

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# Murder in Mrs Gaskell Country

## Hyde, Cheshire 1831

J P Lethbridge

In 1831 Hyde was a Cheshire cotton-spinning town, near the Lancashire border. Its population of about seven thousand had more than doubled since 1821. Before the Industrial Revolution it was just a village. A leading family was the wealthy cotton mill-owning Ashtons. Samuel Ashton, who had a brother, Thomas Ashton senior, lived at Pole Bank, Hyde; and had two sons and a daughter. James Ashton, the oldest son, managed Apethorn Mill, Hyde. Thomas Ashton junior, twenty-three, managed Woodley Mill, Hyde. Their sister Mary Ashton was twelve.

On the evening of Monday 3 January 1831 most of the Hyde Ashtons were preparing to attend the twenty-first birthday party of a Mr Barlow whose sister was James Ashton's fiancée. Thomas Ashton junior, who was not going to the party, left home at half six that evening, to collect some documents from Apethorn Mill. At about a quarter past seven that evening two Apethorn Mill workers, William Taylor, a joiner, and George Wagstaff, a mechanic, who had left work at seven, found Thomas Ashton junior's body lying back down in Apethorn Lane. At first they thought it was a drunk but then realised it was a corpse.

A Hyde surgeon, William Tinker, was called and the victim's body was taken home. Surgeon Tinker's post mortem showed that the victim had been shot in the chest. There was one entry wound and two exit wounds. At Hyde on Wednesday 5 January 1831 the Knutsford, Cheshire, Coroner, John Hollins, held an inquest into Thomas Ashton's death. Six witnesses testified. Three men had been seen acting suspiciously near the scene of the murder and three men, who had recently been sacked by James Ashton, for Trade Union activities, linked to a strike wave, which had affected the Ashtons' Ashton (sic) Lancashire mills but not their Hyde mills, had been arrested. The inquest returned a verdict of murder by person or persons unknown. The three suspects had good alibis, there was no real evidence against them and they were released.

Samuel Ashton offered a £500 reward for information as to who the killers were, his brother Thomas Ashton senior put up £500, and the other local master cotton spinners another £500. These rewards totalled £1,500, about £300,000 in our terms. They were supported by a government decree that anyone involved in the killing, except those who actually fired the fatal shots, who turned evidence, would be pardoned.

On Wednesday 25 May 1831 James Jones, eighteen, awaiting trial in Manchester Gaol, for stealing a shirt, testified to a magistrate that Thomas Ashton's murderer was Thomas Trotter, a middle-aged tailor, with a wife and five children. Thomas

Trotter was brought before a magistrate on Monday 30 May 1831. The magistrate's hearing was adjourned that day to collect further evidence and resumed on Wednesday 1 June 1831. James Jones's evidence showed his ignorance of the circumstances of the murder and Trotter was freed. It looked as if the murder would never be solved despite the efforts of the local police backed up by help from London's Metropolitan Police set up in 1829.

On Wednesday 19 March 1834 James Garside, twenty-five, pleaded guilty at Derby Assizes, to stealing a spindle box, (a box for storing cotton spinning spindles), at Whittle, northwest Derbyshire near the Cheshire border. On Monday 24 March he was sentenced to eighteen months in gaol i.e. eighteen months from when he was tried with no parole or remission. Hoping to escape serving his sentence he confessed he was an accomplice in Thomas Ashton's murder; and that the killers were two brothers William and Joseph Mosley from Marple near Stockport.

The Mosley brothers were arrested. In May 1834 William Mosley, a canal boatman with a long criminal record, named as the killers, James Garside and Joseph Mosley, aged thirty-four, a self-educated labourer, who was regarded as the best scholar in the village. The authorities decided that William Mosley's story was the more credible. James Garside and Joseph Mosley were tried at the Chester Summer Assizes on Wednesday 6 August 1834. The judge was James Parke a Liverpool merchant's son. The prosecution was led by Matthew Davenport Hill who was assisted by James Baldwin Brown, and John Horatio Lloyd whose granddaughter was to marry Oscar Wilde. Joseph Dunn defended James Garside but Joseph Mosley insisted on defending himself.

The main prosecution witness William Mosley described how James Garside and Joseph Mosley had murdered Thomas Ashton by shooting him with a large horse pistol and a smaller pistol at point blank range, hence the one entry wound but two exit wounds. Fifteen witnesses supported his evidence.

James Garside in his defence merely said that "If you've come to take away my life do it". Joseph Mosley blamed the killing on his brother and Garside who he alleged had been paid £10, (about £2,000 today), by shadowy figures linked to the Trade Union movement, to kill the victim's brother James Ashton, the original intended victim; and said that William Mosley had been intimidated and bribed into turning evidence while in Chester Gaol. A fellow prisoner was called and supported this allegation but another prisoner refused to support it and the prison governor denied any wrongdoing.

The judge then summed up. The jury took seven minutes to convict James Garside and Joseph Mosley of murder and they were condemned to death. The task of hanging them was given to the Chester City Sheriffs but they refused, arguing that since Chester's separate Palatinate County Assizes had been abolished in 1830,

the execution should be conducted by the Cheshire County Sheriffs. The Cheshire County Sheriffs countered that hangings were the Chester City Sheriffs' responsibility. The executions were delayed until the matter could be resolved.

On Saturday 16 August 1834 Samuel Schofield, aged twenty-four, was committed to Chester Gaol. He was charged on William Mosley's evidence with having paid Garside and the Mosley brothers their £10 blood money. The authorities hoped he would name higher Trade Union figures such as John Doherty an Irish born cotton mill workers' union leader and political radical as famous in his day as Arthur Scargill once was.

In October 1834 word reached the police that James Garside had borrowed his horse pistol from a Mr Jones, aged twenty, of Marple, and had returned it after the murder. Jones was questioned and admitted he had lent Garside his gun thinking it was for a legitimate purpose. The gun matched its description in William Mosley's evidence. No action was taken against Jones but this discovery was widely publicised it being held as proving the two condemned men's guilt.

The two condemned men were taken to London and on Thursday 27 November 1834 were publicly hanged in front of Horse-monger Lane Gaol. In March 1835 the Grand Jury at the Chester Spring Assizes found no true bill against Schofield i.e. there was no case against him that could be put to a jury. With little publicity he was freed. Later that year a law was passed that Cheshire executions were the City of Chester Sheriffs' responsibility. William Ashton never got his reward it being ruled he was too closely involved in the murder so must be content with escaping the gallows.

The novelist, biographer, short story writer and poet Elizabeth Cleghorn Gaskell's first novel *Mary Barton: a story of Manchester Life* was published anonymously in October 1848. It compared the comfortable lives of the rich and the desperate conditions for the poor against a background of Chartism, strikes, murder and prostitution. Its plot centres on John Barton a decent and kindly working class man who has been driven mad by poverty and the loss of a son to malnutrition, and his wife in childbirth. He has become an opium addict aggravating his poverty. He borrows a gun from his surviving daughter Mary's fiancé Jem Wilson, and shoots dead Harry Carson a spoilt and arrogant wealthy Cotton King's son. His aim is showing a Cotton King what it is like to lose a child.

Unknown to John Barton, Harry Carson was trying to seduce Barton's only surviving child Mary Barton. The police arrest Jem Wilson, a skilled craftsman, inventor and foreman, and learn that his gun was the murder weapon. Jem Wilson is unwilling to betray his prospective father-in-law and seems doomed. After melodramatic scenes including a frantic chase after a boat leaving Liverpool for the Isle of Man, Jem Wilson is proved innocent and acquitted but loses his job. He marries Mary Barton and they emigrate to Canada where they do well in a new country.

Mr Carson senior eventually realises John Barton is the murderer. He confronts the dying John Barton and threatens him with the law. Barton pleads with him to allow him to die at home and Carson eventually repents, Barton dying in his arms. To quote a review by Charles Kingsley, the Christian Socialist clergyman, in Fraser's Magazine, the rich should read Mary Barton because: Do they want to know why poor men, kind and sympathising as women to each other, learn to hate law and order, Queen, Lords and Commons, country party and corn law leagues all alike - to hate the rich in short? then let them read *Mary Barton*.

*Mary Barton* was partly based on the Thomas Ashton murder. If Joseph Mosley was guilty he may well have had much in common with John Barton. James Garside and William Mosley had in contrast past criminal records but we cannot know if they were natural criminals or were driven to crime by poverty. The resemblance between the two murders was close enough that Thomas Ashton's sister Mary who by 1848 was twenty nine and married to Thomas Potter, of a well-known Manchester family, fainted on reading the book. In a letter dated 16 August 1852 Mrs Gaskell apologized to Mary Potter née Ashton's brother in law Sir John Potter for any personal distress the book had caused.

*Mary Barton* was savagely attacked by the mainly Liberal Manchester manufacturers Mrs Gaskell had criticised for callousness towards the poor. Their then organ The Manchester Guardian, the present day Guardian, was particularly hostile. Mrs Gaskell's identity soon became known but she refused to apologise for saying what she thought. She went on to write five more novels and much else.

Hyde is today part of Greater Manchester and is no longer in Cheshire. It has a population of more than thirty thousand and has very few buildings that were there in 1831. Other notable Hyde murderers have included Ian Brady and Myra Hindley of the 1965 Moors Murders; and Dr Harold Shipman who murdered hundreds of his elderly patients.

Thomas Ashton's first cousin, another Thomas Ashton, was born in 1818 and was twelve when his cousin and namesake was murdered. After studying chemistry at Heidelberg University, Germany, he became a leading Manchester master cotton miller. He was noted for his paternalism even when this involved considerable financial sacrifice for instance he kept his mills working during the cotton famine caused by the American Civil War when the US Navy blockaded the Confederate ports; backed improved working class education and helped found Manchester University; and generously supported poor relief schemes. He married an American woman Elizabeth Gair and they had nine children. He died in 1898 aged seventy-nine.

Thomas and Elizabeth Ashton's oldest son Thomas Gair Ashton was created the 1st Baron Ashton of Hyde in 1911 having been a Liberal MP for Hyde from 1885 to

# Conference 2015

Before breakfast  
at Cober Hill

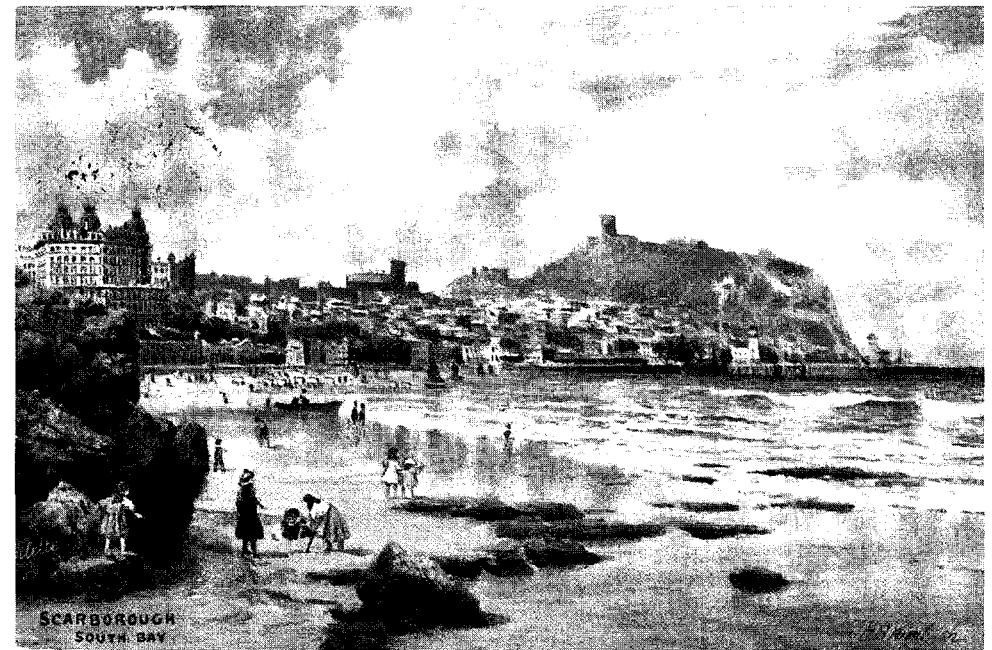


St. Mary's, Whitby  
(St. Nicholas, Monkshaven)



Whitby

Scarborough more than 100 years ago...



1886, and Luton from 1895 to 1911. The current 4th Baron Ashton of Hyde is this Thomas Ashton's great-grandson; and thus the murder victim Thomas Ashton's first cousin four times removed.

Mrs Gaskell's novels are still in print and much has been written about her. She vividly showed what poverty does to human beings but was sceptical about Chartist campaigns for democracy, and socialist plans for changing society, believing that if everybody were made equal some people would soon get ahead at others' expense. Her solution was for rich people to care about the poor and as important to be seen to care. As for her failing to go deeper, she was savagely criticised by her own class as it was, for even exposing the problem at all.

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Editor adds: Mr Lethbridge sent this article to me earlier in the year. Apart from minor editing, I decided to leave it as he wrote it.

## Gaskell and Sand: Two Unlikely Soulmates

John Greenwood

At first glance it would seem that Elizabeth Gaskell and George Sand had very little in common. How can a respectable wife of a Unitarian minister in Victorian England, herself a devout believer, with four equally respectable daughters, and the writer of *Cranford* have any similarities with a French writer who was separated from her husband, and known to have had a scandalously large number of lovers and who wore men's clothes in public, often smoking a cigar? Some readers will have seen Merle Oberon as George Sand and Cornel Wilde as Chopin in the 1945 film 'A Song to Remember', which focused on such a risqué image of Sand. Yes, she did indeed scandalise many of her contemporaries and she enjoyed shocking French public opinion under the restored monarchy. However, thanks to research over many years on these two nineteenth century writers, similarities can indeed be established. As early as 1906, Ward wrote:

George Sand, the great French novelist, whose later works, including her autobiography, appear to me in certain ways - above all in their large-heartedness - to resemble Mrs Gaskell's later writings.<sup>1</sup>

In her own time George Sand's novels from 1832 onwards were eagerly read by discerning English readers like the Carlyles, G H Lewis, George Eliot and John Stuart Mill. Lewis wrote in the *Westminster Review* in 1852:

For eloquence and depth of feeling, no one approaches George Sand.

and Mill eulogised:

There is not in all modern literature anything superior to the prose of George Sand, whose style acts upon the nervous system like a symphony of Haydn or Mozart.

Elizabeth Barrett even wrote a sonnet, entitled *To George Sand: A Recognition*, with the opening lines:

True genius, but true woman! dost deny  
Thy woman's nature with a manly scorn,  
And break away the gauds and armlets worn  
By weaker women in captivity?

Of course, it was not only Sand as a French writer who was so admired by English readers. There was even a bookshop in the Burlington Arcade, named Jeff's, which sold only French books, such was the influence of French novels on English readers and novelists. Showalter argues that from the 1840s English women writers tended to be followers of either Jane Austen or George Sand. By the 1860s George Eliot was considered in the Austen camp and Charlotte Brontë in the Sand camp because Eliot was 'studied, intellectual, cultivated' and Brontë 'had chosen volcanic literature of the body as well as of the heart... the spontaneous artist who pours forth her feelings.'<sup>2</sup>. Is it possible to place Gaskell exclusively into one of these camps? I doubt it.

I have found recently much pleasure and insight in reading the collected letters between Sand and Flaubert.<sup>3</sup> These letters increased enormously my understanding of Sand as a person and writer, leading a very busy life. Furthermore, I kept on seeing similarities between Sand and Gaskell, as revealed in their published letters. Chapple, Pollard and Shelston<sup>4</sup> were responsible for collecting well over 500 letters by Gaskell, whereas their counterpart in France, Lubin<sup>5</sup>, managed to publish about 20,000 letters by Sand. In their respective introductions to the letters they have similar observations. Chapple and Pollard claim the main value of the Gaskell letters is as a record and insight into Gaskell as a person - her basic kindness, decency and vitality, not forgetting her curiosity about



life and people – and as a reflection on the tone and style of so much of her writing:

The great attraction of Mrs Gaskell's correspondence is that it reveals her so clearly as that many-sided person that she understood herself to be... [s]he is her natural impulsive self, blessed with an animation that catches the tones of genuine conversation and runs easily into living speech.<sup>6</sup>

Sand's letters reveal a similar fluency and openness which are so much part of her novels and short stories. In an interview Lubin comments:

She wrote eight to ten letters a day, often more. They reveal an attentive mother, a generous friend, a woman curious about life and other people. In her letters the tone is close to conversation: simple, spontaneous, now passionate, now dramatic. Change of tone is constantly there; in the same letter she can switch from the serious to the colloquial and end with a childish joke.<sup>7</sup>

Then there is the famous sigh from Gaskell: 'a great number of mes'.<sup>8</sup> Both Gaskell and Sand had to cope with so much else than writing novels and short stories. Stoneman<sup>9</sup> and Foster<sup>10</sup> are but two Gaskell scholars who mention the hectic situation, dealing daily with her commitments as a wife and a mother of four daughters, parish work as the wife of a Unitarian minister in central Manchester, and as a leading Manchester citizen with her husband, receiving many distinguished visitors. No wonder she at times expresses near-panic in fulfilling all these commitments. Perhaps she would have found comfort if she had known that George Sand would give vent to a similar busy, sometimes stressful, situation in many a letter, e.g.

enjoying the marvellous winter, gathering flowers, making dresses and mantles for my daughter-in-law, costumes for the marionettes, cutting out scenery, dressing dolls, reading music, but above all spending hours with little Aurore... [n]ot alone enough in Nohant, with the children whom I love too much to belong to myself, and at Paris, one does not know what one is, one forgets oneself entirely for a thousand things.<sup>11</sup>

Ten years earlier Gaskell complains:

I have so much to say ...[a]nd people **will** come from north and south, and east and west, wanting to speak to me this morning...[D]on't think I'm gone crazy if this letter is very much without method.<sup>12</sup>

So Gaskell and Sand have very similar real life situations, with their family commitments being a major item.

Both express much relief from their busy daily lives in their experiences of Italy. Sand writes in her autobiography:

Venice was indeed the town of my dreams, and all that I had imagined beforehand about it was less than the reality, both in the mornings and in the evenings, both during the peace of sunny days and the dim light of the storms.<sup>13</sup>

Gaskell writes in a letter:

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.<sup>14</sup>

However, they do both find time to write many interesting letters to friends and acquaintances, though they deal with the actual writing in different ways. One has the impression - nay, she mentions it herself frequently - that Gaskell snatches any spare moment of the day to jot down something before having to put pen down and see to some domestic matter ('It is so hard to me to write a proper letter'), so that 'she was never wholly free from anxieties, even guilt, about her writing'.<sup>15</sup> Sand, on the other hand, established a routine for writing, usually late at night when all was quiet, thus more time and a better ambiance for reflection.

Receiving at home or visiting distinguished public figures as well as corresponding with them on a regular basis was taken for granted. For instance, Balzac, Flaubert and Turgenev were very much at home at Sand's chateau in Nohant (Chopin even more so!), while Gaskell would mention as quite normal mixing with leading intellectuals whether in Rome, Paris, Oxford or Manchester. Another area Sand and Gaskell share in their correspondence is a fairly prolonged concern for matters of national, even international, importance. In Gaskell's letters to the American Charles Norton the topic is the American Civil War, while Sand's focus in her letters to Flaubert is on the Prussian invasion of France and the Paris Commune in 1870-71. During the four years of the American Civil War (1861-65) Gaskell reveals in her letters her deep concern about the conduct of the war itself and its serious repercussions for the Lancashire cotton economy, deprived of American cotton imports. Sand despairs of the catastrophic situation in and around Paris: 'I think this war is infamous. Men are ferocious and conceited brutes. France and Prussia are cutting each other's throats for reasons that they don't understand. One sees nothing but poor peasants mourning for their children who are leaving. What disorder, what disarray in that military administration. We have reached the point this evening of knowing that we are beaten.'<sup>16</sup>

Turning to their novels and short stories, it would require much more than this short article to do justice to so many similarities. A few examples will hopefully encourage readers to discover more similarities. The first novel of each writer had a sensational effect on the relevant reading public and put each writer on the literary map.<sup>17</sup> Both faced harsh and unfair criticism from quite a few professional

critics as well as from the general public. Accusations of being 'a dangerous book' were made against Sand's *Indiana* because it dealt with the oppressive and unjust position of women in marriage. In reply, Sand insisted she depicted (like a mirror) the actual situation and nothing more. She even claimed that she had no wish to denounce marriage per se nor to abolish it. As she wrote in the 1842 Preface to *Indiana*: 'The injustice and cruelty of the laws which govern the existence of the wife in marriage, in the family and in society.'<sup>18</sup> In *Mary Barton* Gaskell was accused of being too pro-worker and too anti-employer, though, like Sand, she based her account of the Manchester poor and working class on what she experienced in her daily life. In both these first novels the writers deal with the male-female relationships, seduction or the threat of it, the marriage choice and self-definition by the heroine. Society, in both novels, is portrayed as treating men and women differently, the double-standard factor. Both heroines illustrate a woman's right to make her own decisions: Indiana rejects her marriage as a child-wife to a cruel husband and chooses a lover (even if he is a rogue) and Mary rejects the advances of an irresponsible lover and acts decisively to save Jem, her true love, from a murder conviction and her father from exposure to a murder.

Sand's earlier novels of the 1830s which impressed English, as well as French, readers so much were followed in the 1840s by shorter novels or novellas, known in French as *les romans champêtres* (rural stories). These were based on the Berry region in Central France where she spent more and more of her time as she grew older, and thus less time in Paris. She had inherited the chateau at Nohant – still a wonderful place to experience the Sand ambiance. As in Gaskell's short stories with a rural setting, those written by Sand rarely dealt only with idyllic, unrealistic situations.<sup>19</sup> Whereas other French contemporary writers focussed on the lives of town folk, Sand exploited her deep knowledge of and sympathy for village/country folk in her *romans champêtres*. She had no illusions about them.<sup>20</sup> As a child she would mix and play with children from all social classes, and when she became châtelaine at Nohant, she was as caring to the servants as Gaskell was in Plymouth Grove. Loyal but outspoken Gaskell characters like Dixon in *A Dark Night's Work* or Betty in *Cousin Phillis* have their counterparts in Sand's work.

Reading the novels and short stories of both writers leaves the reader in no doubt that they took a feminist stand. However, both refused to be active participants in the contemporary feminist movements. Direct action in this field was not their preference. For Sand, especially from the 1848 Revolution onwards, it was through the struggle within the home and marriage itself that sexual equality would be achieved. Strongly influenced by her Unitarian beliefs, Gaskell's answer to male dominance was through love and reason, care for and solidarity with others. Of course, there were many differences between the two novelists, both in their lives and in their writings. For example, Sand had no sense of sin or guilt in her treatment of sexual relationships between men and women (*Jeanne* is a good

example here), whereas Gaskell, in spite of enormous sympathy for Ruth's predicament, still maintained that Ruth had sinned in her relationship with Bellingham. Nevertheless, there is, as this article has attempted to show, so much that these superb women writers of the 19<sup>th</sup> century had in common.

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- 2 E.Showalter (1978): *A Literature of Their Own* (Virago Press) p.104.
- 3 S.P.Sherman (ed. & trans. 2008): *The George Sand – Gustave Flaubert Letters* (Quill Pen Classics).
- 4 Chapple & Pollard (1966): *The Letters of Mrs Gaskell* (Manchester U P).  
Chapple & Shelston (2000): *Further Letters of Mrs Gaskell* (Manchester U P).
- 5 G.Lubin (ed. 1964-94): *Correspondance de George Sand* (Garnier).
- 6 Chapple & Pollard. Introd.p.xxiii and Chapple (1980): *Elizabeth Gaskell: A Portrait in Letters* (Manchester U P).
- 7 A-M de Brem (1997) : *George Sand : Un Diable de Femme* (Gallimard) pp.82-3.
- 8 Chapple & Shelston, Introd. p.xv.
- 9 P.Stoneman (1987): *Elizabeth Gaskell* (Harvester Press) pp.37-8.
- 10 S.Foster (2002): *Elizabeth Gaskell: A Literary Life* (Palgrave Macmillan) Introd.pp.1-5.
- 11 Sherman, Letters C111 & XL11.
- 12 Chapple & Pollard, Letter 384.
- 13 G. Sand (1854-5) : *Histoire de ma Vie*.
- 14 Chapple & Pollard, Letter 375.
- 15 Chapple & Pollard, Letter 384 and Foster, p.58.
- 16 Sherman, Letters CLXX1 & CLXX11.
- 17 I am indebted to Helen Smith for drawing my attention to an interesting M.A. thesis in Knutsford Public Library: M.A. Mader : *George Sand, Mrs Gaskell and 'Heroinism'* (1981).
- 18 George Sand (1842): *Indiana*, Preface reproduced in B. Didier (ed.1984) : *G. Sand: Indiana* (Gallimard).
- 19 See Gaskell's shrewd comment in her biography of C. Brontë : 'The idea of the mistress and her maidens spinning at the great wheels, while the master was abroad, ploughing his fields, or seeing after his flocks on the purple moors, is very poetical to look upon; but when such life actually touches on our own days, and we can hear particulars from the lips of those now living, there come out details of coarseness... of irregularity and fierce lawlessness that rather mar the vision of pastoral innocence and simplicity' - E. Gaskell : *The Life of C.Brontë* (Oxford World Classics,1996) p.17. Such views are echoed in Margaret Hale's advice to Higgins (who was considering looking for work in southern rural England) in *North and South*.
- 20 G. van den Bogaert, editor of Sand's *La Petite Fadette* (Flammarion, 1967), states: 'Sand paints them as they are, with no indulgence, determined in work and defending their interests. They don't easily let themselves become emotional. Neither are they well-informed. They believe in all superstitions. Sand knew this clearly, so that she was saved from any idyllic absurdities.'

# Gaskelliana for the Twenty-First Century

Fran Baker

The John Rylands Library at the University of Manchester has been marking the 150<sup>th</sup> anniversary of Elizabeth Gaskell's death with a number of exciting new initiatives focusing on our Gaskell holdings.

Over the years, we have digitised letters and individual pages from the Gaskell manuscripts that we hold – for talks and presentations, exhibitions, and in response to requests from researchers. More recently, a project run under the auspices of the newly-established John Rylands Research Institute<sup>1</sup> has led to some much larger-scale digitisation work, with the result that all four of the Gaskell manuscripts held at the Library have now been digitised in their entirety.

The Research Institute was founded to bring together researchers and curators to work on innovative collection-based projects. One of the first projects to be funded by the Institute was 'The Gaskells at 84 Plymouth Grove, Manchester', a proposal submitted by Professor Helen Rees Leahy, Director of the Centre for Museology at the University. Helen was also the Curatorial Consultant for Elizabeth Gaskell's House, being responsible for developing displays and interpretation following the purchase of the House by Manchester Historic Buildings Trust.

While this project had various different strands, Helen was keen to exploit the potential offered by digital technology to bring Gaskell's manuscripts to a wider audience, particularly to visitors who make the journey to Gaskell's home at Plymouth Grove. Utilising the expertise of the Library's Centre for Heritage Imaging and Collection Care, a major digitisation project was launched, and our in-house professional photographers have produced high-resolution digital images of every manuscript. Amongst these is the manuscript of *The Life of Charlotte Brontë*, which reveals in a very material way the difficulties Gaskell encountered in researching and writing the biography of her friend: there are hundreds of crossings out and insertions; letters of Charlotte's were copied into the text by Gaskell's daughters; William Gaskell's hand also features in an editorial role (as well as contributing half a page of the text himself at an early point in the book). By contrast, her fiction manuscripts – particularly those of the short stories – are very clean, reflecting Gaskell's remarkable ability to simply sit down and write without subsequently making major revisions or fair copies. Her habit of composing her works in the midst of her bustling household is well-known, and one of the Library's other collections includes an anecdote about this: Isabella Jamison (formerly Green), who was a friend of the Gaskell daughters, remembered how her older sister Ellen was allowed to practise piano at the Gaskells' home when she was a girl; Isabella commented in her memoirs that 'Mrs Gaskell also used the room to write in & my sister used to wonder much what she was writing'.<sup>2</sup>

These digital manuscript volumes have been created in the form of book-reader objects, meaning that visitors to Plymouth Grove can 'virtually' flick through some of Gaskell's manuscripts in the very house where they were written.

Along with these manuscripts, the Library has digitised the first two published versions of Gaskell's short story 'The Crooked Branch', which appeared in Dickens's journal *All the Year Round* as 'The Ghost in the Garden Room' in 1859, only appearing under its better-known title when Gaskell herself included it in a collection of short stories the following year. This means that the manuscript can be compared with its first two editions, revealing some of the cuts and alterations that its editor (Charles Dickens) imposed on Gaskell's original version of the text.

By the end of this project, we had accumulated such an extensive corpus of digitised material that we decided to pull together all of our Gaskelliana to create a new digital 'Gaskell Collection' in our online image library, LUNA.<sup>3</sup> As well as the literary manuscripts, this includes correspondence which reveals the stories behind Gaskell's work. There are the letters she received from Charlotte Brontë, as well as the letter she obtained from Brontë's friend Mary Taylor in which Charlotte describes the memorable trip she made to London with her sister Anne in 1848 in order to reveal their true identities to publisher George Smith. There are letters from Dickens, Gaskell's irascible publisher; letters she received from other writers like George Eliot and Harriet Beecher Stowe; and some of the prized signatures and letters from famous people that Gaskell acquired for her own autograph collection (Wordsworth's being prominent among them). The Gaskell Family have permitted the Library to photograph some of the items in their own private collection, and these are also included in our online collection – so now people from all over the world can, at the click of a button, view Gaskell's passport, a portrait of Hannah Lumb, and some artwork by Gaskell's daughter Meta.

Any further Gaskelliana photographed by the Library will be added to this digital collection, which we hope will form an internationally significant resource for anyone with an interest in Gaskell's life and works.

Whilst digital reproductions can provide enhanced access to original documents and early editions, they can never quite capture the magical aura of the originals, particularly when handwriting is involved. In addition to the digital work, we therefore decided to exhibit some physical items from the collections to mark anniversary year. Between March and September, the two 'World Literature'-themed display cases in our Rylands Gallery are devoted to Gaskell. In keeping with the theme of Gaskell's House, the display includes a copy of the auction catalogue listing every single item from the house which was sold off in 1914 after Meta's death. Our particular copy of this catalogue comes from John Geoffrey Sharps's large collection;<sup>4</sup> it is special because it belonged to someone who was present at the sale and penned in an additional item by hand as Lot 377 – an 'exquisite

paisley shawl' which was in the Drawing Room but was not included in the printed sale catalogue. Anyone who has seen the displays at Elizabeth Gaskell's House will know of Gaskell's fondness for paisley.

We are also exhibiting an inkstand – not the well-known ivory-inlaid inkstand from the Library's collection which has been on loan to the House, but an altogether plainer wooden one.<sup>5</sup> We will never know whether Gaskell herself ever used it, but it was certainly purchased at the 1914 sale: a note on the base indicates that it was bought by John Harland, who was a member of the Mosley Street Sunday School in which the Gaskells took a great interest – and it was subsequently donated to the Library.

Alongside these items we are displaying a rather humble-looking sheet of notes which was serendipitously discovered behind a bookshelf at the House itself and placed on deposit with the Library by Manchester Historic Buildings Trust.<sup>6</sup> Written by William Gaskell, these 'Hints on English Composition' reflect his work as an educator and his interest in language, as well as recalling the grammatical and other corrections that appear in his hand on his wife's literary manuscripts.

We were also keen to showcase some relatively new acquisitions which had never been seen by the public before, so have included a letter that we purchased in 2013 which illustrates Gaskell's philanthropic interests: writing to Henry Somerset in 1860, she refers a poor woman of her acquaintance to Mr Rickard, a workhouse manager in Manchester, in the hope of getting her some poor relief to supplement her small income.<sup>7</sup> Another small but somewhat unusual acquisition is also on display: in 2013, we were alerted to a lone envelope which was being offered for sale by a bookseller. It had been spotted by David Southern, Managing Editor of *The Collected Letters of Thomas and Jane Welsh Carlyle*, who quickly realised its relationship to an item in the Rylands' collections, namely the famous letter from Thomas Carlyle to the anonymous author of *Mary Barton*, in which he praised the novel as a book 'deserving to take its place far above the ordinary garbage of Novels'. The letter came to the Library as part of Meta Gaskell's bequest and was never accompanied by an envelope. Fortunately, we were able to purchase the envelope,<sup>8</sup> meaning that after more than 160 years and a journey which will probably never be known, it was finally reunited with its original contents!

Another new acquisition we are unable to display physically because of its light sensitivity is a carte de visite photograph of Elizabeth Gaskell, which is tentatively dated to 1864.<sup>9</sup> However, this will be made available for all to see in our digital Gaskell Collection. Cartes de visite were hugely popular from the late 1850s, being exchanged between friends and visitors, and displayed in albums. The portrait on our new carte de visite comes from the same session as the other photograph of Gaskell that the Library has held for many years; taken by Alexander McGlashon of Edinburgh, it shows Gaskell in one of her many paisley shawls.

Finally, one of our Conservators, Laura Caradonna, is undertaking a project to rehouse over 300 of the letters in the Gaskell Collection. These are the letters that were sent to Gaskell or her husband by a range of luminaries, along with Gaskell's autograph collection, all of which came to the Library from Meta Gaskell. They were loose on their arrival at the Library, and were subsequently mounted in five volumes. Although this probably reflected best practice at the time, over the years letters have become partially detached from their mounts, others have become completely loose, and yet others were deliberately removed for inclusion in exhibitions. If a researcher only wishes to see a single letter from the collection, it means an entire volume of letters must be issued each time, putting the other letters at unnecessary risk.

Laura is encasing each letter in its own conservation-grade polyester sleeve, and they will be held in five ringbinder boxes reflecting their current division into volumes.

Once this part of the project is complete, we will address further volumes in the collection, such as the letters sent to Gaskell by Charlotte Brontë. These are also mounted in a volume, but we believe them to have been bound before their arrival at the Library – potentially by the Gaskell family. They therefore have an interest as historic artefacts in a way that the Library-bound volumes do not, so we will need to address the challenge of preserving them to 21<sup>st</sup>-century standards, whilst ensuring that their integrity, and the original binding, is retained.

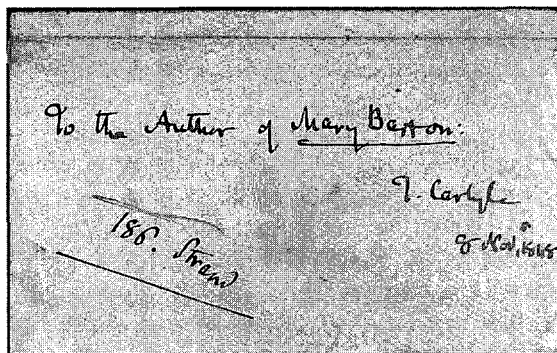
We are running two collection encounters for Gaskell Society members in November, at which I will be showing some old favourites from the collection as well as some of our more recent acquisitions. This will also provide an opportunity to find out more about the conservation project from Laura.

Our projected Gaskell-related activities for the future include undertaking some further work with Professor Rees Leahy on the history of the house at Plymouth Grove - including its pre- and post-Gaskell occupants, which may form the basis of a display in the future.

As ever, the legendary J G Sharps laid some groundwork in this area: his archive contains papers - including some beautiful photographs - of the Harper family, who moved into the house after Meta's death, and this is complemented by a small accession of material the Library acquired separately some decades ago from a relative of the Harpers. There were at least two Harper daughters, one of whom (Lilian) was a professional actress, and the other (Constance) a musician; aptly, Constance played the harp, and was the first professional female musician to join Manchester's Hallé Orchestra. The house at Plymouth Grove therefore became home to another generation of creative and talented women. Elizabeth Gaskell would surely have approved.

- 1 See <http://www.jrri.manchester.ac.uk/>.
- 2 Isabella Jamison's memoirs, p. 19, Papers of the Jamison Family, Box 5/3.
- 3 See <http://luna.manchester.ac.uk/luna/servlet/Gaskell2~91~1>.
- 4 Papers of J.G. Sharps, Box 28/2.
- 5 Gaskell Collection, VDA.3.
- 6 Accession 2013/48.
- 7 Accession 2013/15. Published as letter no. 467 in Chapple and Pollard (eds), *The Letters of Mrs Gaskell* (Manchester: Mandolin, 1997).
- 8 Accession 2013/2.
- 9 Accession 2013/42.

Fran Baker is Archivist, The University of Manchester Library



Envelope addressed  
by Thomas Carlyle



Carte de visite  
photograph of Mrs Gaskell

## A message received on 8 May 2015 from two new members who are sisters

It is a truth universally acknowledged that ladies in possession of a favourite author must be in want of a Literary Society.....

And so it was that my sister and I, both devotees of Jane Austen and Mrs Gaskell, and members of the Jane Austen Society for many years, came to join the Elizabeth Gaskell Society and thus attend our first AGM at Cross St. Chapel on 18th April 2015.

The Elizabeth Gaskell Society was not entirely unknown to us as our good friend from the Jane Austen Society, Jackie Tucker, had always sung its praises whenever we met her at Austen events and kept urging us to join. She listed the vital ingredients that go into making a good literary society – excellent discussion groups and local events, a conference with renowned speakers at an agreeable hotel, pilgrimage trips in the footsteps of the author and delicious lunches! We were won over and decided to take the plunge and not only join but to dive straight into the Scarborough summer conference in pursuit of *Sylvia's Lovers*.

But the first hurdle was the AGM; would we be welcome, would we get on with the Gaskellites, would the buffet lunch live up to expectations? Well; yes, yes and, most definitely, yes!! What a lovely time we had and can only say thank you very much to everyone for making us so welcome. The members were so friendly, the speakers so interesting and stimulating and the lunch so utterly delicious!

We are looking forward to meeting up again at the conference in July.

Best wishes to all,

Christine Grocott & Judith Bottriell

Editor adds: We must let these New Gaskell Girls know that we prefer to be known as Gaskellians. We welcome them warmly nonetheless. They did come to the Conference.



# Time for Some Light Relief: 'Gaskell' on the Silver Screen

Christine Lingard

For anyone interested in Elizabeth Gaskell and her friends you may want to consider a film as an alternative to reading a book. Here are a few suggestions with less obvious connections, in addition to adaptations of Brontë novels.

## Glory 1989

With Oscar winning performances from Denzel Washington and Morgan Freeman, this is the true story of Colonel Robert Gould Shaw (Matthew Broderick) who was killed commanding the only contingent of black troops at Fort Wagner, Charleston Bay, in the American Civil War, 1863. Mrs Gaskell wrote a short appreciation of him for Macmillan's Magazine later that year. Not for the faint hearted.

## Creation 2009

The story of Darwin's writing of *The Origin of the Species*, and his devotion to his precocious daughter Annie, (Martha West) whose death, at the age of thirteen, nearly wrecked his marriage. Gaskell was excited to meet him in 1851, writing: It's not the Poet Laureate, but it is a cousin, not seen for years, and who has been around the world since, who has volunteered to come up 15 miles to see me. Charles Darwin (Paul Bettany) was in fact the cousin of her cousin Sir Henry Holland. He became the inspiration, in part, for Roger Hamley in *Wives and Daughters*. The child was treated in Malvern by Dr James Gully (Bill Paterson) who also treated Meta. His own daughter, Susannah, a school friend of Marianne Gaskell, was invited to stay at Plymouth Grove - But Susy's [troubles] are peculiar, & really need confiding to someone, as she has no mother.

## Scott of the Antarctic 1948

Starring John Mills as the Polar explorer. One member of his crew was Lieutenant (later Commander) Henry Pennell, (Bruce Seton) Thurstan Holland's nephew who remained at base and did not progress to the Pole. He survived only to die in the Battle of Jutland in 1916. In his only memorable scene in the film he entertains his colleagues with a tongue-twisting monologue. London members may also fondly remember the late Jane Wilson, whose kinsman, Dr Edward Wilson (Harold Warrender), also perished with Scott.

## Finding Neverland 2004

J M Barrie (Johnny Depp) entertains the young Llewelyn Davies brothers with stories that became *Peter Pan*. The boys were nephews of Gaskell's other son in law, Charles Crompton, who being childless himself was very fond of them. Their mother (Kate Winslet) was the daughter of George du Maurier, the first illustrator

of *Sylvia's Lovers*, who loved the book so much that he called her Sylvia. The film contains some inaccuracies especially including the portrayal of Sylvia's mother (Julie Christie).

## Effie Grey 2014

Elizabeth Gaskell's opinion of Effie Grey (Dakota Fanning) the estranged wife of John Ruskin (Greg Wise) and her affair with John Everett Millais (Tom Sturridge) is well documented. They had attended the same school. Gaskell defended Ruskin. Effie's champion was Lady Eastlake (Emma Thompson), the critic of *Jane Eyre*, whom Gaskell wanted to libel. The film is liable to divide modern audiences as much as the original affair did the Victorians.

## The Invisible Woman 2013

Adapted from the book by Claire Tomalin, this is the story of Dickens (Ralph Fiennes) and his relationship with Nelly Ternan (Felicity Jones). The film includes several characters known to Gaskell, such as Mark Lemon (Richard McCabe), Wilkie Collins (Tom Hollander) and Mrs Dickens (Joanna Scanlan). The couple met in Manchester during the production of his play, *The Frozen Deep*. On another occasion he paid a visit to Mrs Gaskell. 'On Wednesday Mrng Mr & Mrs Dickens, & Miss Hogarth came to call before 10!' she recalled. Meta Gaskell also remembered the event: He once called, rather flashily dressed.

## Miss Potter 2006

William Gaskell, when a widower, became a surrogate grandfather to Beatrix Potter (Renée Zellweger), the young daughter of his friend, Rupert Potter (Bill Paterson). They regularly holidayed together and there are several photographs of them together. Beatrix wrote movingly of his last days, having visited him shortly before his death. She also recalled her father being taken aback when visiting the Gaskell daughters at Plymouth Grove - 'They had become exceedingly stout!'

## The Duchess 2008

The story of the disastrous marriage of Lady Georgiana Spencer (Keira Knightley) and the Duke of Devonshire (Ralph Fiennes) who was only interested in producing an heir. This baby eventually succeeded to the title and in 1857 entertained Elizabeth Gaskell, in a wheel chair, at his home, Chatsworth House in Derbyshire. He talked incessantly she recalled.

## The Innocents 1991

This film, starring Deborah Kerr and Michael Redgrave, was adapted by Truman Capote from *The Turn of the Screw*, a short story by Henry James. There have been several critics who have pointed out similarities with Gaskell's most popular ghost story, *The Old Nurse's Story*. He was very complementary about her: 'Mrs Gaskell's genius was so composite as a quality, it was obviously the offspring of her affections, her feelings, her associations.'

# The AGM and Literary Weekend of the ALS

30 May 2015

Janet Kennerley

The venue for this year's event was York and the meeting took place at King's Manor, in the Huntingdon Room. We were told that this was built as a hunting lodge for Henry VIII, but in more recent times it had been used as a school and then was taken over by the University.

Delegates were welcomed by Anita Fernandez-Young, Secretary of the ALS, who explained that she was standing in for the Chairman, Linda Curry, who was disappointed not to attend due to medical reasons.

Anita pointed out that the ALS was in a new phase of its history, now being entirely 'virtual', but any societies still needing printed information would still be able to receive it. She posed the question to the representatives of various literary groups – 'What can the ALS do for your society?'

Michael G Wilkinson, Chairman of the Trollope Society, welcomed everyone to York, and pointed out that his society is this year celebrating 200 years since the birth of Anthony Trollope in Bloomsbury, London. In his address, 'Time and Mr Trollope', he mentioned how excited the Victorians had been about reading, that most authors wrote within their own time, but so many have now faded away from public awareness. Nowadays, writers need to compete with TV, cinema and computers. He thought that Anthony Trollope's establishment of his characters, both male and female, and his treatment of politics, for example, are still recognized now in everyday life. Like his mother, Fanny Trollope, Anthony was remarkably industrious. He travelled all over the world and never lost an opportunity to write, producing 47 novels, 5 travel books, 2 plays, 3 biographies and an autobiography, translations, short stories, reviews essays, periodical articles and lectures. His bicentenary this year is being celebrated worldwide and also, his associations with the Post Office. He was responsible for the introduction of the first pillar boxes, which initially were green, but were later changed to the more familiar red to enable them to be seen more easily.

Howard Gregg, Convenor of the York Trollope Society Seminar Group, and also a member of the Gaskell Society, spoke about 'Anthony Trollope in Yorkshire'. Howard pointed out that Trollope travelled worldwide – but had many links with Yorkshire. He was working for the Post Office in Ireland in 1842 when he met his future wife, Rose Heseltine, who was from Yorkshire, and they married in 1844 at Rotherham. Her father was a bank manager, and Rose was baptized as a Unitarian. They had two sons and lived in various places during their marriage, but Rose was always very supportive to her husband in his literary career. She was considered

to be a stable influence on him and helped in forming some of his female fictional characters. Anthony Trollope stood as Liberal Candidate in the 1868 Election at Beverley in Yorkshire, but it was a very corrupt area and he lost. His political experience is reflected in his writing, especially *Ralph the Heir* of 1869. He was very fond of the Bolton Abbey area which he described as 'the prettiest spot in England'.

Before lunch, members of the York Group entertained the meeting with readings from Trollope's writings, which gave us an insight into his many-sided character – construction of the plot, acquainting the reader with his characters, becoming intimate with the reader, several clerical portraits and lovely location descriptions.

The 2015 AGM of the ALS took place after lunch, and delegates were asked to stand when the name of their society was announced. There were 70 names on the Delegate List, and 8 were members of The Gaskell Society.

Once again, the Secretary acted as Chairman. The main items of interest arising were that the ALS Newsletter is now circulated electronically and each member society should appoint someone to receive this in order to cascade it to other members as required. Likewise, the ALS Journal is available as an e-version, and therefore more easily and widely distributed, avoiding postal expense. The theme for the 2016 Journal will be 'Literary Scandal' and articles of 1,000 words are requested on any aspect of this wide-ranging subject by the end of February next year.

Jenny Uglow has been President of the ALS over recent years but has now resigned, so suggestions were invited for her replacement.

Thelma Thompson, a long standing ALS Committee member has resigned as the Shropshire Literary Society has been disbanded. It was also announced that Janet Allan of the Gaskell Society has resigned. There was a request for names to fill these vacancies – meetings are held twice yearly in Birmingham with travel expenses paid.

## Campaigns

Janet Kennerley pointed out that Plymouth Grove, now known as Elizabeth Gaskell's House, was officially reopened in the autumn of 2014, and recommended a visit. The house was viewed before restoration in 2010 by delegates when the Gaskell Society hosted that year's AGM and Literary Weekend.

Anita Fernandez-Young said that Gad's Hill, the only house which Charles Dickens owned, is currently on the market, having recently been used as a school. Future plans for this property are uncertain.

Elaine Peake, representing the George Eliot Fellowship, told the meeting of their

plans to create a community literary heritage space at Griff House, near Nuneaton, where George Eliot grew up as Mary Ann Evans. Griff Preservation Trust has been set up to administer the George Eliot Visitor Centre.

Next year's ALS annual event is to be hosted by The Brontë Society, date to be confirmed but probably in May 2016 – see ALS website for further details:  
[www.allianceofliterarysocieties.org.uk](http://www.allianceofliterarysocieties.org.uk)

Janet's Notes: Just a reminder – any Gaskell Society member is welcome to attend the AGM of the ALS. It is an enjoyable opportunity to meet other members from societies around the UK and perhaps a chance to visit somewhere different and learn about other authors and areas associated with them. The ALS consists of over 100 societies representing 50,000 readers.

Anthony Trollope 1815-1882 was a favourite writer of Mrs Gaskell – 'I wish Mr Trollope would go on writing *Framley Parsonage* for ever. I don't see any reason why it should ever come to an end.'

'I do not think it probable that my name will remain among those who in the next century will be known as the writers of English prose fiction.' (Anthony Trollope, *An Autobiography*)

... both the above quotes used in The Trollope Society's membership application form!

## ~ Forthcoming Events ~

### Autumn General Meeting

**Saturday 26 September 2015, Knutsford Methodist Church**  
Please see enclosed leaflet for details and application form.

### Annual General Meeting 2016

**Saturday 2 April 2016 Cross Street Chapel, Manchester**  
Further details TBA in Spring Newsletter

## North-West Group

### Manchester Meetings

These are held on the first Tuesday of the month (NB No meeting in January) in Cross Street Unitarian Chapel, which will open at 12 noon for a bring-your-own lunch, followed by talk at 1.00pm. (More details on website)

#### 6 October

**Mike Rose:** Across the Class Divide.

Philanthropy and the Gaskells in the 19th Century

#### 3 November

**Diane Duffy:** March of Progress in the works of Anna Eliza Bray (1790-1883) and Elizabeth Gaskell (1810-1865).

#### 1 December

**Michala Hulme:** Grim Manchester

Michala is an historian and genealogist. She is currently working towards a PhD.

#### 2 February 2016

**Anthony Burton:** The Gaskells and the Intellectual Life of Manchester

Anthony Burton spent most of his working life as a curator at the Victoria and Albert Museum, London and was also a Trustee of the Charles Dickens Museum in Bloomsbury.

He is now a volunteer and a Trustee at Elizabeth Gaskell's House.

#### 1 March 2016

**Lynne Allan:** The Gaskells and The Portico

Lynne is Chair of The Portico Library and is a skilled and experienced teacher of English Language Literature and Creative Writing.

### Knutsford Meetings

These meetings are held in Brook Street Chapel Hall, Adams Hill, on the last Wednesday of the month, from 28 October until 27 April. (NB No meeting in December)

Buffet lunch available from 12.15. **Elizabeth Williams** will speak and lead the discussion afterwards. *Wives and Daughters* is the work to be studied.

**New Year lunch 13 January 2016.** Further details TBA

## The Gaskell Society South-West

### 14 and 15 September Manchester Trip

The South-West Group will be making a 'pilgrimage' to Plymouth Grove on Monday afternoon, the 14th of September. We will be going by train from Bath that morning and will stay overnight so that we can visit the Portico Library the following morning.

Arrangements have been circulated to all members and any further information can be had from Elizabeth Schlenther (see below). This will take the place of our usual summer lunch.

### Saturday, 17 October, 2.30 pm at the BRLSI, Queens Square, Bath

This promises to be a special meeting in several ways. Gillian Ballinger from the University of the West of England, Bristol, will be speaking to us on: **Novel to Television – adopting *Wives and Daughters***. She promises some clips from the TV series as part of her talk.

Afterwards we will have a tea in commemoration of the 150th anniversary of Elizabeth Gaskell's death in 1865. We hope as many members as possible will be able to come for this special occasion.

Dates have not been set yet for our discussion groups next winter, but the book will be *Cranford* and the sessions will again be at members' homes.

Queries about any of our events to: Elizabeth Schlenther, 14 Vellore Lane, Bath, BA2 6JQ, Tel: 01225 331763 or via email: [eschlenther@gmail.com](mailto:eschlenther@gmail.com)

## London and South-East Group

### Saturday 12 September 2015

**Dr Julia Allan:** *The Life of Charlotte Brontë* and an extraordinary friendship

### Saturday 7 November

**Dr Rebecca Styler:** The image of the maternal in the works of Mrs Gaskell  
Venue Francis Holland School, Graham Terrace, London

Domestic arrangements as usual.

## Sesquicentennial Events

### 19 October

**Nick Channer** will discuss his book, *Writers' Houses* (at 84 Plymouth Grove)

### 21 October

**Jon McGregor:** Victorian Letters (at 84 Plymouth Grove)

### 6 November, 2-3pm

Collection Encounters, John Rylands Library, Deansgate, Manchester

### 14 November

Tea party at Knutsford Heritage Centre

### 15 November

Commemoration service at Brook Street Unitarian Chapel, Knutsford

### 26 November, 2-3pm

Collection Encounters, John Rylands Library, Deansgate, Manchester

Please check website for further details of these events.



THE BRONTË SOCIETY

**CALL FOR PAPERS**

THE 2016 BRONTË BICENTENARY CONFERENCE:

**"...the business of a woman's life..."**

**Charlotte Brontë and the Woman Question**

The Brontë Society is pleased to announce that the conference will take place on Friday, Saturday and Sunday 19 – 21 August 2016 at the Midland Hotel in Manchester

In 1837 Charlotte Brontë wrote to the Poet Laureate, Robert Southey, for advice on a literary career. He replied that 'literature cannot be the business of a woman's life: & it ought not to be'.

Our conference in 2016, the first of the three Brontë bicentenaries, takes up the challenge of what might be the 'proper business of a woman's life'. The many facets of this subject present a wide range of possible papers both academic and literary, including:

*Women's position in English culture and society in the nineteenth century*

*Contemporary writing on 'The Woman Question'*

*Charlotte Brontë's own writings on the matter*

*Her relationship with other women writers*

*Her literary reputation*

*Her influence on later feminist movements.*

THE KEYNOTE SPEAKER WILL BE

Professor Germaine Greer

The conference weekend will include an optional excursion to The Gaskell House, the home of Charlotte's friend and biographer, Elizabeth Gaskell, which has recently been opened to the public.

\*\*\*\*\*

Abstracts for papers (no more than 300 words) should be sent by  
28 February, 2016, to:

The Conference Organizer, The Brontë Society  
The Brontë Parsonage Museum, Haworth, Keighley BD22 8DR  
Successful speakers will be notified by 31 March, 2016.