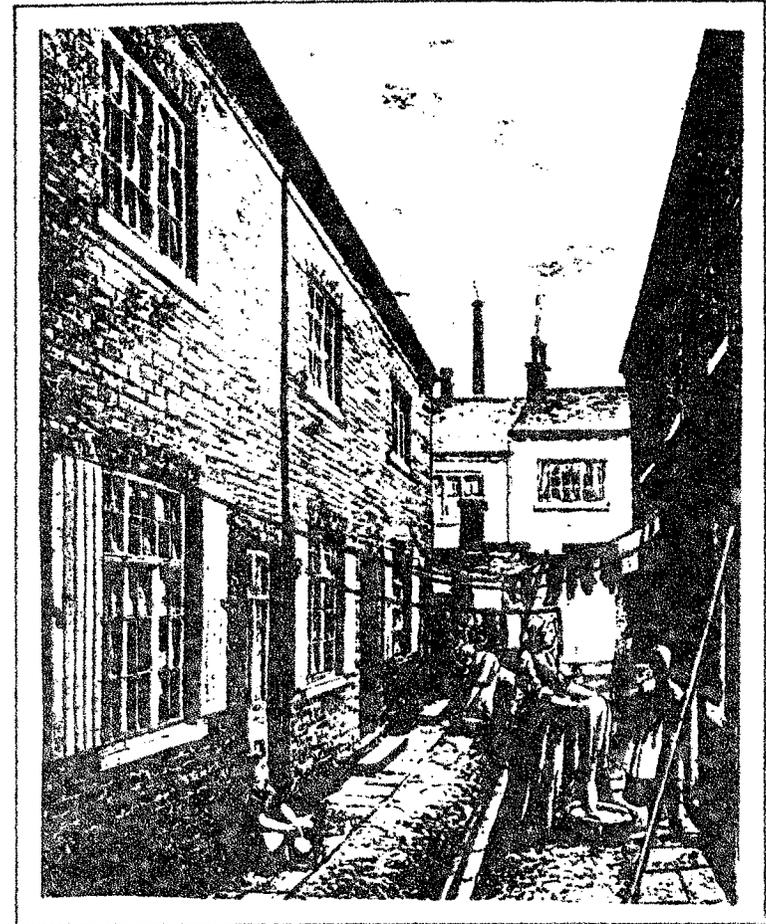


The Gaskell Society



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)

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NEWSLETTER

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; what the exact nature of this proposed conversation should be he had ^{did} not know.

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

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 1855¹:

'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

¹ Letters and Memorials of Catherine Winkworth Vol.1, p.346