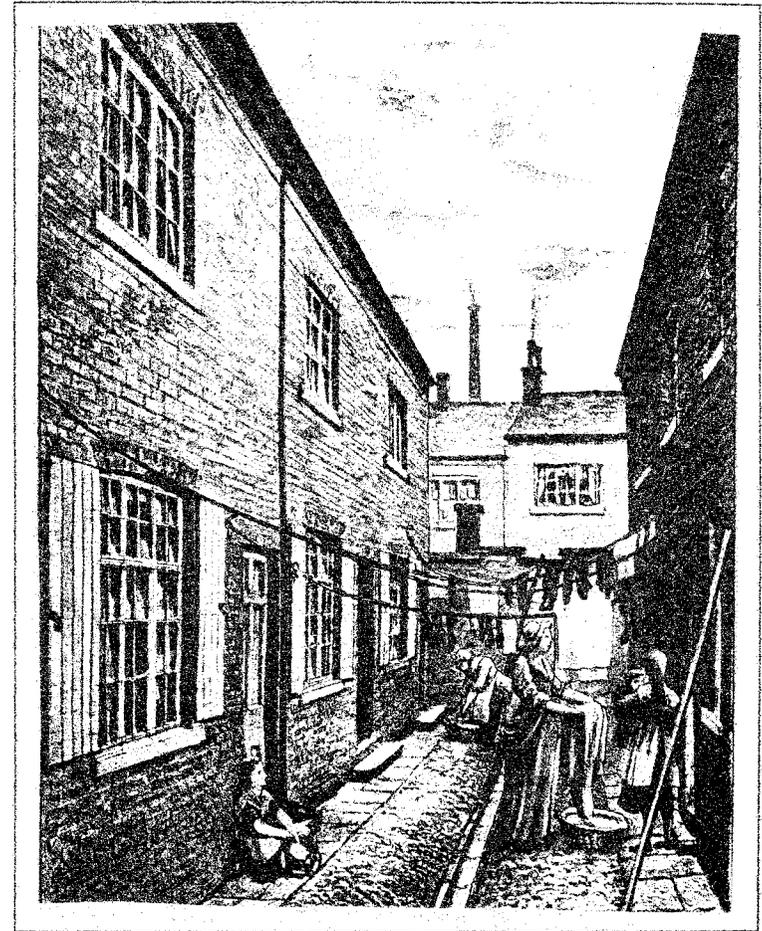


# The Gaskell Society



**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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**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



SIR JAMES KAY-SHUTTLEWORTH, MRS GASKELL  
AND CHARLOTTE BRONTE

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.

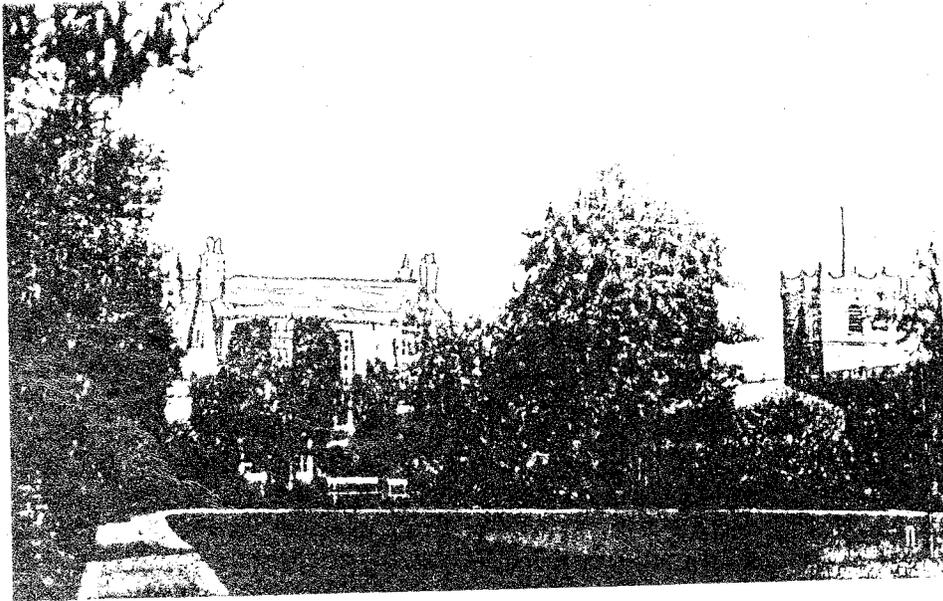
Brenda Colloms

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