

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.

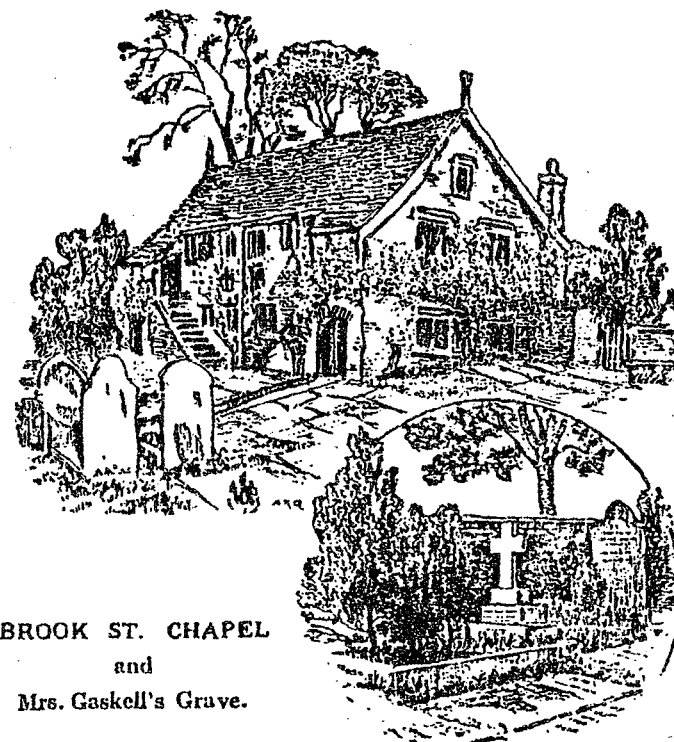
An exhibition of Gaskell Illustrators will be on view
after both meetings, at the schoolroom, Brook Street

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
THE EDITOR: Mrs J. Leach, Far Yew Tree House,
Over Tabley, Knutsford, Cheshire WA16 0HN
Telephone: 0565 4668

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

-oOo-

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

-oOo-

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

-oOo-

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

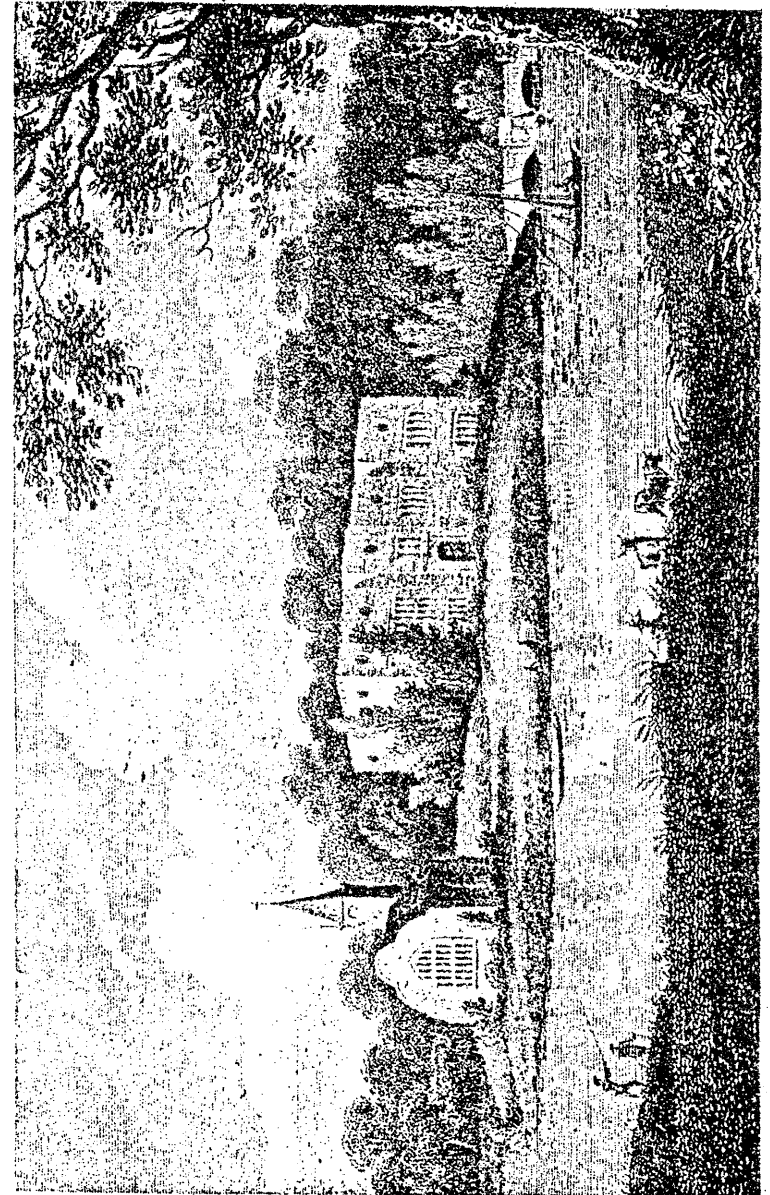
'I was brought up in a little country town, and it is my lot now to live in or rather on the borders of a great manufacturing town, but when spring days first come and the bursting leaves and sweet, earthy smells tell me that 'Somer is ycomen in', I feel a stirring instinct and long to be off into the 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 letters¹. 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

¹'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

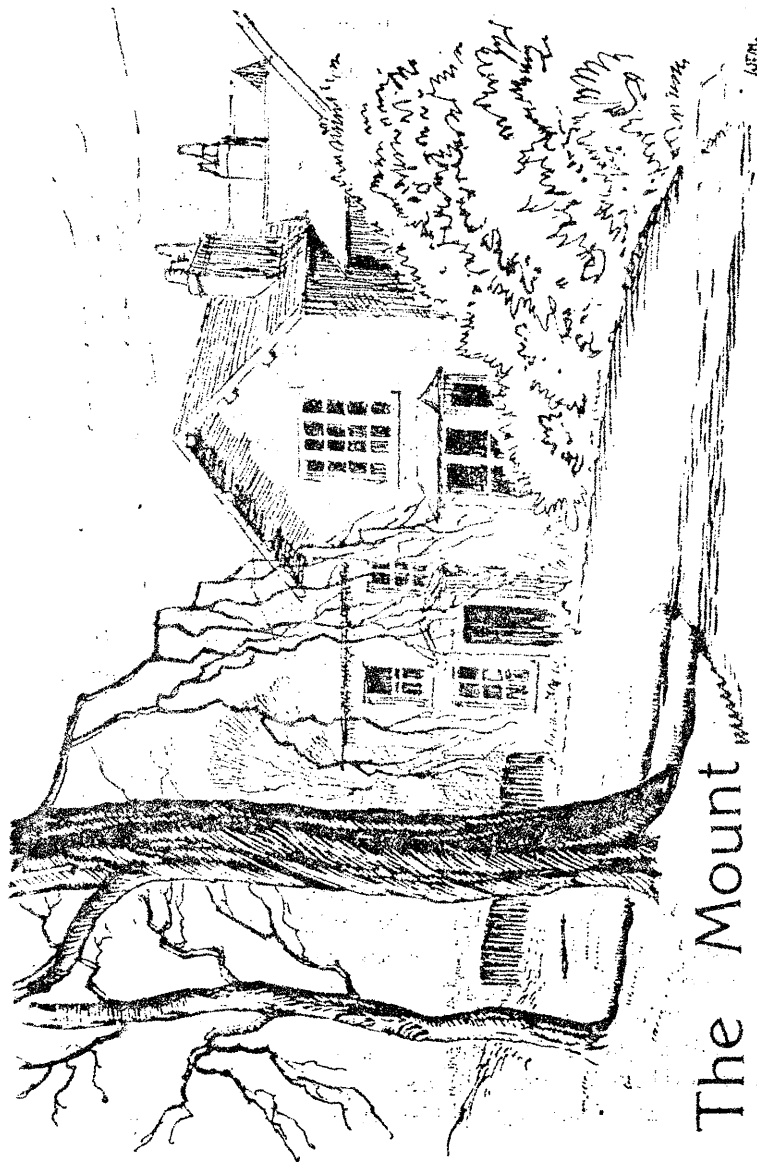
Acknowledgements for details of Samuel Greg to 'Portrait of a Village. The Happy Valley' by Margaret Ingram, illustrated by W. Stirling Martin

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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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