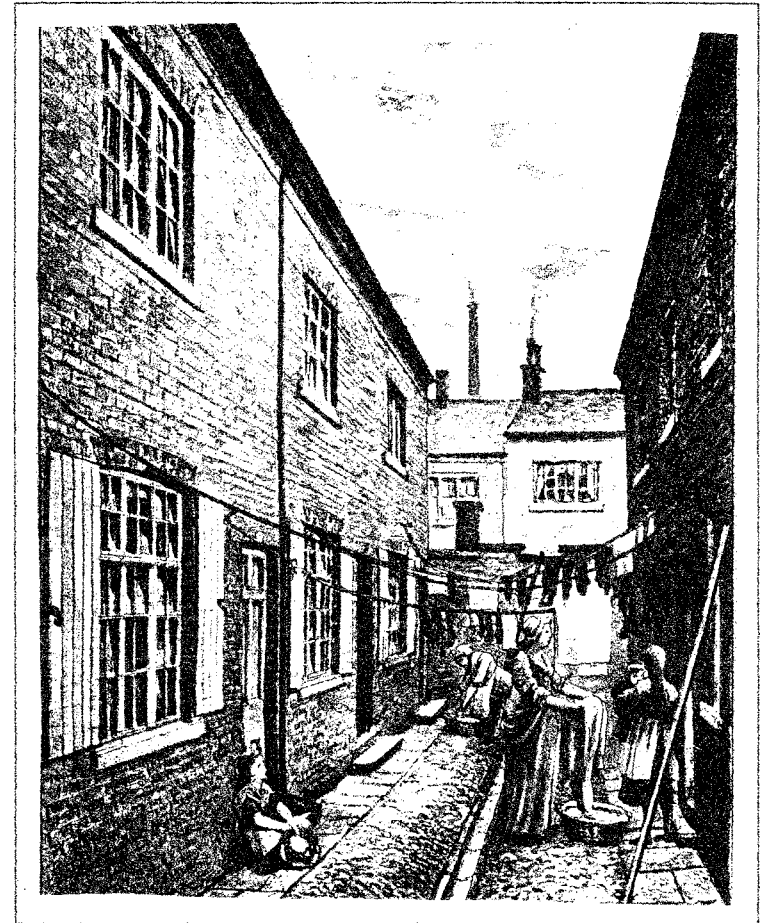


The Gaskell Society



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)

NEWSLETTER

ISSN 0954 - 1209

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!

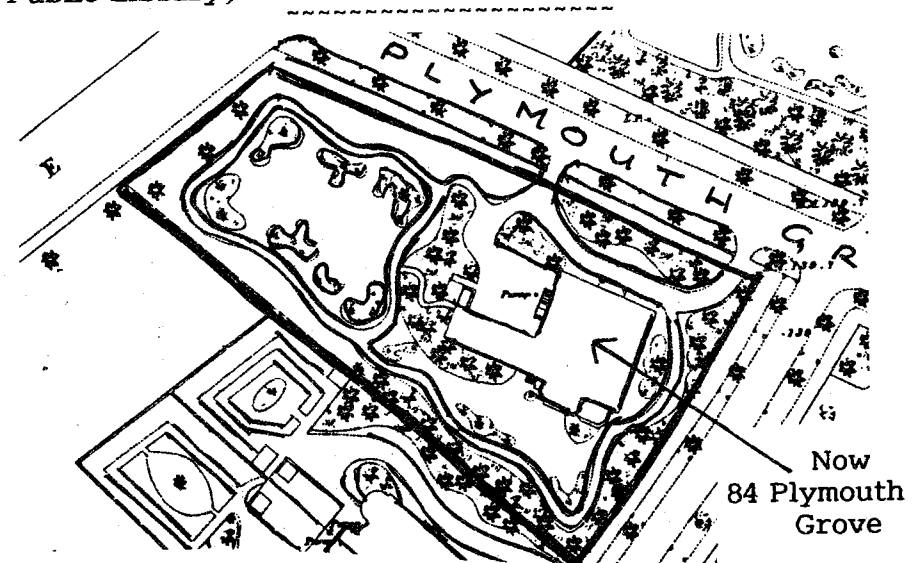
Then the man drove one, faster than ever; and presently the wild moor was enclosed in little patches of fields here and there; and, on descending a little hill (or as they call them "brows" in that country) there were the scattered glimmering lights of a village to be seen not far off.

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.

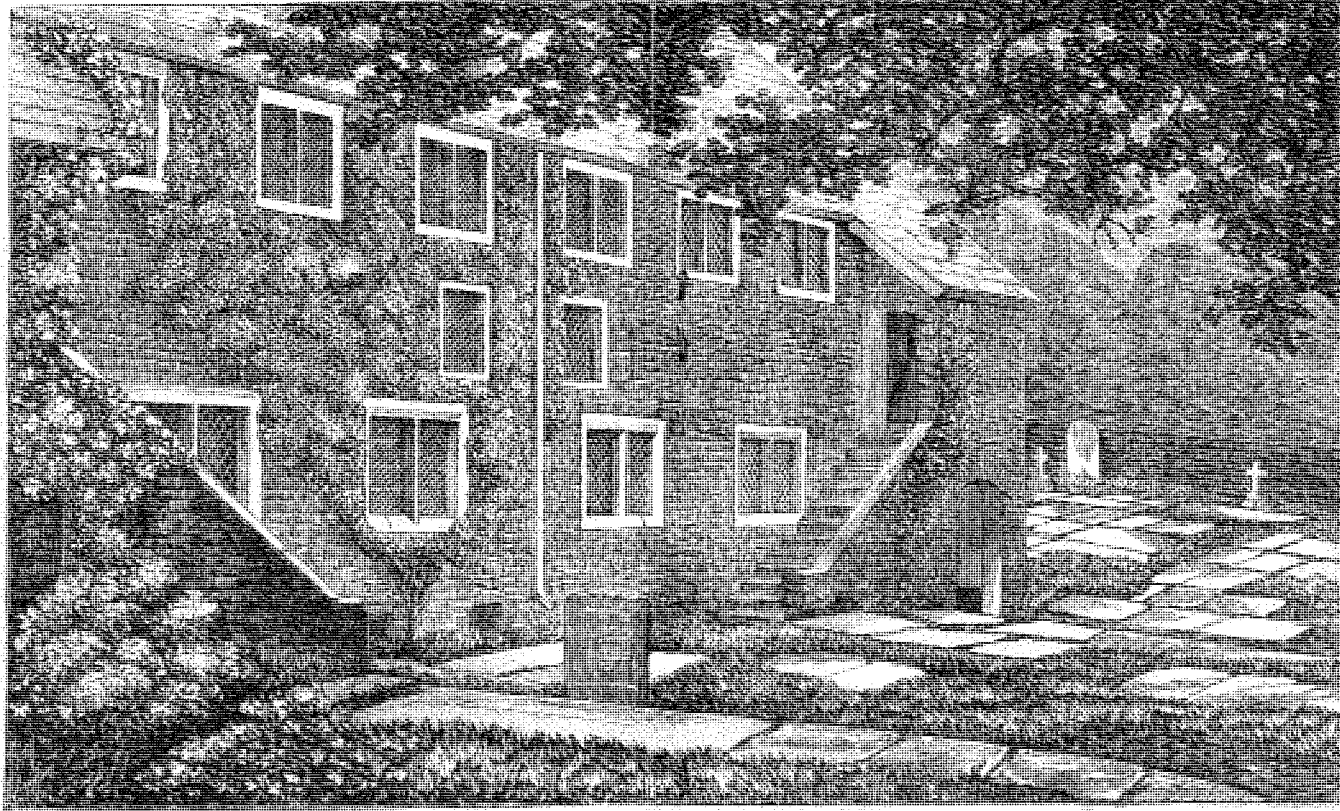
Space forbids mention of all that exists in the new collection of papers, but the 'Diary and Expences & Journal of a Voyage & Journey from Liverpool to Trieste via Hull & Toninguen in the Summer of 1805' and 'Do of Do from Malta to Falmouth and Sandle Bridge in the Spring of 1810' are particularly fascinating, 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