

# The Gaskell Society



**NEWSLETTER**

If you have any material or suggestions for future Newsletters, please contact Mrs Joan Leach, Far Yew Tree House, Over Tabley, Knutsford, Cheshire WA16 0HN (Tel: 01565 634668)

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

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**NO. 22**

## EDITOR'S LETTER

We hope you received your 1996 Journal safely and enjoyed reading it.

It helps to keep the mailing list accurate if dues are paid at the correct time, that is 1st September or at AGM or London meeting on 14th September. We have included details about paying by banker's order. Membership cards are not necessary and will only be sent if SAE is included. We must try to keep down postage costs and regret that in future Journals will be sent surface mail to overseas members. US members may pay dues of \$18 to Lucy Magruder, The Gaskell Society, Box 5424, Fullerton, CA 92838.

During our summer season we have enjoyed three outings; the first to Lancashire where we visited Hall i' the Wood for its connections with Samuel Crompton and textile history, next we went to Derbyshire to well dressings at Mayfield and Sudbury Hall where scenes from the TV version of Price and Prejudice were set. A hot Saturday in July found us in Conway and Beaumaris following in Gaskell footsteps; we cooled off by sailing round Puffin Island; this tour may be part of our itinerary at the Chester Conference. You will hear more about this with a Christmas mailing but put the date in your diary, 8-11th August 1997, and the chance to add a day at either end. At Oxford all our speakers were members and we now issue a CALL FOR PAPERS. The conference will be titled: "The Victorians at Leisure".

We have a busy Gaskell year ahead with various events and activities planned for you and we hope that you will be able to share these with us.

It promises to be a good year for publications too. Manchester University Press have in hand Professor Chapple's text for Elizabeth Gaskell: The Early Years, which he has been researching assiduously for some years. We anticipate publication about March.

Enclosed with this Newsletter are details of Private Voices by Chapple & Wilson (Keele University Press) which will have a wide appeal.

Member Anna Unsworth, who read a paper at our Oxford Conference and was a Gaskell enthusiast and scholar well before the Society was formed, has a book due to be published in October - Elizabeth Gaskell: an Independent Woman, Minerva Press £12.99.

All these books will be available to members at Society meetings.

As a token of our appreciation for the legacy given to us by Daphne Carrick (see NL 21) we will remember her by naming our AGM talk as THE DAPHNE CARRICK LECTURE.

#### ALLIANCE OF LITERARY SOCIETIES

The Mary Webb Society is to provide the speakers for the post-AGM programme of the Alliance of Literary Societies in Birmingham next April. The author and poet, who lived in Shropshire, died 70 years ago next year. The Mary Webb Society (Tel: 01952 244810) was founded in 1972 and its president is Dr Gladys Mary Coles, the prize-winning Merseyside poet.

Two new officers were appointed at the 1996 annual meeting of the ALS - Mr Bill Adams (chairman of the George Eliot Fellowship) has become the new hon. secretary and Ms Thelma Thompson (chairman of the Shropshire Literary Society) is the new hon. treasurer.

Half the literary societies in the UK are not affiliated to the ALS and Bill Adams has promised a special mailing to non-member societies advising on the benefits of membership.

The newest 'recruit' is the Romany Society (Tel: 01625 504507).

KENN OULTRAM

#### BEHIND THE SCENES: SOURCES AND CONTEXTS

by J A V Chapple

The diary Elizabeth Gaskell kept for a few years after the birth of Marianne in 1834 was published in a limited edition of 50 copies by Clement Shorter in 1923 and is very rare indeed. After Anita Wilson had published her article entitled 'Mother and Writer: A Study of Elizabeth Gaskell's Diary' in the *Gaskell Society Journal* for 1993, she thought that such an early, significant composition would have a broad general appeal and proposed a critical edition of the whole text to the journal's editor.

Alan Shelston suggested that she should collaborate with me and put us in touch with a publisher for the book now with Kelle University Press, to be entitled *Private Voices*. It will be based on Mrs Gaskell's original manuscript and on the parallel manuscript journal kept by Sophia Holland (née Isaac) about the babyhood of Thurstan (Newsletters 17 and 20). Some associated material, especially a long letter William Turner wrote to his daughter Mary shortly after her marriage in 1811 to William Gaskell's senior colleague at Cross Street Chapel, John Gooch Robberds, and Mary's own short autobiography composed in the late 1860s, will be printed in an appendix.

This recital of the bald facts ignores the warm hospitality offered by Mrs Rosemary Trevor Dabbs and by Mrs Portia Holland and her late husband, John Swinton Holland. It was a pleasure to see all the pictures and memorabilia that found an honoured place in their homes - a large oil painting of Marianne, small portraits of Peter Holland and Hannah Lumb, a silhouette of the Reverend William Willets, father-in-law to Peter and Swinton Holland as well as William Turner, and so on. Many of our members will recall the library of Manchester College Oxford, where, through the good offices of the Chaplain and Margaret Sarosi, the Librarian who welcomed the Society at our Oxford Conference, I was able to consult the Robberds manuscript now owned by Miss Barbara Hartas-Jackson. Scores more acknowledgements await the publication of my book on Elizabeth Gaskell's background and early influences, now with Manchester University Press.

February 10th  
1834

Edward Thurston

I from the first  
showed great fire  
of getting patching  
and holding tight  
being strong hope  
to his hands

Facsimile of Sophia Holland's Diary (actual size)

The transatlantic collaboration with Anita Wilson could not have been more gratifying. She has been responsible for the critical and historical introductions to the diaries, whilst I had the easier task of transcribing. It sometimes seems that others do most of my work. Even my most recent little discovery was a double gift of Fortune. In the course of showing a visitor to Hull the panoramic view of the city from the top floor of the University Library, I happened to notice that we possessed a good run of the *Lancet*. A few days later I began to look through the volume for 1832 for information about cholera in Manchester. The word 'Boddington' positively leapt off the page.

The second thing I thought of was my feeble note in the *Gaskell Society Journal* for 1990 ('Boddingtons: not identified'), keyed to Elizabeth's account on 8 August 1832 of cousins of Sophia Holland who had been struck by

To my dear little Marianna I shall "dedicate"  
this book, which, if I should not live to give  
it her myself, will I trust be reserved for her  
as a token of her mother's love, and extreme  
anxiety in the formation of her little  
daughter's character. If that little daughter  
should in time become a mother herself,  
she may take an interest in the experience  
of another; and at any rate she will  
perhaps like to become acquainted with  
her character in its earliest form. I  
wish that (if ever she sees this) I could  
give her the slightest idea of the love  
and the hope that is bound up in  
her. The love which passeth every  
other love, and the hope that however we  
may be separated on earth, we may  
each of us so behave while sojourning here  
that we may meet again to renew the  
dear & tender ties of Mother and Daughter.

Elizabeth Gaskell's Diary (actual size)

lightning on their wedding tour. Their umbrella had served as a conductor 'and afterwards the steel in Mrs Boddington's stays, conveyed the fluid to within a straw's breadth of a vital part in her leg', wrote Elizabeth dramatically.

The *Lancet* for 15 September 1832 contains an account by Benjamin Boddington, Esquire, which draws upon a communication by Dr Faraday to a scientific periodical, the *London and Edinburgh Philosophical Magazine*. Benjamin's address is given as Badger Hall and the wedding couple are identified as a Mr and Mrs T T Boddington.

On Friday, 13th April 1832, they had placed the servants inside their post chariot whilst they themselves mounted the barouch-seat behind, so that on their journey from Tenbury to Bromyard they could enjoy the scenery of the Abberley Hills near Worcester. But a 'slight' storm arose. Then, 'a flash of lightning struck them both senseless, threw the horses on the ground', killing one of them, 'and cast the postboy to a considerable distance'. (This postillion was not so much struck by lightning as thrown by his unfortunate horse.)

Benjamin's account is, as one might expect, partly scientific. Readers of Patricia Cornwell's *Potter's Field* will not be surprised to hear that the steel of the busk proved to be magnetised. Benjamin provides a neat diagram for this. But there are numerous other fascinating details.

The wires of Mrs Boddington's shattered umbrella (which had no ferule) passed the 'electric fluid' to the wire round the edge of her bonnet by her left eye, from which is circled to the back of her head, singeing her hair, 'zigzagged along the skin of the neck to the steel busk of her stays, leaving a painful but not deep wound', perforated the brown paper case of the busk and fused a quarter of an inch of its upper surface. Thereafter there was no mark or discoloration of busk or case until the lightning discharge exited at the bottom of the steel busk in the same way, causing a deep wound dangerously close to her left femoral artery. Though Mrs Boddington's

gown, petticoat and seat cushion were singed, pierced and rent, nothing actually caught fire.

Mr Boddington was less fortunate. His clothes were severely torn and burnt. His wife and a servant had to put out the fire whilst he was 'apparently lifeless'. His gold shirt buttons were fused and thrown some distance away, leaving a flesh wound; a knife in his waistcoat pocket was the cause of another wound. He was wearing a thick old navy pea-jacket, which was torn to pieces, but his waistcoat was 'merely perforated' by a pea-sized hole on one side and by a similar hole next to a gold pencil-case, 'where it passed out, setting fire to his trowsers and drawers, and inflicting a deep wound round his back, the whole of which was literally flayed.'

The back of the barouche seat was made of iron, which was broken in two. Its fractured parts almost touched the carriage spring, the discharge passing to the earth by the tires of the wheels, leaving four holes in the road where they had been in contact at the time of the shock. Two months after the accident, two pairs of Mrs Boddington's scissors in a work-case were found to be magnetised. Parts of Mr Boddington's watch, especially the balance wheel, were also highly magnetised. When it was shown to Dr Faraday he 'set it afloat on a cork, and found the poles so well defined' that it was eventually mounted as a compass. Significantly, none of these objects were in the direct tracks of the lightning discharge.

As usual, possible lines of enquiry proliferate. Who were the Boddingtons? (JGS might here consider a series of puns on ale and brewing.) How were they related to Sophia Holland? Was Badger Hall in Shropshire? It is hard to forget that Henry Holland's friend Michael Faraday had just a few months before the accident discovered electromagnetic induction and invented the dynamo - the beginning of the mighty electric power industry. When Sir Robert Peel on a visit to his laboratory pointed to the experimental machine and asked what use it was, Faraday is said to have answered, 'I know not, but I wager that one day your government will tax it' - a story told in a splendid biography of the great scientist by L Pearce Williams. Plus ça change ...

PRIVATE VOICES: The Diaries of  
Elizabeth Cleghorn Gaskell and Sophia Isaac Holland  
 Edited by Anita C Wilson and J A V Chapple  
 Keele University Press. £17.95

This book includes two first-hand and contrasting accounts of motherhood in the 1830s.

Elizabeth Gaskell's diary of Marianne's babyhood from 1835-8 (originally published as "My Diary" by Clement Shorter) shows her early promise as a writer. Sophia Holland's chronicles of Edward Thurstan Holland's earliest years from 1836-9 is more prosaic. Thurstan, of course, later married Marianne. There is excellent introductory material to each diary.

As a piece of social history, these diaries document the challenges, dilemmas and rewards of Victorian parenthood. As a piece of literature, there is no doubt that, in cultivating the powers of observation to be found in her diary, Elizabeth was laying the foundations for the wider social vision to be found in her novels.

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The Audio Book Collection now includes Mary Barton read by Juliet Stevenson. 12 cassettes for £17.95 (ABC 136s). Excellent value. You might persuade your library to buy it. Freepost (BA 1686/1) BATH BA2 3SZ for catalogue

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Those of you who are technical wizards may already know that there is a Gaskell page on the internet organised by Professor Mitsuhara Matsuoka, who will be carrying out research at Manchester University this autumn. Find him on

<http://lang.nagoya-u.ac.jp/~matsuoka/Gaskell.html>

BOOK NOTES  
 by Christine Lingard

Novel possibilities, fiction and the formation of early Victorian Culture by Joseph W Childers (University of California, Riverside), University of Pennsylvania Press, £30.95.

A discussion of the important role played by certain social problem novels in influencing official texts generated by parliamentary and radical bodies in order to bring about social change. In many cases the novel provided the inspiration for the social text. Mary Barton is compared to Engels' The condition of the working class in England, and many parallels are found. Charles Kingsley's Alton Locke, and Disraeli's Coningsby are also discussed.

The language of gender and class: transformation in the Victorian novel by Patrician Ingham (St Anne's College Oxford), Routledge, £37.50.

Starting from the premise that the representation of gender is always involved with the representation of class, the author uses six major Victorian novels to explore the way language is used to describe romantic conflict and yet still succeed in avoiding stereotypes. The novels in question are Shirley, North and South, Hard Times, Felix Holt, The Unclassed (George Gissing) and Jude the Obscure.

Walking the Victorian streets, women, representation and the city by Deborah Epstein Nord, Cornell University Press.

Dickens and Gaskell are the two most prominent authors discussed in this book about the depiction of urban life. Section one deals with the role of the narrator who was invariably male; section two with the fallen woman and section three with new women and the end of the century. It deals at length with Gaskell's observation of the street life of Manchester and makes many references to modern critics, in particular Raymond Williams' The country and the city. The book is not confined to the novel. Some parallels are made with a French travel write Flora Tristan, whose Promenades dans Londres was published in 1840.

FIRST MEETINGS  
THAT LED TO LASTING FRIENDSHIPS  
 by Barbara Brill

In preparation for the reading of the correspondence between Charles Eliot Norton and John Ruskin which I shall shortly be embarking on, thanks to the availability of the book in Manchester Central Library, through the kindness of Christine Lingard, I have been reading Ruskin's 'Praeteria'. In volume III chapter 1 I was particularly interested in Ruskin's account of his first meeting with Charles Norton on the boat between Vevay and Geneva in 1886.

"It was hot on deck and we all went down into the little cabin, which the waves from the paddle wheels rushed past the windows of, in lovely wild masses of green and silver. There was no one in the cabin but papa, mamma, old Anne and me, and a family whom we supposed rightly to be American, of the best sort. A mother with three daughters and her son - he in charge of them all, perhaps five or six and twenty; his sisters younger; all of them quietly and gracefully cheerful. Neither of the groups talked but I noticed that from time to time the young American cast somewhat keen, though entirely courteous looks of scrutiny at my father and mother.

In a few minutes after I had begun to notice these looks, he rose with the sweetest, quiet smile I ever saw on any face (unless, perhaps, a nun's, when she has some grave kindness to do) crossed to our side of the cabin, and addressing himself to my father, said, with a true expression of great gladness and of frank trust that he knew who we were, was most thankful to have met us, and that he prayed permission to introduce his mother and sisters to us.

The bright eyes, the melodious voice, the perfect manner, the simple but acutely flattering words, won my father in an instant. The rest of the time till we reached Geneva passed too quickly; we arranged to meet in a day or two again, at St Martin's.

And thus I became possessed of my second friend, after Dr John Brown and my first real tutor, Charles Eliot Norton."

This account of a first meeting reminded me forcibly of the meeting of Charles Norton with Elizabeth Gaskell and Marianne and Meta in Rome in 1857, described many years later in a letter to Norton written by Meta who kept up a correspondence with him after her mother's death:

"I shall keep the anniversary of that Carnival Day when we first saw you as a festa, for I can truly say that your friendship has been one of the greatest pleasures of my life. It is sealed now, too, with deep gratitude to you for your faithful affection to Mama which she prized as highly as she returned it truly. I can see your face and smile now (as distinctly as if I was just turning away from them) when you caught at some confetti that Mama was dangling from a long stick from the balcony - and Mama said "Oh, look, what a charming face!" and Mr Story (I think it was) said "Oh, that's Charles Norton" and there was a chorus of welcome and bidding you come up." (*From Letters of Mrs Gaskell and Charles Eliot Norton 1855-65, Introduction p.XIX. Ed. Jane Whitehill. London 1932*).

In Praeterita (volume III chapter 1) Ruskin refers to Norton's concern for the health of his daughter Lily. Norton wrote from his home, Shady Hill, on April 9th 1887:

"The winter has been long and hard with us ... We have had the usual winter pleasures and all my children have been well, though Lily is always too delicate, and ten days hence I part with her that she may go to England and try there to escape her summer cold. She goes out under Lowell's charge, and will be with her mother's sister and cousins in England."

It is interesting to conjecture whether the Gaskell daughters saw anything of Lily Norton during this visit as they had a special interest in the child who was christened 'Elizabeth', after their mother, and like her was called 'Lily'. In one of Meta's letters to Norton she refers to the christening and to the appropriate christening present she and her sisters had sent out. She wrote on January 13th 1867 from Plymouth Grove:

"Thank you, dearest Mr Norton, for telling me of darling

little Lily's christening. It must have been in every detail the very best that we could have wished or imagined possible. A christening service is so beautiful and solemn and such a glad happy thing - I am going to send Lily a simple locket with some of Mama's hair in it - which I would give to very few. Do you think it would be safe to send it by post, registered? I do so like the think of the flowers on the table, when little Lily was being christened, for all lovely bright things seem symbolic of Mama whose soul seemed to clasp all beauty as the gift of God." (*Letter 2611*)\*

There appears to have been an exchange of locks of hair as on March 28th of the same year Meta wrote from Cowley House, Oxford:

"Dearest Mr Norton

I have heard this morning from Julia that the locket with darling little Lily's hair has reached home and I hasten to thank you for it, though as yet unseen. It is so kind of you and dear Susan (as she tells me I may call her) to have thought of this gift for me, and though I could never never need anything to remind me of your child and Mama's namesake I long to have it in my hands and to begin to carry it always with me." (*Letter 2612*)\*

She wrote again after seeing her locket:

"I wish so much that I could see Lily and it is with quite a pang that I think that perhaps we may never meet. It is only in looking forwards that I feel how separate our lives are. In the past it has made no real difference; and every time that I write to you it seems as if I had only just parted from you. I thank you again and again with all my heart for this gift, dearest Mr Norton.

If the locket with Mama's hair in it has reached you, you will perhaps have thought that the lock of hair was clumsily put in, so I wished to tell you how I had not trusted it in the jeweller's hands, for fear of its being changed (which is said often to happen), but our dear old Hearn put it in as neatly as she could [Here a note has been added 'The locket is now in the Gaskell Mem. Hall, at Knutsford']. I have been away from home for sometime

stopping with Marianne and Florence before I came here. It is so pleasant to see Marianne so perfectly happy as she is. She and Thurstan fit into one another beautifully." (*Letter 2610*)\*

I hope very much to find in the Ruskin-Norton correspondence the same delightful intimacy.

\*The quotation from the letters of Meta to Norton are published by permission of the Houghton Library, Harvard University (Nos. 2611, 2612, 2610)

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RIVISTA DI STUDI VITTORIANI

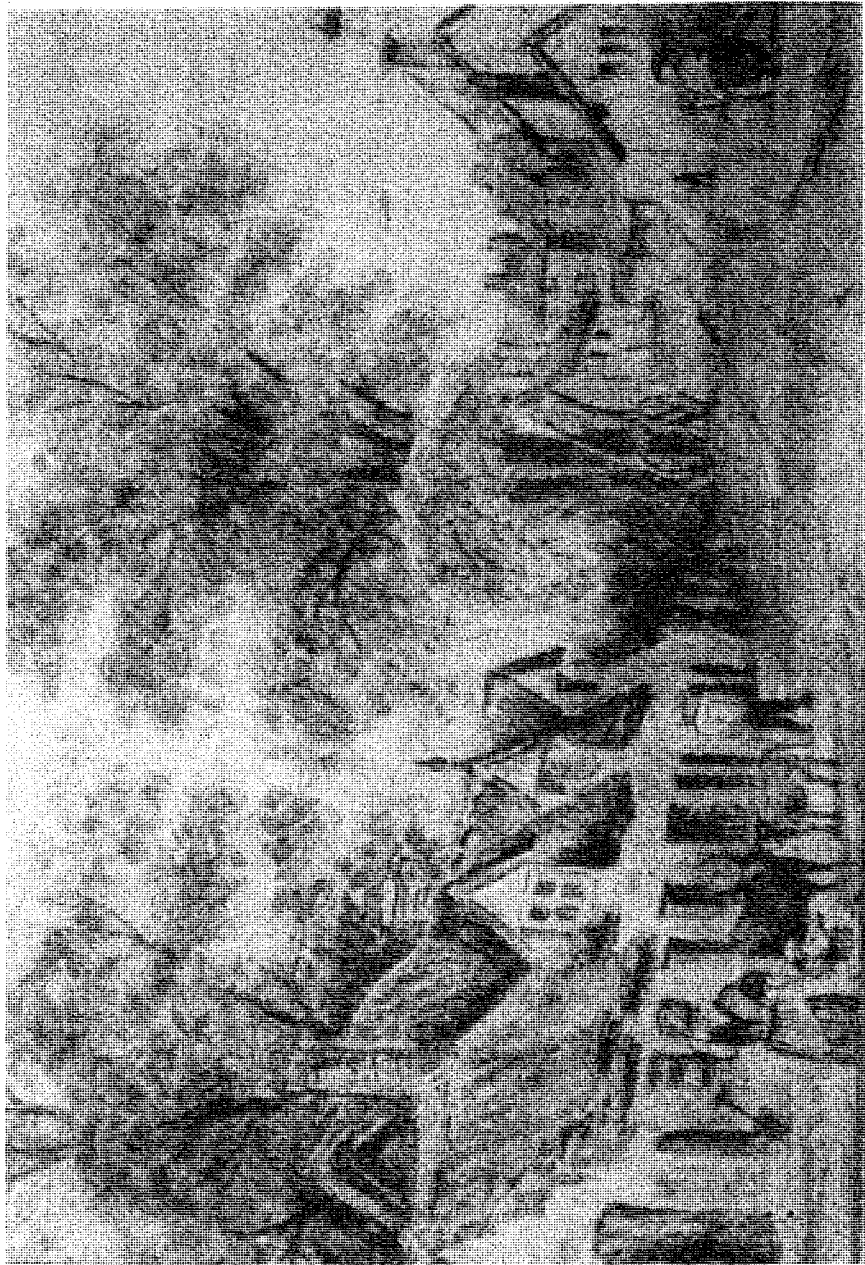
This is a new Journal published quarterly from the Centre of Victorian and Edwardian Studies at Pescara University.

The Editor is Francesco Marroni, a Vice President of The Gaskell Society; John Chapple and Alan Shelston have both been appointed to the editorial board, which includes a number of eminent Victorian scholars. RSV will publish scholarly articles on all aspects of Victorian and Edwardian literary culture, in Italian and English. Editor Francesco Marroni, in the opening number, contributes an article on Thomas Hardy's poem 'An August Midnight' and Anna Unsworth writes on Italian references in Cousin Phillis: 'A purer aether, a diviner air'.

The journal also carries substantial reviews of recent scholarship.

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 A valuable addition to Gaskell works in Italian translation has been published by Maria Costantini (Edizio Danilo): *Storia di un Signorotto di Campagna e altri Racconti*. It includes *The Squire's Story*, *The Sexton's Hero* and *The Heart of John Middleton*, with a useful introduction, notes and bibliography.





This Victorian watercolour scene of King Street, Knutsford, about 1860, before the railway came, will soon be available to members as a postcard. Geoffrey Sharps has kindly made it available from his collection. The artist is believed to be Lucy Holland

ELIZABETH GASKELL AND MANCHESTER  
Day School organised by Manchester  
Metropolitan University, Gaskell Society, and  
Lancashire & Cheshire Antiquarian Society

Saturday 26 April 1977

at

Manchester Metropolitan University  
Mabel Tylecote Building, Cavendish Street

Fee: £9.00; £6.00 (members and concessionary)

PROGRAMME

- 9.00 am Registration and Coffee
- 9.30 am Unitarianism in Victorian Manchester  
Ian Sellers (University of Manchester)
- 10.15 am Views of the North in Victorian Literature  
Brian Maidment (University of Huddersfield)
- 11.00 am COFFEE and BISCUITS
- 11.30 am Footnotes in Mary Barton  
Terry Wyke (Manchester Metropolitan  
University)
- 12.15 pm Folk Song and Mrs Gaskell  
Carolyn Jackson-Houlston (Oxford Brookes  
University)
- 1.15 pm LUNCH (those attending to make own  
arrangements)
- 2.30 pm Afternoon Visits  
Tour 1. Plymouth Grove (Robin Allan)  
Tour 2. Portico Library and Mosley Street  
(Alan Shelston)  
Tour 3. All Saints and Book Street (Terry Wyke)

This will be in place of our usual Spring meeting. It seems very early to book for this but it may be over-subscribed.

Booking forms available at meetings, or send SAE if you have not received one.

HOLIDAY IN GERMANY

Plans are now in hand for this to take place from 6-12th May by air. Arrangements are being made with Moswins, a specialist firm for German holidays. Our hotel will be a new one, complete with swimming pool (fancy a swimming gala?!) at Mannheim, convenient for our itinerary, a \*\*\*\* hotel at \*\*\* price for us. We will have half board.

Moswins has the advantage of being able to arrange flights from Heathrow, Manchester or Bristol to Frankfurt.

Day 1 - Travel and settling in

Day 2 - We will visit Heidelberg, the castle, monastery church, lunch at the Wolfsbrunnen restaurant, all known to ECG. We will have a one-hour boat trip down the Neckar Valley

Day 3 - The Odenwald Valley and Heppenheim (sorry we cannot spend six weeks there but we will visit a vineyard)

Day 4 - Worm, Bingen and Mainz - old cathedrals etc

Day 5 - Explore Heidelberg at will. Afternoon trip to Speyer

Day 6 - Down the Rhine Valley and over the French border to Strasbourg to the mountain area as setting for The Grey Woman

Cost £518, plus travel insurance £15. Single room supplement £80, but you may like to share

We have some spare places. If you would like to see more details, please let me know. We will have with us John Chapple (and Kate if her recent hip operation lets her) who has travelled Gaskell country here and tells me his German is adequate for ordering drinks! I am sure we can rely on Professor Peter Skrine who lectures in German to manage as our spokesman.

Mrs Gaskell had a spot of trouble in Mannheim over RUM! but we will be more careful. Like to join us?

MONTHLY MEETINGS IN KNUTSFORD

These were popular last year and will recommence on 28th October. We will use A Dark Night's Work as course book. A leaflet is available if required; please send SAE or collect at meetings.

NEW YEAR LUNCH

Make a note of the date in your diary - 11th January at The Parish Church Rooms - details later.

LONDON & SOUTH EAST GROUP

SATURDAY 14th SEPTEMBER at Pimlico School, Lupus Street, London SW1V 3AT, 2 pm.  
"Sybil' and 'Mary Barton': A Historian's Perspective" - Howard F Gregg

SATURDAY 9th NOVEMBER at Francis Holland School, 39 Graham Terrace, London SW1W 8JF, 3 pm.  
"Gaskell's Gothic" - Jenny Uglow

For further information send SAE to Dudley Barlow, 44 Seymour Road, London SW18 5JA