

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
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NO. 23

Editor's Letter

by Joan Leach

The Society has a busy year ahead and we hope that you will all be able to join our activities either in person or spirit. Firstly, we have a monthly lunch and lecture from October to May here in Knutsford, which has been well attended and much enjoyed.

Our London and South East group meets five times a year for an excellent series of lectures; one of these forthcoming is to be shared with The Dickens Fellowship.

Forty-two members are looking forward to their tour to Germany 'In the footsteps of Elizabeth Gaskell' from 6th to 12th May. We hope to take some photographs to share our experiences with others.

With this Newsletter you will receive details of a meeting in Manchester on 22nd March. On 26th April you will have a choice between lectures in Leeds, London or Manchester!

Those of you who can reach Birmingham may like to join the AGM meeting of the Alliance of Literary Societies on 19th April when the Mary Webb Society will be hosts. SAE for details, please.

We have two publications to look forward to: Elizabeth Gaskell: the Early Years by our Chairman, John Chapple. Many hours of research and fascinating discoveries have gone into the making of this book, which will be published by Manchester University Press in April.

MUP have also decided to reprint The Letters of Mrs Gaskell, edited by J A V Chapple and Arthur Pollard. This will be a paperback edition.

These books will be available at our meetings at discount rates or direct from MUP.

The programme for our Chester conference is nearly complete. The trips into North Wales will be very pleasant, and any members who choose to stay an extra day on Monday 11th August may like to visit Knutsford and Gaskell country.

IF you are not able to get to our meetings, you might think of arranging a literary lunch in your area which might result in the formation of a group who could meet to read and discuss Victorian literature.

A Study of Mrs Gaskell's Handwriting
by Caroline Arnaud

Whether or not you believe in graphology as a science, I think you might be interested in reading the following study of Elizabeth Gaskell's handwriting. It was made by a graphologist I happen to know personally - Madame Coulet - who was kind enough to do it for me out of friendship. Madame Coulet is no specialist of the Victorian Era, and, as a Frenchwoman, she knows nothing at all about Elizabeth Gaskell's life and writing. This "naïveté" might be regarded as a drawback. On the other hand, it could be viewed as an asset, since I would imagine it must be difficult for an English graphologist not to be biased when dealing with the handwriting of someone so famous.

The three samples Madame Coulet has had the opportunity of studying are unfortunately not original manuscripts - as I possess none - but photocopies of them. However, I was glad to be able to supply her with various extracts (since you should never draw conclusions from one document only). All of them come from the Central Library of Manchester. Two of them are extracts from letters to Mrs Schwabe. They are dated "1852" (librarian's hand) and "April 30th 1852" (Gaskell's hand). The third one is not dated. It is a sample of Mrs Gaskell's writing followed by Meta's words "This is my mother's writing/M.E.Gaskell-2 March, 1909". They are referred to in the library as Gaskell manuscripts numbers 2, 3 and 10.

But let us delay no further the analysis of the handwriting itself, which I have tried to translate for you as accurately as possible.

Mrs Gaskell was a most dynamic and energetic woman. She was quick at repartee: her conversation must have been very fast as well as full of quick, clever and amusing remarks. Mrs Gaskell was not one to bend to other people's will or authority. She was quick to rebel. She was easily moved to enthusiasm too, and took on lost causes. She felt she had missions in life. Her energy was the most striking part of her temperament. She was always ready and willing to fight and argue. She had a remarkable fighting spirit.

She sometimes found it difficult to refrain from doing what she felt she had to do. At times, she even fought too much, that is, to the point of becoming muddled. She knew how to define clearly what she meant and to lay emphasis on what she wanted to say. Her authority sometimes verged on authoritarianism. Thanks to her energy and her capacity for decision-making she was something of a leader. She was one to spring into action. Even though she was an attractive character, she was not liked by everybody, as she did not try to make herself pleasant to everyone. She could be disagreeable and unpleasant when she wished to be. Once convinced that she was doing the right thing, she would fight her battles to the end. She regarded people who disagreed with her as mere fools. The Era in which she lived partly accounts for this personality of hers. There were such strong-minded matrons in the nineteenth century. She was not one to follow the lead of her husband. Her handwriting belongs to the "animus-type"² rather than to the "anima-type". She had a critical mind as well as a very inquisitive one: she was a keen observer of what took place around her, even though she focused on things that interested her and tended to forget everything else. She became totally involved in what preoccupied her. Her mind was very active. Indeed, she was mentally superior. She could clash with people. Hers was not a restful temperament. She enjoyed shaking up both people and set ideas. There was something of the pioneer within her, as she was good at starting things. It was certainly more difficult for her to carry on doing what she had initiated. Daily life and habits tired her out. When she was no longer interested in what she was working at, she needed to start up something new again so as to regain her enthusiasm. Hers was a passionate nature. It is not certain that she could remain attached to the same person for a long period of time. Affections did not come first and foremost in her life. They were not what counted most for her. She would bravely - not to say obstinately - champion the cause she believed in. When her beliefs and her feelings happened to clash with one another - as they were bound to in such a one - the former would win over the latter. She did not treat people diplomatically. She did not pretend to agree with what she disagreed with. She was not a shy person. She knew what she wanted to say,

and said it. Even though she could be very thoughtful towards people, she certainly was not always easy to get on with on a daily basis. She must have been a very socially attractive person. Her intellectual honesty was not to be questioned, but she would not let herself be distracted with details. When she was engrossed in something, you should not disturb her with something else either. She was driven by her passions. She never knew when to stop. She must have been liable to breakdowns since there are signs of regular exhaustion in her handwriting: she felt drained now and then. She would pass judgments and make choices first, and then think them over afterwards. She needed to fight for a cause that shook her to her very soul. She would champion this cause passionately, without ever considering in the least whether it was in her interest to do so. She would spare no trouble: this is what was most attractive about her. There was not the slightest shadow of hypocrisy about her. She could be carried away by unusual fits of anger. All in all, her personality is a most interesting one, and it really is worth studying: Elizabeth Gaskell was an exceptional woman.

Madame Coulet privately concluded by confessing that although Mrs Gaskell's handwriting is a most beautiful one, she would not have liked living in the same house with her.

I would conclude by saying, in a nutshell, that I for one was struck, shaken and ultimately utterly convinced by this analysis of Mrs Gaskell's handwriting made by Madame Coulet. I would be most happy to know your opinion about it. It is no easy task to picture to oneself the temperament of someone you only know through her writing. Doesn't this analysis of her handwriting made us more familiar with this fascinating and wonderful woman?

¹Emile Caille thus defines the "animus" woman: her way of thinking may be qualified as "masculine". It is very likely that she sometimes wished she were a man (translation mine). Emile Caille, *Graphologie analytique* (Paris: Masson, 1990) 63

Humour in Mrs Gaskell's Letters (1)
by Graham Handley

Reading the letters of a great writer - and Elizabeth Gaskell's claims to greatness are being steadily advanced - one feels all the time the consciousness of connection to the published work. Forty years ago I read the first seven volumes of Gordon Haight's edition of *The George Eliot Letters*, listening to the voice of the serious evangelical Mary Ann Evans, then to the cry from the heart after her father's death, then pondering the self-conscious Journal entry on HOW I CAME TO WRITE FICTION, and so on through the writing, the forms of publication of the individual works, the utterances on art, morality, life, domesticity. It was both fascinating and salutary, and at times I felt that the eye of the writer was firmly fixed on posterity. Just over ten years on from that reading I turned to *The Letters of Mrs Gaskell* edited by Chapple and Pollard. The complete contrast of tone with that of George Eliot, the constant familial emphasis, the wonderful rush of enthusiasm, emotion, warmth frustration, were underpinned by a running, delicious range of humorous innuendo, sometimes self-mocking. The eye was firmly fixed on the present in unselfconscious commentary. To read Mrs Gaskell's letters was to know her.

Mrs Gaskell's humour is present from her very beginning in *Mary Barton*, that otherwise sombre novel being irradiated, for example, by Job Legh's feeding the baby. *Cranford* is impregnated with comic modes, life's little ironies, Amazonian snobberies, the tragi-impersonation of poor Peter and the whimsy sentiment of his return. Deft touches made servants aggressively funny in *Ruth* and *North and South*, and Dn'l Robson moves from comic obstinacy to bloody-minded tragedy in *Sylvia's Lovers*. There would, I suspect, be general agreement about the pre-eminence of *Wives and Daughters* in Mrs Gaskell's comedy canon. None of her contemporaries, I suggest, outdid Mrs Kirkpatrick, her inflexible egoism even surviving the reined-in bluntness of Mr Gibson. She anticipates Rosamond Vincy: the difference is that Rosamond is not funny.

The humorous elements in Mrs Gaskell's letters have often a

natural and bubbling spontaneity, a vivacious curiosity, a rambling triviality or a gossipy flow. Perhaps their most endearing quality is her capacity of self-mockery (more of this later) and, sometimes, an innocent enjoyment in her own achievement. Take this almost throwaway account of how *Cranford* was informed with real-life incidents which she still treasures: this from a letter to Ruskin is some twelve years after its publication:

... whenever I am ailing or ill, I take 'Cranford' and - I was going to say, *enjoy* it! (but that would not be pretty!) laugh over it afresh. And it is true too, for I have seen the cow that wore the grey flannel jacket - and I know the cat that swallowed the lace, that belonged to the lady that sent for the doctor, that gave the emetic ...
(L 562, late February 1865)

And she goes on to tell the story of the servant-girl who had been taught by two maiden ladies 'to vault or jump gracefully' over the 'white places' in the carpet 'lest her feet might dirty them'. In fact her own public writing finds humorous mention in her casual letters. Before her suffering over *Ruth* there is a smaller worry over *Mary Barton*:

I find every one here has most convincing proofs that the authorship of *Mary Barton* should be attributed to a Mrs Wheeler, nee Miss Stone, and authoress of some book called the 'Cotton Lord'. I am only afraid lest you also should be convinced and transact that part of the business which yet remains unaccomplished with her. I do assure you that I am the author ... (L 31, Novr 13/1848)

Three weeks later she received a cheque for £50 from her publisher Edward Chapman. When she gets one for £20 for 'Lizzie Leigh' she ponders whether she is 'swindling them but I suppose I am not', adding wryly 'Wm has composedly buttoned it (the cheque) up in his pocket'. (L 70, Apr 26 1850). *Ruth*, 'a prohibited book in *this* as in many other households' (L 148 27 Jan 1853) provides anguish rather than humour, but even here Mrs Gaskell sees the funny

side. She tells her dear friend Tottie Fox of two men who burnt the book and of a third forbidding his wife to read it - 'they sit next to us in chapel, and you can't think how "improper" I feel under their eyes' (L 150 Feb 1853). And she repeats what Sir Francis Doyle had said to her as she fretted about people looking at her as if she were the author of *Ruth*, 'Can't you tell them, my dear, that you're Ruthless?' (L 211, Oct 1854).

Working on *North and South* enabled her to indulge that tone of self-mockery which is one of her warmest and most endearing qualities. Look at the repetitive and deliberately mechanistic nature of the prose here as she writes to Emily Shaen about the novel:

I've got to go (with Margaret - I'm off at her now following your letter) when they've quarrelled silently, after the lie, and she knows she loves him, and he is trying not to love her; and Frederick is gone back to Spain and Mrs Hale is dead and Mr Bell has come to stay with the Hales, and Mr Thornton ought to be developing himself - and Mr Hale ought to die - and if I could get over the next piece I could swim through the London life beautifully into the sunset glory of the last scene. (L 218, Oct 1854)

This laconic affectation of writer's block, a quiet laugh at work in anything but progress, is supplemented by her remarks on the same novel to Dickens: 'I think a better title would have been "Deaths and Variations". There are five deaths, each beautifully suited to the character of the individual.' (L 220, Dec 1854). But sometimes the humour at her own frustration has an edge of rejection. This was written while she was at work on *Wives and Daughters*:

I hate intellect and literature and fine arts and mathematics! I begin to think Heaven will be a place where books and newspapers will be prohibited by St Peter: and the amusement will be driving in an open carriage to Harrow, and eating strawberries and cream for ever. (L 561, Feb 20 1865)

Mrs Gaskell is richly curious, and the mystery of George Eliot becomes something of an obsession with her. She is lyrical about *Scenes of Clerical Life* and *Adam Bede* ('Janet's Repentance' is her favourite) and full of praise for the new writer. But the author as woman ('Madam Adam' she calls her later) is what really intrigues her. Writing to Mr 'Gilbert Elliot' in June 1859, she observes:

Since I came up from Manchester to London I have had the greatest compliment paid me I ever had in my life. I have been suspected of having written 'Adam Bede'. I have hitherto denied it; but really I think if you want to keep your real name a secret, it would be very pleasant for me to blush acquiescence. Will you give me leave? ... After all it is a pity so much hearty admiration should go unappropriated through the world. So, although to my friends I am known under the name of Mrs Gaskell, to you I will confess that I *am* the author of Adam Bede, and remain very respectfully and gratefully,

Yours,

Gilbert Elliot (L 431, June 3)

It is humour which doesn't quite come off, and with Josiah Liggins claiming the authorship of the novel, as well as of *Scenes of Clerical Life*, it is arguably in bad taste. Mrs Gaskell supported the Liggins' rumour for some time, but was generous enough to admit her error and heap further praise on her competitor in a letter from Whitby to George Eliot some five months later. She says, however, not without a certain sardonic humour, 'I should not be quite true in my ending, if I did not say before I concluded that I wish you *were* Mrs Lewes.' (L 449, Nov 10 1859).

There are other instances of her sense of fun in the literary and artistic areas. Consider her remark to Lady Kay-Shuttleworth that she feels that the difference between herself and Charlotte Brontë is that 'she puts all her naughtiness into her books, and I put all my goodness (into mine) ... my books are so far better than I am that I often feel ashamed of having written them and as if I were a hypocrite.' (L 154,, Apr 1853). She notes when she visits

Mr Brontë 'this little deadly pistol sitting down to breakfast with us, kneeling down to prayers at night, to say nothing of the loaded gun hanging up on high, ready to pop off on the slightest emergency.' (L 166 Sept 1853). She visits Wordsworth's widow, and recounts how 'shortly after her confinement when quiet had been particularly enjoined', Coleridge roused the house 'about one in the morning ... to ask for eggs and bacon, and similar vagaries.' (L 139, 28 Oct 1852). And there is the wonderful account of her meeting Rossetti a few times and always getting his attention until ladies with beautiful hair appeared:

It did not signify what we were talking about or how agreeable I was; if a particular kind of reddish brown crepe wavy hair came in, he was away in a moment struggling for an introduction to the owner of the said head of hair. He is not as made as a March hare, but hair-mad. (L 444, Oct 25 and 30 1859)

We have noted her generosity over George Eliot, and it is seen too in her praise of *Framley Parsonage*. Like everyone else she is dreading the final part of the serial publication of the novel, and she cannot repress a little joke about one of Trollope's least likeable characters, the archdeacon's eldest daughter, saying 'I hope he will make the jilting of Griselda a long while a-doing.' (L 456, Mar 1860).

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The Historical Novel Society has been founded recently. Membership costs £8 per annum. There will be two issues each year of the magazine "Solander" with reviews, and information and articles by historical novelists including Bernard Cornwell, Joanna Trollope, Richard Woodman, Melvyn Bragg etc.

Write (with SAE) for information to:

The Historical Novel Society  
Marine Cottage, The Strand, Starcross, Devon EX6 8NY  
Tel: 01626-892962

The Royal Literary Fund  
by J A V Chapple

Despite my lucky identification of the Boddingtons, I believe the surest way to make discoveries is to keep following up some of the hundreds of clues that exist rather than rely on chance. Thus, in Letter 180 to James Crossley, Elizabeth Gaskell wrote that she had applied to the Literary Fund on behalf of a poor inhabitant of Knutsford and her two widowed daughters. Through the courtesy of Dr Christopher Fletcher, Curator of Literary Manuscripts at the British Library, I was shown Case File No. 1247, which contains a number of applications made to the Literary Fund of behalf of Mrs Selina Davenport of Knutsford.

There are six sets, which happen to contain no less than four unknown letters by Mrs Gaskell. The constant appearance of new letters in salerooms and elsewhere presents a time-consuming editorial task of some magnitude, which causes me to welcome the decision of Manchester University Press to reissue the 1966 edition of the *Letters* in paperback during the summer, together with a preliminary list of corrections and amendments. The 1850 date of Mrs Gaskell's first letter to the Literary Fund, for example, now enables her missive to Crossley to be firmly assigned to 1852 - a suggestion first made by Geoffrey Sharps.

The very definite concern for individuals that is manifest in these documents is consistent with Elizabeth Gaskell's position in her famous 'quarrel' with Florence Nightingale, who was 'too much for institutions, sisterhoods and associations', though with the typically charitable proviso that 'anything like a judgment' of such an extraordinary being must be 'presumptuous' (Letter 217).

The first form of application, dated 10 May 1850, was made out by Elizabeth herself, stating that Mrs Davenport was 71 years old and kept a very small shop in Knutsford. The most she gained from this was one shilling a day, and frequently nothing. She had no other income apart from £10 a year allowed to her by a relation, out of which she had to

maintain herself and the two penniless, middle-aged daughters who lived with her. Eleven three- or four-decker books had been published by Mrs Davenport, with titles like *The Queen's Page; Italian Vengeance, & English Forbearance;* and *The Daughters of the Viscount and the Sons of the Earl*. It sounds as if they were all in the best possible taste, of the time. Mrs Davenport's three recommendations were signed by Mrs Gaskell, the Vicar of Bowdon and Mary Holland.

It turns out that Mr R A Davenport, himself an author, had been a pensioner of the Literary Fund for some years but had claimed to be a widower. They had evidently been separated and on the worst of terms for many years. His letter of self-exculpation to the authorities is in the files, claiming that he wished to conceal the 'disgrace of being allied to such a character'. It is accompanied by a brief covering letter that dryly suggests 'faults on both sides'.

In the event, Mrs Davenport was successful and on the 12 June T Crofton Croker noted that she was granted £30, sent to her through Mary Holland. In April 1852, another application was made, backed this time by Lucy Holland, Susan Deane (née Holland) and the Vicar of Knutsford. £20 was voted. The next application, in April 1853, is unusual. Miss Holland, apparently, would not sign again, so the request is backed by Mrs Davenport's landlord Henry Barber, chemist, Thomas Gallimore, draper, and Thomas Howarth, book and print-seller, all of Knutsford. No grant was made then, but similar small sums were in later years.

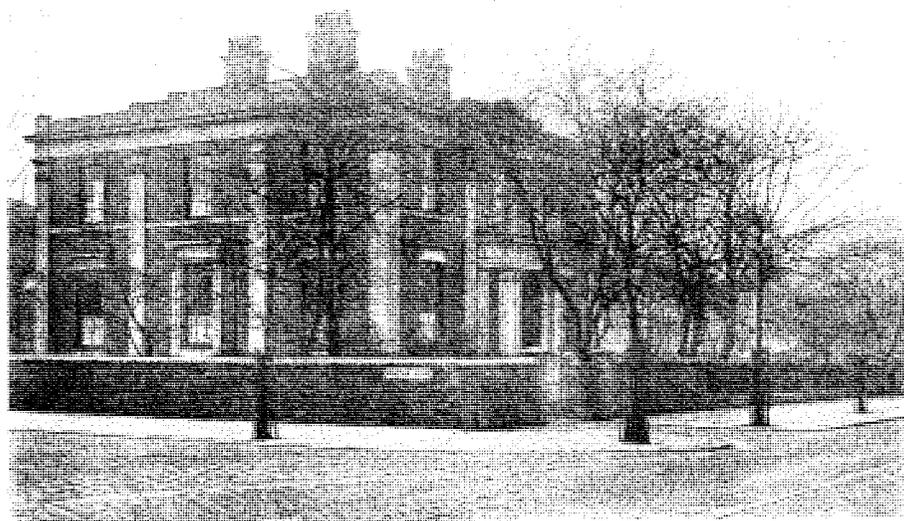
Elizabeth Gaskell's letters of support seem to have been sparked off by her Knutsford cousins Mary and Lucy. If so, they were also successful in enlisting the aid of Emily Leicester of Toft Hall, Knutsford tradespeople, various vicars, a surgeon, a solicitor and the chaplain of Knutsford's House of Correction.

This contrasts with what we find in Case File No. 652, which adds to the little we know of Mrs Catherine Stevenson, Widow of Mr William Stevenson, of the Record Office. In April 1829, £40 was voted to her. Her case was

made in a letter to the relevant committee by the inhabitant of Grove House, Brompton, whose signature is quite illegible. An addendum slip advises delay in payment until Dr A T Thomson had settled his brother-in-law's estate: any grant 'might be interfered with' by William Stevenson's creditors.

So far, so good. The Payment was made eventually, Katharine Thomson signing for her husband. But a few years later came a desperate letter from Mrs Stevenson, dated 18 January 1833 from 57 Albany Street, presumably the one at the Calton Hill end of Edinburgh's New Town. She says that her husband's death had left herself and her children 'perfectly destitute', that she had tried to run a boarding house without success and contracted debts. 'However small a sum', she cried, 'it will be most thankfully received'. It is a very sad letter, but quite unaccompanied by other recommendations or letters of support. Nor was she, like Mrs Davenport, an author. There is a bald annotation, 'Already relieved as a Widow'.

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84 Plymouth Grove in 1910  
(see article on page 14)



### Book Notes

by Christine Lingard

*Victorian love stories: an Oxford anthology*; edited by Kate Flint. Oxford University Press, 1996. £17.99

An extensive anthology of thirty short stories covering the whole of Victoria's reign including authors not normally associated with the period such as Somerset Maugham. Gaskell's *Right at last* is one of the earliest stories in the collection which also includes such familiar names as Trollope, Hardy, Henry James, Wilkie Collins, Kipling and Wilde alongside less familiar ones such as Nora Vynne, Ella Dickens, George Egerton, and Flora Henniker. The latter is the 'little mite - Flora Milne' whose birth is recorded in Mrs Gaskell's letter to her father Richard Monckton Milne in 1855. She grew up to become a close friend of Hardy. A general introduction and very brief biographical notes are provided.

*Talking classics: the world's great novels on CD or cassette*. Vol 67 - Elizabeth Gaskell's *Mary Barton*. An Orbis classics collection. 1996. £3.99

A fortnightly publication consisting of a recording (compact disc or tape) read by Maggie Ollerenshaw and a 12-page glossy pamphlet (recommended to be read after listening to the tape). The booklet is interesting for its unusual illustrations taken from a 1964 BBC television production of *Mary Barton*. *North and South* was issued as part 53 in this series.

Anna Unsworth, *Elizabeth Gaskell: An Independent Woman*, London: Minerva Press, pp.244, ISBN 1 86106 179X 1996, paperback, £12.99

This book seeks to further our understanding of Elizabeth Gaskell, the woman and writer. Anna Unsworth's knowledge of the Unitarian Church and Christian Socialism is particularly valuable. The book is an illuminating treatise that draws our attention to many of the ideas that informed Elizabeth Gaskell's writing. At the same time we are given a clear understanding of a woman who really could not "be bound by another's rules".

(Full review will appear in the Journal)

Irene Wiltshire

84 Plymouth Grove

The future of Elizabeth Gaskell's Plymouth Grove house continues to concern us. Back in December 1994, the Vice-Chancellor of Manchester University wrote that it had in fact assumed ownership in 1973 but that it was concerned about 'the apparent cost of repairing' the house 'relative to the property's value'. (Very considerable sums have been estimated to put right structural and other defects.) Also, he stated that the University now wished to relocate the International Society in a better place.

The Gaskell Society Committee and a number of individual members have therefore kept this matter under constant review. A great deal of quiet work has gone on behind the scenes, both with the University and more generally. In particular, it has seemed valuable to investigate the history of the house, not only in Elizabeth Gaskell's time but thereafter. Her husband and daughters played a part in the public life of Manchester after 1865 that adds considerably to its significance in the City's history.

The Plymouth Grove house was again carefully discussed at the Gaskell Society Committee's February meeting. Although the University will have no future use for the house, it has not yet identified funds for the transfer of the International Society to a more central location in its campus, nor has it yet found premises requiring little or no adaptation. We are also told that it is 'highly improbable that 84 Plymouth Grove will become vacant before the summer of 1998 at the earliest' and that any discussions concerning its eventual sale are at present 'premature'.

The Committee does not believe that the Society could assume such a major responsibility alone, but recommends that we associate ourselves with other groups possessing a strong interest in Manchester's heritage. City improvements of many kinds are in hand or under consideration. It is thought that at this stage the establishment with others of a charitable association, The Friends of 84 Plymouth Grove might be the most effective way of proceeding.

J A V Chapple & Joan Leach

Programme for London & South East GroupSaturday 26 April

2 pm at Francis Holland School, 39 Graham Terrace, London SW1W 8JF

'Marriage in the Life and Work of Elizabeth Gaskell' - Sylvia Burch

Saturday 13 September

2 pm at Pimlico School, Lupus Street, London SW1V 3AT

'Wives and Daughters' and 'Middlemarch' as Provincial Novels'- Dr Graham Handley, Vice-President of the George Eliot Fellowship

Saturday 8 November

2 pm - venue to be arranged

'The Early Years of Elizabeth Gaskell' - Professor John Chapple, Chairman of the Gaskell Society and author of 'Elizabeth Gaskell: The Early Years' to be published in April

Tuesday 16 December

6.30 pm (doors open at 6 pm) at Swedenborg Hall, Swedenborg House, 20-21 Bloomsbury Way, London WC1 (entrance in Barter Street)

'Elizabeth Gaskell, Charles Dickens and the French Revolution' - Howard F Gregg.

This will be a joint meeting with the Dickens Fellowship.

Further information from Dudley Barlow, 44 Seymour Road, London SW18 5JA

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University of Leeds Day School - Saturday 26 April

Although this is the same day as the Manchester Day which we are sharing with The Lancs and Cheshire Antiquarian Society, some members may be interested.

For information send SAE to: Marilyn Moreland, School of Continuing Education, University of Leeds, Leeds LS2 9JT

Forthcoming Events22nd March: MANCHESTER MEETING at the Freemasons Hall

10.30 Coffee and biscuits

11.00 Professor Peter Skrine, Professor of German at University of Bristol will speak on Elizabeth Gaskell's German StoriesJ Geoffrey and Heather Sharps will speak on The Gaskells and Uhland

The meeting will finish about 1.00 pm. We are disappointed that the Palace production of Hard Times is not on until the next week, 24-29th.

Transport from Knutsford can only be arranged if a minimum of 15 book. We would return at 3.00 pm from Manchester to allow time for shopping, etc. PLEASE ENCLOSE SAE IF YOU HOPE we will transport you and REPLY PROMPTLY.

You will see from the map that the venue is only a short walk from the Metro at St Peter's Square.

19th April: Alliance of Literary Societies AGM in Birmingham, hosted by the Mary Webb Society

26th April: Day School jointly with Lancs and Cheshire Antiquarian Society. You should have booked for this by now.

Monday 19th May: This is the last date of the season of monthly classes; we intend to meet from 10.45-12 noon then have a coach to travel to Cholmondley Castle Gardens for lunch etc. If you are not a class member but would like to join us please let me know.

Sunday 29th June: A trip to Wycoller, an idyllic and historic village, the hall in ruins is reputedly the model for Mr Rochester's house Ferndean Manor.

We intend to leave Knutsford at 9.45 and stop in Haworth for lunch. At Wycoller in the afternoon the senior ranger of Wycoller Country Park will give us a short slide talk on its history, followed by a guided walk.

Booking form for the Wycoller trip and another (date to be arranged) to Arnold Bennett Country, will be sent with the Journal in April.

Joan Leach