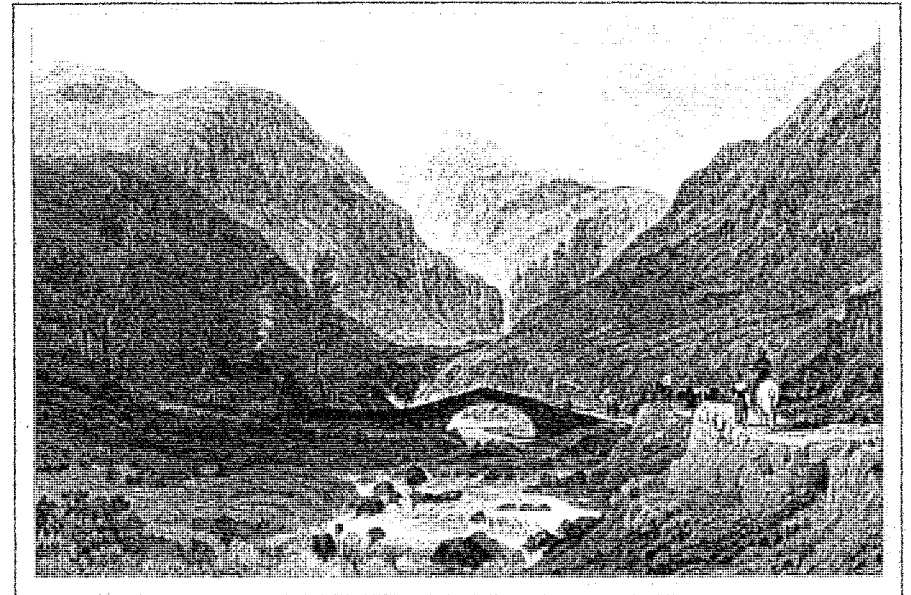


# The Gaskell Society



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)

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

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**NEWSLETTER**

**MARCH 1998**

**NO. 25**

## Editor's Letter

When I look back to 1985 when our Society was launched I am amazed at the progress that has been made in Gaskell studies, and I like to think that our Society and Journal has played a major part in this. If I thought about it at all in 1985, my horizons for linking up Gaskell enthusiasts certainly did not stretch around the world and I expected to find members mainly in the North West of England. Our monthly *Lunch and Literature* meetings here in Knutsford are well attended and the London/South East group grows steadily, but members continue to join us from around the world and most exciting is the work being done in the translation of Gaskell works, to reach a wider audience.

The publication of Sylvia's Lovers in Japanese is a major event in Gaskell history and we congratulate Professor Tatsuhiro Ohno; you can read in this newsletter how he has achieved this.

Swiftly following this news, we learn that Professor Li Fang in South Korea is translating North and South into Chinese. He has to cope with chapter headings such as 'Haste to the Wedding: wooed and married and a' (Chapter One) and puzzles such as what was a 'chip' bonnet? With computer contacts he is now able to use the Gaskell correspondence link to seek help with such queries. 'Haste to the wedding' was a country dance fiddle tune, by the way.

Børge Skråmestø in Oslo regrets the lack of Norwegian translations and would like to work on Cranford but notes that only one Austen title has been translated. A Spanish translation of Wives and Daughters is likely; perhaps in time for the BBC production!?

We are looking forward to our Spring meeting on 4th April at the new Cross Street Chapel and hope many of you will be able to join us. Professor Arthur Pollard, who was our first President, will speak on Gaskell Letters, and Margaret Smith on Brontë Letters. This will be a full day's meeting with lunch.

"Sylvia's Lovers":  
The First Japanese Translation  
 by Tatsuhiro Ohno



The first Japanese translation of Sylvia's Lovers became available on 25 December 1997. This novel is the one I discussed in my BA thesis. The book was so moving (probably, Philip Hepburn was what I was then) as to make me feel like translating it into Japanese. I started the work in 1989, completed the first draft in 1994 and the second in 1996, and began to search for a publisher in January 1997. I received an agreement from Sairyu-sha in April, and published it on the date above.

I shall never forget the warm encouragement given by two people during my struggle: Mrs Joan Leach, Honorary Secretary of the Gaskell Society, and Professor Andrew Sanders of Durham University.

One of the difficulties I encountered was how to deal with the Yorkshire dialect. I consulted some experts and guidebooks for advice. The most persuasive suggestion was that I should choose the dialect of a Japanese region whose climate was similar to Yorkshire's, in short, Tohoku or Hokkaido, the northern part of Japan. But I have little knowledge about those dialects spoken in these areas, because I was born and grew up in Kumamoto, one of Japan's south-west provinces. After long deliberation, I resolved to use my native dialect which I had no difficulty in handling.

Another problem cropped up here: conversations in the genuine Kumamoto dialect would be incomprehensible even to the Japanese. I was forced to modify many dialogues into those similar in style to the standard Japanese although the speakers were talking in the genuine Yorkshire dialect (I could guess they were mostly by

spellings). As a result, my Sylvia has come to speak a standardized version of the Kumamoto dialect. Some have already criticized my device by saying it will cause great damage to Sylvia because it is quite disappointing for a beautiful heroine to speak a local dialect. But, let me remind you that, however beautiful she may be, Sylvia is an uneducated country girl.

The book is 737 pages long, including the text (594 pp), a Gaskell chronology (88 pp) and the translator's commentary. The following remarks I wrote in the afterword might be helpful for understanding what this novel is about.

"What is true love?" Various answers would be offered to this question, because we are living in the age of various values. What the novel aims at is, in a word, to suggest an answer to this question. The story develops mainly in the 1790s in Monkshaven, a fictional whaling town of the north-east coast of England. The protagonists are four: Sylvia Robson, the 16-year-old daughter of a dairy farmer; Philip Hepburn, the 21-year-old shop assistant and her devoted lover; Charley Kinraid, the brave harpooner who wins her heart; and Hester Rose, Philip's co-worker whose selfless devotion to him is never rewarded.

In those days, Britain was at war with France, and the press-gangs were active to press robust men into the British military forces. When Charley is caught by them a few days after pledging himself to marry Sylvia, he entreats Philip, the only witness to the scene, to tell her what he saw and that Charley would surely come back. However, Philip thinks that Charley is fickle: he has loved many girls and finally forsaken them. Sylvia would no doubt meet the same fate as such pitiful girls. So thinking, Philip determines to ignore Charley's message. His decision becomes the pivot on which her fortune begins to decline.

Has Philip made the right choice? Will Sylvia understand the depth of his love lying behind his

falsehood? What fate is waiting for Hester, who endures the pain of unrewarded love?

I would like this book to be read by those who are groping for the reliable answer to the question of what is true love, especially by those who are being tormented by the pangs of unrequited affection.

I sincerely hope my translation will be of some use in creating Gaskell fans in Japan. Further information is available on my web page:

"[http://www.let.kumamoto-u.ac.jp/eng/ohno\\_e.htm/](http://www.let.kumamoto-u.ac.jp/eng/ohno_e.htm/)."

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*Pen y Bryn*

Elizabeth and William Gaskell's  
Honeymoon in Aber, September 1832

by Jean Lindsay

The Gaskells spent two weeks of their honeymoon in Aber in September 1832. Elizabeth had visited the village at an earlier date and had fond memories of the area. The pretty wooded village, which is five miles east of Bangor, is near the Menai Straits and has a river, waterfalls and mountains. The Aber Falls can be reached after a two-mile walk through a wooded valley and the two falls, a quarter of a mile apart, are a spectacular sight as the water descends from the precipice. There is also a walk through the Anafon Valley and it is small wonder that Elizabeth preferred the wildness of Aber to Beaumauris.<sup>1</sup>

It is, however, impossible to say where the Gaskells stayed in Aber.<sup>2</sup> It could have been at any of the numerous inns of the village. The Census of 1851 includes the Bull, the Prince Llywelyn and Crosskeys. The Tithe Map of 1848 names the Bulkeley Arms Inn, and on the Ordnance Survey Map of 1888, this has become the Bulkeley Arms Hotel. In 1919, this hotel has been renamed the Aber Hotel, a name it still retains. The Aber Hotel is near the railway station, which is now closed, and in the Gaskells' day there was no railway, as the line from Chester to Bangor was opened in 1848. One hotel in Aber can be ruled out, as this, the Aber Falls Hotel, only appears on the map in 1912. One house of note is Pen y Bryn, built in 1580 by Sir William Thomas, although his family no longer owned the house in 1832. He was one of the benefactors of the village, and Lord Bulkeley of Baron Hill, Beaumauris, at one time Lord of the Manor of Aber, was another.<sup>3</sup> It is possible that Pen y Bryn, with its small tower, could have been the Gaskells' lodging-place.

A picture of the village from 1820 to 1827, just before the Gaskells' visit, is found in the Aber Vestry records.<sup>4</sup> They give an account of the management of the needs of the poor by the Overseer and the Churchwardens under the Old Poor Law. Even after the setting up of the Union Workhouses by the Poor Law Amendment Act of 1834, Aber

still had its almshouses, built by Lord Bulkeley in 1811, and its charities included a Rabbit Club, which in the 1880s and 1890s distributed one rabbit a week to some of the 'deserving poor'.<sup>5</sup>

It seems likely that the Gaskells were aware of Aber's distinguished medieval history. It was one of the main courts of the princes of Gwynedd in the thirteenth century and Llywelyn Faw (Llywelyn the Great) was said to prefer the court at Aber to the others. He married Joan, daughter of King John, and she died at Aber in 1237. Her body was taken across the sands to be buried at Llanfaes and her stone coffin is in the porch of St Mary's Church, Beaumaris. Dafydd, the son of Llywelyn Fawr and Joan, died at Aber in 1246, six years after his father's death. The Court was also a royal manor and was within a fortified enclosure, containing halls, stables, kitchens, chapels, bakery and a brewery. Its exact location is a matter of controversy. It is said to be either in the area near the Mound (Mwd), an almost circular shape, built either by the Normans or by the Welsh princes in the style



*Aber, Caernarvonshire*

of the Norman castles, or in the region of Pen y Bryn, which is situated on a nearby hill.<sup>6</sup>

The village has a church which was rebuilt in 1876, so the Gaskells would see the 'ancient edifice with a square tower'. The rectory, now called the Old Rectory, is near the church. A ferry across the Lavan Sands to Beaumaris would be in operation, the distance at low tide being four miles, although the sands frequently shift. In foggy weather, a bell in Aber church, presented by Lord Bulkeley in 1817, was rung to direct travellers.<sup>7</sup> The village, at the entrance to a romantic glen, with its sparkling river, nearby sea and mountains, provides an idyllic setting for a honeymoon, even though the Gaskells have managed to keep their exact abode a secret.

#### NOTES

- <sup>1</sup> The Letters of Mrs Gaskell, ed J A V Chapple and Arthur Pollard (1966), letters 2 and 9
- <sup>2</sup> After the Conference at Chester, Professor Chapple asked me if I knew where the Gaskells stayed in Aber. This short article is an unsuccessful attempt to answer his question.
- <sup>3</sup> A Short History of Aber Manor, Parish and Village, T J Owen (1966)
- <sup>4</sup> Gwynedd Archives Service, Pa 134
- <sup>5</sup> Gwynedd Archives Service, XPE/56/116
- <sup>6</sup> Llywelyn Ap Gruffydd, A D Carr (1982)
- <sup>7</sup> Black's Picturesque Guide to North Wales (1866)

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#### Stop Press on 84 Plymouth Grove

Manchester Civic Trust is forming a Building Preservation Trust for action on buildings at risk; their first project is the Gaskell home at 84 Plymouth Grove.

Manchester University has offered the Trust an option on the house and assistance with a feasibility study.

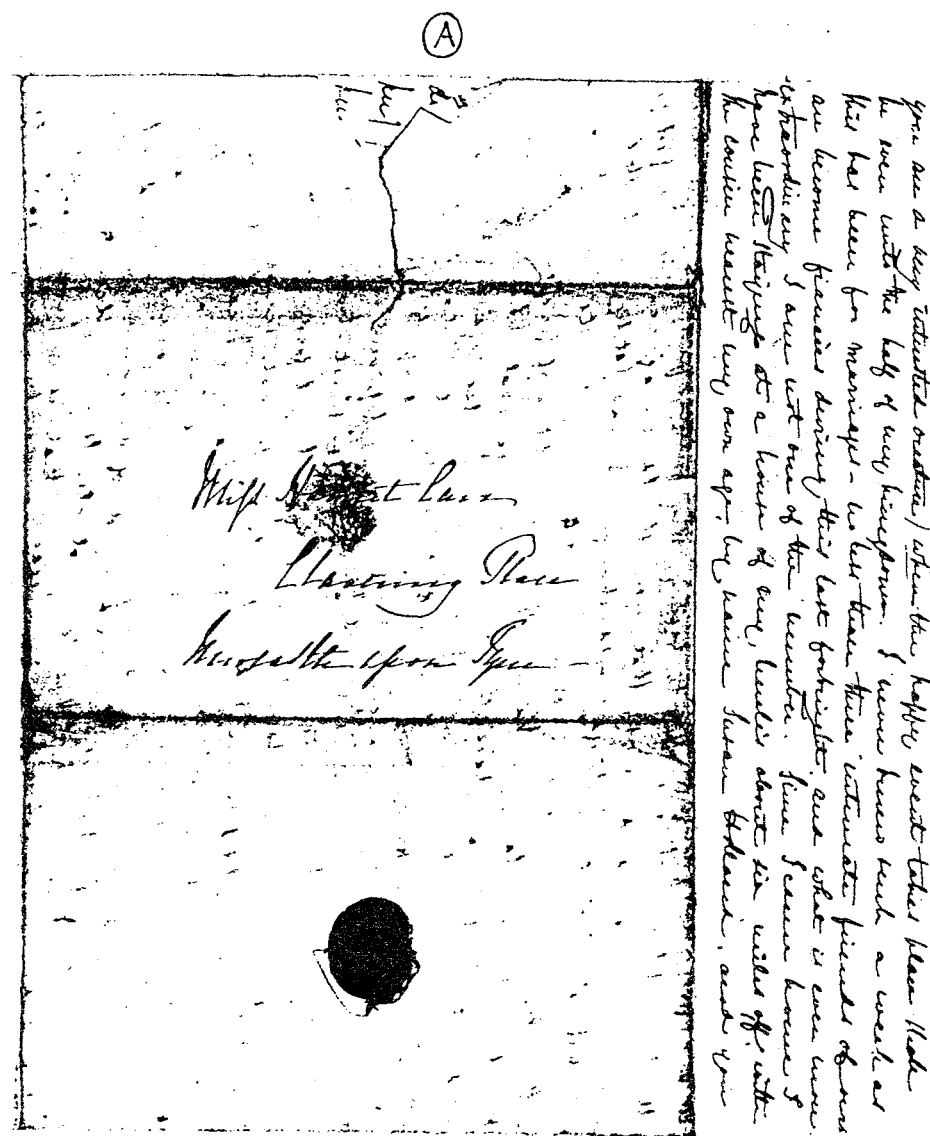
Elizabeth Gaskell's First Music Book\*  
by J A V Chapple

When she was young, Elizabeth Gaskells' penmanship was varied. Two very different hands appear in the letters she sent to Harriet Carr during 1831-32. The first three were written in a small, upright scribble, the last two in a bold cursive sloping to the right (illustrated on the cover of *Gaskell Society Journal* 4). We cannot infer a simple chronological sequence, however, because the addresses of all five letters were written in the larger sloping hand (example A).

Her earliest music book of 1825, too, begins with the sloping cursive, but is followed on later pages by a smaller upright hand. Also, the names of her schoolfellows are pencilled on a number of pages of the music book. Were it not for the Carr letters, we might even have assumed that many of these pages were written by somebody other than Elizabeth. Though I believe that she actually wrote down most of the words and music, there is evidence that at least two other people were involved.

On page 1, there is a comment correcting one of the bars of music, presumably written by one of her teachers (example B). If we turn to page 19, we discover both words and music in a similar hand (example C). Could this have been written by Katharine Thomson, née Byerley? Though she married Anthony Todd Thomson in 1820, before Elizabeth first went to the Byerleys' school, there is good evidence that Katharine maintained her artistic connection with Avonbank. And this hand is more like hers than those of her sisters, as we can see from their many letters in the Wedgwood collection kept in Keele University Library.

Then, on page 32, there are words and music almost certainly written by William Gaskell, presumably several years later on a page that had been left blank (example D). Its handwriting can be compared with that of an early, signed letter of 1841 at Harvard, a poem in the



you are a very interesting creature / when the happy event takes place. I  
 be now with the help of my kind friends. I never know such a week as  
 this has been for many years - as let them their intimate friends & ours  
 are become friends & desire they last brought out what is now mine  
 & Harriet's & our set me of the weather. I am I am I am  
 you have been staying at a house of my, and I am about six miles off with  
 the entire heart very soon as; but have been from the end, and you



(C)

Hadst oh my soul. Thy wonders will be multitudes that none all be able to write a

summing thought a view, His ways are just, his ways are just, his ways are

As just his counsels were repeat 8 bars

DCP

(D)

Where are the dead? the ground is green! He walks this world in Christ's garment

They will be done. The answer is man, and they are done, the spirit with

For tho' a garden is a joyful thing,  
 especially when ready made to hand,  
 And blest as theirs was with sternal spring,  
 without too any rent to pay for land  
 Or taxes either to a church or king—  
 yet still I say I can't quite understand  
 How they could live for ever unrepenting,  
 Tho' married folks be caught to be but digging.

(E)

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L. M. W. GASKELL.\*

*Where are the dead?*

(F)

- 1 WHERE are the dead, the pious dead,  
 Who walked this world in christian faith?  
 Their toils are done, their crown is won,  
 And they are blessed, the Spirit saith.
- 2 They feel no more temptation's power,  
 They've found the land where trials cease;  
 Where every tear is wiped away,  
 And all is sweet and holy peace.
- 3 They're gone beyond the reach of pain,  
 And all that speaks of dark decay;  
 There beams in glory on their souls  
 The light of an immortal day.
- 4 Why sadly mourn we, then, for those  
 Whose lives had made them meet for death?  
 Their toils are done, their crown is won,  
 And they are blessed, the Spirit saith.

Sharps Collection (example E) and some pages found behind the bookshelves in his study (illustrated in my *Elizabeth Gaskell: A Portrait in Letters*).

Moreover, the text of this particular hymn is printed as his in his colleague John Rely Beard's Unitarian hymns, *A Collection of Hymns for Private and Public Worship*, 1837 (example F), something I had not realised when Julian Savory gave his splendid performance of music associated with Elizabeth Gaskell at the 1997 AGM.

\*I owe thanks to Helen Burton, Christine Lingard and Geoffrey Sharps for their help with this note.

Charades and Amateur Theatricals  
 by Barbara Brill

As a devotee of Robert Louis Stevenson as well as of Elizabeth Gaskell, I am always delighted when I come across some link between them. I have already written in a previous Newsletter about Stevenson's connections with Fleeming Jenkin, the young student engineer whom she befriended and his wife, the former Annie Austin, friend of Meta. I was pleased to read more details of the Jenkins in a book I have recently acquired "I Remember Robert Louis Stevenson" edited by Rosaline Masson, published in 1922. On reading it, I was struck by the many complimentary and affectionate references to the Jenkins.

When Fleeming was made Professor of Engineering at Edinburgh University, where Robert Louis Stevenson was his student, he and his wife moved to Stuart Street, Edinburgh, a house that became the pivot of the city's literary life and bore many resemblances to the Gaskells' home at Plymouth Grove. It was John Chapple's reference in his recent book, "Early Years", to Elizabeth as a contriver of a charade (see page 413) that sent me back to her letter No.92 (in the Collected Letters) in which she described in some detail the charade "got up" by Anne Austin and enacted "in the outer lobby, under the gas; and we stood on the staircase in the inner hall and the folding doors were thrown open."

In the contribution to Rosaline Masson's book, by Sir William Hardman, he writes at length about the excellent amateur theatricals "got up" at the Jenkins' home. These were on a more ambitious scale than the Plymouth Grove charades, as a fully rehearsed play was performed annually and three performances given, one for friends and two for servants and dependants, the dramas ranging from Greek to Shakespearean plays. There was a boys' playroom (they had three sons) leading off the dining room that formed the stage and the dining room the auditorium.

"The central figure" wrote Hardman, "of the plays was



Mrs Fleeming, whose genius was their motive and justification ... Had she sought fame on the professional stage she would have found it given without stint. She was delightful in comedy but in the single cumulative tragedy of the Greeks she was at her greatest." Fleeming's contribution to the success of the plays was as stage manager and costume designer. He studied sculptures in the British Museum to perfect the tailoring and folding, experimenting with sheets and shawls.

Stevenson sometimes took part but he had no skills as an actor, though he sparkled in the after-dinner speeches at the meal held at the end of the show. Annie's mother, Mrs Alfred Austin, also took part and "her refined dignity showed to advantage in elderly parts". Another performer was the poet, W E Henley, at whose wedding in 1878 Annie Jenkin was one of the witnesses.

Fleeming was interested in the development of the phonograph and had an instrument made, using it to record his lecturesses. Mrs Jenkin spoke into it when the machine was used to raise money at bazaars. If only those recordings had been kept Mrs Jenkin's voice could have been heard long after her death in 1921 at the age of 83. "She maintained her love of truth, beauty and goodness", qualities that perhaps were instilled into her by her friendship with the Gaskells. Fleeming was spoken of as "the best talker in London but he was content to suppress himself and be a foil to his wife". How proud Mrs Gaskell would have been to have heard these tributes paid to her protégées by Robert Louis Stevenson.

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Trip to Hay-on-Wye (book town), Ludlow and Hereford  
15th-16th June  
 and  
 Paris Trip  
17th-22nd September

These are almost fully booked.  
 Please send SAE if you need information.

Book Notes  
 by Christine Lingard

○ "*Some appointed work to do*": women and vocation in the fiction of Elizabeth Gaskell, by Robin B Colby. Contribution to Women's studies. Number 150, Greenwood Press, £30.95.

Defends Elizabeth Gaskell against a century of under estimation. It claims that her works are extremely radical because they challenge the widely held assumptions about the nature of women. The work consists of chapters on her contemporaries, *Mary Barton*, *North and South*, *Cranford*, *Wives and Daughters* and more unusually *The Life of Charlotte Brontë*. The book provides a detailed analysis of previous critics and has a copious bibliography.

*Writing and Victorianism*, edited by J B Bullen. Longman, £17.99.

A general collection of essays on Victorian literature which touches briefly on an unusual aspect of Gaskell's *Mary Barton* in the essay *The opium eater as criminal in Victorian writing* by Julia North.

*The Brontës: a life in letters*, edited by Juliet Barker. Viking, £20.

Dr Barker follows up her acclaimed but provocative biography of the Brontës with this book which allows the story to be told by participants themselves by means of their letters and other contemporary writings, though the editor's hand is still in evidence as this is only a selection and far from comprehensive. Most of the letters but by no means all were written by Charlotte. There are only a few by Elizabeth Gaskell plus some extracts from the *Life*. What is most useful is the number of letters addressed to her, which are collected for the first time, including letters from Charlotte's friend Mary Taylor.

Membership Renewals

This is the first year we have collected Membership Renewals in January. In the past the due date was the day of the AGM, but with the growth of membership a much smaller proportion of members are now able to attend Knutsford events. We hope that members are finding the new arrangements convenient.

If you have not already paid your subscription for 1998, you may send a cheque, payable to GASKELL SOCIETY to our Membership Secretary, Mrs I Wiltshire, 21 Crescent Road, Hale, Altrincham, Cheshire WA15 9NB (e-mail: wiltshires@aol.com). Current rates for the UK are as follows: Individual £8.00; Joint £12.00; Institution £12.00. You will in due course receive a revised membership card and receipt. Overseas Members who do not have their own Membership Secretary may follow the above procedure. The rates are £12.00 for all overseas members.

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The London and South East Group meeting dates for 1998 are 25th April and 12th September, with the Annual Meeting on 7th November. Further information from Hon Secretary - Mr Dudley Barlow, 44 Seymour Road, London SW18 5JA (Tel: 0181 874 7727).

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US Hon Secretary - Mrs Lucy Magruder, Box 5424, Fullerton CA 92838 (e-mail: lmagruder@aol.com). Annual subscription \$20.

Gaskell Home Page on Internet -  
<http://lang.nagoya-ac.jp/~matsuoka/Gaskell.html>

Joan Leach's e-mail - JoanLeach@aol.com