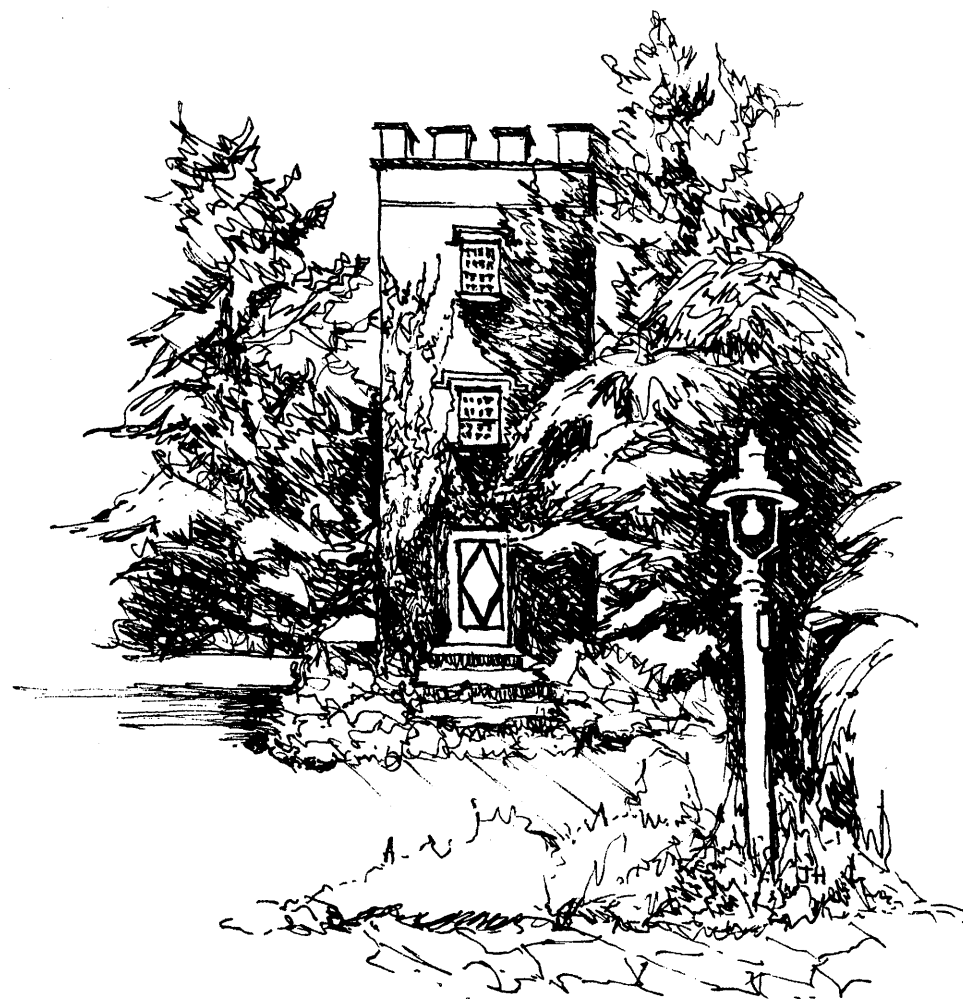


The Gaskell Society



THE GASKELL SOCIETY HOME PAGE has all the latest information on meetings.
<http://www.gaskellsociety.cwc.net>

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NEWSLETTER

August 2000 - Number 30

Editor's Letter

This edition of the Newsletter may look a little different as we have changed our printer. As I write this we are preparing for Knutsford Literature Festival which will be held from 23rd September to 1st October. The Gaskell Society AGM will be on 30th September at 4.00pm after a programme of talks in the morning and afternoon: these will be oversubscribed even though we have space for a hundred and seventy people. The Festival was timed so that Gaskell members could participate but even if it does become an annual event this pressure for space will not happen again because we are proposing to hold future AGMs in Manchester, at Cross Street Chapel, in the Spring; this is partly because members from further afield will find it easier to reach but it will also be more appropriate now that our financial year follows the calendar year. At this year's AGM we will also take measures to become registered as a charity.

In this edition you will be able to read about our visit to Belgium from 11th - 15th May with articles by Jackie Horsfield and Dudley Green. We followed Elizabeth Gaskell to Brussels, where she went to research for *The Life of Charlotte Brontë*, and to the cathedral towns for she advised, "If you ever go don't miss these towns on any account". We went to Antwerp, Bruges and Ghent as she did, ".... no human being who has not seen them can conceive of the sublime beauty of the cathedrals in the grand old cities in Flanders...while every bit was picturesque the whole was so solemn and sublime...as if the world had stood still with them since the 14th century". (Letters 15)

Part of her story, *The Poor Clare* is set in Antwerp and we were able to see the Beguinage (though there may have been more than one) a community for religious women who served the poor and sick. The story can be found in OUP World's Classics *My Lady Ludlow and other stories*. Some of us will visit Browsholme Hall and Stonyhurst College in Lancashire looking for Catholic traditions which also feature in the story.

We are now planning for our next conference which will be at Bath Spa University, 17th - 20th August 2001. Rome beckons us for 2002. Marie Moss, in this newsletter, has traced for us some of the literary associations of Rome.

We hope to see many of you at our various forthcoming meetings, details of which can be found in the latter pages of this newsletter. You may not be able to join members of the London and South East Group on a guided walk of Southwark by Sylvia Burch so we have printed her itinerary so that you may be able to follow it when you visit London.

Visit to Belgium, 11th - 15th May 2000.

How fortunate we are that Mrs. Gaskell, as well as providing us with some wonderful literature, was also a well travelled lady. Following in her footsteps is proving to be a pleasure indeed. On Thursday 11th May, some forty of us converged on Brussels from various starting points, ranging from Cheshire (of course), Yorkshire, London, Scotland and the Midlands. On our arrival it rained very briefly, but thereafter the sun shone gloriously. How much more pleasant is any place when the weather is lovely.

We began with a conducted coach tour to give us an overview of the city, and this was followed by a sightseeing walk which took us to the Grand Place, only minutes from our hotel. This was an extremely handsome square, with its 17th century Flemish Renaissance style trading and mercantile guild-houses, glittering with gold filigree. Loitering in the bustling, narrow streets it was hard to believe that we were only one hour away from Manchester by plane and it was clear already that Brussels is not like any other city in the world, having a charm that is all its own.

The evening saw us enjoying the first of our very tasty dinners in a nearby restaurant, this trip was already proving to have been very well organised.

On Friday the coach took us to Antwerp, where we were met by an excellent guide, Sheila Cosforth. We began in the Grote Market (Main Square). On three sides are 16th century Guild Houses, topped with gilded figures, whilst on the fourth is the Town Hall. After this we enjoyed the beautiful stained glass windows in the Cathedral of Our Lady. This is a very light and airy cathedral, Belgium's biggest. Works by Rubens and his school embellish the interior. We then visited St. James Church, where Rubens is buried, followed by the Beguinage, a 16th century institution for Beguines, religious women whose vows were somewhat less strict than those of nuns. Today it is a restful neighbourhood of little houses and cobbled streets.

Saturday was a free day in Brussels, where we followed our own inclinations. Many of us returned to the Grand Place, which was home to a brightly coloured flower market. The little restaurants in the neighbourhood gave plenty of choice or somewhere to have lunch. It was altogether very pleasant to take life at a slower pace and, over a glass or two of wine, to appreciate the tang of flavour of life in Brussels.

On Sunday we went by coach to Bruges. Nowhere on our trip seemed very far from anywhere else, and soon we were in this charming city, with its canals and beautiful squares. Like so many medieval places, it throws your sense of time out of joint, transforming you back across the centuries.

Here, some of us treated ourselves to a tour of the city by horse and trap. Bruges is a gem of a place and very manageable on foot. It really does not need the title 'The Venice of the North' as it can stand most charmingly in its own right, without any reference to other cities. Again, there were plenty of picturesque, good value cafés to choose from. We enjoyed wandering around a flea-market, situated in a lovely, leafy setting at the side of a canal. On a more cultured level, the Beguinage and the Basilica of the Holy Blood were well worth a visit. The trip ended with a 35 minute cruise through the canals where we saw the buildings from yet a different angle.

On our final day, Monday 15th May, we boarded our coach for the last time to visit Ghent. With its canals, this shares some characteristics with Bruges. Both are relatively confined, but Ghent feels more like a real city, a lived-in place. There are many reminders of the medieval mercantile and weaving traditions that brought the city its wealth. Another canal trip was a fitting end to our visit, and as before, the sun shone. In fact, by now it was hot! We enjoyed a final al fresco meal before setting off for the airport and for home.

Altogether, this was a splendid visit. Even the weather had been specially ordered, and Jupiter Pluvius had kept well away. The fine spell broke two days after our return and the temperature plummeted. We all owe our thanks to Janet Allan and Jean Alston for visiting Brussels in advance and for generally sussing out the place, it was particularly bad luck that ill health kept Janet away after all her hard work. And of course our thanks, as always, to Joan Leach for her superb organising abilities (anyone else?).

We look forward with pleasure to our projected trip to Rome. Thank you, Mrs. Gaskell, for visiting so many fine places. I am currently undertaking research to see if she visited the Canadian Rockies, or perhaps China. At the very least, she must have gone to Athens! If anyone has any evidence of this, I would be delighted to receive it.

Jackie Horsfield.

Following The Brontës in Brussels - May 2000

One of the objects of our visit to Brussels was to follow in the footsteps of Charlotte and Emily Brontë who came to the city in February 1842, escorted by their father, the Revd Patrick Brontë. Their aim was ultimately to establish a school of their own in the Parsonage at Haworth and in order to fulfil this ambition they needed to acquire a better knowledge of French and German. Arrangements were made for them to study at the Pensionnat Heger run by Madame Heger in the Rue d'Isabelle. The two sisters remained at the Pensionnat for nine months, returning home in November 1842 on the death of their aunt, Elizabeth Branwell. Charlotte returned to Brussels alone in January 1843 to teach English at the Pensionnat and also to continue her language studies. She stayed in Brussels for a further twelve months before returning to Haworth in January 1844.

It is no easy matter to identify the site of the Pensionnat Heger since there have been so many changes to the area where the school was sited. The Rue d'Isabelle was situated below the fashionable eighteenth century quarter of the city, with its colonnaded Place Royale, Parc de Bruxelles and Palais Royale, and above the lower, medieval level with its crowded shops and huddle of narrow streets. No trace remains of the Pensionnat Heger but it is possible to descend from the Rue Royale to the street levels which Charlotte and Emily would have known. On our first night we were guided by Jean Alston down to the Rue Terakin where we were able to gain some impression of the area where the school was sited. The Rue Terakin is now a scruffy little street but the road still contains the old setts of cobbles. As Ernest Raymond wrote in his *In the Steps of the Brontës*:

"Down there in the silence you are as near to the Rue d'Isabelle as you will ever get, and your feet are on the cobbles which Charlotte and Emily trod when it was Sunday in Brussels, and the bells were ringing, and they were coming out of the low-lying Rue d'Isabelle into the Rue Teraerken on their way to the Protestant Chapel in the Rue du Musee."

On Saturday morning a group of us decided to explore the area further. We started at the impressive statue of General Belliard beside the Rue Royal and descended the steps to the street below. In *The Professor* Charlotte Brontë describes Mr. Crimsworth's first visit to the Pensionnat:

"I remember, before entering the park, I stood awhile to contemplate the statue of General Belliard, and then I advanced to the top of the great staircase just beyond, and I looked down into a narrow back street, which I afterwards learnt was called the Rue d'Isabelle. I well recollect that my

eye rested on a green door of a rather large house opposite, where on a brass plate, was inscribed, Pensionnat de Demoiselles."

We descended to the street level and after a careful search Brian Hechle pointed out the plaque high on the wall of the adjoining Palais des Beaux Arts, which records that:

'Near this site formerly stood the Pensionnat Heger where the writers Charlotte and Emily Brontë studied in 1842-43'.

We then walked the short distance to the Place de la Musee where we found the Chapel Royale where Charlotte and Emily worshipped most Sundays. It was their normal custom to come to the Anglican service held there at 2pm. In *The Professor* we may read Charlotte's trenchant description of her fellow countrymen who attended the chapel. Mr. Crimsworth has just attended a service at the Chapel Royale:

"I turned from the door of the chapel-royal which the door keeper had just closed and locked, and followed in the wake of the last congregation, now dispersed and dispersing all over the square. I had soon outwalked the couples of English gentlemen and ladies. (Goodness gracious! Why don't they dress better?)



Gaskell Society members at the statue of General Belliard in Brussels.
The Pensionnat Heger was in this area.

My eye is yet filled with visions of the high-flounced, slovenly, and tumbled dresses in costly silk and satin, of the large unbecoming collars in expensive lace; of the ill-cut coats and strangely fashioned pantaloons which every Sunday, at the English service, filled the choirs of the chapel-royal, and after it, issuing forth into the square, came into disadvantageous contrast with freshly and trimly attired foreign figures, hastening to attend salute at the church of Coburg)."

It was in this chapel that Mr. Crimsworth was married to Frances Henri. It was here too that Charlotte attended the funeral service of her vibrant young friend, Martha Taylor, who died of cholera in Brussels in October 1842. The chaplain of the Chapel Royal at that time was the Revd Evan Jenkins, known to Mr. Brontë through his brother, David Jenkins, who 30 years earlier had succeeded him as curate of Dewsbury. It was through Mr. Jenkins' recommendation that Charlotte and Emily had come to the Pensionnat Heger. After escorting his daughters to the school, Mr. Brontë stayed several days with the Jenkins family and paid a memorable visit to the battlefield of Waterloo, a journey also undertaken by one enterprising member of our party.

Not far away is the Cathedral of St. Michael and Ste Gudule. The toll of its bell dominated the surrounding area as Charlotte knew well, and it was here in September 1843 that Charlotte had one of the strangest experiences of her life. When the school broke up for the summer vacation in the middle of August, Charlotte, feeling an acute sense of loneliness in the deserted building, fell into a mood of deep depression. On 1st September she went for a long walk in the country. She visited the grave of Martha Taylor in the Protestant Cemetery and on her return, not feeling able to go back to the lonely Pensionnat, she wandered through the adjoining streets. On the following day she wrote to Emily describing what happened:

"Yesterday I went on a pilgrimage to the cemetery. When I came back it was evening; but I had such a repugnance to return to the house, I still kept threading the streets in the neighbourhood of the Rue d'Isabelle and avoiding it. I found myself opposite to Ste Gudule, and the bell, whose voice you know, began to toll for evening salute. I went in, wandered about the aisles where a few old women were saying their prayers, till vespers begun. I stayed till they were over. Still I could not leave the church or force myself to go home, - to school I mean. An odd whim came into my head. In a solitary part of the cathedral six or seven people still remained kneeling by the confessionals. In two confessionals I saw a priest. I felt as if I did not care what I did, provided it was not absolutely wrong.



The Pensionnat Heger in the later nineteenth century. (Le Soir, Brussels)

I took a fancy to change myself into a Catholic and go and make a real confession to see what it was like. A penitent was occupied in confessing. They do not go into the sort of pew or cloister which the priest occupies, but kneel down on the steps and confess through a grating. Both the confessor and the penitent whisper very low, you can hardly hear their voices. After I had watched two or three penitents go and return I approached at last and knelt down in a niche which was just vacated. I had to kneel there ten minutes waiting, for on the other side was a penitent invisible to me. At last that went away and a little wooden door inside the grating opened, and I saw the priest leaning his ear towards me. I was obliged to begin, and yet I did not know a word of the formula with which they always commence their confessions. It was a funny position. I commenced with saying I was a foreigner and had been brought up a Protestant. The priest asked if I was a Protestant then. I somehow could not tell a lie and said 'yes'. He replied in that case I could not 'jouir du bonheur de la confesse'; but I was determined to confess, and at last he said he would allow me because it might be the first step towards returning to the true church. I actually did confess - a real confession. When I had done he told me his address, and said that every morning I was to go to the Rue du Parc - to his house - and he would reason with me and try to convince me of the error and enormity of being a Protestant!!! I promised faithfully to go. Of

course, however, the adventure stops there, and I hope I shall never see the priest again. I think you had better not tell papa of this. He will not understand that it was only a freak, and will perhaps think I am going to turn Catholic."

Vith this account on our minds we climbed the impressive steps leading to the nain door of the cathedral. Wandering around we saw several imposing confessionals with ornate wooden carving and dark green curtains. We tried to magine the scene which Charlotte had described and reflected on her feeling of loneliness and on the depression which had driven her to such an incharacteristic action.

As we returned along the Rue Royale we were reminded of a happier occasion which took place a few days later when Charlotte caught a glimpse of the 24 year old Queen Victoria on her first visit to Brussels on September 1843. As she wrote to Emily:

"You ask about Queen Victoria's visit to Brussels. I saw her for an instant flashing through the Rue Royale in a carriage and six, surrounded by soldiers. She was laughing and talking, very gaily. She looked a little, stout, vivacious Lady, very plainly dressed, not much dignity or pretension about her. The Belgians liked her very well on the whole - they said she enlivened the sombre court of King Leopold, which is usually as gloomy as a conventicle."

Entering the Parc de Bruxelles we recalled the concert given in the park on the occasion of the Feast of the Assumption of the Blessed Virgin Mary on the evening of 15th August 1843, it seems likely that Charlotte attended this concert, since in chapter 38 of Villette she included an item from the actual programme given on that occasion in her description of the celebrations which Lucy Snowe encountered when she wandered through the park at night.

Charlotte Brontë's experiences in Brussels, and especially her relationship with Monsieur Heger, provided a vital element in the shaping of her creative genius. For us it was a significant and moving experience to follow in her footsteps.

Judley Green

Travelling the Literary Trail

by Marie Moss

Working with a BBC television production team, as some members of the Gaskell Society were last summer made aware, requires much standing in line and even more standing about. The long gaps in filming were used most profitably by Jean Hockenhull, who drafted evocative pencil sketches of our locations, and sometimes of her more dilatory companions, who filled the waiting hours with talk of little, or but moderate, consequence. On one such occasion, it was Rome, I remember, at the Goethe Museum, the balconies of which building look usefully over the Corso, Geoffrey Sharps amused the group by relating his close encounters with some of the media darlings whom the press have chosen to lionise. In the absence of a passing carnival parade, or the charming face of Charles Eliot Norton looking up to seek our acquaintance, we were happy to be entertained by Geoffrey's recollections of his meeting with Mandy Rice Davies at the Floral Hall in Scarborough, and allow his claim to even more glamorous intimacy having once shaken the hand of Sacha Distel, which had lately embraced Brigitte Bardot.

Returning to the Mediterranean on holiday with my husband a short time later, I paid a brief visit to Taormina, to seek but not find Fontana Vecchia, 'the pink stucco farmhouse' where David Herbert Lawrence and Freida sat out under the Sicilian sun, the bad press which greeted the publication of *'Women in Love'*. Our cruise ship stayed only a day at Messina, before turning north, passed Stromboli, to plough a wake through the Tyrrhenian Sea, along the route the restless Lawrences followed to Sardinia and to Rome. Some days later we moored in the old port of Civita Vecchia, where Elizabeth Gaskell came ashore after her eventful voyage south from Marseilles in the spring of 1857. Like Lawrence, she was seeking sanctuary from the critics. As the paths of these two literary favourites converged, we followed them to Rome, and where else but to the Piazza di Spagna. Rain cascaded down the deserted Spanish Steps, so we took shelter in Casina Rossa, the Keats - Shelley Memorial House. Here are to be found relics of all who, like Norton and Gaskell, lodged in this district of artists, writers and poets, and of many known in some way to Elizabeth. The letters of Goethe, Coleridge, Wordsworth and Leigh Hunt; the lock of hair which Elizabeth Barrett gave to Robert Browning, and the sculpture of William Wetmore Storey, Elizabeth's generous host at Casa Cabrera during her stay in Rome.

As the rain continued to fall beyond the opened windows, my husband turned to the small print of our museum guide and drew my attention to a compelling

carnival mask which had been worn by Lord Byron in Venice. I had seen its like before - yes, it was at the Goethe Museum where a display of etchings of the Roman carnival was filmed by our cameraman for the Omnibus production.

smiled, remembering Geoffrey's entertaining exposition of Sharps' Connecting Theory, and my mind began to wander the web of associations, of family and of friendship, which connect E C Gaskell with D H Lawrence. The writer of *'Wives and Daughters'* with the author of *'Sons and Lovers'*. Gaskell readers will be familiar with the two published letters which Elizabeth wrote from the home of her dear friend Mary Greg, The Mount, in Bollington, Cheshire. (Letters 21 and 114). On the first of her visits, made when Florence was quite young, Elizabeth found "such famous nurseries," and a cot by her bedside for baby Julia. The Greg children regretted that Julia had not been brought, but made up for it by making much of Florence, who rushed to be dressed next morning in the nursery to join in their play. She was taken with Alice, Herbert, Katie ('2 years old today') and baby Isobel to the Greg's Home Farm to collect cream for them to "churn themselves" for a little birthday tea, 'with their own butter.' "Flossy is in high glee and thoroughly at home", Gaskell reports to Marianne and Meta.



In 1852 Elizabeth was again staying at The Mount, and went with Mrs. Greg and all the children and a pony "to meet Meta and Florence," (presumably at the station). Meta mounted and rode the pony home, while Florence "disappeared among the group of children as happy as happy can be with Alice." The next day, Elizabeth and her girls walked with the "4 eldest Gregs" to the Unitarian Chapel in Macclesfield. "3 miles up hills and down hills, wind and dust too and the little chapel itself was so very hot that it made me very sleepy ever since we are all pretty well tired," but Meta "seems to be enjoying herself."

Mary Greg was a warm-hearted woman and good friend to Elizabeth throughout the years of Manchester and motherhood before her increasing fame. Like Caroline Davenport of Capesthorpe Hall, a mutual friend, she provided the country air and country pursuits which Elizabeth always wanted for herself and her children. Mrs. Greg was born Mary Needham (1809) into a large Unitarian family living at Lenton, a village at that time, just outside Nottingham. The sons of Hannah and Samuel Greg Senior attended Mr. Taylor's Unitarian school in Nottingham, and all the boys were made welcome at the Needham's home, Lenton House. Mary's lifelong friend was Anna Enfield, the daughter of another Unitarian family. Mary's sister married Anna's brother and remained in Nottingham, but the two friends were separated by what, before the railway age, was a vast distance when Anna married Septimus Dowson and went to live in Norfolk, and Mary came with Samuel Greg Junior to Bollington.

The Gregs had eight children; six girls and two boys, and created for them a happy family life in their large and comfortable house with its big gardens and ample grounds. On August 12th 1860 Ben, the son of Mary's old friend, paid a call with his uncle, William Enfield. Years later this is how Ben Dowson described the occasion:

"It was a date that has always remained fixed in my mind...in the afternoon we called at Mr. Samuel Greg's house. It was only a visit of a few minutes, but it sufficed to give me a picture of that sweet home as it then was. The girls, scarcely more than children, rushed me down the terrace to get a peep at the lovely view over the hills to Buxton. Amy and Bertha I already knew and loved, but this was my first sight of Alice, then nearly 16, but looking so slight and young."

For Alice and Ben it was love at first sight. Ben Enfield Dowson was a recently qualified lawyer with a position in his uncle's law practice in Nottingham. As William Enfield was also uncle to Alice there was opportunity for her aunt to further the young people's relationship, and in September 1863, when Ben was 26 and Alice 19, the two were married.

Their first baby arrived in 1864 and thereafter others followed at all but yearly intervals until there were ten, eight of them exhaustingly boisterous boys. Alice was an educated, serious minded girl, but young as she was, she found it difficult to manage her children, or her growing household. Her mother came to her rescue. Mary Greg rushed down to Nottingham to care for her at each confinement, and as the family grew, gathered up the older children to bring back to Bollington. Alice too returned to Bollington for weeks and months at a time throughout her mother's life. William Enfield Dowson, Alice and Ben's first born, was what today would be termed as a hyperactive child, and it soon became apparent that separation from Will gave Alice the greatest relief. Although loved by his mother, Will had less than his share of her attention, and spent his early days with his grandparents with whom he was a favourite, and with his unmarried aunts, Amy, Katie and Isobel at The Mount. Will's exploits, breaking and stirring up preserved eggs in the cellar, pouring ink onto blankets and sofa covers, and raiding the kitchens in the middle of the night, nearly setting fire to the kitchen door with a candle, began to be judged dangerous. With his naughtiness seemingly beyond curbing, he was boarded at a small school, at first in Nottingham, and later in Southport. From here he continued to come to Bollington for holidays, and was nursed there when he was sick.

In 1852 Elizabeth Gaskell wrote in a letter to Marianne, "Little cousins are pouring in upon the world" (Gaskell letters 134). One of these, the daughter of William Gaskell's brother Robert, christened Susan Elizabeth (Lily) Gaskell, became Mrs. Walter Greg when she married Alice's younger brother and came to live in Prestbury, some two or three miles from The Mount. Lily Greg and her children spent much time with Alice's boys at the tolerant home of her mother-in-law, and later her daughter, Hilda, was to marry one of the Dowson brood, Will's younger brother, Gerald. The Gaskell, Greg, Dowson ties were close at this time, and the adventure and drama that always seemed to surround young Will Dowson must have been relayed to the Gaskell daughters at Plymouth Grove by their cousin, Lily, or their friends, Alice and her sisters.

Despite the difficulties of his rearing, Will grew into an attractive and capable young man. After two years at Owen's College, Manchester, and some time spent in Dusseldorf, learning German, he became a successful Nottingham lace manufacturer, and a real estate entrepreneur, with boats and weekend cottages for hire along the Trent. Fun-loving and gregarious, his taste for adventure never diminished. He was a pioneer of winter sports in the Alps, and the first in Nottingham to own a car, number AV 1. He drove his mother, Alice, "....so fast that it was rather frightening," she felt. In 1894, Will married Helena Brownsword (Nellie) and took a house on the Mapperley Road.

A near neighbour, Frieda Weekley (née von Richtofen), the lively wife of a rather dull academic, Ernest Weekley, became a frequent visitor, and Alice and Ben Dowson also invited the Weekleys to their home. When Frieda's second daughter, Barbara, was born in October 1904, Will Dowson agreed to be her Godfather.

Will shared with Frieda and her children his enthusiasm for the countryside. He took them for drives, and to swim from his boat and little bungalow on the river. Frieda, bored and ill at ease in English provincial society, proved deft at starting a love affair. They made love on a sea of bluebells under ancient oaks in the grounds of Byron's estate at Newstead Abbey, and in Will's car in Sherwood Forest. Frieda described Will euphemistically as "the one great friend" with whom she "felt alive," and he made Nottingham almost bearable for her. They liked to talk about contemporary novels and Will recommended a satire by John Galsworthy on the theme of a woman trapped in a loveless marriage, probably *'The Patrician'*. "I've met somebody," Frieda told Dowson, "who's going to be much more than Galsworthy." Frieda was ready to turn from a man who had known too little of his mother's love, to one who had known too much.

The story of Frieda's dramatic flight with her husband's former pupil, David Herbert Lawrence, is well known. Will Dowson later wrote to Frieda, "If you had to elope, why not with me?" His letter was carelessly slipped between the pages of *Anna Karenina*, a tale Frieda had read in Nottingham but which now had acquired new meaning for her. Shortly afterwards she sent the book to Ernest, no doubt with an analysis on the moral to be drawn from Anna's dilemma. Dowson's letter was still inside the book when it arrived. Ernest Weekley examined it and mailed it to Lawrence without comment. Lawrence, of course, was not unknowing. Frieda talked freely to him of her relationship with Will, and shared the details of their lovemaking. These were transposed, with authentic locations (Bluebells, Sherwood Forest et al) into the affair between Ursula and Rupert, in *'Women in Love'*.

As the rain stopped, my husband closed his guide book, and we left Byron's sinister mask, peering from its dark corner, to go out into the Piazza in search of lunch. "I think Newstead Abbey would be worth a visit," he observed, "interesting life - Byron's." "Yes," I agreed, "perhaps next year when the bluebells are in bloom." You know Geoffrey, with a little help from your theory, literary trails become surprisingly crowded. One never knows whom one might meet!

Sources:

Chapple J.A.V. and Pollard A.

- 'The Letters of Mrs Gaskell' (Manchester 1966)

Byrne Janet

- 'A Genius for Living - A Biography of Frieda Lawrence' (London 1995)

Meynell Alix

- 'What Grandmother Said - The Life of Alice Dowson 1844 - 1927' (Cambridge 1998)

Book Notes

O'Farrell, M.A. **Telling complexions: the nineteenth-century English novel and the blush.** Duke University press £11.95.

This book explores the use of not only the "blush" in Victorian novels to indicate a character's inner emotions and desires but also the use of body traits for similar purposes. It has particular reference to *Pride and Prejudice*, *Persuasion*, *North and South*, and *David Copperfield*. The author is particularly concerned with the character of Fanny Thornton (who blushes) and Margaret Hale (who blunders). She draws parallels with Gaskell's editorial difficulties with Dickens.

BRONTË CHARLOTTE and EMILY. **The Belgian essays a critical edition.** Edited and translated by Sue Lonoff. Yale University Press, 1996.

People who went on the recent Gaskell Society visit to Brussels in search of the Pensionnat Heger may be interested to learn that this book has been reissued. It comprises twenty-eight *devoirs* or essays written by the two sisters in response to exercises set by M. Heger. Each piece in French is accompanied by a parallel translation and all the corrections and notes made by their teacher. The editor's extensive notes and introduction make ample references to Gaskell's *Life of Charlotte Brontë* and tries to assess the importance of these years on their subsequent careers.

MEYNELL, Dame ALIX. **What grandmother said: the life of Alice Dowson, 1844-1927 based on her diaries by her grandmother.** Colt books, £25.

For those interested in the people of Gaskell's circle this book has some interesting anecdotal and background information. The author (a distinguished civil servant) has written a biography of her grandmother drawing extensively on her diaries. She was Alice Greg (1844-1926) one of the large family of Samuel Greg the younger of the Mount, Bollington Cross, near Macclesfield who as a child of eight met Mrs Gaskell in 1852 and got on well with her daughter Flossy. She married a lawyer and went to live in Nottingham where she raised a large and diverse family and became a campaigner for reform of women's health and other issues. The book includes information on the Greg family and is in its own right an interesting account of the role of women in the nineteenth century and what was achieved by some of them without the benefit of a university education. I was particularly intrigued by the appendix listing the signatories to the petition against female emancipation of 1889, which includes several people well-known to Gaskell. Mrs Leslie Stephen (mother of Virginia Woolf) whose first husband was a member of the Duckworth family whom she visited several times, the sisters Mrs Walter Bagehot and Mrs William Rathbone Greg, wife of one the most severe of Gaskell critics and also Alice's uncle (their other sister Matilda was once also engaged as was Meta Gaskell to Capt. Hill), Mrs Matthew Arnold and her sister-in-law Mrs W.E. Forster, known from visits to Ambleside, and Mrs Charles Buxton, Sir Henry Holland's daughter.

Mary Barton, edited by Jennifer Foster (doctoral candidate at the University of Ottawa) Broadview literary press, Ontario. (Distributed by Turpin distribution services Ltd, Blackhorse Road, Letchworth SG6 1HN)

Wives and Daughters, edited by Graham Handley, Everyman Gaskell series. Dent, £4.99.

Two new scholarly paperback editions are now available with critical introductions and notes. The new edition of *Mary Barton* is published in Canada. The text is that of the 5th edition of 1854 omitting William Gaskell's lectures on dialect. Textual notes and references are printed as footnotes to the text. Gaskell's own footnotes are distinguished from the editor's by the letters EG. The editor's notes are mostly bibliographic identifying quotes and references. The bibliography includes several books of social background and a general nature.

Wives and Daughters uses the text of the Knutsford edition with misprints silently corrected. Textual notes are brief usually confined to linguistic definitions. What distinguishes both these editions are the appendices of literacy criticism. The former has 103 pages of reviews many quoted in full and extracts from longer works. William Rathbone Greg's influential but very critical article in the *Edinburgh Review* is printed in full for example. They consist of letters describing the composition of the novel, contemporary reviews, contemporary fiction and social documents. There are extracts from such authors as Carlyle, Engels, Charlotte Brontë, George Eliot and Charles Dickens.

Wives and Daughters has only sixteen pages but they include contemporary reviews such as that which the 22 year old Henry James wrote for the *Nation* and unlike the former has extracts from modern critics such as Sharps, Uglow and Stoneman.

Christine Lingard

Literary Walk of Southwark - 19th August, 2000

Mrs Gaskell to her daughters - Marianne & Meta - late 1855?
“...in the bus I sat next to somebody, whose face I thought I knew,...he read ‘*Little Dorrit*’ And I read it over his shoulder. Oh Polly! He was such a slow reader, You’ll sympathise, Meta won’t, my impatience at his *never* getting to the bottom of the page...We only read the first two chapters, so I never found out who ‘*Little Dorrit*’ is...”

Perhaps we can do better, as we start our walk close by the site of the Marshalsea prison - where Little Dorrit was born - and almost next to the church of St. George the Martyr - where she was baptised and at the end of Dicken’s story, married. This whole area is rich in Dickens associations and we shall visit the Southwark Local Studies Centre (located close by the last surviving wall of the Marshalsea) to examine old photographs and pamphlets/maps etc. After our lunch break at the George Inn in Borough High Street, we shall continue our walk to Southwark Cathedral, and along the riverside to the Globe Theatre.

Detailed Itinerary

Start from BOROUGH Underground Station (Northern Line) Booking Hall - look at nearby Lant St. (Dickens had lodgings there as a young boy) and possibly other Dickens associations. See Church of St. George the Martyr and remaining Marshalsea Wall.

Visit Southwark Local Studies Centre - to see maps of the area, pamphlets etc.

Walk along Borough High St. to the George Inn - noting White Hart Inn plaque on way. Also, site of *Tabard* - starting point for Chaucer’s pilgrims.

Lunch at the George Inn - sandwiches/meals available. Prices £5 - £6. £3 for club sandwiches. If fine you may wish to sit in the courtyard.

Short walk to Southwark Cathedral - noting especially tomb of John Gower (first English poet(?) and friend of Chaucer), Shakespeare memorial and window - Harvard Chapel, etc.

Walk along riverside via Golden Hind!

Palace of Bishops of Winchester (Rose window), Clink St. to Anchor Inn - frequented by Doctor Johnson. Enjoy view from terrace and look into ‘Dictionary room’ with Johnson Quotes on the wall.

Walk under Southwark Bridge (Dorrit’s ‘Iron Bridge’) towards Globe Theatre - negotiating possible cones, drills and building works!

Near the Globe - explore Bear Gardens area and possibly visit *Light & Sound* Presentation on sit of Rose Theatre (cost at group rate is £2 per person). This is a 23 minute film, shown 1/2 hourly and is well worth seeing for background to the Elizabethan theatre. It needs to be booked in advance.

At the Globe Theatre - tea/coffee is available, also Globe Theatre exhibition, for those who wish to see this. It may also be possible to join a tour of the theatre (cost about £7.50, £6 concession).

At Cardinal’s Wharf (just past the Exhibition entrance) - notice the house from which Christopher Wren watched building works at St. Pauls, opposite! And to conclude, for any one who has the energy, the ‘delights’ of Tate Modern are only a few steps away!

Knutsford Meetings

The latest season of Knutsford meetings was well attended, in spite of the fact that we had to change from Monday to Wednesday. We wondered how we should manage without Irene Wiltshire, who had built up the group so successfully, but this year we have enjoyed a ‘Members Miscellany’, with a variety of topics and speakers. Dudley Green talked about Patrick Bronte and his relationship with Elizabeth Gaskell; Marie Moss discussed the short story

'Christmas Storms and Sunshine'; Emily White told us about the Gaskell's niece, Mrs Walter Greg, and Margaret Smyth talked about literary Manchester in the Gaskell's time. All speakers were both well-informed and entertaining. Our thanks go to Irene, for four years of carefully-researched talks and stimulating discussion, and to this Year's speakers who have managed to maintain that same high standard.

We also discussed the BBC dramatisation of *Wives and Daughters*, which was pronounced a resounding success, several members giving it ten out of ten. Opinion was more divided on the Omnibus programme about Gaskell. We watched some of the out-takes and were impressed by the stamina of our members in repeatedly climbing stairs, knocking on doors, coming in and going out, and still managing to talk intelligently.

For the next series of meetings we shall be discussing *Cranford*. Meetings will be on October 25th, November 29th, January 31st, February 28th, March 28th and April 25th, with possibly an outing on May 30th. As last year, we shall be meeting at St. John's Parish Hall at twelve o'clock, and each session will involve a buffet lunch, followed by a talk or discussion. All are welcome.

Elizabeth Williams.

For queries about group meeeting address to:

Knutsford and Manchester

Joan Leach
Far Yew Tree House, Over Tabley, Knutsford, Cheshire WA16 0HN

London and South East

Dudley Barlow
44 Seymour Road, London SW18 5JA

South West

Rosemary Marshall
138 Fairfield Park Road, Bath BA1 6JT

Gaskell Society Southwest

Group Report on Spring Activities 2000

On Saturday April 15th the group held a meeting at 2.00pm at the Bath Royal Literary and Scientific Institution in Queen Square. This was in preparation for our 'Literary Jaunt' to Devizes and Elizabeth Gaskell. Peter Skrine began by describing George Eliot's stay in Devizes at the home of Dr. Brabant, his attempts to dominate her intellectually and physically and her expulsion when this all became to much for Dr. Brabant's blind wife and her sister. The resemblance to Casaubon and Dorothea in 'Middlemarch' is very clear.

Rosemary Marshall then spoke about William Ewart M.P. His family and his political achievements, which included The Public Libraries Act (1850) to enable everyone to improve themselves with free access to books. The bill was pushed through in the Lords by Lord Stanley of Alderley (who thought free libraries were such a good idea that schools could be abolished!). He bought the house at Broadleas because of the new railway line which made it possible to get to London in 3 hours. For such a radical reformer who achieved so much, he seems to have very little recognition today, but his friendship with William and Elizabeth Gaskell must recommend him to us.



Outside the front entrance to Broadleas with its present owner, Lady Anne Cowdray and her dogs.

On Sunday May 7th 16 members and friends met at Avebury on a perfect late spring morning and drove to Devizes. The scenery was just as described by Mrs Gaskell in her letter to Emily Shaen in September 1856, in which she describes "blue misty plains, and villages in nests of trees, and church spires which did not reach nearly where we were in our beautiful free air and primitive world". We assembled in the market square where Peter pointed out the fine 18th century buildings which indicated the prosperity of the town, before taking us to the house from which poor young Mary Anne Evans was so ignominiously ejected. We enjoyed a very good lunch before going out to Broadleas, since 1947 the home of Lady Anne Cowdray, who opens the beautiful garden to the public. She kindly allowed us to see the ground floor of the house before we went round the garden. No wonder Mrs Gaskell once wrote that she "enjoyed Broadleas far the most of my visit."

We plan a picnic in August and then Dudley Green is coming to speak to us on 'A Question of Trust: The Relationship between Patrick Brontë and Elizabeth Gaskell' on Saturday, November 18th at 2.00pm.

Rosemary Marshall

Manchester Meetings at Cross Street Chapel.

The next season's meetings will be held on the second Monday in each month at 10.30 for coffee and biscuits.

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|-----------------|--|
| 9th October - | Christine Lingard, librarian at Central Library, Manchester will give a talk on The Gaskells and Popular Education. |
| 13th November - | Dr. P. O'Brien on Warrington and the Gaskells. Dr. O'Brien MD is the author of <i>Warrington Academy 1757-86 Its predecessors and successors</i> (1989). |
| 11th December - | A Christmas Carol Service for The Gaskell Society conducted by the Rev. John Midgley |

London & South-East Branch

Future Meetings

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|--|--|
| Saturday 16th September 2000: | 'Meteorological Accuracy in Gaskell's Provincial Novels'
Frances Twinn |
| Saturday 11th November 2000:
(Date to be confirmed) | 'The Thomson Family and the young Elizabeth Stevenson'
Ian Gregg |

Both meetings to be held at Francis Holland School, 39 Graham Terrace, London SW1W 8JF commencing at 2pm. Lunch beforehand at Royal Court Tavern, Sloane Square, 12 noon, if you wish.

At Home with Elizabeth Gaskell

Many Gaskell Society members have enjoyed a performance of Barbara Brill's *At Home with the Gaskells* at Plymouth Grove, Brook Street Chapel, the National Gallery and many other venues. Now this has been produced as a booklet by:
Teamband Ltd, Wanwood, Park Corner, Nettlebed, Henley-on-Thames, Oxon RG9 6DR

One or two copies £5.50 plus 50p postage each, 6-9 copies £4.15 plus 35p a copy postage etc. cheque or postal order to Teamband Ltd.

Tennyson and Gaskell

Our president, Professor John Chapple, having completed the editorial work on *Further letters of Mrs Gaskell*, soon to be published by MUP, finds time to address The Tennyson Society at its memorial service in Bag Enderby church, Lincolnshire, 3.00pm on Sunday 6th August. Members will remember the admiration for the poet which Elizabeth Gaskell shared with Samuel Bamford (Letters 50, 56, 59) and Mr. Holbrook in *Cranford*.

On his visit John will look out for the signpost, 'To Old Bolingbroke and Bag Enderby' to which someone added 'God's gift of a daughter'.

Two Events at The British Library

Tuesday 12th September, 6.15pm - 7.15pm

Andrew Davies & Jenny Uglow discuss:

'Adapting the Classics'

For many people today, the classics of English literature are most readily accessible through film versions, and especially televised 'costume drama'. Andrew Davies is the doyen of TV scriptwriters, having adapted *Pride and Prejudice*, *Middlemarch*, *Wives and Daughters* and many others. Here he talks to Jenny Uglow, author and editor of many books, including *Elizabeth Gaskell: A Habit of Stories* (1993). Video extracts from Andrew Davies' work will be shown.

Prices are £7.50 & £6.00 concessions.

Sunday 1st October, 3.00pm-4.20pm

Tuesday 3rd October, 7.00pm-8.20pm

Pascal Theatre Company present the world premiere of:

'Charlotte Brontë Goes to Europe'

An adaptation of Charlotte Brontë's *Villette*.

Written and directed by Julia Pascal; music composed and played by Mark Bousie.

Villette, unlike *Jane Eyre*, does not end with 'Reader I married him', and its autobiographical aspects are unmistakable, with more than a hint of Charlotte's own unrequited love for Monsieur Heger. *Charlotte Brontë goes to Europe* is set in the mid-19th century and the present day, and uses video, hymns, live contemporary music, original text, dramatisation from the novel and Charlotte Brontë's little-known Belgian notebooks, in a work specially created for the British Library.

Prices are £7.50 & £6.00 concessions.

Apply to:

The British Library

Events Box Office

96 Euston Road

London

NW1 2DB

Tel: 020 7412 7332

Email: boxoffice@bl.uk

Progress on The Gaskell House Plymouth Grove

The Gaskell Society has been very concerned about the house for years, but we are a literary society, not capable or willing to take on the responsibility of bricks and mortar. However we instigated the setting up of the Manchester Historic Buildings Trust, an independant Building Preservation Trust, which has as its first project the restoration and conversion of the house. The trustees include two members of the Gaskell Society Committee, the Chairman of the trustees of Cross Street Chapel (the Unitarian Chapel in Manchester where William Gaskell was Minister), a property owner, a surveyor and a conservation officer, and there is a professional project manager. A detailed survey of condition, history and possible self-supporting future uses is now almost complete. The house is in a very poor state of repair and also suffers from subsidence. The approximate cost of restoration and conversion will be £1,200,000. The Heritage Lottery Fund in principle support the project, and would supply about half the money needed. The trust hopes to find the remainder from a combination of grants, income from the property and low-interest loans. This process will take about 2 years, during which time we hope the present tenants will remain to guard the house against vandals.

The beautiful drawing room, dining room, music room and William Gaskell's study, although in very poor condition, retain many original features and we hope will be available for public use. Photographs taken in the 1890s show these interiors in some detail, and some of the original furniture is known to exist. The rest of the premises have very few original features, except the doors and windows. The catalogue of the auction sale in 1914 lists most of the contents, and we are anxious to trace the articles which were sold then.

So you see that although 84 Plymouth Grove does look neglected and shuttered, much work has already been done and we hope that in two or three years time it will open its doors to the world.

Historical Background

84 Plymouth Grove was the home of the Gaskell's from 1850 until the death of Meta Gaskell in 1913. Its importance was recognised in the 1950s when it was given a grade II* listing which saved it from demolition when most of the rest of the street was cleared to make way for the present housing estate. It is

recognised as a building of national importance. At present it belongs to Manchester University and is let to a Tamil Housing Association, the long-term tenants, the International Society, having recently moved to other premises.

Janet Allan

Stop Press

Further Letters of Mrs Gaskell

edited by John Chapple and Alan Shelston.

Published by Manchester University Press £45: distributed in the USA by St. Martin's Press, Inc. 175 Fifth Avenue, New York Ny 10010 USA.

The Liberal Education of Charles Eliot Norton by James Turner

Published by Johns Hopkins University Press: distributed in U.K. by Plymbridge £35.00. This book, reviewed in the Times Literary Supplement (14th July, 2000) may be of interest to members and will probably be reviewed in our next journal.

We have a few copies of:

The letters of Mrs Gaskell and Charles Eliot Norton 1855-1865

edited, with an introduction, by Jane Whitehill (1932)

This is a 1973 reprint by George Olms, in their *Anglistica and Americana* series. Our copies cost £10 with 70 pence p&p to U.K. addresses and pro rata.

Apply to:

Mrs. Joan Leach,
Far Yew Tree House, Over Tabley, Knutsford, Cheshire WA16 0HN.

Illustrations on cover and p.10 by **Jean Hockenhull**.