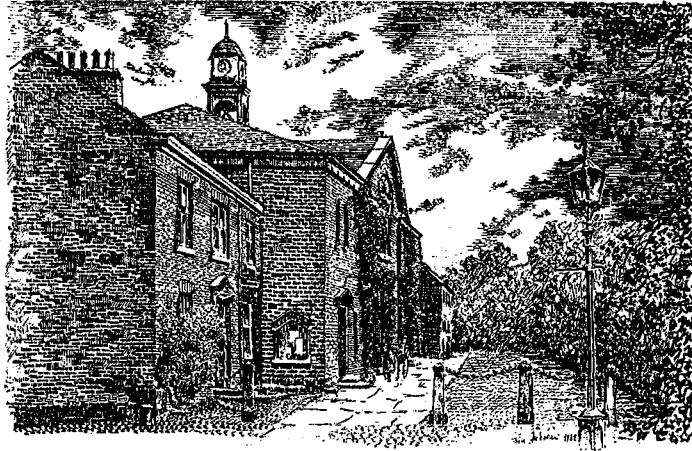


The Gaskell Society



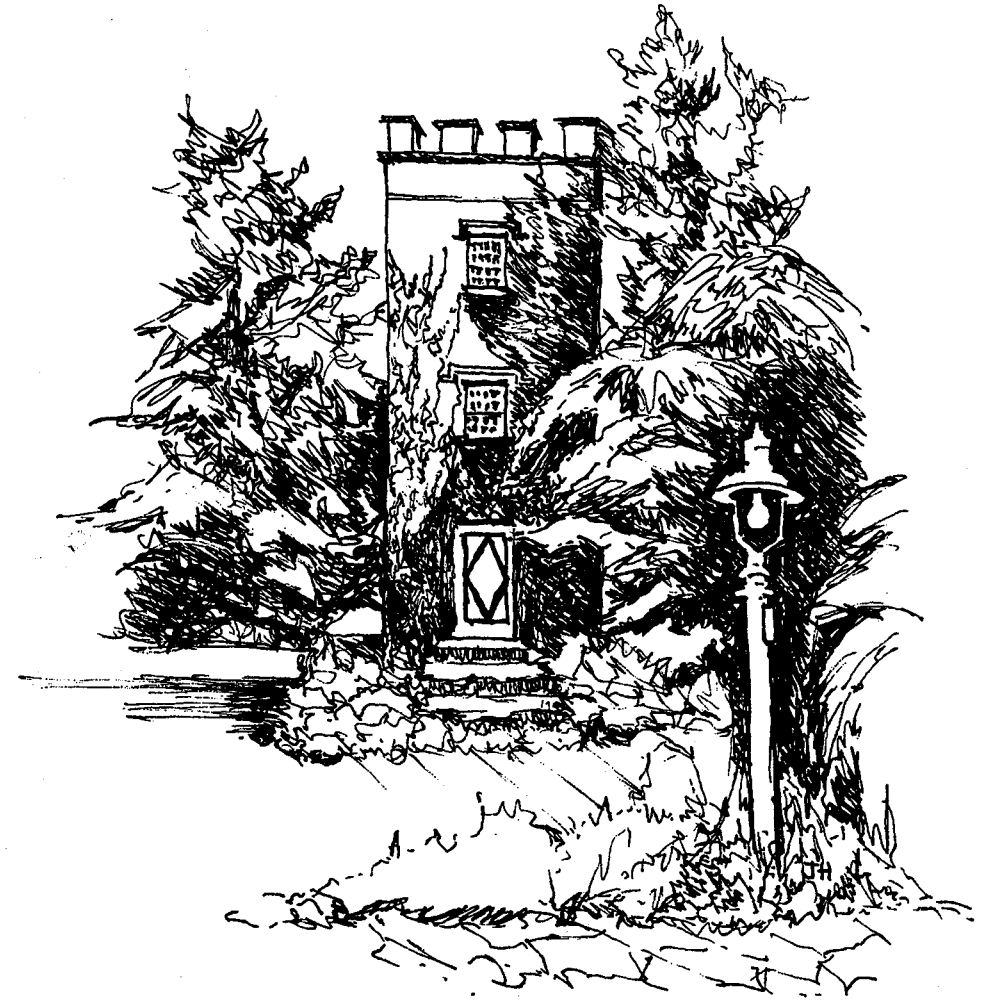
Moravian Church
Fairfield Settlement, Droylsden, Tameside.

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

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. Telephone - 01565 634668

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

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NEWSLETTER

Autumn 2001 - Number 32

Editor's Letter

It was good to see so many members at our recent weekend conference in Bath, 112 of you, and many who had not attended previous events. With some experience of running weekend conferences for our members we succeeded in getting excellent speakers and a well-balanced programme in a pleasant venue. We are grateful to our members in the South West who helped so much at every stage to make this such an enjoyable event and to all who played their part in the programme. You will all be able to read some of the papers and a report in our next Journal. Several pamphlets were prepared for the event and can be obtained by post : details are given with the South West Group notice.

Our next conference in 2003 is likely to be in the north east, probably at Durham or Newcastle-upon-Tyne.

We are sorry to disappoint some of you with the news that we have had to give up plans for a visit to Rome in 2002. The trip we were planning worked out to be too expensive - £650 plus for four nights but there were other problems and we felt that it would be exhausting sight-seeing with a large group. For those who still hope to visit Rome we propose to collect a list of members who might like to combine in smaller groups. Anyone finding a holiday offer they liked could consult the list and contact others to discuss ideas. Write to me if you would like to have your name on such a list or if you have suggestions on tour offers or hotels. I have some details of tour companies which have been recommended to us, which we can give to members who are thinking of joining a tour or arranging their own trip. There is another way the Society hopes to assist would-be Rome bound travellers: we will compile a booklet of the Gaskells and their contemporaries in Rome and suggest visits for literary pilgrims.

However we DO still hope to offer you an overseas visit and this will be to Normandy and Brittany partly in the steps of Gaskell and Madame de Sévigné. This will be a coach tour, probably for a week near the beginning of September. We need to know how many of you are interested in this plan and especially how many single rooms would be needed so we can start looking for a hotel.

It may not happen for some time but we have just heard that BBC is working on a production of *North and South*.

We hope many of you will be able to join us at group meetings in Knutsford, Manchester, London and Bath or at the New Year Lunch on 15th January at Cottons hotel, Knutsford. Any member who is too far away to get to local meetings might consider starting a group in their area, perhaps by putting a notice in the local library or paper: the Society could give back-up support.

Plans for Plymouth Grove are progressing but funds are much needed.

Joan Leach

84 Plymouth Grove

Janet Allan

At our conference in Bath I gave a very short slide presentation about 84 Plymouth Grove, the house in which Elizabeth lived from 1850-65, and where her husband William and their two unmarried daughters lived between 1865-1913. At the beginning of July the Manchester Historic Buildings Trust applied for a Heritage Lottery Fund Grant to restore and convert the house, and I appealed for funds towards the development of this application. Members of the Society have now generously contributed over £2,000 towards this development funding and the fund raising which will be necessary. This is a most encouraging response and I would like to thank, again, everybody who has contributed. Anybody who has not already done so will find the donation form in this newsletter, and I hope I can persuade them to add to the total.

The result of the Stage 1 of the Heritage Lottery application will not now be known until about March 2002, nine months after our application was sent in, and if we pass Stage 1 there will be further development work before we can apply for Stage 2. It is unlikely now that we will know if we have been successful until early in 2003.

In the forthcoming months I will be giving a longer and more detailed talk about the project to members of the Society (the date to be announced) and have also been asked to talk to several other local organisations. I will be very pleased to hear of others who would be interested. Please get in touch with me at 10 Dale Road, New Mills, High Peak, SK22 4 MW, phone/fax 01663 744233 email janet@janetbook.fsnet.co.uk.

The Gaskells' Bequests

Janet Allan

Some time ago I decided to investigate Elizabeth Gaskell's will. However, careful searches both in Manchester and London, could find no trace of any such will. This was to be expected as married women at that time could not make independent wills. However, there were no Letters of Administration either, so there was no trace of Elizabeth's property. What happened to The Lawn at Holybourne near Alton, I wondered, the house which she was buying without her husband's knowledge? And how much money did she have? Also, when did the Gaskells buy 84 Plymouth Grove, which was rented in 1850 for £150 a year, but by 1913 belonged to Elizabeth and William's daughter Meta (Margaret Emily) when she died, and what happened to The Shelling, the house in Silverdale which Meta and her sister Julia had built?

Some of these questions are answered in the much later wills of William, Julia and Meta Gaskell, and in a copy of the deeds of 84 Plymouth Grove which I obtained recently.

William Gaskell's will dated 23 March 1876 left all his household effects to Julia and Meta, and divided the rest of his property equally between his four daughters. Florence pre-deceased him, dying in 1881, and thus after William died on 11 June 1884 his net estate of £46,103. 0s. 11d was shared by the other three sisters, Julia, Meta and Marianne (Mrs Holland). There is no mention of freehold property, and 'no leaseholds' is noted on the probate document.

Julia and Meta, having inherited £15,367 each from their father, lived on at 84 Plymouth Grove, the doyennes of Manchester society and very much involved in local charitable enterprises. As unmarried women they were able to control their own affairs, and both their wills make interesting reading.

Julia's will is dated 28 July 1905. In the event of her dying before Meta she left nineteen legacies, twelve of which were to local friends including Miss Anna Halle, Miss Taylor of St Judes School Manchester, Miss Viola Joy and Miss Vera Hochstein, both at the Manchester Royal College of Music, and Miss Vernon at the Manchester Art Museum and University Settlement at Ancoats. Other bequests included Miss Alice Winkworth at Bristol, Mrs William T. Arnold of 4 Carlyle Square Chelsea, Mrs Frances Sleigh, wife of the Vicar of Silverdale and Michel Devonassond, Guide aux Livets, Chamonix, Haute Savoie. Should she outlive Meta the list extends and includes £10,000 to Katherine Agnes Greg to run a home of rest at the Shelling, the 'cottage' that she and Meta had built in Silverdale, for teachers from the Manchester High School for Girls, Governesses, Nurses from Ardwick or a convalescent home for children. Other legacies included £1,000 for the Benevolent Fund for Sick and Aged Governesses, £2,000 to Ardwick District Nurses Home, £1,000 to Ancoats Hospital, £500 each for the Unitarian Home Missionary College, the Domestic Mission, Manchester College Oxford, Christie Cancer Hospital, the Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Children, and Manchester Art Museum. Mrs Jane Sanderson formerly Matron of the Kitchen for the Sick at Ancoats was to receive £50. Julia died before Meta, on 24 October 1908, so after the nineteen individual legacies the balance of her estate of £28,300.11s.11d went to her sister with whom she had lived all her life.

Meta died on 26 October 1913. The gross value of her personal estate was £50,223. 0s. 9d. Interestingly in her will, dated 13 March 1913, Katherine Agnes Gregg is only to receive £50 and there is no reference to the Shelling, but we find that on 19 December 1909, a little over a year after her sister's death, Meta had presented land and buildings in Swinton Avenue 'for the purposes of a home to be called The Memorial Nursing Home' to Louisa Potter, Thomas Arther Helme and others. The Trustees of this Home received £4,500 from Meta in her will. Presumably this replaced the Silverdale project. It is in Meta's will also that we find the question of

The Lawn at Holybourne is answered. The house had been kept in the family and after William's death the freehold was owned jointly by Marianne, Julia, Meta and Charles Crompton (their deceased sister Florence's husband). Meta left her share to Marianne.

Marianne also received £17,000 in trust for herself and her children. Other bequests underline the involvement of the Gaskells in the charitable and cultural life of Manchester. They include £1,500 to the Ardwick District Nurses Home, £1,000 to Ancoats Hospital, £1,000 to the University of Manchester, £1,000 to the Fox Coat Charity, £100 each to the Royal Manchester College of Music, Manchester High School for Girls, Manchester Royal Eye Hospital, the Unitarian Home Missionary College Manchester, the Ministers' Pension and Insurance Fund and the Benevolent Fund for Sick and Aged Governesses. £200 went to the Domestic Mission, the Manchester Art Museum, Manchester Grammar School (£100 for the Musical Society and £100 to the Sports Committee), and £300 to Brook Street Chapel Knutsford for the upkeep of the family grave.

Bequests to individuals included £1,500 each to Henry Llewellyn Davies and Crompton Llewellyn Davies, £500 to Elizabeth Gaskell Norton of Shady Hill Massachusetts (in a later codicil this was revoked and replaced by an annuity of £200) and £500 to Miss Lena Moxon of Morrah, Falmouth. Lady Anne Isabella Ritchie (daughter of William Makepeace Thackeray) received £300. There were numerous other small bequests. In addition to their wages, three of Meta's five servants received legacies of £100 and the remaining two got £50 each.

The wills of both sisters request that their executors destroy all personal papers, which were to be 'put together in a box or boxes'. How we wish now that this had not been done! Meta also left her mother's portrait by Richmond to the National Portrait Gallery, and to the Corporation of Manchester she gave among other things the portrait of William by Mrs Swynnerton, the bust of Elizabeth, and presentation plate given to William on the twenty-fifth anniversary of his ministry at Cross Street Chapel. The University of Manchester received William's 1878 presentation plate. All other possessions including 84 Plymouth Grove and the motor car were to be disposed of by her executors.

The deeds of 84 Plymouth Grove reveal that Meta and Julia bought the house for £3,500 on 24 January 1900. Included in the deal were 2 and 4 Swinton Grove, which are still standing, and 6 and 8 Swinton Avenue, the houses used for The Memorial Nursing Home which no longer exist.

So we now know more about the Gaskells' houses, and their wealth. The question posed by these discoveries is – how did the family become so wealthy? Did Elizabeth's books provide their very considerable fortune? Was William's income of £300 from Cross Street Chapel substantially augmented by his other duties? Or did inheritances help to increase the Gaskell bank balance? Perhaps other members of the Society can throw some light on this.

Bellingham

Muriel Smith

In *Mrs Gaskell and Newcastle-upon-Tyne* in the Gaskell Society Journal Vol.5 (1991), P. J Yarrow suggested that Mrs Gaskell had picked up the name Bellingham, used in *Ruth*, when she lived in Newcastle around 1830: it is the name of a small village in Northumberland. Alternatively, she could have encountered the name when staying with the Kay-Shuttleworths in 1850: there is a Bellingham Chapel in Kendal Parish Church. The Bellinghams of Levens Hall, Cumbria, belong to the same family as the Bellinghams of Northumberland Bellingham.

There is, however, a famous bearer of the name connected with a famous and very rare, indeed unique, incident, the assassination of a British Prime Minister. Spencer Perceval was shot by John Bellingham in the lobby of the House of Commons on 11 May 1812. Perceval was by profession a lawyer who had previously served as Solicitor-General and Attorney-General, that is, had been responsible for some of the wartime political prosecutions: this may connect with the almost universal satisfaction observed among the lower ranks of society over his death. He was also violently anti-Catholic at a time when the Catholic Question, the possible relaxation of the savage penal laws still on the Statute Book was a major issue in Parliament, connected of course with the Irish Question. However, it became clear that fears of revolutionary action were groundless: Perceval's death had nothing to do with politics. Bellingham was acting on personal motives: he had got himself into trouble in Russia and blamed the British Government, He was largely the author of his own misfortunes but that never stops a man from nursing a grievance.

BANK STREET UNITARIAN CHAPEL, BOLTON

Christine Lingard

On 5th June 2001 a group of Gaskell Society members visited this Chapel. Elizabeth Gaskell may well have been familiar with the Chapel herself as she was friendly with the Darbishire family who were associated with it but the family connection goes further back to her Holland ancestors. Because of what John Chapple calls the 'veritable cat's cradle' of Unitarian relationships Gaskell's connection with two of the Chapel's eighteenth century ministers Philip and John Holland is very complicated. Philip Holland was both her grandfather's cousin and his brother-in-law twice over making him also her great uncle.

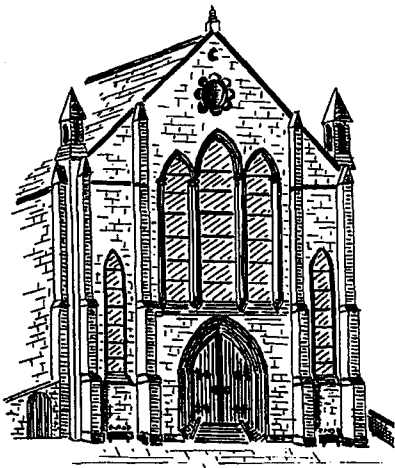
Philip Holland (1721-1789) was active as a trustee in founding the celebrated Warrington Academy and later minister at Bank St., where he was very popular. He established a boarding school offering tuition in Latin, Greek, Chemistry and Natural Philosophy. Short grammars and long exercise books, a few rules and many examples were in his opinion the best way to learn a language.

Pupils were attracted from a wide area. They included his nephew, William Turner (father of the Rev William Turner of Newcastle). This was a time when the Manchester-London coach was advertised as taking "barring accidents four and a half days". Turner sent letters to his son by means of the butchers who travelled from Yorkshire to the market in Bolton. The most famous of Philip's pupils were the sons of Josiah Wedgwood – John, Josiah and the 8-year-old Thomas (the pioneer photographer). Wedgwood took an active interest in his sons' education, and travelled on several occasions to Bolton.

But even this regime was not adequate to satisfy the boys' lust for education so he took them away to a school he founded himself at Etruria. He exchanged letters with Philip Holland showing his enthusiastic support for the American colonists. These were very troubled times. Wedgwood witnessed machine-breaking riots on one visit. The Wedgwoods later became connected by marriage to the Hollands and the Turners so the friendship must have been a close one.

Philip's nephew John (1766-1826) succeeded his uncle at Bank Street but was less successful. At one time during an anti-dissenter riot in the 1790s his effigy was carried through the streets and burned. He is important to us because he received his education at the Daventry academy in Northamptonshire. There he made friends with a fellow student from Berwick. It is probable that it was this friendship that brought William Stevenson to the North West. He took up the ministry at Dob Cross, Failsworth, from where he paid visits to his friend's relations at Sandleybridge, near Knutsford and met his future wife.

John Holland was also a teacher and maintained a notable library. He was described as a broken man whose mental powers were failing when he retired in 1820. With his brother he wrote fourteen textbooks that were widely used in the education of young women in the early part of the nineteenth century. Aspiring students might perhaps take heed of one of their salutary warnings:



"Another cause of sloth, is a vehement love of study and contemplation. Indeed, if we pursue valuable knowledge, in order to impart it to others, or to qualify ourselves for the right conduct of life, this far from deserving the name of sloth, that is one of the best and most notable employments in the world. On the contrary, if the sole end of our study be to fill our heads with useless notions, whatever pains we may take, it is no better than a specious kind of idleness, which if it be somewhat plausible, it is upon that account the more dangerous."

The GASKELLS, POPULAR EDUCATION & THE FREE LIBRARY MOVEMENT

Christine Lingard

In the last issue of the newsletter I discussed the role of the Mechanics Institutes and their libraries in meeting the demand for popular education but even these had limitations in that they were not free to users. Free libraries were the solution. Credit for their foundation is given to three men - Joseph Brotherton MP for Salford from 1832, a local man very much involved in the community, Swedenborgian, vegetarian and campaigner against the death penalty - William Ewart (1798-1869), also a liberal MP but with a more national reputation - who played a more significant role in the Gaskell story and Edward Edwards (1812-87) a Chartist - just the sort of man for whom libraries were intended - a former bricklayer, self-educated at Mechanics' Institutes. The campaign began in earnest in 1836 when Edwards wrote to the Select Committee on the Arts chaired by Ewart. The cause was taken up in the press. *Eliza Cook's Journal*, for one, published articles advocating them. In 1839 Edwards became assistant in the British Museum reading room under its great librarian Antonio Panizzi. It wasn't a happy relationship. Matters came to a head when he objected to Edwards' absences on behalf of his campaign and dismissed him.

A Select Committee was established under Ewart's chairmanship in 1849 with Brotherton as deputy. Members included Disraeli, still better known as a novelist, Monckton Milnes, famous for his literary breakfasts, and Sir Harry Verney, future husband of Parthenope Nightingale. Francois Guizot, French historian and exiled Prime Minister was a key witness. Gaskell recounts a social event (13th May 1849):

We cabbed it to Mr. Monckton Milnes... there were the House of Lords there, ...and Guizot, and Whewell, and Archdeacon Hare... We were very merry, and it was a very short two hours which every one had said is the proper number of hours to stay at breakfast. [GL45a]

This is in the middle of the period when the Select Committee was receiving evidence though it would be unwise to read too much into this.

The main fly in the ointment was Panizzi who questioned the statistics and wrote to the press in disapproval. Ewart won the day and introduced a bill in parliament. The Public Libraries' Act became law in 1850. It enabled towns with a population of over 10,000 to spend the product of a 1/2d rate on Libraries but not on books. These had to be donated or paid for by public subscription. In 1855 the limit was raised to one penny. The cardinal principal was that they should be free to all. The claim to have the first public library is made by several towns. In fact with a bit of linguistic variation they can all prove to be right. Some jumped the gun and used the Museums' Act of 1845 to open them. The first of all was Warrington (1848), second

Salford, Brotherton's constituency (1849) and third Winchester. Brighton passed a local act to enable them to open theirs in 1850. Several voted to adopt the act almost immediately but invariably there were delays before services were ready.

The honour of opening the first library under the act fell to Manchester in 1852. Liverpool followed the same year but Westminster, the first in London, was not opened till 1857. Edwards was appointed librarian. Subscription funds for both middle classes and workingmen were opened to pay for books. The building at Campfield, Deansgate was originally Robert Owen's Hall of Science, one of his public meeting halls for the discussion of his radical ideas. Engels was an enthusiastic member. The building was nearly destroyed by fire during protests in 1840. The Owenites however were the ones charged with sedition. The building was badly managed and regarded as a public nuisance. It was bought at a fraction of the original cost by Sir John Potter. Prince Albert was invited to perform the opening ceremony but declined and donated 18 books instead, including such riveting titles as *The Natural History of Deeside* and *On the Application of Water Glass in the Arts*. Total stock was 21,308 volumes - far bigger than the Mechanics' but quite small by modern standards.

The library opened for public inspection from 2nd to 5th June 1852. There were two ceremonies on 2nd September. The morning audience was limited to those who contributed a minimum of £5 (presumably they were allowed to bring guests) - the evening meeting to workers. At least half of the morning audience were women but only a fifth of the evening's. The list of speakers reads like a *Who's Who* of Victorian letters, so much so it proved to be a case of cultural indigestion. Edwards was there but took little interest as he was suffering from 'summer cholera'. Ewart however was on holiday. The Chairman Sir John Potter, presided. Speakers were the Earl of Shaftesbury, Bulwer Lytton, who in the 1830s was one of Gaskell's favourite authors, Dickens and Thackeray. Ironically next was Sir James Stephen, Professor of Modern History at Cambridge, whose son married Thackeray's daughter (he was the grandfather of Virginia Woolf). Dr Henry Vaughan who held the equivalent post at Oxford, Monckton Milnes, John Bright MP and some mayors made up the number.

Gaskell and the Winkworths were in the audience:

She (16 year old Meta) and I went down to the Royal Hotel & Joined the Dickens, Mr Charles Knight, and then went to the Free Library where we had capital places, close to the speakers. But oh! My usual complaint! The room despite its immense size & height was so close, & the speeches so long I could not attend & wished myself at home many & many a time, my only comfort being seeing the caricatures Thackeray was drawing which was very funny. He and Mr Monckton Milnes made plenty of fun, till poor Thackeray was called on to speak & broke down utterly after which he drew no more caricatures. We went at 1/2 past 9 & did not get out till 1/4 to 4, which was too much of a good thing. [GL 131]

Though Thackeray had lectured before (Brontë had heard his *English humorists* in 1851) he had only just decided to pursue this career in earnest to supplement his irregular income from writing and was very anxious about it, using it as a measure of his potential for such an undertaking. He was certainly eager to outshine Dickens, taking along his friend the American publisher Joseph Fields for support. He spoke confidently for about three minutes then completely froze and sat down without explanation. When at ease he was a fluent and entertaining conversationalist but he was prone to attacks of nerves. At the evening meeting he redeemed himself and was most entertaining in his references to French novels which he was *obliged to read*, but he hoped will *never be on the shelf of the library*.

The library opened for business on 6th Sept. There were two floors - reference and lending, with books only available from catalogues. The staff consisted of an assistant librarian, two porters, a clerk and a boy. The clerk on the princely salary of £26 p.a. was a W.H. Gaskell! This I trust was not a connection because he found the work so arduous and the hours so long that after reporting for duty in an intoxicated condition he was dismissed. He tried for a post at Salford but found himself in Lancaster gaol in debt to Edwards financially.

Henry Crabb Robinson, the *Times* journalist wrote in his diary in 1857:

The one thing that has eclipsed all others is the Free Library... in a large hall there were some thirty or forty men, working men perhaps, reading, not light and idle books. There was no impudence or impertinence or anything objectionable. There is a newsroom and this is not the most instructive reading, but it is with this and novels etc., that young men must begin.

Co-opted to the Committee was one of Manchester's greatest book men, the renowned after-dinner speaker James Crossley (1800-83) who died in his bachelor home by the side of and literally under an enormous mountain of books. He was associated with the Portico, Chetham's and the Athenaeum. Gaskell's letters to him are very formal, exchanging interesting information on Cheshire history, folklore and the like.

Crossley was the most remarkable and picturesque figure in Manchester. Enveloped in a long dark-coloured cloak, his white hair fell from his shoulders from beneath a broad-rimmed hat and his manners were those of days gone by. He loved old books, old wine, old friends, old times, and attributed his longevity to port, celibacy and never indulging in snuff and tobacco [Ellis]

He and Edwards compiled a list of books to facilitate the purchase of the initial stock. Regrettably no work by Gaskell was included but then neither was any by Jane Austen or the Brontës, but such recently published books as *Vanity Fair* and *David Copperfield* were. The committee interfered in the selection - among titles banned were *Moll Flanders* and *Roxanna*.

They went on a book-buying spree in Manchester, London, Liverpool and Bristol. They spent £3,200 instead of the allotted £2,600 on 14,000 books. The committee was not amused and Edwards' problems with them began. He was his own worst enemy and seemed to court controversy, regularly falling foul of them in his campaign for better hours, pay and leave and was censored for being absent from the reading room several times. He argued that these were for legitimate reasons - the intolerably long hours and also all manner of business that any librarian will tell you is par for the job. He objected to the extra workload the opening of branches at Ardwick, Ancoats and Hulme had brought. He was again called to answer charges in 1858. Potter had suffered the first of a series of strokes so the chair was taken by Cllr Harry Rawson, a man probably known to the Gaskells, though it isn't recorded, a Unitarian, publisher of several of William's sermons and the author of his obituary in a local paper. Once he accompanied Edwards to pass approval on his selection of books. Edwards was dismissed by the narrowest of margins.

Annual reports make interesting reading because they list the most issued titles. In 1857 in the literature category: *Dombey and son* (Dickens); *Tales of the landlord* (Scott); Burns' works (note centenary year); *Self control* (Mrs Brunton, 1814); *The Virginians* (Thackeray); *Sketches by Boz*; *Ivanhoe*; *Lalla Rookh* (Thomas Moore, 1813); *Pendennis*; *Mary Barton*; *Roland Cashel* (Charles Lever); *Last of the barons* (Lytton), Shakespeare's plays. 1860: *Jane Eyre*; *Smuggler* (GPR James); *Pilot* (Fennimore Cooper); *Tales of Ireland* (William Carleton, 1817); *Dombey and son*; *Daltons* (Lever); *Rookwood: Windsor Castle* (Harrison Ainsworth); *Mary Barton*; *Kenilworth* (Scott); *Vanity Fair*.

In 1855 the most issued journal was *Howitts'*, beating *Household Words* into second place. *Ruth* is in a list for the branches but I found no mention of *North and South*, possibly because it was issued in instalments. *Lizzie Leigh* is in the list for the Rochdale Rd branch in 1862 (a novel by Charles Reade was top) and at Hulme where *Shirley* headed the list. It is just as interesting to see what isn't there - nowhere could I find any mention of *David Copperfield*.

The radical movement in Manchester is invariably associated with the Potters. These are not the Lancashire Potters to whom Beatrix Potter belonged, but other Unitarian friends of the Gaskells from Tadcaster, Yorkshire, who had made money growing turnips. The first John Potter, a Cannon St. draper whose home was a meeting place of radicals e.g. his sons Thomas and Richard, John Shuttleworth, newspaper proprietor, (another regular caller at Plymouth Grove) and Mark Philips MP, all of whom campaigned for moderate parliamentary reform. 'Radical' Dick Potter (died 1844) became MP for Wigan and appears to have known William Gaskell's brother-in-law, William Robson. Sir Thomas Potter (1774-1845) remained in local politics and was first mayor of Manchester.

His son, Sir John of Buile Hill, Pendlebury was first chairman of the Libraries' committee.

Edwards was not initially impressed, considering that his father's prestige covered up many shortcomings. Engels was less polite:

Potter is a frightfully big and enormously fat creature, about forty-six years of age, with red hair and whiskers, three times mayor of Manchester, very jolly, has no brains, but a good deal of belly and backside.

Gaskell also referred to him as *Fat Sir John*. He seemed to have had difficulty in making decisions and came into conflict with Edwards several times, but it had been his recommendation to appoint him so he usually acquiesced to his demands, unlike Rawson whose dislike was more personal. Potter was a very sick man by the time of the final dispute and only appeared at the last meeting. He made the casting vote to dismiss him but was dead two weeks later. He was only 43. In *Further letters* Gaskell gives a detailed description of his illness to Monckton Milnes, suggesting she knew him better than I had been led to believe.

His sister-in-law Mary fainted on reading the account of the murder in *Mary Barton* because it reminded her of the murder of her brother Thomas Ashton of Pole Bank, Werneth near Hyde, in a dispute with the trade unions. He was found dead by the roadside on 3rd January 1831. The murderers were not found for three years when one turned King's evidence. Aged 12 at the time she was the last to see him before the attack. Gaskell denied knowledge to Potter:

*I wish to give 'Mary Barton' and another little book to the Free Library. But before I do so I should like to make a private enquiry of you ... as to how far my giving these books would be distasteful to you. Of course I cannot be unaware of the opinions which you and your brother have so frequently & openly expressed... it appeared to me as if it would be an impertinence on my part to send the obnoxious book to any collection in which you took an interest ... Of course I had heard of young Mr Ashton's murder at the time when it took place; but I knew none of the details, nothing of the family, never read the trial (if trial there were, which I do not to this day know) and that if the circumstance were present to my mind at the time of my writing *Mary Barton* it was so unconsciously, although its occurrence, and that of one or two similar cases in Glasgow at the time of a strike were, I have no doubt, suggestive of the plot, as having shown to me to what lengths the animosity of irritated workmen would go. [GLI30 Aug. 16 1852].*

Note the murder took place before she came to Manchester. Chapple suggests she was in Edinburgh. It was not reported in *The Times* though there were other papers.

The nurse followed Mr Carson to the servants' hall. There on the dinner table lay the poor dead body... The policemen looked at each other. Then one began and stated that having heard the report of a gun in Turner Street he had turned down that way (a lonely, unfrequented way Mr Carson knew, but a short cut to his garden door, of which Harry had a key); that as he (the policeman) came nearer, he had heard footsteps of a man running away

but the evening was so dark (the moon not having risen) that he could see no one twenty yards off. That he had even been startled when close to the body; by seeing it lying across the path at his feet... Mr Carson listened attentively never taking his eyes off the dead body. When they had ended he said, 'Where was he shot?' They lifted up the thick chestnut curls and showed a blue spot (you could hardly call it a hole, the flesh had closed much over it) on the left temple. A deadly aim! And yet it was so dark a night!

Compare this with an account from *The Stockport Advertiser* of 7th January 1831:

The victim of this cold blooded and diabolical act of assassination, who was in his 24th year, and remarkable for his kind and conciliating disposition and manners, had the management of a new mill at Woodley from whence he had just returned ... to spend an evening with a family near Stockport... the unfortunate gentleman had not proceeded on the public highway after quitting the private road more than 30 yards before he was shot, and it would appear that the assassins had awaited his approach sitting in a hedge bank on the roadside, which situation gave them the best opportunity of seeing or hearing the approach of their victim from his father's house down the private pathway. The breast was perforated at the edge of the bone by two bullets from a blunderbuss which passed out of the left shoulder blade, having taken an oblique direction upward...

The body was carried back to Pole-Bank in an armchair and laid out on a kitchen table.

One explanation is that she was familiar with Elizabeth Stone's *William Langshawe: the Cotton Lord*, a novel which otherwise may have been forgotten. The author was a member of the family who founded the *Manchester Chronicle*. One of her brothers James was the author of the *History of Manchester* quoted in the last issue and edited a volume of Manchester poetry containing two by William Gaskell as well as some by Charles Swain, Maria Jewsbury and Samuel Bamford.

Elizabeth Stone (born 1803) married Thomas Stone (died 1850) vicar of Wandsworth. She wrote two books on fashion and needlework edited by the Countess of Wilton of Heaton Park and at least one other novel *The Young Milliner*. Neither is in the British Library and it is difficult to ascertain whether all other books listed under "Elizabeth Stone" (which date up to the 1870s) are by one and the same person. In 1857, *God's Acre*, a mediocre book about cemeteries was advertised as her 'last book'. There was an appeal in the *Times* in 1856 for the next of kin of a Mrs Stone.

Her novels are important because they were the first by a Manchester resident to belong to that new literary genre 'the condition of England novel', of which Charlotte Tonna and Fanny Trollope were the first exponents. They provide a link with the more

accomplished novels of Gaskell. Joseph Kestner claimed that she probably did not read them but she must have been aware of them. They rely heavily on verbatim quotes from her brother's *History*. The murder comes as the climax of the novel and is accompanied with this footnote:

Let not my readers imagine that this awful incident has been invented for the notice. A few years ago a young cotton manufacturer of the highest respectability, and most excellent character, was murdered even so, and as we have described by order of the Spinners' Union.

Michael Wheeler points out several similarities with *Mary Barton*. Judge for yourself:

A crowd of people appeared and as they partly divided to enter the hall, Mrs Wolstonholme who had nervously pushed foremost, saw her eldest son, Henry, borne in by the men - a corpse.

Pass we this.

The ruffians, delegates of the secret committee of that union to which we have alluded had done their work well. This excellent young man - good man, a good brother, a kind master for he, and indeed his father also were beloved by every individual in their employ, and their factory was full of hands in full work, - had been shot by some coward, who stood close behind him; the weapon was loaded with slugs, one of which pierced his heart, the other his backbone, and the victim fell dead in a moment. The report of firearms brought people to the spot instantly, but no one was to be seen but the murdered young man; not a clue, not the remotest trace of the villains remained.

Mary Barton was published anonymously. At first Gaskell did all she could to conceal her identity:

By the way Emily was curious to know the name of the person who wrote 'Mary Barton' (a book she saw at Plas Penrhyn), and I am happy to be able to satisfy her Eve-like craving. Marianne Darbishire told me it was ascertained to be the production of a Mrs Wheeler, a clergyman's wife, who once upon a time was a Miss Stone, and wrote a book called the "Cotton-Lord" (GL30)

Was she deliberating trying to confuse by transposing the lady's married and maiden names? But many people guessed the truth including Mary Ewart and Guizot. Walter Sichel whose mother, a member of Manchester's German community, knew the Gaskells, claimed that the book was a profound secret from her husband which only came to light when a messenger from her publisher arrived at their home. Though, when she realised the subterfuge might prevent her receiving payment, she hastened to reassure her publisher:

I find everyone here has most convincing proofs that the authorship of Mary Barton should be attributed to a Mrs Wheeler, née Stone, an 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 I am the author. (GL 31)

William Ewart (1798-1869) was a personal friend of the Gaskells at least from April 1849 when he offered to take her round the Houses of Parliament. He was born in Liverpool, the son of a businessman who in 1809 stood godfather to the son of an associate - William Ewart Gladstone. They were not related but part of the same Liberal tradition. Ewart had been an MP since the age of 28 and gained a considerable reputation as a campaigner on causes ranging from Free Trade to the abolition of hanging in chains, reduction of the number of offences carrying the death penalty, and legalising of metric measures. He retained many connections with Lancashire (he succeeded Dick Potter as MP for Wigan) and was a friend of Cobden and on some of the same education committees as another Gaskell friend, Dukinfield Darbishire. His brother Joseph remained in Liverpool and shared yet another friend in James Martineau. In the 1840s he provided some of the cash for Harriet Martineau's trip to the Middle East. His career as an MP was undistinguished.

They were grandsons of a minister in Troguire, Dumfries. Their uncle Peter Ewart was an engineer associated with Matthew Boulton and Samuel Oldknow, the Marple manufacturer, and came to Manchester to install an engine at Quarry Bank. According to Gaskell, the business failed in 1830 and he died c1837. [GL421 a] In fact he was killed by a chain at the Woolwich dockyard in 1842. He was a prominent member of the Portico. Gaskell was distressed to hear that his son Lt Col John Ewart (1802-57), his wife Emma Fooks and baby daughter were killed at the siege of Cawnpore in the Indian Mutiny, leaving a son, Harry, with his aunts in Manchester. Imagine her anxiety when her own daughter had just engaged herself to an officer posted to India. The precise fate of the Ewarts is documented. Letters written by Emma Ewart are preserved in the British Library. One of them, written before they had suffered any physical harm, was among several printed in the *Times* in October 1857:

To my dear sisters [i.e. sisters-in-law] and ends: I cannot write any more, if we should be spared I hope we may have better news to give you before long. Kiss my darling H(arry) for us, and may God bless him. John sends his best love. I must not forget to thank Mrs G. for The Life of Charlotte Brontë which arrived in the midst of all this distress two or three days ago. If peaceful times should ever return we may hope to find pleasure in reading it as well as in writing to acknowledge it. Give my love to her, and tell her how strangely we are situated.

They had once been a lively family.

I wish the Ewarts knew how to rest & be quiet, for it will be rather provoking if all the good at Poulton is done away with by bustling so in Manchester and one of their parties was large, vulgar and overdressed.

Peter's daughters supported themselves by private means. Agnes (born c1815) and Mary (c1821 – 1901) were well known in Manchester, friends of Hallé and often mentioned in the connection of their social work. Gaskell recommends Agnes: -
she talks a great deal. She does really know a great deal (of the condition of factory girls) and her facts would be good and accurate; her opinions (I think) crude and uninformed, but expressed without the least shyness or reserve. [GL630]

It is not certain when they came to know the Gaskells, as she was inaccurate in her details about Peter Ewart. She is very formal in her first surviving letter to Mary (1848) [GL36], admitting the authorship of *Mary Barton*. In 1852 they were house hunting because another brother was about to be married. They rejected one in Hyde Grove in favour of one in Nelson St near Plymouth Grove. By which time they were on first name terms. At the same time William Ewart's young daughters were 'coming out' and he spent most of his spare time taking them to concerts and the theatre. (He was already a widower). Their tastes were very similar to Gaskell's and it was they who recommended that he read her novels. The friendship appears to have involved the whole family. William and his daughters visited him without her.

Meta had been hearing Papa's praises from Mr Ewart. 'My friend Mr Gaskell' for I hope he will allow me to rank me as a friend'. Meta referred to Papa's walks with Mr Ewart - 'Yes he is the most charming companion I know &c so Papa's ears ought to have been burning. [GL455]

She visited both his London house and his estate at Broadleas, Devizes, which he bought in 1852. She was there in 1856 writing *The Life of Charlotte Brontë* and in 1857. These working holidays were immensely enjoyable. She went there from Dumbleton where she had worked tirelessly, wearing herself out. At Broadleas she paced herself more:

So at Broad Leas (the Ewarts) I only wrote till lunch... I enjoyed Broad Leas for the most of my visit, perhaps owing to my not having the sick wearied feeling of being over-worked.. & Mr Gaskell being very jolly: & delicious downs Salisbury Plain, get at able in our afternoon drives great sweeps of green turf, like emerald billows stretching off into the blue sky miles & miles away, - with here & there a 'barrow' of some ancient Briton, & Wansdyke, & Silbury Hill, and the great circle of Avebury all to be seen, while the horses went noisily over the thick soft velvety grass high up above blue misty plains, and villages in nests of trees, & church spires which did not reach nearly up to where we were in our beautiful free air, & primitive world. [GL308]

Ewart encouraged a friend Ben Smith to take up a career in politics in the 1840s and his young daughter helped him on the hustings. This was the future Barbara Bodichon the artist and feminist best remembered as a benefactor of Girton College whom Gaskell admired but did not like. The two women were both friendly with the elder daughter, the other Mary Ewart (1831-1911), also a prominent feminist - despite being part of the 'opposition' so to speak. Mary campaigned on behalf of the rival

college Newnham - leaving £31,000 to them, in addition to money she gave them during her lifetime. As well as sharing Barbara's commitment to women's education she was an enthusiastic traveller, who enjoyed studying the art, history, flora and fauna of all the places she visited. *The calm, judicious Miss Ewart* as Gaskell described her when they disagreed over the authorship of *Adam Bede*.

By the end of her life she was telling Marianne:

Do go and see the Ewarts as much as you can. They were so good to me, and I do feel grateful to my children if they will pay attention to those whom I love.

William Ewart's career is all the more remarkable because he was left a widower early with a young family. His wife was his cousin. They shared two great aunts, the authors Sophia (1750-1824) and Harriet Lee (died 1851) who ran a school at Belvedere House, Bath. They were friends of Mrs Siddons, Sheridan and Mrs Radcliffe. The latter refused an offer of marriage from William Godwin. Their works include the play and the popular retelling of *Canterbury Tales*.

Further reading: Chapple and Pollard. The letters of Mrs Gaskell, new ed. 1997. [GL] Shelston. A. and Chapple, J.A.V. Further letters of Mrs Gaskell, 2000. Ashton, Owen and Stephens, Robert. The Victorian working class writer, 1999 Ellis, S.M William Harrison Ainsworth and his friends, 1911 Kestner, Joseph. Elizabeth Stone's 'William Langshawe: the Cotton Lord' and 'the Young Milliner' as condition of England novels. *Bulletin of the John Rylands Library*, vol. 67 Spring 1985 Munford, William. Edward Edwards, 1812-1888: portrait of a librarian, 1963. Penny rate: aspects of British public librarianship, 1951. William Ewart, M.P.: portrait of a radical, 1960. Tylecote, Mabel. The Mechanics' Institutes of Lancashire and Yorkshire before 1851, 1957. Ward, Andrew. Our bones are scattered: the Cawnpore massacres and the Indian Mutiny of 1857, 1996. Wheeler, Michael. Biography, literary influence and allusion as aspects of source studies. *British journal of aesthetics*, vol. 17, 1977 p. 149-60.

BOOK NOTES

Christine Lingard

Elizabeth Gaskell: Gothic tales; edited with an introduction by Laura Krantzler. Penguin Classics £6.99.

It is very regrettable that most of the recent editions of Gaskell's short stories have been allowed to go out of print. Oxford edition of *The Moorland Cottage* (edited by Suzanne Lewis) is the only other selection currently available in the UK, so this book is particularly welcome. It contains *Disappearances*, *The Old Nurse's story*, *The Squire's story*, *The Poor Clare*, *The Doom of the Griffiths*, *Lois the Witch*, *The Crooked Branch*, and *The Grey Woman*. The first piece, not strictly an original short story but a retelling of a Manchester 'legend' has not been reprinted since the Knutsford

edition. The stories are selected not only to illustrate her fascination with the supernatural but also to demonstrate her interest in the dual nature of women's lives.

The introduction (though the reader is warned to leave it till later not to spoil the plot) illustrates Gaskell's successful marriage of domestic duties and literary creativity. There are notes and a bibliography.

Gender, Power and the Unitarians in England 1760-1860.

Ruth Watts Longman, £19.99.

This is a sociological and historical study rather than a literary one but nevertheless provides interesting and important background to an understanding of how Elizabeth Gaskell's life and work exemplifies the aims and teachings of a sect which placed such importance on education. Many of members of her family including her father, husband, and daughter are mentioned as well as friends such as the Turners, Robberds, Greys, Martineaus and Carpenters.

David, Deirdre (editor). The Cambridge Companion to the Victorian novel.

Cambridge University Press, £13.95.

One of a series of comprehensive surveys intended for students – this book comprises a number of topic or genre based essays by different authors with a general introduction. Gaskell is mentioned in the essay on Industrial Culture and the Victorian Novel by Joseph W. Childers but not in Nancy Armstrong's essay on Gender. There is also a brief mention of *Mary Barton* in the chapter on Detection. (*Mary Barton* was one of the first English novels to include a detective.) There is an extensive bibliography.

South-West Group

Members who did not attend the Gaskell Society Conference at Bath Spa in August 2001 may like to purchase copies of one or more of the four booklets which were prepared specially for it by the South-West Group of the Society.

William Ewart: Radical and Philanthropist by Rosemary Marshall
This illustrated booklet, written by the Secretary of the South-West Group, is devoted to the career and achievements of the M.P. who was a good friend of William and Elizabeth Gaskell. His home, Broadleas, on the outskirts of Devizes, was the centre-piece of the Conference excursion.

George Eliot in Devizes by Peter Skrine

Could Devizes have been a model for Middlemarch? In 1843 Mary Ann Evans spent some weekends there at 'Sandcliff', a house near the market place. This booklet tells you what happened there and why it is significant.

'I hope to see you again: '

The Friendship of Catherine Winkworth and Charlotte Brontë

This booklet relates directly to Peter Skrine's paper on the Winkworth sisters and their friendship with Mrs Gaskell. It includes the full text of Catherine's letter to her sister Emily about her meeting with Charlotte Brontë, and Charlotte's one surviving letter to Catherine. Together they reveal a relationship that was unexpectedly close.

Literary Bristol. A mini-anthology compiled by Peter and Celia Skrine with the help of Maggie Lane

Containing passages from 12 authors associated with Bristol and Clifton from Pope to Pym, this 'walking tour in words' also includes a linking narrative, details of authors and a useful check-list of writers with Bristol and Clifton associations. These four booklets published by the South-West Group, are priced at £1.50 each (post free) and can be obtained from *Mrs Rosemary Marshall, 138, Fairfield Park Road, Bath BA1 6JT*. Cheques should be made out to *Gaskell Society South-West*. Also available are two small books by Maggie Lane: '*A City of Palaces: Bath through the eyes of Fanny Burney*' (including many references to Mrs Thrale) '*A Charming Place: Bath in the Life and Novels of Jane Austen*' £3.95 each post free, as above.

South West Group meets on November 17 at Bath Royal Scientific and Literary Institution, Queen Square at 2.00pm for 2.30. Lunch in the Francis Lounge for those who wish.

Mrs Marie Moss will be speaking on '*Christmas Storms and Sunshine*', a short story published in *Howitts Magazine*, before *Mary Barton*. Marie is an economist with a deep interest and knowledge in local history in the Manchester area, and a very entertaining speaker. You might like to read the story first. It can be downloaded from the web at <http://lang.nagoya-u.ac.jp/~matsuoka/EG-etexts.html>. The library staff should be able to help you or ask a schoolchild! The story comes to 8 sides of A4 paper.

LONDON and SOUTH-EAST GROUP

Meeting to be held at the Francis Holland School, 39 Graham Terrace, Chelsea SW1W 8JF

Saturday, 10 November : *Mrs Gaskell in the Magazine World* by Edward G. Preston, former secretary to The Dickens Fellowship

KNUTSFORD AND MANCHESTER MEETINGS

KNUTSFORD MONTHLY MEETINGS at St John's Parish Rooms will be held on the last Wednesday each month from 31 October, when we will be studying 'Ruth'. Lunch at 12.15 and the meetings finish about 3.15.

MEETINGS AT CROSS STREET CHAPEL

Manchester Writers

All these writers had connections with Manchester in the nineteenth century. Come and learn more. Talks to be held on 2nd Tuesdays in month, at 1.00pm, Cross Street Chapel, Manchester. The chapel will be open from 12.15 for those who wish to come early and partake of a sandwich lunch using the nearby Pret-a-Manger or bringing their own; tea and coffee will be available.

9 October 2001

Thomas de Quincey by Barry Symonds

Lyrical Ballads, Mummies and Diabolic Factories : Thomas De Quincey leaves Manchester

Barry is an Open University lecturer and is editorial consultant for the new *Collected Works of De Quincey* (22 vols). Thomas De Quincey was born in Manchester in 1785 and is perhaps best known for : *Confessions of an English Opium Eater*. Come and learn more about him.

13 November 2001

Harrison Ainsworth by Steve Collins

The Lancashire Witches, was published the same year as *Mary Barton*, 1848. Ainsworth was a member of Cross Street Chapel so did the two authors meet?

Of his 39 novels, mainly historical, many were set in Lancashire. His vivid scene-setting and lively narrative made him a popular 19th century writer who produced his own magazine and edited others.

12 February 2002

Samuel Bamford by Morris Garratt '*Hymn to the Poor*' and radical writing

12 March 2002

Mrs Linnaeus Banks by Chris Makepeace *The Manchester Man*

All welcome. Admission £1.00 for non-members.

NEW YEAR LUNCH JANUARY 15TH

At Cottons Hotel. Speaker: Richard Booth, Hay-on-Wye bookseller. Details and booking form enclosed with newsletter

AGM and SPRING MEETING

Will be held on Saturday 23rd March at Cross Street Chapel, Manchester

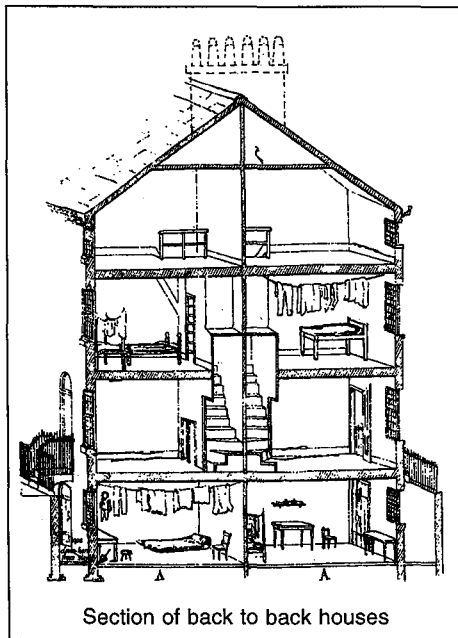
GROUP VISITS 2001

North West members enjoyed visits to the Moravian Settlement at Whitefield on 8th May and to Bolton's Bank Street Unitarian Chapel on 5th June. At both, chapel members welcomed us and told us of their history. Christine Lingard, in this newsletter traces the Holland connections with Bank Street.

On 20th June members of The Arnold Bennett Society guided us around Burslem - the *Bursley* of Bennett's fiction. The Alliance Of Literary Societies will hold its AGM in Stoke next year on 27th April to coincide with a weekend of events to celebrate the centenary of the publication of *'Anna of the Five Towns'*.

Terry Wyke conducted a 'Summer Perambulation : London Road to Ancoats' on Saturday 14th July. With the assistance of old maps Terry took us back in time to see the remains of back-to-back houses and cellar dwellings clustered around mills like Murrays' which still survives and which Elizabeth Gaskell recommended seeing to an unknown correspondent as one of

'the things best worth in Manchester . . . just off Ancoats Lane, everybody there knows Murrays'. You would there see the whole process of preparing & spinning Cotton, with the latest improvements in machinery . . . these works are very interesting, if you do not get a stupid, fine young man to show you over - try rather for one of the working men.' (GL 549).



A sheet of the 1839 report of The Ministry to the Poor will remind members of the sixth chapter of *Mary Barton*: 'I was urgently requested to go into a cellar in which the greatest destitution was said to exist. I accordingly went; it was rather late in the evening, and as soon as I opened the door, I could just discover something rolled up the floor. As soon as I entered, the man began stirring the fire, which brought to light one of the most distressing, and I ought to perhaps to add, revolting scenes I ever witnessed. I saw a woman lying on a few bits of dirty sacking upon the bare flags, and herself almost in a state of nudity, and who had been delivered of a child only three or four hours. . . . The husband said that he had neither candle, food, nor money . . .'