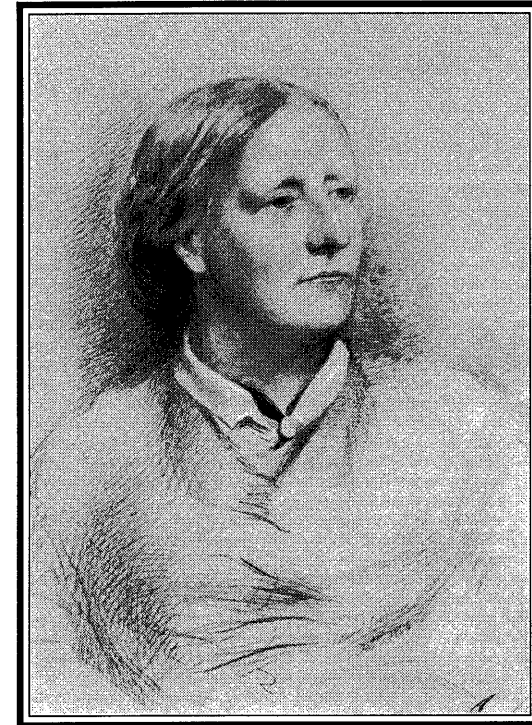
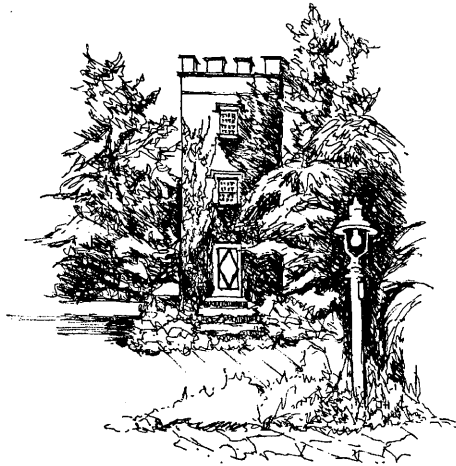


The Gaskell Society



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

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 E-mail: joanleach@aol.com

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

Membership Secretary: Miss C. Lingard, 5 Moran Crescent, Macclesfield SK11 8JJ

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NEWSLETTER

Spring 2002 - Number 33

Editor's Letter

Joan Leach

Our programme for 2002 is quite a full one so please check dates in this issue and remember that you can also consult our home page for details (note change in address) this can be done at most libraries. Our group meetings at various venues have been well supported and most enjoyable; if you are not within reach of these you might think about forming a new branch in your area, with help from the Society. We would like to hear from potential speakers on Gaskell and related topics for any of our groups. We hope to continue our series on Manchester writers at Cross Street Chapel next autumn but need speakers; we have had excellent talks on Thomas de Quincey, Harrison Ainsworth, Samuel Bamford and Mrs Linnaeus Banks, some of which we may print.

Mrs Banks wrote to William Gaskell in September 1878, hoping to add him to her list of subscribers to her book of poems *Ripples and Breakers*. She reminds him that: '*Nigh half a century has flown since I stood first to be questioned in your Bible-class in the small chapel-room off Cross Street - and I am now 57. 'Mary Barton' was then unwritten and of my poems or my 'Manchester Man' there was no foreshadowing unless the books that I selected for reading from the library might be an index. I read all Miss Martineau's 'Illustrations of Political Economy' before I was 14 . . 'She notes that the proprietors of the Portico Library 'are designing to pay honour to you'*

Three unpublished Gaskell letters came up for sale on 9th November, 2001 at Phillips Auctioneers London and were bought by John Rylands Library and the Brotherton Library. One of them thanks the sender of tickets for two Hallé' concerts at which 'Mr Hallé 'played superbly'. Another letter (23 October 1854) is from Lea Hurst, the Nightingales' house in Derbyshire, where she was working on *North and South*, has interesting material on Florence Nightingale and the third letter is an invitation to 'Harriette', Marianne's friend, to visit Silverdale. More about these in future publications.

The Alliance of Literary Societies AGM is hosted this year by The Arnold Bennett Society celebrating of the centenary of the publication of *Anna of the Five Towns*. This is a weekend programme: on Saturday 27th April commencing at 10.00am with the AGM at 11.00, at The George Hotel, Burslem and continuing on Sunday 28th. There is a full programme of walks, talks, films and visits. The final event is a talk by Roy Hattersley, vice-president of the Society, at 2.30pm. It is possible to opt for any single event or part of the programme. The Gaskell Society will be represented. A special B&B rate had been arranged with The George Hotel, Burslem (£50 double £40 single)

If interested send an SAE to Joan Leach for details.

The Folio Society is to publish an illustrated edition of *Wives and Daughters*.

Knutsford is soon to have a long awaited, new library where, we hope, the Gaskell collection will be more accessible. In clearing the cellars a plaque has been found which reads:

This tree, a scion of the mulberry tree growing in Shakespeare's great garden at New Place, Stratford-upon-Avon, was presented to the Knutsford Urban District Council by the Trustees and Guardians of Shakespeare's birthplace in memory of Mrs Elizabeth Gaskell recalling her associations with Stratford-upon-Avon where she spent two years as a pupil at Avonbank School.

Unfortunately there is no date given but I am told that the tree was there in the 1950's and may be pre-war.

Consulting the current custodian of New Place I am told that their tree still flourishes AND that we can purchase a three foot scion of it to plant again in Knutsford. I am hoping that the trustees of Brook Street Chapel will agree to let the Gaskell Society plant it there.

On the Trail of Madame de Sévigné

John Chapple

As early as 1855 Elizabeth Gaskell had asked her French publisher Hachette for a copy of a book on the life and writings of Madame de Sévigné (1626-96). In March of 1862 she told George Smith that she had begun to write a memoir herself, and later that year in May she went to Paris to pump Hachette for information and beg for useful introductions. Though the city was 'abominable; noisy, hot, close, smelling of drains – and – perpetual cooking &c', she held her nose and visited 'every old house in Paris that she lived in', made a list of relevant books and gathered a 'splendid collection of all the portraits of herself, family and contemporaries'.

In 1651 Madame de Sévigné had retired to her country house in Brittany, Les Rochers near Vitré, at the age of twenty-five, after her husband had been killed in a duel over a lady known 'la belle Lolo, qui n'était pas une vertu'. Les Rochers became the next item on Gaskell's research agenda. Towards the end of May she went by rail with Meta and her friend Isabel Thompson to explore the ancient town of Vitré, finding it very like Chester, 'with wooden colonnades supporting the first floors of the houses' over the pavement. After exploring the town, the three of them went jolting along to Les Rochers in a little market cart, with their sketch books and drawing materials on a spare seat.

Arriving at the château, she was enchanted: 'No one has ever said half enough of its

beauty', she wrote. On rising ground a few kilometres from the old town stood 'a vast picturesque pile ... with 13, (that I *counted*) towers, of all sizes & shapes' (*Letters*, p. 926). Les Rochers is indeed much larger than, say, Haworth Parsonage. But it's no size at all in comparison with some of the grandiose châteaux of the Loire or the massive pile near Angoulême of Sévigné's friend, the epigrammatist La Rochefoucauld. Later, Gaskell was to liken it to some of the larger castles in Scotland (*French Life*). Dating from earlier centuries, Les Rochers had come into the possession of the Sévigné family in 1410. By about 1600 its ancient tower had been joined by a short range of more domestic buildings, crowned by steep roofs, pointed towers and chimney stacks. Standing a little apart from them, allowing a way through into the buildings of the inner courtyard, is the chapel Madame de Sévigné had built in the early 1670s. If you seek her monument just look around this elegant little classical building, roughly contemporary with Wren's St Paul's.

Nowadays, Les Rochers is in private hands, but there is an excellent visitors' centre at the entrance. One then walks a short distance by a row of dark trees up to a geometrical parterre, its formal design picked out by narrow beds of colourful, highly scented flowers – nicotiana, heliotrope and the like. The old tower contains a small but fascinating museum, dominated by the full-length portrait in a gilded wooden frame of the young Madame de Sévigné, dressed in rich and glowing silks and brocades, embellished with jewels, ribands and flowers, looking far more alert than the languorous *Beauties* painted by Sir Peter Lely for the court of Charles II. Outside, the semi-circular wall enclosing the main gates of the garden might be the cause of a strange phenomenon: at certain points a mere whisper is clearly audible at a distance. What struck Elizabeth Gaskell, however, is the fact that the whole complex is 'high up on a plateau of ground, with 30 miles of sunny champaign country lying below', visible over the low stone wall to one side. She could see for miles, 'till it all melted into the blue haze of distance'.

The museum on the ground floor of the old tower, Madame de Sévigné's chapel, the garden and the park with its long allées are all open to visitors; the rest of the château is kept private. But there is so much else to fascinate in this part of Brittany. In *French Life* Gaskell gives a good deal of attention to Vitré. Its ancient castle, flamboyant Gothic and Renaissance church, curious mediæval houses, inns and bustling street life make it a wonderful place to explore. Even the railway station is interesting, 'smart and new and in apple-pie order', Gaskell reported. Today, its regular, streaky-bacon facade reminds us of Rugby school. Fougères, too, though she skips over it in her accounts of her pilgrimage, is well worth a visit. It was, she wrote in those days, 'very curious & very filthy'. The central site, however, is spectacular, its old castle one of the largest in Europe. There is a 'circuit littéraire' leading one to places associated with Chateaubriand, Hugo and Balzac. As one might expect, tourists abound.

In her early life Elizabeth Gaskell had found reading Sévigné's *Letters* as exhausting as reading Richardson's *Sir Charles Grandison*. (They both wrote at almost inordinate length.) Why did she become so very interested in this aristocratic lady and the intellectual circles she moved in? Both women, it has been noted by Philip Yarrow, 'had been brought up by affectionate aunts and uncles, both were devoted mothers, and both were great letter-writers' (*Gaskell Society Journal* 7, 1993). Gaskell's interest in the influential part women had played in French history and culture had also developed remarkably in the intervening years. Madame de Sévigné had associated with Madame de La Fayette, Mlle de Scudéry and other free spirits of the time. As one might expect, Sévigné's brilliantly extemporised letters both echo her living voice and recreate her present life and times with humour, sense and sensibility. Yarrow argues cogently that Madame de Sévigné was in many ways Gaskell's seventeenth-century equivalent. Alain Jumeau agrees wholeheartedly: 'they were, so to speak, twin souls' (*Gaskell Society Journal* 13, 1999), and quotes Virginia Woolf's speculation that Sévigné might have been a great novelist in the twentieth century. The truly sad thing is that Elizabeth Gaskell never lived to accomplish what might have been a remarkable study of a major French female author, a work to place beside her *Life of Charlotte Brontë* and informed by the kind of historical imagination she was to display in *Sylvia's Lovers*. But her short pieces on French life contain the only record of her research of any substance. No manuscript of the memoir she began seems to have survived.

I owe thanks to our member Véronique Baudouin for information. Also, *Qui êtes-vous, Madame de Sévigné* is an attractive, well illustrated booklet by Jacqueline and Roger Duchêne, obtainable at Les Rochers.

The Gaskells' Shawls

Janet Allan

The photograph of Elizabeth Gaskell in 1864 shows her wearing a beautiful and ornate Paisley shawl. It was only recently that we began to realise how fond she was of shawls, and how hers have been treasured over the last hundred and twenty-seven years. Good shawls were very expensive –there may be no direct references to their value in Gaskell's works, but in *Vanity Fair* Thackeray describes Amelia Sedley being forced to sell her Indian shawl 'It was a very fine and beautiful web: and the merchant made a very good bargain when he gave her twenty guineas. . . ' a great deal of money in 1848 for a second-hand article.

The shawl in the photograph has not been found, but seven others have come to light in various parts of the country which are said to have been hers or her family's.

One has an elegant blue and lavender Paisley design on a cream background, which you could imagine being worn in the cool of the evening over a light summer dress. Another has a predominately red centre with an elaborate border, and a third has an emerald green centre with a rich red edging. There is one with a light all-over pattern of small motifs in red and other colours, and a tufted border. Two more are Italian Mezzari, which are very large shawls of block-printed cotton with patterns similar to the pottery 'Indian Tree' design which we are still familiar with today. These are dated between 1850 and 1860 and manufactured in Genoa. It is possible that they were purchased on the 1863 trip to Italy. They may have belonged to Elizabeth's daughter Meta, as they were presented to the School of Art in 1934 'in memory of Miss M.E. Gaskell'. The last shawl is different again, in cream silk twill with a woven pattern.

Besides these complete shawls there are two garments made out of shawls – an ample jacket of jacquard-patterned wool, made from a Paisley shawl of about 1862, with a black fringe, and 'smallish' dressing-gown made from one half of a Paisley shawl of 1850-60, with pieces from another shawl used for the collar and cuffs. These are in different locations so I have been unable as yet to compare them, but one wonders if they were both cut from the same shawls? As the photograph shows, Elizabeth was not 'smallish' by 1864, so perhaps the dressing gown was for one of her daughters?

William Gaskell's bust in the Portico Library shows him wearing a shawl, as men sometimes did in the nineteenth century. William felt the cold and probably wore one. The actual garment is lost, but we have it permanently reproduced in stone.

A Centenary Event and a Bi-Centenary Proposal

Janet Allan

In the centenary year of Elizabeth Gaskell's birth, on 19 February, 1910, the sixteenth annual meeting of the Bronte Society was held, not at Haworth but in the large hall of the Athenaeum in Manchester, with the Vice-Chancellor of the University in the chair. It was a notable meeting. The address on 'The Brontë Family in relation to Manchester', which dealt mainly with Elizabeth Gaskell's friendship with Charlotte Brontë and the subsequent *Life of Charlotte Brontë*, was given by the Dean of Manchester, the Rt. Rev. J.E.C. Weldon.

In the discussions which followed, Mrs Leo Grindon read a letter from Mr Clement

Shorter 'suggesting that there should be a statue in Manchester in memory of Mrs Gaskell and Charlotte Brontë. "What a fine thing it would be" she remarked, "to have a twin statue linking them both together in the Plymouth Grove direction". It was also suggested at the meeting that the house at 84 Plymouth Grove should be preserved in memory of both writers. Nearly a hundred years later we are looking forward to the bi-centenary of Elizabeth Gaskell's birth. I hope that before then the house will have been restored.

We are now reviving the idea of a statue and consulting with the Brontë Society about the project. More news in the next Newsletter.

(My thanks to Christine Lingard at Manchester Central Library and to Ann Dinsdale at the Brontë Parsonage Museum for press cuttings and information)

HELP PLEASE!

Elizabeth Rye

I am investigating a painting which I believe is of Mrs Gaskell. The portrait is dated 1851 and is by Herbert L. Smith. (I wrote a brief article about this painting, *GSN* (No5) in 1981. I found an intriguing paragraph on page 237 of *Mrs Gaskell and her Friends*, by Elizabeth Haldane, which may provide a clue about the painting's origin:

Oddly enough, there was a movement to have a portrait of Mrs Gaskell painted by Watts later on [after Jan 1850] but the scheme did not mature, though he was anxious to undertake the work.

Does anyone know where Elizabeth Haldane found this information?

I think Mrs Gaskell would have been uncomfortable with the idea of a subscription to honour her philanthropy. 'I am more & more convinced that *be good & doing good* comes naturally, & need not be fussed and spoken about.' (Letter 123, 13th May 1852). I suspect the 'scheme did mature', because a philanthropist stepped in and commissioned the portrait, privately and discreetly.

It would be very helpful to know what group of people was interested in honouring Mrs Gaskell with a portrait. If you can help at all please email me on ruth@scibydes.fsnet.co.uk.

P.S. Oddly enough, the family that originally sold the painting in 1974 has an interesting connection to both Mrs Gaskell and the philanthropist who I believe commissioned the painting. More later!

Samuel Laurence 1812-1884

Joan Leach

Many of you will know the pastel portrait of Elizabeth Gaskell by Samuel Laurence, reproduced on the cover of this newsletter and available as a postcard* There had been some confusion about the date of this portrait as shading under the artist's signature makes 1854 & 5 a possible reading but 1864 & 5 is, I believe the correct one. The figure 5 is a faint addition so there must have been two sittings. Perhaps the earliest reproduction of this portrait was in *The Knutsford Edition of Cousin Phillis* (1906) published by Smith and Elder. Did they own the portrait? It is dated there as 1864-5 when it was almost certainly in the possession of Meta and Julia Gaskell. But it is not the only Laurence portrait of the author.

Gaskell Letter 555 (Chapple and Pollard) is addressed to :
My dear Mr Lawrence, (sic)

Sept. 12th (1864)

... I should have not the least objection to Mr Smith's becoming the possessor of your likeness of me; indeed it would be pleasant to feel that I was hanging on the walls of so kind a friend - When I am next in London I hope that I (and my cap) may be able to give you another sitting . .

A footnote adds that the portrait was 'now in the possession of Mrs. E. M. Gordon of Biddlesden Hall, Northants'. She was a descendant of George Smith, publisher. The Brotherton Library, Leeds has the MSS of *Sylvia's Lovers* from the same source but knows nothing of the whereabouts of this portrait of Elizabeth Gaskell in a bonnet or cap as she calls it. The picture looks as if further work might have been intended. Annette B. Hopkins (1952) reproduced this in her biography.

It seems likely that the better known Laurence work was done at a second sitting(s) later that year and into 1865, perhaps when she was in London in April. This is the version still owned by her descendant, Mrs Trevor Dabbs.

It was used for the dust jacket and frontispiece for Winifred Gérin's biography of Gaskell (1976) when 1854 is given as the date but the post card reproduction made for The Brontë Society gives 1864/5 on the advice of J. G. Sharps.

Samuel Laurence travelled to America, with the encouragement of Thackeray, in 1854 and was based there until 1861, thus he could not have been working on a Gaskell portrait in 1855, which should convince any who doubt the dating of the Laurence pastel portrait. The confusion is compounded by the shading under the artist's signature which makes the third number look like a 5 instead of 6 and the added 5 is faint.

*by kind permission of Mrs Trevor Dabbs

Caroline Holland (1835-1909) John A.V. Chapple

'Took very much to Cousin Coo – as he does to most of his lady cousins...'; we read in *Private Voices: The Diaries of Elizabeth Gaskell and Sophia Holland*, page 95. There is nothing odd about this October 1838 glimpse into the childhood life of the little boy who grew up to become Marianne Gaskell's husband, Thurstan Holland, but the editors of his mother's diary were unable to identify this favourite cousin. We also find that Elizabeth Gaskell once wrote that '*Mr Honest Netherlands*', presumably Henry Holland, was at Knutstord in 1847 with 'Coo. & Gertrude'. Chapple and Pollard could then do no more than speculate without evidence that 'Coo' was perhaps a copyist's error for 'Cor'. (See *Letters*, 1966, page 826, from typescript; *Further Letters*, page 33).

However, Mr David Holland, a descendant of Sir Henry Holland, is kind enough to inform me in a private letter that 'Cousin Coo' was the daughter of Sir Henry's second wife, Saba, herself the daughter of the famous wit Sydney Smith. Mr Holland notes that Henry's manuscript journal substantiates Caroline Holland's presence at Dumbleton in 1838, whilst Saba's manuscript, 'Anecdotes of my darling little Coo', shows that Caroline was again there in August of the following year.

On her father's death in 1873 Caroline inherited her father's house in London. It became a pied-à-terre for her many relations. And according to the *Oxford Dictionary of Quotations*, it is to Caroline's *Notebooks of a Spinster Lady* (1919) that we owe the attribution to Queen Victoria of one of the most famous of all put-downs: 'We are not amused'.

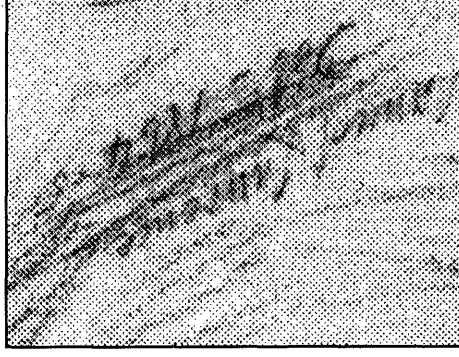
From *The Bookseller*

A directory called *Contemporary Writers* has spotted a promising talent on the Manchester University Press list. She is Elizabeth Cleghorn Gaskell, author of *The Further Letters of Mrs Gaskell*. The directory has sent her a flattering missive. "Congratulations on your publishing success. Members of our staff have requested that your name be added to our selection of prominent and emerging authors for inclusion in *Contemporary Writing*", the letter informs Mrs Gaskell (1810-1865).

Inviting further information for 'Sidelights' in which authors are invited to comment informally on their writing career: "Tell us about yourself – what is your primary motivation for writing? Describe your writing process. What inspired you to write on the subjects you have chosen?"



Samuel Laurence exhibited as a portrait painter at The Royal Academy from 1836 until 1882 when he showed a drawing of George Eliot. He had close relations with many eminent literary men of his day particularly G.H.Lewes and Leigh Hunt. He worked in oils as well as chalk and crayon and many of his portraits were engraved. Gaskell noticed one of Tennyson, alongside Richmond's portrait of Charlotte Brontë, at the Haworth Parsonage (GL 167). This was made in 1844 the same year as one of Carlyle writing at his desk. To complete our knowledge we would like to trace the portrait of Elizabeth Gaskell in a bonnet and get a better copy made. Can you help us? *Early Victorian Portraits* R. Ormond (1973) lists this as being in the collection of Frank Miles. We hope in a later publication to follow the history of late photographs of our author.



BOOK NOTES

Christine Lingard

Some new books due in 2002:

Chastity and transgression in women's writing: interrupting the Harlot's progress, 1792-1897 by Roxanne Eberle. Palgrave, £45.

A modern interpretation of representations of prostitution and the position of women in nineteenth-century writing; in addition to Elizabeth Gaskell, who dealt with the subject directly in *Ruth* and to some extent in all her novels, this study discusses some less familiar writers such as Amelia Opie, Mary Hays and Sarah Grand.

The Victorian Novel by Francis O'Gorman (in the *Blackwell Guides to Criticism* series). Blackwell £14.99

Intended for the general student, this guide discusses the critical response to the major Victorian novelists – the Brontës, Dickens, Eliot, Gaskell, Thackeray, Trollope, Hardy and James – and addresses major themes such as gender, genre, politics and language.

Understanding Jane Eyre by Debra Teachman. Greenwood Press, £33.50

A literary analysis of the novel embracing commentary and extracts from primary sources such as *The Life of Charlotte Brontë*, with suggestions for teachers.

Thomas and Jane Carlyle by Rosemary Ashton. Chatto and Windus, £25.

The biographer of George Henry Lewes now turns her attention to one of the most influential couples in Victorian London. Thomas Carlyle was one of the first to write in praise of *Mary Barton*, and Elizabeth Gaskell was entertained at their Chelsea home.

THE LONDON AND SOUTH-EAST GROUP

2002 PROGRAMME

- Saturday 11 May 'Letters from America: Elizabeth Gaskell, John Ashton Nicholls and Fredrika Bremer' – **Alan Shelston**
- Saturday 14 September 'Flannel waistcoats and long sleeves': Motherhood and Matrimony in Elizabeth Gaskell' – **Sylvia Burch**
- Saturday 9 November 'A Question of Trust: The Relationship between Elizabeth Gaskell and Patrick Brontë' – **Dudley Green**

All the meetings will be held at the Francis Holland School, 39 Graham Terrace, London SW1W 8JF and will commence at 2pm. Francis Holland School is a few minutes walk from Sloane Square underground station (District and Circle lines).

Anyone who wishes may meet at 12 noon at Sloane Square underground station for a light lunch at the Royal Court Tavern, also on Sloane Square. Those arriving later than 12 noon should proceed directly to the Royal Court Tavern. If further information is required please contact Dudley J Barlow. (Tel: 020 8874 7727)

SOUTH-WEST GROUP

PROGRAMME

13th April:

Ian Gregg has had to postpone his rehabilitation of Elizabeth Gaskell's stepmother but we hope to welcome him to Bath in 2003. Details of the speaker for this date will be circulated soon. 2.00 p.m.: The Bath Royal Literary and Scientific Institution.

17th-19th May:

Visit to Penzance, the home of Maria Branwell. We are being welcomed by our members in Penzance, led by Mrs Sheila Burlton, and anyone interested should get in touch as soon as possible. This is a very flexible holiday, with members going by train – cost £20 for a super apex return from Bristol or less if you have a railcard – and staying in a small hotel near the sea front in room with ensuite facilities for £20 pp bed and breakfast. The weekend could include a visit to the Eden project. Telephone Rosemary Marshall, 01225 426732.

18th August: Sunday tea party with gentle literary entertainment.

23rd November:

'Elizabeth Gaskell: Escape from the city': 2.00 p.m. at the Bath Royal Literary and Scientific Institution. Speaker: Gwen Clarke. Come to Bath and do your Christmas shopping.

All queries to Rosemary Marshall, 01225 426732.

GENERAL MEETINGS IN THE NORTH WEST

The AGM meeting will be held at Cross Street Chapel on Saturday 23rd March at 11.00am. Afterwards Dr Frances Twinn will speak on: *Meteorological Accuracy in the Provincial Novels of Elizabeth Gaskell*. Our usual caterers will provide a buffet lunch and we will reconvene at 2.15 when Janet Allan will give an illustrated talk: *Oh! What a House! 42, Plymouth Grove*.

Monthly meetings continue in Knutsford on the last Wednesdays in the month until May when on Monday 27th we will have a coach trip to Macclesfield to follow links

between Gaskell's friends and Unitarian families. We will leave Knutsford at 11.00am to visit King Edward Street Unitarian Chapel with guide, Mrs Forester. After lunch in the town we will meet again at 1.45 pm to visit N. T. Hare Hill Gardens, formerly belonging to the Brocklehursts, where rhododendrons and azaleas should be at their best, Lea Hall; home of the Gaskells' niece Lily Greg; then on to Bollington for The Mount and other Greg sites.

Cross Street Chapel, Manchester, 9th April

Chris Makepeace has agreed to lead *a Manchester Man walk*, the subject of his talk on 12th March, meeting at Cross Street Chapel at 1.00pm . The walk takes approx. one and a half hours

OUTING TO LICHFIELD on Saturday 29th June

John Chapple will be our guide to the Town with its Samuel Johnson, Erasmus Darwin and Wedgwood associations.

At our Autumn Meeting in Knutsford on September 28th Jenny Uglow , our Vice-President, has agreed to speak on: *Erasmus Darwin, the Lunar Society and Elizabeth Gaskell's upbringing*.

**The Lunar Men* is the title of Jenny's latest book, to be published by Faber in September.

Knutsford Literature Festival will be held from 28th September to 6th October

Trip to Brittany 12- 19 September

We regretted disappointing those of you who would have joined a trip to Rome but the logistics of that venue defeated us. Instead Brittany is an attractive alternative. Following Gaskell and Mme de *Sevigne trails and other literary connections, flying from Stansted airport and staying at St. Malo.

Local History Week, 4-12 May 2002.

'Local Histories and Communities in North West England'

The Manchester branch of the Historical Association in collaboration with English Heritage North West Region and the Manchester Centre for Regional History at Manchester Metropolitan University is planning a day conference at Manchester Metropolitan University on Saturday 4 May. The cost will be about £10 per person. This will be a prelude to a series of activities – historical walks and visits, schools' events, museum and archive exhibitions – during local history week.

The society will be taking part, with a talk in the morning of 4 May, an exhibition and in the afternoon a Gaskell Walk led by Terry Wyke. There will also be Knutsford activities in the course of the week.

More details, times etc will be available nearer the time.