The Gaskell Society

NEWSLETTER

Autumn 2003 - Number 36

THE GASKELL SOCIETY HOME PAGE has all the latest information on meetings.
http://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

ISSN 0954 - 1209

Editor's Letter

Joan Leach

Our 2001 Bath Conference, with the help of our SW members, was such a resounding success that we were apprehensive about being able to live up to it at Durham this year. We can now report that members present from 1 - 4 August at Collingwood College enjoyed the whole experience and several are saying, 'Here's to the next time'.

We are greatly indebted to our excellent team of speakers, who found time among their other commitments and vacations to join us. You will be able to read Mary Kuhlman's report on the conference in the next Journal together with several of the papers.

It is wonderful to have members meeting and renewing friendships on these occasions in true Gaskellian tradition. We are grateful to Janet Allan and Jean Alston who made planning trips to Durham and Newcastle and Christine Lingard who ran the book stall, other committee members who contributed to the success and all who came to Durham. The whole programme of papers and events was well balanced and our venue suited us perfectly.

In this issue we hope you will enjoy reading Marie Moss' article about Elizabeth Gaskell and Macclesfield. The Society hopes to publish a booklet on Gaskell's Cheshire associations. Christine Lingard links our recent visit to Whitby with other literary echoes. The Knutsford group studied *Sylvia's Lovers* last season and some members will join a trip to East Yorkshire in September to follow the trail. John Chapple gives us further notes on Gaskell Letters and Muriel Smith writes on Elizabeth Gaskell and the American Civil War which will link up with our American theme at the Autumn meeting on 27 September.

Group notices are towards the back of the Newsletter, including forthcoming events. Please let me have addresses of any non-member literary friends who might like to attend a Gaskell day in Edinburgh when we hope to raise enough interest to form a group.

Elizabeth Gaskell was fond of gardening so she might have approved on the Royal Horticultural Society's show at Tatton Park, alias Cumnor Towers. What she would have thought of herself in the form of a teddy-bear style figure in green box topiary, skirted by bedding plants, with picnic basket, model mill, a quill pen and book in flowers? This was commissioned by Knutsford Town Council and won a silver prize.

And What of Sylvia?

Christine Lingard

A recent enquiry about illustrated editions of Sylvia's Lovers reminded me of a tenuous link between one of the least known members of Gaskell's family and Peter Pan!

When George Smith wanted an illustrator for the first illustrated edition of Sylvia's Lovers (first published in 1862), he decided on an unknown young artist on the staff of the Cornhill Magazine - George Du Maurier. The illustrations were not acknowledged but they made his reputation. Du Maurier thought that some pictures of Whitby would most suitably depict the novel - unknowingly hitting on the true setting of the book, which is referred to as 'Monkshaven' in the text. He was enchanted by the novel and it remained a life-long favourite, so much so that he called one of his own daughters Sylvia.

With Sylvia's Lovers at last out of the way, in 1863 Elizabeth Gaskell could turn her attention to more personal matters - the marriage of a daughter. Not the eldest, Marianne, for whom 'domestic activity will be her forte', or even the 'independent' Meta, already unlucky in love, but twenty-year-old Florence, the third daughter - the least frequently mentioned of the quartet 'who has no talent under the sun; and is very nervous, and anxious'. In fact she proved to be the only daughter to marry during her mother's lifetime.

Her choice of husband was a distant relation of her father - Charles Crompton, a lawyer, whom she had met the previous year. He was by ten years Florence's senior, and Gaskell's first verdict was: 'He lacks imagination enough to be what one calls spiritual' but later she called him 'sweet tempered'; on another occasion: 'his father & mother both say he has not given them a moment's uneasiness since his birth in any way. He has almost perfect health, & perfect temper; I should have said not clever; but he was a 4th wrangler at Cambridge and is a Fellow of Trinity, and is getting on fast very fast in his profession; so I suppose he has those solid intellectual qualities which tell in action, though not in conversation.'

He was the eldest of the seven children of a judge. His nearest sister Mary, just a year younger than himself, appears to have been a formidable character. She was married to Rev John Llewellyn Davies (1826-1916), Vicar of Kirkby Lonsdale, a religious writer, contributor to Macmillan's Magazine, and a follower of the Christian Socialist, Frederick Maurice; he was also associated with John Ruskin at the Working Men's College, where he taught mathematics. While in London he had so enraged Queen Victoria with a sermon against Imperialism that she arranged for his transfer to a Cumbrian parish as far away from London as possible.

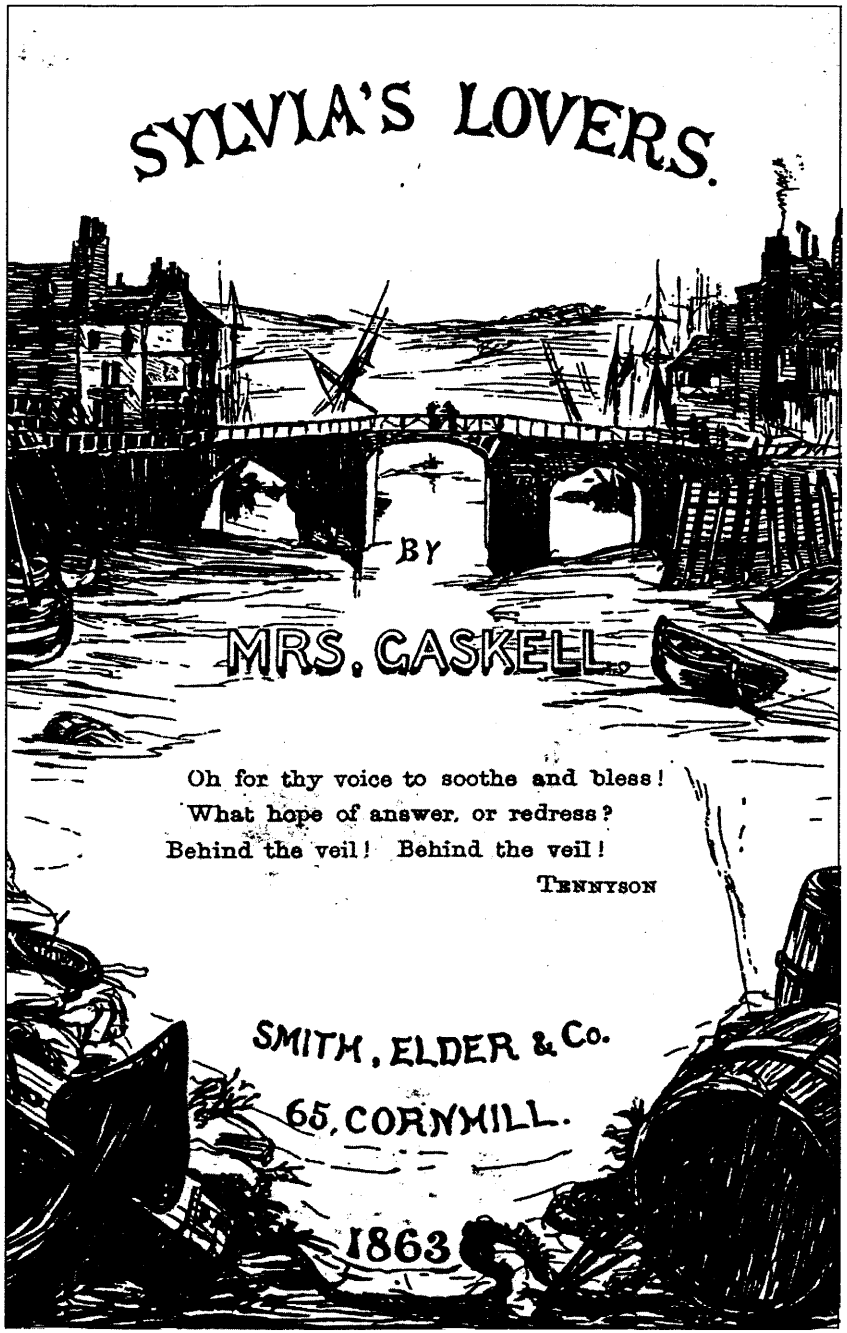
His sister was the renowned Sarah Emily Davies, of Girton College fame. It is reported that in thirty-six years of married life Mary Davies never once attended a single one of her husband's sermons.

Charles and Florence set up home in London and, despite her mother's description of their modest means, acquired a prestigious address at Oxford Terrace overlooking Regent's Park. It was a useful stopping-place for mother on her frequent trips to the capital. Charles was indeed moderately successful in his career. In December 1888 he was elected Liberal MP for the Leek division of North Staffordshire, but these were tumultuous times and in the following year the Liberal party split over the controversial Home Rule for Ireland issue. In July 1889 he stood again, this time as a Gladstonian Liberal in favour of Home Rule, but was defeated by the same Conservative candidate. Little is known of Florence's life after her mother's death and she died at the age of thirty-nine in 1881. She had no children.

Charles must have taken a great interest in one of his nephews, Arthur Llewellyn Davies (1863-1910), and on his own death ten years later, he left him three thousand pounds in his will. This was enough for the young man, also a lawyer, to marry his fiancée Sylvia Du Maurier at last, in 1892. Sylvia by now was an enchanting young woman, beloved by her mother-in-law Mary. But happiness was short. Arthur died of cancer at the age of forty-seven, and within the year Sylvia too succumbed to the same disease, leaving five young orphan boys. These were the very same 'lost boys' to whom J.M.Barrie told his stories of Peter Pan. He had already met the eldest boy George (then aged five) playing in Kensington Gardens, while walking his dog there. A great deal has been written about this relationship and the story has been televised. At first Arthur was concerned about the influence on his sons but he came to respect Barrie. It is thought that he is the basis for Mr. Darling.

Further reading: Andrew Birkin, The Lost Boys (Constable, 1979).

Ed: *Although George Du Maurier's title page illustration is clearly of Whitby, others are of characters in the story with no identifiable Whitby background, in the copy in the Whitfield Stanton Collection in Knutsford Library.*



Elizabeth Gaskell and Macclesfield

Marie Moss

It was Professor R. H. Tawney who famously told a conference of medieval agrarian historians that what they needed in their search for sources was not more manuscripts but stronger boots. Well-shod Gaskell scholars need no reminding of the value that fieldwork can contribute to their knowledge of Elizabeth's life and work. With pleasure and profit we have followed her footsteps across the United Kingdom and some countries of Europe, but it is important that our enquiry does not ignore the evidence on our doorstep. Elizabeth spent much of her early life within a small area of north-east Cheshire, and even after her marriage, before fame and a modest degree of fortune enabled her to travel more widely, she found relief from the pace and grime of Manchester life by returning to the people and places of her early years.

With this in mind the 2002 summer excursions of the Knutsford group concentrated on an exploration of Elizabeth's - and thereby the Holland's - Cheshire, and our previous winter study of the text of *Ruth* made Macclesfield (a possible model for Eccleston) an obvious starting point. Writers of fiction must invent from what knowledge they have, so we set out to discover something of the Macclesfield Elizabeth would have known in the first half of the nineteenth century, and to consider to what extent a knowledge of the physical, social and economic landscape of Macclesfield may have influenced her writing.

Macclesfield became one of the earliest factory towns in England, when the throwing of silk was adapted to large-scale water-powered production in the eighteenth century. The town had also been an important market and service centre since the granting of its medieval charter, and the rapid increase of population and prosperity promoted by the twisted-silk button trade, and the later silk goods trade, prompted a retail revolution which had made the town, by the early nineteenth century, a regional focus for shopping and other pleasure pursuits. Members of the Holland family of both Sandlebridge and Dam Head, like the rest of north Cheshire's gentry and squirearchy, would have turned to Macclesfield for goods, services and entertainment, and Elizabeth must have been a frequent visitor as a young girl. Her well known delight in fabrics would have been satisfied and possibly nurtured by the wide range of drapers, mercers, milliners and haberdashers who stood the market or had shops in the town. Their hierarchy was dominated by number 9 Market Place, the high-class woollen-drapers owned by the Swanwick family, which catered for the carriage trade and attracted the custom of the Davenports of Capesthorne, the Stanleys of Alderley and Lord Stamford of Dunham Massey, with a dazzling stock of quality cloths, laces, buttons and buckles drawn from throughout the country and the wholesale houses of London.1 Frances Davies,

daughter of the Headmaster of Macclesfield Free Grammar School (later King's), which educated a number of the Hollands, was a frequent customer here, purchasing handkerchiefs and ribbons, 'peaue satten' and ten yards of 'Puie poplin' sent especially from London in December 1819. Frances would have been known to Elizabeth Stevenson even before her infamous involvement in the abduction of the young Cheshire heiress Ellen Turner, which she plotted with her stepson Edward Gibbon Wakefield in 1826. Elizabeth refers to this scandal in a letter to Harriet Carr written in 1831. 2 As successful shopkeepers, doctors and mill-owners, members of the Swanwick family became well established amongst those living as gentlemen in north-east Cheshire, and Elizabeth acknowledges familiarity with 'Mr. and Mrs. Swanwick (of Alderley)' in a letter to Marianne in which she recalls her meeting with them at the wedding breakfast of Mary Robberds. 3

During the 1820s and early 1830s the superintendent of Swanwicks' emporium was a Mr. Hill. At the time of his death in 1833 he lived in a typical artisan house of the period less than a hundred yards from the shop in Brunswick Terrace, a house we thought worth looking at for the features it shares with the chapel-house, the fictional home of Mr. Benson, a man likewise in possession of social status above his income. The house has three stories with an enclosed hallway, front and rear parlour and front and rear bedrooms on each upper floor. The small walled back garden faces south-east allowing the morning sunlight to fill the back living room and giving to the back bedrooms a view to the line of hills, above which the moon rises, points on which Gaskell was especially precise in her narrative.

To the east of Macclesfield the hills which flank the Derbyshire dome rise abruptly from the Cheshire Plain and their proximity makes their presence strongly felt in the town. In similar fashion the hills, which Gaskell describes as Ruth travels to Eccleston, are never absent from her story.

> *"It is not much further now," said Miss Benson, apologetically, to Ruth. "...We have about eighteen miles of plain, and then we come to the moors and the rising ground, amidst which Eccleston lies."...*
> *A low grey cloud was the first sign of Eccleston; it was the smoke of the town hanging over the plain. Beyond the place where she was expected to believe it existed, arose round, waving uplands; nothing to the fine outlines of the Welsh mountains, but still going up nearer to heaven than the rest of the flat world into which she had now entered."*

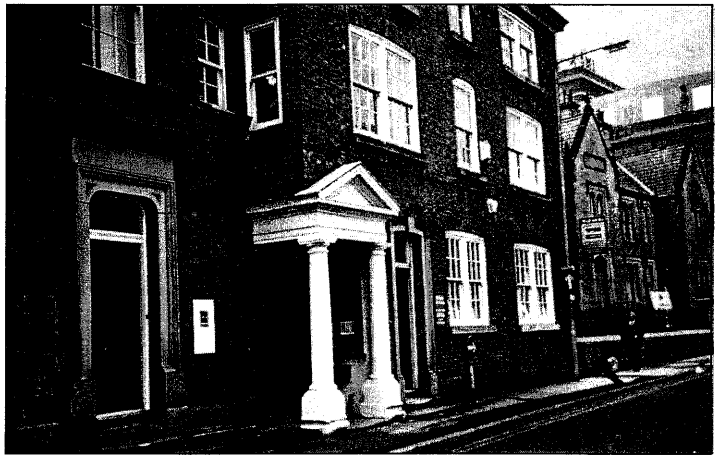
Knutsford was part of this flat world as Macclesfield and Eccleston were not. From her window Ruth watched the moon light the hilltops on her first night in the town, and Bellingham observed them white-topped with snow as she later lay dead in the cold little room. Again, it was to the hills that Jemima fled when reeling from the shock of the milliner's revelation of Ruth's past:

> *...Jemima did not go towards home, but to the direction of the outskirts of the town, on the hilly side...Soft white clouds had come slowly sailing up out of the west; the plain was flecked with thin floating shadows, gently borne along by the westerly wind that was waving the long grass in the hay fields into alternate light and shade.*

The topographical detail and the meteorological accuracy with which the prevailing westerly winds blow the clouds from the direction of the plain to cast the first shadows over the contentment Ruth had found in Eccleston, suggest that Gaskell was drawing on a knowledge of a strongly pictured location for the fictional landscape of her small industrial town, one well matched by the geography of Macclesfield.

The coach which brought our members from Altrincham and Knutsford set them down in King Edward Street (formerly Back Street) which joins Jordangate at the north-west corner of Market Place. Here have survived a number of fine eighteenth-century houses which were built by the Macclesfield well-to-do and - to quote Gaskell - 'such of the county families as content themselves with the gaities of a provincial town', in this case Cheshire landowners and long time near neighbours of the Hollands, such as the Davenports, the Thornycrofts, and the Norburys. The increasing industrialization of the town after the mid-century diminished the appeal of such properties for seasonal residence and they were gradually put to other use. Sir Peter Davenport, a forebear of Elizabeth's Capesthorne friends, had early disposed of his mansion to the Free Grammar School after it had become tainted by the occupation of The Young Pretender on his march south; by Elizabeth's life-time most of the other grand houses were occupied by attorneys, publishers, banks and medical practitioners, as they are today. Parts of old Manchester had experienced the same processes of change: Lower Mosley Street in particular had seen much conversion to commercial use, and it was a socio-economic phenomenon which captured the imagination of Gaskell and found expression in her writing. The opening pages of *Ruth*, albeit set in 'an assize town in one of the eastern counties', are devoted to an acknowledgment of the changing town landscape and the sensitive response of the romantic young seamstress to the fading splendour of her inappropriate surroundings.

Macclesfield's Unitarian Chapel lies obscured from sight behind these old buildings which line King Edward Street. The only approach to it is by a narrow passage, known locally as an 'entry', but undoubtedly a '*cul-de-sac*', as Gaskell describes the access to Benson's chapel in *Ruth.* Built in 1689, it is very similar in design to the Cheshire chapels at Brook Street, Knutsford and Dean Row, Wilmslow, but whereas they are made of brick, the Macclesfield chapel is built with local Kerridge gritstone, which is readily darkened and stained by atmosphere and weather as Gaskell suggests. The roofline is long and low and two outside staircases, located at each



King Edward St, Macclesfield. *The white portico conceals the entrance to the passageway leading to the concealed Unitarian Chapel.*

end of the rectangular walls, give access to the upper gallery. Victorian photographs, brought out for our visiting party, show the stone walls, once heavily hung with ivy which almost covered the windows and in sunlight could certainly have cast a tracery of shadow on white-washed walls within. The open space, which originally surrounded the chapel, was commercially valuable and had mostly been sold off by the end of the eighteenth century, some of it by the Rev John Palmer at the time of his doctrinal break with a large section of his congregation in the 1760s. However, when Elizabeth attended a service there in 1852, the Minister, John Wright (later joint editor, with William Gaskell, of the Unitarian Herald), had gardeners in his employ to care for the chapel exterior, so it is possible that 'a lilac-bush or two, a white rose-tree, and a few laburnums' were at that time growing in the chapel yard. There is however no burial ground, and we judged that the position of this chapel within a few yards of the market place could never have been near the 'outskirts of the town'.

The chapel in Macclesfield had its origins in the strength of Dissent, which flourished, notwithstanding fear of persecution, in the nearby hill villages in the seventeenth century. Original documents show that the initiative for its building came from Mr. William Stonehewer of the Hollins in Sutton and Mr. Humphry Higginbotham of Rossin Chase at the upper end of Sutton, a village which lies some two to three miles into the hills above Macclesfield. Both are described as 'London merchants', which means that they handled the London end of Macclesfield's silk button and twist trade and would have been known to members of the Holland family in the same trade.

They made the initial and largest of the subscriptions which quickly raised the £250 building cost and funded a pew for the elders and deacons to sit in and another to be given into the keeping of Mr. Joseph Stonehewer 'for the advantage of Suttin People sitting in it as He might see fitting'. The pews are still distinguished by the names of these benefactors today. Gaskell seems to have been aware of this background when she reflects on Benson's congregation which

> *consisted of here and there a farmer with his labourers, who came down from the uplands beyond the town to worship where their fathers worshipped, and who loved the place because they knew how much those fathers had suffered for it.*

The Holland family name occurs several times in the early records of Macclesfield chapel. William and Daniel, the younger sons of John Holland of Dam Head, Mobberley, a confirmed Dissenter, are listed as original pew holders. Unable to inherit the family farm, they lived and worked in Macclesfield as chapmen (factors for silk twist and buttons) and were joined there by their father when he retired.4 While there is no evidence that Adam Holland, the third minister at Macclesfield, was a relative, there were dissenting ministers in every generation of Elizabeth's Cheshire predecessors who would have been visiting preachers. Her great-uncle Peter Holland, a founder of the Warrington Academy, was present in 1765 to witness the ordination of the eccentric Reverend John Palmer, a former Warrington student, to whom Aunt Lumb or possibly Aunt Abigail was entrusted for schooling.5

For much of the nineteenth century the chapel was known locally as Brocklehurst's chapel, after the wealthy patron who was its principal support. John Brocklehurst (1718-1791) made the successful transition from silk chapman to silk manufacturer and founded a dynasty, which dominated silk production in Macclesfield until the late twentieth century. In 1816 John Brocklehurst II took over a failing bank in premises directly in front of the chapel and it was here, in a long unopened safe, that the seventeenth-century documents relating to the founding of the chapel were discovered in the late twentieth century, giving confirmation of what Gaskell had earlier known of its origins. John Brocklehurst III (1788-1870) was a contemporary of Elizabeth's. Like Gaskell's invention 'Mr. Bradshaw', he was not only the principal manufacturer in the town and a Dissenter but also an ardent Whig with political ambitions. He was elected M.P. for Macclesfield in the first elections of 1832 and represented the town for thirty-six continuous years. The Brocklehursts' chief rivals for the town's economic, social and political leadership were the Ryle family, manufacturers who owned a great deal of land within and around the town. John Ryle II inherited a fortune of a quarter of a million pounds, and gained Macclesfield's other parliamentary seat, with forty more votes than Brocklehurst. Ryle was an orthodox Tory and protectionist, a creed which enjoyed the support of the town's Tory newspaper *The Courier*. The Brocklehursts financed a new Whig paper called *The Herald* and for a while the rivalry between the two publications and their

supporters was as fierce as that Gaskell observed between two politically opposed newspapers in a small town in her short story Christmas Storms and Sunshine. In 1827 the *Courier* reported a call for all working men to boycott 'any shopkeeper, publican, hairdresser or other person who shall take in the *Herald*', when that paper opposed the interests of the self-employed artisan weavers.

The Ryles, like the Brocklehursts, were bankers. They took over the town's first bank in 1800 and did well for some years, opening a Manchester branch in 1821. The banknotes of the *two banks were familiar cur*rency in the district until injudicious investment caused Ryle's bank to fail in a spectacular crash in 1841.

Bank failures were of course not uncommon, and readers of Gaskell will be aware of the consequences the failure of a country bank could have for such as Miss Matty. John Ryle shared Miss Matty's honourable sentiments and tried to do the best he could for his creditors. For twenty years he made payments at intervals towards the settlement of the Bank's debts: his five-pound notes, headed 'Macclesfield and Cheshire Bank' and with successive payments noted on the back, are still to be found in the town. Of Ryle it was said, 'nature intended him for a country gentleman, and if her design had been fulfilled, as a country gentleman he would have shone'. He was perhaps not unlike the 'rich silk manufacturer of Macclesfield', whom Mary Howitt noticed at a country-house gathering in 1854 - 'a fat, jolly Conservative, whose work-people are emphatically hands and who thinks "Mary Barton" a dangerous, bad book'.6

Brought up in the Whig tradition, John Brocklehurst III became a progressive Liberal and supporter of Free Trade but, while recognizing the value of the removal of protection for the necessaries of life, he knew that the exposure to competition, which the Cobden Treaty would accomplish, would not be in the interest of Macclesfield's silk industry. Henry Winkworth, whose family enjoyed an intimate friendship with the Gaskells, was caught on the horns of the same dilemma. The Winkworths moved from London to Manchester in 1829 and lived for a time in Oxford Road near to the Gaskell family before moving to Alderley Edge in 1850. Winkworth had a warehouse in York Street, Manchester, which had to be replaced after its destruction by fire in 1844, and manufactured silk at the Victoria Mills, Macclesfield, in partnership with James and Daniel Proctor. In her *Memorials Of Two Sisters*, Susanna Winkworth writes

> *My father, true to his Free Trade principles, had worked with Mr. Cobden and others in promoting this treaty; indeed, if I remember rightly he was a commissioner for the silk trade. But in this case he was decidedly a martyr to his principles; for this treaty gave a blow to the English trade from which it never recovered, and my father was one of those most greatly affected by it.*

In the late 1850s the decline of trade was already causing large-scale

unemployment in Macclesfield and in January 1858 Catherine Winkworth wrote to her sister Emily

> *Papa is busy about the terrible distress in Macclesfield; has been over there twice looking into the matter himself, and is out this afternoon with Mr. Jackson collecting for the relief fund... Papa's own mill and two of Mr. Brocklehurst's have been working three to four days a week all through, but that is a bare subsistence for the hands, and the other mills have nearly all been stopped. Two began partially this week, and one thinks this state of things cannot last much longer. 7*

It is interesting that Catherine did not hesitate to use the term 'hands', which so offended Mary Howitt, when speaking of her father's labour force.

Matters did not improve for the Winkworths: a first half-year profit in 1858 turned into a second half-year loss and the family were forced to spend their capital. During the slump which followed the enactment of the Cobden Treaty in 1860, Brocklehurst's mills were kept going at a loss to the firm of £70,000. John Brocklehurst is reported as saying, 'I have made my money in Macclesfield and I will spend it to the last sixpence before I will see the work-people starve'. Henry Winkworth did not have such deep pockets and he had no honourable recourse but to give up his business and his large Alderley house. In recent years the Victoria Mills, the earliest dating from 1823, were threatened with demolition and the properties had fallen into very bad repair. In the event the projected by-pass stopped short of the site and they have been wonderfully restored for present day use. Our visiting party was, therefore, able to go down to the Bollin valley to where the use of water- power drew early mill construction, to view the two buildings much as Elizabeth Gaskell would have known them.

In this area the spaces between the oldest mills were crammed with labourers' houses during the first phase of industrialization and the district gradually lost caste to become, by the 1840s, Macclesfield's Irish quarter, as the insanitary lodging-houses were woefully overcrowded by the multiple occupancy of recent immigrants. In 1849 two government health inspectors made a survey of the town preparatory to establishing a local Board of Health. Their preliminary report found these over-crowded quarters in the lower town a breeding ground for disease. In one court they reported that several Irish families were living in a two-roomed house, and in this group alone there were 24 persons suffering from fever. These findings were given tragic consequence by severe cholera and typhus epidemics which visited the town in the winter and spring of 1849, for which the Irish were widely blamed. In locating the origins of the typhus fever, which brought death to Eccleston and to Ruth, in 'the low Irish lodging-houses' where 'it was so common it excited little attention', Gaskell was echoing a commonly-held view and one which was authenticated by the official report of the Macclesfield Board of Health published in 1853. 8

Elizabeth Gaskell had many friends amongst those working to improve public health in Macclesfield at this time. Sir John Stanley and the Rev Edward Stanley, as Chairman and Vice-Chairman of The Board of Guardians, collected a mass of comparative statistics relating to health in the town and the neighbouring country districts, together with the cost of maintaining the poor. These statistics were embodied in the famous *Report of the Sanitary Condition of the Labouring Population of Great Britain,* issued in 1842 by Edwin Chadwick. This was at once the first great national survey, and the chief stimulus and starting point of the Victorian public health movement, which both Elizabeth and William Gaskell were anxious to support. Active propaganda and further reports followed, one of which, *Grainger's report on the origins and spread of cholera,* was enclosed with a letter to Elizabeth from Edwin Chadwick in 1851.9 In Macclesfield, John May, acting clerk to the Poor Law Union, kept up the pressure with an annual record of public health statistics for the town and the Rev Edward Stanley gave a series of lectures on sanitation and cleanliness. These efforts were supported by Mrs. Caroline Davenport, who allowed the grounds of Capesthorne Hall to be used for a two-day garden party, organized by John May in 1850 in aid of Macclesfield's Public Baths and Washhouses. Gaskell contributed an offprint of two of her short stories, *The Sexton's Hero* and *Christmas Storms and Sunshine*, to be sold in aid of the fund; William Gaskell supported the work of the Rev Edward Stanley as an occasional speaker for Macclesfield's Useful Knowledge Society.

After our visit to the lower town, our party left Macclesfield for Hare Hill Gardens, where azalea and rhododendron walks originally laid out by the Brocklehursts are now being restored by the National Trust. In Prestbury we paused to look across a field towards Legh Hall, a house set back from the Prestbury-Wilmslow road near to the cross at Mottram St. Andrew. In the late nineteenth century this became the home of the Gaskells' niece, Susan Elizabeth Gaskell, on her marriage to Walter Greg, son of Samuel Greg II, whom Elizabeth Gaskell knew as a little boy at Bollington. It seems probable that this is the 'Lea Hall' at which Elizabeth and William stayed in September 1851, the night before the wedding William conducted for Emily Winkworth and William Shaen at Dean Row Chapel. The proximity of the house to the chapel, less than four miles, would have suggested it as a suitable place for the well-organized Elizabeth to request lodging for the night. She was later to regret her foresight when it turned out that the Winkworths had other plans for their transport to the ceremony. Her hosts were Mr. and Mrs. Hervey, with whom by chance she travelled on a train journey to Macclesfield in 1849. They left the train at Prestbury while Elizabeth stayed on to Macclesfield where she could hire a Fly to take her to the home of the Gregs in Bollington. On parting the Herveys insisted on seeing her before her return to Manchester and arranged to send transport over for her to spend the day with them before she left.10

Bollington was the last destination on our tour of the Macclesfield area. Here it was

possible to visit The Mount, the marital home of Elizabeth's childhood friends, Samuel and Mary Greg (née Needham) and to tread some well-authenticated footsteps. The house was built in 1845, on high ground above the mill and cottages where Samuel Greg had hoped to establish a Utopian industrial community. Mrs. Gaskell and her daughter Florence stayed at the house in November 1849 and although it is now a nursing home there is much about it which has not changed since their visit. We were able to see the staircase Elizabeth and Florence descended, delayed by a button which had to be restitched to Florence's slipper, and therefore late for tea taken informally with 'the two eldest little things at home playing about'. We saw the original main entrance and the drawing room; upstairs there are still bars at the windows of the 'famous nurseries' where Florence joined the little Gregs in celebrating Katie's second birthday with butter the children had made with cream from the farm. When Elizabeth, with Meta and Florence, came back to stay at the Mount the following May, the children were thoroughly at home, Meta mounting and riding the pony brought to meet her, and Florence 'as happy as happy can be with Alice'. On this occasion the party attended Sunday service at King Edward Street Chapel and were made very tired by the hilly, hot and dusty three-mile walk into town. On both these visits and on others, Elizabeth combined her trip to Bollington with time spent with her good friend Mrs. Davenport at Capesthorne Hall, but the children were not usually included in the Capesthorne country house parties. Here Gaskell was introduced to a wide range of house-guests. Some like 'our two nice clergymen', Mr. Weigall of Holy Trinity Church, Macclesfield, and Mr. Osborne, Principle of Rossall School but formerly of King's School, whom she met there in February 1852, drew her closer to Macclesfield life. She came greatly to admire the Rev Weigall for his Benson-like devotion to 'our manufacturing population' and for the reasons he gave her for refusing her help towards a better living.11 Mrs. Davenport was soon to remarry and for everyone's entertainment brought down her wedding finery. This display included six Indian shawls, 'the lowest priced one 90 guineas...*oh dear!* they were so soft and delicate and went into such beautiful folds'.12 A scene Gaskell was graphically to recall in the opening chapter of *North and South.*

There was not time for our party to journey on to Capesthorne, although properly it should have been included in our itinerary of Gaskell's Macclesfield, so for our last visit we dropped down Moss Brow, to Greg's ' Happy Valley', where the mill at Lower Houses is still in use, although not for cotton spinning. The workers' terraced cottages which Greg improved for their comfort have been further modernized, and their allotments have been developed in recent years for modern housing, obscuring the view the mill-workers once had of the mill clock. The old home farm together with the Sunday School and Reading Room which Samuel Greg provided for the education of the mill-workers and their children have also been adapted for residential use. Greg's was a well-intentioned attempt to make a mill community a

vehicle for social change. He shared his first Bollington home, Turner Heath, with his work force, inviting respected workers to Saturday evening tea parties with conversation, music, reading and games, in an effort to know them better and share with them his values, but the huge financial losses the business incurred crushed the experiment. Only the Greg fortune and the efforts of Greg's more business-like brothers saved the firm and kept the labour force from want. Greg's 'stinging grief' at his failure spoke to Elizabeth Gaskell as eloquently as the strong words of criticism directed, by William Rathbone Greg and others, at the 'one-sided' philosophy of Mary Barton. It shook her confidence in her ability to write, as many urged that she should, on 'the other side' of the question. 'I believe that there is much to be discovered yet as to the right position and mutual duties of employer, and employed', she told Lady Kay-Shuttleworth in her own defence.13 However when she came to write her next industrial novel, *North and South,* some of the ideas of Samuel Greg found expression, and the difficulties and infinite anxieties of the mill-owning class were affirmed in a stronger voice.

In truth our short pilgrimage around mid-nineteenth century Macclesfield did not wear out much shoe leather, but in this varied social and physical landscape and in the evidence of Elizabeth Gaskell's association with it, there was much to send us back to re-read with well-rewarded pleasure her letters and works of fiction.

Notes:

The evidence for their custom is a fragment of a Day Book recording credit sales for December 1819. The Rev Edward Stanley was the most frequent customer (6 calls), the Stamfords the biggest spenders (£54 11s 7d); Miss Davenport purchased 'Pelise Cloth' and paid for the making up of four cloaks for charity, and Mr. Walter Davenport also bought grey cloaking for charity and fabrics for a jacket for his 'Keeper'.

2) John Chapple and Alan Shelston, *Further Letters of Mrs. Gaskell* (Manchester, 2000), p.10.

3) J. A. V. Chapple and Arthur Pollard, *The Letters of Mrs. Gaskell* (Manchester, 1997), no.126.

4) Gaskell shows her knowledge of the legislation introduced to arrest the decline of Macclesfield's button trade in *Sylvia's Lovers* (Penguin Classics, ed Shirley Forster, p. 51) 'Silk weavers has been petitioning Ministers t'make a law to favour silk buttons', complains Daniel Robson.

5) John Chapple, *Elizabeth Gaskell, The Early Years* (Manchester, 1997), p.137. Information on the Holland family was kindly supplied by Christine Lingard.

6) Mary Howitt, *An Autobiography,* vol. II, ed. Margaret Howitt (London, 1889), p.106, letter of 21 May 1854.

7) *Memorials of Two Sisters (London, 1908),* ed. Margaret J. Shaen, pp.173-4.

8) *First Annual Report Macclesfield Local Board of Health, 1853.* Ms. Copy, Macclesfield Town Hall, pp. 81-2.

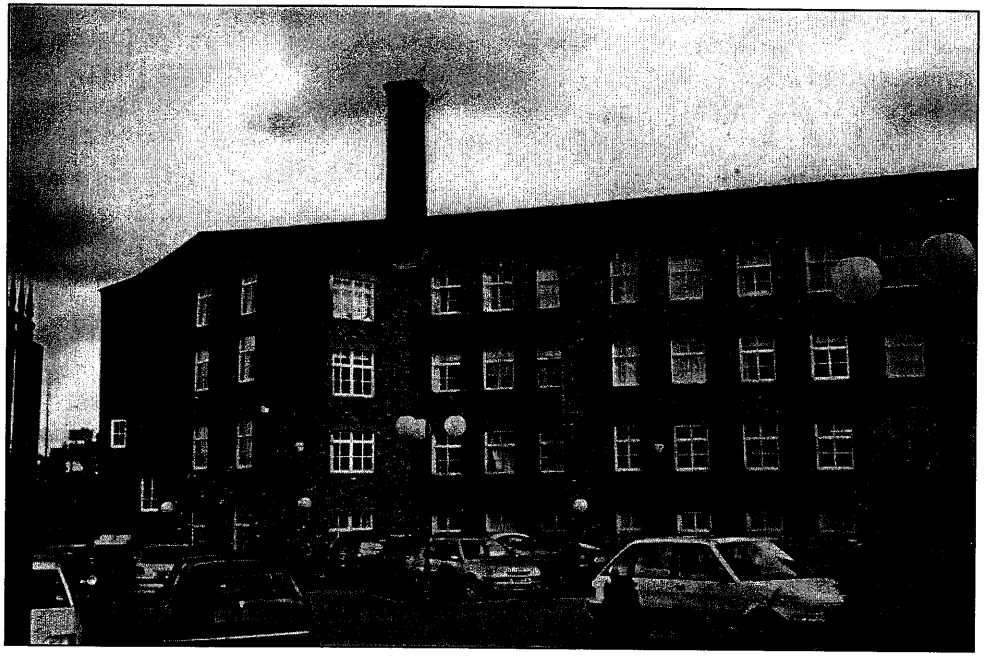
9) *Letters Addressed to Mrs. Gaskell,* John Rylands Library, 1935, ed. R. D. Waller, p.14.

10) *Letters of Mrs. Gaskell,* nos. 21, 101, 100a; and *Further Letters*, p. 46.

11) *Letters of Mrs. Gaskell,* no. 104; and *Further Letters*, pp. 62, 165, 167, n.3.

12) *Further Letters*, p. 62.

13) *Letters of Mrs. Gaskell*, no. 72a.



Victoria Mills, Macclesfield. *The section shown dates mostly from 1823; onto this section Winkworth and Proctor added an extension for power-loom weaving, in 1837.*

Editing Elizabeth Gaskell's Letters

John Chapple

One of my earliest academic tasks was to transcribe ninety folio leaves, closely written circa 1575 by the musician Thomas Whythorne in a very singular 'new orthography' he had devised. The manuscript was also badly worn in places, so immense care was taken in preparing it for the press. Nevertheless, a postgraduate student, whom I had myself taught to read Elizabethan Secretary hand, was able to correct my transcription of one clearly written word.

Even perfectly correct readings can seem doubtful. Shirley Foster suggests that Jane Whitehill's 'home' might be preferred to Chapple and Pollard's 'Rome' in a letter Gaskell sent to Charles Norton on 19 January 1860: *'Sometimes I dream I am in America, but it always looks like Rome, when I know it is not.'* (See Elizabeth Gaskell: A Literary Life, 2002, pp.132, 187, n.12.) Conjectural readings are by their very nature plausible, but there is no doubt that 'Rome' is the correct reading of the actual manuscript. Nor does it seem likely that Gaskell herself made a simple mistake. The context also shows that America is represented by 'cities' as well as 'country' and 'forests'; the immediately-following reference to Norton's European courier, François Boggia, indicates that her mind had briefly reverted to the joyous days she had spent in Rome in the spring of 1857. Norton picked this up in a postscript to his reply on 7 February 1860: *'Three years ago we met in Rome!'*

The editors of Elizabeth Gaskell's letters, however, unfortunately missed one important fragment. Shirley Foster rightly notes (p.190, n.63) their omission of Gaskell's judgment on *Sylvia's Lovers,* quoted from a lost letter by A.W. Ward in his introduction to volume 6 of the Knutsford edition*: 'It is the saddest story I ever wrote.'* Are there any more overlooked snippets out there? An Autolycus wanted.

Here we go round the mulberry bush

It was about two years ago that I was asked if I remembered a mulberry tree growing in the grounds of Knutsford Library, I didn't and no one else I asked did either, but when the cellars of the old library were being cleared ready for a move to the new library (which houses the Whitfield collection so well) a metal plaque was found. This recorded the gift to Knutsford of a mulberry tree by the trustees of Shakespeare's Birthplace Trust. I am holding this plaque in the accompanying photograph.

I wrote to Stratford upon Avon to ask if they had any record of when this had happened but none could be traced; however I was told that we could purchase another scion of the tree. It is now thriving in the garden of Brook Street Chapel and we intend to mark it with a new plaque.

The Gaskell Mulberry

THIS TREE IS A SCION OF
THE MULBERRY TREE GROWING IN
SHAKESPEARE'S GARDEN IN NEW PLACE,
STRATFORD UPON AVON,
IT WAS PLANTED BY PROFESSOR JOHN CHAPPLE,
PRESIDENT OF THE GASKELL SOCIETY,
ON 20 MARCH 2002 IN MEMORY OF
ELIZABETH GASKELL'S TWO YEARS
AT SCHOOL IN STRATFORD UPON AVON

IT REPLACES AN EARLIER TREE DONATED BY
THE SHAKESPEARE BIRTHPLACE TRUST TO
COMMEMORATE BOTH WRITERS

20 March 2002. At the tree planting: *Chapel members with Knutsford Town Mayor, George Walton and Gaskell Society members, including President John Chapple, resting on his spade, and Chairman Janet Allan (third from the right). Taken by Elizabeth Williams, sadly we neglected to get a photo of the whole group because we expected the local paper photographer to do it but he arrived too late.*

Elizabeth Gaskell and the American Civil War

Muriel Smith

On Monday 10 June 1861 (Letters, No. 488), Elizabeth Gaskell wrote a very prompt answer to Charles Eliot Norton, headed:

'Dining-room in Plymouth Grove, breakfast things not as yet removed, your letter came at *breakfast.'*

On the Sunday, she and Meta had been talking of their American friends:

> *'then we talked over your politics, and could not understand them;...I understood 'the Union' to be an expansive, or contractive contract. Expansive (as being capable of including more than the original thirteen United States) it has proved itself to be. But it seems to me that...its power of expansion involved that of its dissolution (or contraction as I have called it above) if need were....You included (by your annexations) people of different breeds, & consequently different opinions...; the time was sure to come when you could not act together as a nation; the only wonder to me is that you have cohered so long. And yet you say in this letter 'I do not feel sure that under any circumstances the right of secession could or would have been allowed'...altogether I (average English) cannot understand how you (American) did not look forward to 'secession' at some time not very far distant.... I should have thought (I feel as if I were dancing among eggs), that separating yourselves from the South was like getting rid of a diseased member, (possibly there are cases where amputation is a more impatient & consequently a more cowardly thing than the slower process of trying to bring the leg back to a healthy state). We have a proverbial expression in Lancashire 'Good riddance of bad rubbish' that I thin I should have applied to the Southern secessions.*

The first shot of the war, that carried away the Stars and Stripes at Fort Sumter, was an unfortunate mistake; as with the Charge of the Light Brigade, 'someone had blundered'. Major Anderson, commanding Fort Sumter, had reported to Washington on 5 March 1861 (the day after Lincoln's inauguration) that unless reinforced he could not hold out for more than a few weeks. Lincoln decided to re-provision the fort but not reinforce it. When Beauregard demanded its surrender, the provisions were still on the way. Anderson replied that if he did not receive either them or specific instructions from Washington he would surrender on 15 April. Then on 12 April the shot rang out across the bay of Charleston. Certainly the gunners were not aiming at the flag, or they would never have hit it first go.

When the Constitution of the United States was declared to be in force, 13 September 1788, the right of secession was generally assumed, and the states of

Virginia, Rhode Island and New York made it an express condition of ratification. There were two cultures, agricultural and industrial, and neither half of the Union regarded itself as unbreakably bound to the other, given sufficient cause to part. Lincoln, however, denied the right of secession: he was in the hands of the people who had supported his election in return for the promise of jobs in the Cabinet. His last words, in the last debate before the war began, were:

> *And open Charleston as a port of entry, with their ten per cent tariff! What then becomes of my tariff?*

Charleston was exporting slave-grown cotton to be spun and woven in Manchester by free workers paid as little as possible and turned off at any downturn in the business. Boston, concurrently, imported West Indies molasses and turned it into rum, which was shipped to West Africa and sold to African traders in exchange for fellow Africans (if not actually fellow-tribesmen) who were to be shipped across the Atlantic as slaves. Any air of moral superiority assumed in Lancashire or Massachusetts was hardly justified.

Meanwhile, Elizabeth Gaskell is showing a good grasp of American history and is, moreover, stating the South's case and supporting Jefferson Davis, without, apparently, having any idea that she is so doing.

BOOKSTALL NOTES

Members who were at the Durham Conference will have enjoyed Christine Alexander's talk on 'Elizabeth Gaskell and Victorian Juvenilia', which will also appear in the next volume of the Journal. But copies of Juvenilia Press titles, by a number of famous budding authors, failed to arrive on our bookstall. We now have the following books, very interesting and handsome they are, for a modest £5 each, including p&p:

Jane Austen:
Jack and Alice • Love and Friendship • Lesley Castle
The History of England • Frederick & Elfrida

Charlotte Bronte:
My Angria and the Angians • Tales of the Islanders Vol 1
Tales of the Islanders Vol 2 • Tales of the Islanders Vol 3

George Eliot:
Edward Neville

Philip Larkin:
Incidents from Phippy's Schooldays

Anna Maria Porter:
Artless Tales

We are also ordering copies of the handsome Hesperus Press paperback edition of *Lois the Witch*, with an excellent foreword by Jenny Uglow, which will shortly be available at £5, including p&p.

Please send your orders for these and any other books on our booklist (which is on the website or I can send you a printed copy), to me, **Janet Allan**, at:
10 Dale Road, New Mills, High Peak, SK22 4NW
Tel: 01663 744233 and email: janet@janetbook@fsnet.co.uk.

BOOK NOTES

Christine Lingard

Lois the Witch, with an introduction by Jenny Uglow (Hesperus Press, £6.99) is now available in bookshops.

A number of volumes containing Gaskell's short stories are currently available: *Oxford book of Victorian Ghost Stories*, edited by Michael Cox and A. R. Gilbert, containing *The Old Nurse's Story*, first published in 1991, is now published in paperback (Oxford University Press, £9.99).

The Oxford book of English Love Stories, edited by J. A. Sutherland, containing *The Heart of John Middleton* (OUP, £9.99) and *The Oxford book of Victorian Love Stories*, edited by Kate Flint, containing *Right at Last*, are also now available in paperback.

Two titles of critical analysis continue the current interest in industry and literature: *Figures of Finance Capitalism* by Borislav Knezevic, Routledge, £50, was published in February. It aims to provide a reading of middle-class misgivings about a class system still dominated by a patrician élite, taking its illustrations from texts by Dickens, Gaskell, Thackeray, and Macaulay.

Patent inventions: intellectual property and the Victorian novel, by Clare Pettit of Newnham College, Cambridge (Oxford University Press, £45, due in January 2004) 'shows how novelists Charles Dickens, Elizabeth Gaskell and George Eliot participated in the debates over the value and ownership of labour in the 1850s, such as patent law and the married women's property law'.

The Lunar Men: The Friends who made the Future: 1730-1810 by Jenny Uglow is now available in paper back. Faber at £9.99

THE LITERARY NORTH WEST - THE CROSS STREET CHAPEL TALKS

This winter we are continuing our successful series of Tuesday lunch-time talks on literary figures in the region, interspersed with a little festive cheer. As usual they will start at 1 o'clock, but you are welcome to join us beforehand for sandwiches bring your own or buy them next door at Pret-a-manger) tea and coffee available in Cross Street Chapel's dining room.

Tuesday 14 October, 1pm Gaskell.
'Escaping an adominable, wicked world'. Gaskell, Wilkie Collins and sensationalism in The Cornhill Magazine by Marie Cairney.
We welcome a new face on the Gaskell scene with an intriguing title to her talk: Maria Cairney is a postgraduate student of Alan Shelston's at the University of Manchester.

Tuesday 11 November, 1pm.
Elizabeth Raffald and the making of Manchester by Hannah Barker.
Elizabeth Raffald was the Mrs Beeton of her day. Her book *The Experienced English Housekeeper,* made her name on a national scale. In late eighteenth century she was also famous for producing Manchester's first town directories which mapped the phenomenal commercial growth of the city. This talk explores the life of Elizabeth Raffald and her place in the transformation of Manchester. Hannah Barker is senior lecturer in history at the University of Manchester. She has published several books on the late eighteenth and early nineteenth-century political press.

Tuesday 9 December, 1pm Cross Street.
Carols for Gaskellians.
To open the festive season we have a carol service arranged by Alan Myerscough of the Cross Street Chapel staff, who so ably assisted in our presentation on Catherine Winkworth's hymns earlier in the year.

Tuesday 6 January 2004, 1pm.
Edwin Butterworth of Oldham (1812-48): a window on early industrial Lancashire by Dr. Michael Winstanley.
During his short life, Edwin Butterworth published numerous local history books, visited every parish in the county as Edward Baines's research assistant for his four- volume history of Lancashire, and sent regular reports to Manchester newspapers on events in his home town of Oldham. This talk assesses the man and his work through his surviving manuscripts and his publications. Dr. Winstanley is a lecturer in the History Department at Lancaster University.

Tuesday 10 February.
Frances Hodgson Burnett by Ann Thwaite.

Tuesday 9 March.
Howard Spring by Barbara Frost.
Howard Spring's books on Manchester were best-sellers, and many of us remember with pleasure, *Fame is the Spur, Shabby Tiger, Rachel Rosing, My Son My Son and The Houses in Between.* We have persuaded Barbara Frost, Blue Badge Guide and long-time supporter of the Gaskell Society, to talk to us about the author and (probably) the Manchester he wrote about.

The Knutsford meetings are on Wednesdays October 29, November 26, Jan 28, Feb 25, March 31 and April 28 at St. John's Parish Rooms, Church Hill at 12.15 for lunch. Studying *North and South.*

The Gaskell Society South West

Activities this half- year.

We have had a very interesting year so far in the South-West. As we are not too far from the Quantocks, we thought that a closer acquaintance with The Romantic poets Coleridge and Wordsworth would be a worthwhile topic. We knew that Mrs. Gaskell enjoyed the poetry of both writers. In 1836, she wrote from Sandlebridge describing herself sitting in the corner of a field studying Coleridge and Wordsworth in such an idyllic situation that "One can't think of anything but poetry and happiness." At our April meeting at BRLSI in Queen Square Bath, Kay Millard spoke to a very appreciative audience on "Elizabeth Gaskell and Coleridge", concentrating on shared Unitarian ideals.

As they developed in the 19th century. Those wishing to know more will find a succinct and scholarly account of the development from the doctrine of Necessity to the "cloudy transcendentalism" of Coleridge in Jenny Uglow's biography, page 6. We were most indebted to Kay, Chairman of the Bath Unitarian Fellowship for her scholarly talk.

This led to a mini visit to the Quantocks in May, when seven members stayed overnight in Alfoxden House, now a lovely hotel, and visited Coleridge's cottage in Nether Stowey, walked though the scenery described in some of his poems. Mr. Tom Mayberry, Chairman of the Friends of Coleridge, join us for dinner and gave us a wonderful talk on the relationship between the Wordsworths and Coleridge, illustrated by excellent slides. When he had gone home, we read "The Ancient Mariner" aloud in the room in which Coleridge was said to have read it for the first time to William and Dorothy!

Our thanks are due to Marie and Derek Moss who visited Nether Stowey earlier in the year, invited me down for the day and showed me where everything was,

including the Hotel which we would never have found otherwise. We did so much in 24 hours, including being introduced to "Chocolate Lumpy Dumpy Pudding" which must be the most delicious and calorific dessert ever, and did you know that Coleridge walked from Nether Stowey to Bristol to change his library books?

Sunday August 17th was another delightful tea party at the Cunliffe-Jones house overlooking the Frome valley, where we sat in the shade, ate a sumptuous tea, admired the view and read our favourite pieces from Mrs.Gaskell's work. It has been a lovely year so far.

Congratulations to Peter and Celia Skrine on their latest grandchild.

Forthcoming Event

On November 22nd, we are looking forward to welcoming Ian and Mary Gregg, when Ian will speak to us on the rehabilitation of his ancestor, ECG's step-mother. Knowing Ian, this will be a very good experience.

Rosemary Marshall

London and South East Group

Meet at The Francis Holland School, 39 Graham Terrace, near Sloane Square, 13 September at 2.00pm.
Shirley Foster: *Violence and deconstruction in Gaskell short stories*

8 November.
Gwen Clarke: *Elizabeth Gaskell and Manchester: a difficult relationship*
Further details from Dudley Barlow 020 8874 7727 or e-mail.

AUTUMN MEETING IN KNUTSFORD AT ST. JOHN'S PARISH CHURCH ROOMS

SATURDAY 27 SEPTEMBER, 2.00PM-4.30 APPROX.

Dr. Jane Silvey will speak on:
'It all began with Jane Eyre': the complex trans-atlantic web of women writers.

Afternoon tea at 3.00pm, provided by Cross Town WI at £3.50 each, followed by: *Trans-atlantic friendships:* Readings from letters of Elizabeth Gaskell, Charles Eliot Norton and others arranged by Joan Leach.

Brook Street Chapel will be open for visits from 11.30- 12.30. Upstairs some of the Chapel's library books for Sunday reading will be displayed including those donated by Aunt Lumb. Don't forget to look at the mulberry tree and the Gaskell grave with flowers for Elizabeth's birthday (29 September). Members will be welcome at Brook Street Chapel's harvest festival on 28 September.

As part of Knutsford's Literary Festival Joan Leach will lead a walk:
Discover Knutsford's Cranford Days on **Sunday 5 October at 11.am** from **Jardines Book shop on King Street (£2).**

On **Saturday 4 October** *Mr. Dickens is coming* by Gerald Dickens, great, great grandson of the author. Using extracts from novels, diaries and letters he re-creates Dickens on stage. Festival programmes are available at libraries etc and bookings can be made at TIC, Toft Road, Knutsford WA16.
Tel: 01565 632611 Web page: www.knutsfordlitfest.co.uk
There will be a linked exhibition at The Heritage Centre where Knutsford's Millennium Tapestry is also on display.

Please make a note in your diaries of the A.G.M. in Manchester on **Saturday 3rd April 2004.**

Unitarian College Manchester 1854-2004

In connection with the forthcoming 150th anniversary of the Unitarian College Manchester a commemorative volume is to be published in May 2004, entitled "Unitarian to the Core: Unitarian College Manchester 1854-2004." The work will primarily be of interest to alumni and supporters of the College, but there will be much of interest to Gaskell enthusiasts, particularly because William was the co-founder of the College with John Relly Beard. It will be an illustrated, hardback, subscription edition with names of subscribers printed in the volume where we receive orders in time.

Send Joan Leach an SAE for a flyer or check our home page for details.
Cost £20 plus postage.

Details and order form by e-mail from joyce.ashworth@lkh.co.uk or by post from: The Administrator, Unitarian College, Luther King House, Brighton Grove, Rusholme, Manchester M14 5JP.