

The Gaskell Society



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

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NEWSLETTER

Spring 2005 - Number 39

Editor's Letter

Joan Leach

This will be a memorable year for us and we hope many of you will join us at our Manchester Conference, hosted jointly with Manchester Metropolitan University, from 19th to 21st July. The programme offers a wide variety of papers from speakers homing in from all parts of the globe, and special events, including guided walks and dinner at Manchester's Victorian Town Hall: the architect, Alfred Waterhouse, also designed the Natural History Museum and Knutsford's market hall. You can find details of the conference on the internet, at www.mcrh.mmu.ac.uk/gaskell.

The long anticipated BBC TV production of *North and South* aroused mixed feelings in member viewers and others, as you will see from Elizabeth Williams' collected reviews and comments. It has encouraged readers to go back to the book and, I am told, stimulated a revival of cravats as a fashion item!

The BBC's next project will be a great contrast and will show Elizabeth Gaskell's talents as a humorist. It is to be called *CRANFORD CHRONICLES*, because it is an amalgam of three Gaskell works: *Cranford*, *Mr Harrison's Confessions* and *My Lady Ludlow*, though *Cranford* was the starting point and is at the heart of it. The three books have been closely interwoven, so all the major and minor stories are threaded together for a four-part series. Expect some surprises!

It is the result of three years' enthusiasm and work by Susie Conklin and Sue Birtwistle, who worked together on *Wives and Daughters* and *Pride and Prejudice*. Sue Birtwistle will produce it, and the script is written by Heidi Thomas. Jenny Uglow has acted as consultant throughout. It is hoped that filming will start in a few months' time.

There are two recent publications by Gaskell members to be noted: Dr. Graham Handley's *Elizabeth Gaskell Chronology* (Palgrave) will be much appreciated by students of Elizabeth Gaskell's life and works. It not only summarises the letters succinctly but collates them with her life and contemporary literary events. Graham has done us the honour of dedicating his work to Frances Twinn, our London and S.E. group secretary, and The Gaskell Society.

Alan Shelston's Norton edition of *North and South* has plenty of extra material to answer any questions you might have after watching the TV version or re-reading the book, and is a most attractive paper back. Both will be reviewed elsewhere.

We are looking forward to a trip to the Lake District, staying at Grasmere, from 2nd to 5th May 2005, following the literary trail of the Gaskells, Wordsworth, Harriet

Martineau and others.

You receive notice of all our major events in the Newsletter and can also check on the home page: <http://gaskellsociety.users.btopenworld.com> but there are times when we may want to arrange an extra visit or tell you about an event in the North West. There are many members who are not able to participate in such events for various reasons, so to save expense on postage we will create a North-West mailing list. Please will you fill in and return the form enclosed with this Newsletter, or sign up at a meeting.

Scientists in Wives And Daughters

Christine Lingard

In *Wives & Daughters* Gaskell created the character of Roger Hamley, younger of the two sons of a country squire, and recently graduated from Trinity College, Cambridge. He shows a fascination with natural history, never happier than when walking alone or making scrupulous records of the specimens he has gathered, and during the course of the book he undertakes a journey to Africa to collect specimens for a museum.

There is no doubt that Gaskell had Darwin in mind when she sent Roger on his voyage of discovery. She says so in a letter to her publisher in 1864, outlining the plot of her proposed novel. Initially she had planned to send him round the world too, but modified her plot, sending him to Abyssinia and the Cape. But the character is more complex and it is evident that there are other sources for her inspiration.

Gaskell described Darwin as her cousin. This is not strictly the case. He was a cousin of some of her Holland cousins who were descended from Rev. William Willett, husband of Josiah Wedgwood's sister Catherine. Darwin was the grandson of Wedgwood. Gaskell's cousin, Edward Holland of Dumbleton Hall, in particular was a friend of the Darwins and there are several references to this branch of the family in Darwin's correspondence. But there is only one recorded meeting between Gaskell and Darwin - at a party for the birthday of Julia 'Snow' Wedgwood.

But it is claimed that the character of Roger Hamley emerged during a visit she made to Manor Place, Edinburgh early in 1864. Her host was George Allman (1812-1898), Professor of Natural Philosophy at the University. Allman, an Irishman born in Cork, married in 1851 Emily, sister of the Gaskells' solicitor William Shaen, the man charged with clearing up the mess caused by the publication of *The Life of Charlotte Brontë*. Shaen in turn was married to one of the Winkworth sisters. Gaskell described Allman as an old friend, having known him since his marriage:

[he] is the most charmingly wise and simple man I ever met with. I mean he is full of deep thought & wisdom & knowledge and also like a child for unselfconsciousness, and sweet humility ... They have no children; but their happiness seems perfect, even without. (*Letters*, No. 546)

Allman was a prolific writer of scientific papers if not books. His speciality was marine biology - in particular gymnoblastic hydrozoa (jellyfish). All his works were meticulously illustrated and are believed to have had an influence on Thomas Huxley. They remained standard for many years. He was also actively involved with setting up the Edinburgh Natural History Museum. Being totally absorbed in his work, he appears to have had few outside interests, rarely travelled and hardly fits the bill as the dashing romantic hero of fiction: but Gaskell would have been able to observe his method of working at first hand, as she could not with Darwin.

Both these men were experienced scientists with well-established reputations. She did not know either of them as students, so I should like to offer another suggestion for a model. Marianne Gaskell had a long-standing affection for her second cousin Thurstan but his parents opposed marriage, not because of consanguinity but on financial grounds. His father Edward Holland had twelve children to divide his fortune between and Thurstan would have to earn his living. In her disappointment in 1861, Marianne left to spend the winter in Rome, where to her parents' dismay she came under the influence of Cardinal Manning. Whether their prejudice was as strong as Squire Hamley's - he 'held all Roman Catholics in dread and abomination something akin to our ancestors' hatred of witchcraft' - is a subject for debate. Marianne made the return journey via Dumbleton where she renewed her acquaintance with Thurstan. While on a family visit to London that summer Thurstan's younger brother Fred took lodgings nearby and helped to make 'plans'. After a trip to Eton and the boat races when they tried to watch fireworks over the river in the rain Marianne and Thurstan were as good as engaged. A huge family row ensued.

In the previous year Gaskell had secured for Fred a post as curate at St Andrew's, Ancoats, one of the poorest areas of Manchester. In a letter to her cousin Effie Wedgwood in December 1862 (quoted by Jenny Uglow), Meta Gaskell, after expressing her distress at the rift, says of Fred: 'I am so full of the Dumbletonians and Fred - He is much the best and agreeable too!'

Frederick Whitmore Holland graduated from none other than Trinity College, Cambridge, in 1861 (Thurstan had studied law at the same place but unlike that other son of a country squire - Cynthia Kirkpatrick's Mr Henderson who only played at being a barrister, Thurstan had to do the job of barrister in earnest). Fred was ordained the same year and spent the next four years in Manchester - a period

when Meta suffered a good deal of ill health and depression, but kept busy ministering to the poor during the cotton famine.

Some time in 1861, as well as graduating and taking up his post, Fred managed to fit in a trip to Sinai. This isn't as lengthy an undertaking as it sounds. The Suez Canal had been opened in 1860 expressly to take steamships to Australia, so this area was becoming more frequently visited. According to the diary of a Macclesfield lady, Marianne Brocklehurst, the steamship from Brindisi to Egypt in 1873 took only four days.

Not very much is known about Holland's first trip - who accompanied him or who financed it - but in 1865 he was there again. This is the year that *Wives and Daughters* was being serialised in the *Cornhill Magazine*. Geoffrey Sharps quotes Marianne as saying that her mother did not have a firm plot when she started but the story developed as she wrote. Fred arrived in Suez in February. One can only speculate on how long the trip was in the planning. This time there are some accounts of his activities. He visited the ancient Egyptian turquoise mines at Wady Mughara and left his companions, to wander solitarily in the desert finding archaeological relics, copying hieroglyphics and surveying mountains.

In 1866 he was part of an officially-sponsored expedition to chart the area. Fred's trips were all of a geographical or archaeological nature but requiring detailed recording of data with all the precision of the scientist. He gained a bit of a reputation in geographical circles. On his return to England in 1865 he became Vicar of All Saints', Evesham, not far from Dumbleton, and in his final years was headmaster of Evesham Grammar School. His adventuring spirit continued to the end. He died at the relatively early age of 41 from heart disease, while on a mountain in Switzerland.

There may be nothing more to this than a mother's ambitions for her daughter. We will probably never know the truth but I think you will find there are a lot of characters in *Wives and Daughters* who may be drawn from life, so why not?

Chapple, J.A.V. & Pollard, Arthur, eds, *The Letters of Mrs Gaskell* (Manchester University Press, 1997 reprint).

Papers of the Royal Geographic Society, April 23 1866.

Sharps, John Geoffrey, *Mrs Gaskell's Observation & Invention* (Linden Press, 1970).

Uglow, Jenny, *Elizabeth Gaskell. A Habit of Stories* (Faber & Faber, 1963)

Elizabeth Gaskell and Dickens in All the Year Round

Deborah Wynne

Alan Shelston's interesting discussion in the last Newsletter, outlining the relationship between Gaskell and Dickens during the period when *North and South* was serialised in *Household Words*, prompts me to add a few comments about the development of this relationship when Dickens became editor of *All The Year Round*. Alan Shelston indicates that Gaskell may have felt pressurised to make changes to *North and South* to suit Dickens's requirements, while on the other hand Dickens considered Gaskell to be intractable and unaware of the demands of weekly serialisation. However, despite these tensions, the 'back-to-back' serialisation of two important 'social problem' novels in the pages of *Household Words* constitutes one of the most significant moments in Victorian publishing history. What is less well-known, however, is that this 'double act' was resumed in 1859 when Dickens established his new weekly magazine, *All The Year Round*.

Dickens inaugurated his new magazine with the serialisation of *A Tale of Two Cities* and he chose a three-part short story by Gaskell, *Lois the Witch*, to run with the novel's climactic later instalments between 8th and 22nd October 1859. In many ways *Lois* and *A Tale* were as well-matched thematically as were *North and South* and *Hard Times*. Dickens's historical novel depicts the violent events of the French Revolution of 1789, while *Lois the Witch* is based on the Salem witch trials of the 1690s. Gaskell's gloomy yet powerful novella, in which the teenage heroine is executed as a witch, was positioned by Dickens alongside those instalments of *A Tale of Two Cities* which depict Darnay on trial in France and the dramatic discovery of Dr. Manette's 'forgotten' letter. The effects of this pairing of *A Tale* and *Lois* must have been particularly exciting for readers of *All the Year Round* who were able to turn immediately from Dickens's representation of history to Gaskell's equally powerful rendering of the past.

The story of the serialisation of *A Tale* and *Lois* has a further twist, however, for the ending of Gaskell's narrative, which depicts the innocent, condemned Lois comforting her fellow prisoner, Nattee, the Native American servant, as they are both led to the gallows is a foreshadowing of Sydney Carton's attempt to comfort the French seamstress as they make their final journey to the guillotine at the end of Dickens's novel. This scene in *A Tale of Two Cities* appeared a few weeks after *Lois* had completed its serialisation. It is feasible that Dickens, having read Gaskell's moving account of Lois's execution, was inspired to borrow the detail of the main protagonist comforting a weaker companion for his own famous scene. Although

readers of *All The Year Round* were treated to two dramatic executions within the space of four weeks, few would have been aware that Gaskell was the author of *Lois the Witch*, for Dickens imposed a policy of anonymity on his contributors while retaining the right to sign his own contributions. Indeed, it may have been Dickens's insistence on Gaskell's anonymity that led her to arrange for her next serialised novel, *Wives and Daughters*, to be published in *The Cornhill*, where her name was prominently displayed.

Book Notes

Christine Lingard

The year 2005 should prove to be an important one in Gaskell scholarship with the publication in the summer of the first volumes of new Pickering & Chatto edition of the complete works of Gaskell - a prestigious and scholarly project which will introduce a number of unfamiliar works of Gaskell as well as new readings of the text and new editing. More in future journals and newsletters.

Elizabeth Gaskell Chronology by Graham Handley. Palgrave Macmillan, £55. This is a long established series which has covered all the major British authors and will prove a valuable reference tool. It treats the Gaskell story systematically and chronologically. Graham Handley is a prolific author on Elizabeth Gaskell and a member of the Society.

The Pre-Raphaelite Art of the Victorian Novel: Narrative Challenges to Visual Gendered Boundaries by Sophia Andres. Ohio State University Press, \$89. An interdisciplinary study of painting and literature, coupling Victorian novels with painters and revealing new links and influences between the two genres. It concentrates on Gaskell, Wilkie Collins, George Eliot and Hardy. It includes full colour illustrations.

Medical women and Victorian fiction by Kristine Swenson. University of Missouri Press, \$39.95. A comparison of the medical women (both doctors and nurses) in *Ruth*, *The Woman in White* and other books with their real life counterparts, this book offers a new insight into the problem of the prostitute in Victorian culture and society.

Educating the Proper Woman Reader: Victorian Family Literary Magazines and the Cultural Health of the Nation by Jennifer Phegley. Ohio State University Press, \$39.96. A discussion of the influence of women on contemporary literary taste, analysing their reading habits and showing how literary magazines such as *The Cornhill*, *Belgravia* and *Victoria* catered for them, and illustrating the role played by

fiction writers such as Mrs Braddon, Dickens, George Eliot, Gaskell, Thackeray, Trollope and Mrs Oliphant in this.

The Moral of the Story: an Anthology of Ethics through Literature, eds Peter and Renata Singer. Blackwell Publishing, £17.99. An extensive collection of extracts from literature demonstrating the treatment of ethics. An extract from *North and South* is used in the section on 'Work Ethics'.

North and South on BBC TV

The following are a selection of comments on the recent television adaptation of *North and South*.

From Gaskell Society members:

'I think the important thing about adaptations is that they should be judged for what they are, and not simply in terms of fidelity to the original. If the director wants to leave material out, or invent material, that's fine by me. According to this principle I had no problems with Mr Darcy's wet shirt. But it does have to be in the spirit of the original, or at least of the period, and that is where so much of *North and South* fell down. To take the most obvious example, Margaret would hardly have gone out to dinner, in company she didn't know, in a dress that Nell Gwynne might have found too revealing. Neither would she have gossiped about her friendship with Thornton with Bessy and her sister.'

'Part of the adaptation I felt was powerful and excellent. I found the scene in the silent mill, in the last episode for example, deeply moving, underlining visually (which is what television can do so well) the reality of Thornton's loss. I felt that the Margaret/Thornton relationship was handled with great sensitivity apart from the lack of respect for 19th-century conventions in the final kiss! Still that's what they really felt for each other. The beating-up in episode one was unfortunate, as it was quite out of character with Gaskell's - and the BBC's - interpretation of Thornton.'

'What the director, or the designer, did not understand was the visual contrasts Gaskell uses throughout the novel which are a gift for TV... Lots of close-ups and too few establishing shots, which an actress friend of mine assures me are to save money.'

'I found it too melodramatic, too mid-Victorian Romantic - sadly lacking in the subtlety of Gaskell.'

'Many people who have not read the book will now do so. I have had conversations with people from a wide variety of age-groups who will now read and enjoy Gaskell for the first time.'

'For me, the adaptor's greatest transgression lay in the distortion of character. Margaret - she of the thousand pouts - seemed to drift endlessly through the series

in a state of utter bewilderment ... Mr Bell - a man-about-town - positively leered at Margaret.'

'All those chubby workers who looked as if they had never missed a meal or contracted TB. Surely there are some thin extras around? What about a few Big Issue Sellers?'

'What a pity that it was confined to four episodes, as the ending was condensed and inaccurate.'

'Production beautifully photographed but ... quite unhistorical.'

'I was very impressed and thought it excellent'.

'..."sexed-up" for a modern audience.'

I was so disappointed with the casting of the main characters... but I found the minor characters very engaging.'

'Margaret was convincing - but I hated her hat!'

'Mr Thornton was very good-looking and easy to watch.'

From the press:

'For the life of me I cannot imagine what some Tristram saw in Mrs Gaskell's *North and South* that made him imagine this weirdly arch, mawkishly patronising and hopelessly dated story about the divide between 19th-century rural and industrial England would have any conceivable interest as a television drama'. A. A. Gill in *The Sunday Times*.

'... the longing for a 100 per cent proof hit of excitement, mystery and passion has an outlet... John Thornton ...played smoulderingly by the previously little-known Richard Armitage, as a blue-eyed, dark-haired stunner, the Darcy *de nos jours*... Historical accuracy can go hang when you are imagining yourself in Margaret's place.' Anne Ashworth in *The Times*, reporting on the female public's reaction.

'Visually this was terrific - especially Margaret's first astonished glimpse of the inside of a textile mill: the air so thick with cotton that it looked as if she'd stumbled into an Arctic blizzard. The supporting roles too are very well done: Tim Pigott-Smith as Margaret's ineffectual father and Lesley Manville as her shell-shocked mother.' John Preston in *The Sunday Telegraph*.

'John Thornton (Richard Armitage), strides, a Mephistophelean shape, through the perpetual snowstorm of his cotton mill. Dark and thunderous, he seems to be forever grinding a ruthless tooth. Margaret (Daniela Denby-Ashe), a marmoreal beauty with great, astonished eyes, is an attractive heroine. Kind, clever, decided, doggedly optimistic ... Under the bludgeoning of fate, her bonnet is knocked only slightly askew.' Nancy Banks-Smith in *The Guardian*.

'Author's in-laws owned sailcloth business in Buttermarket Street.' Headline in the *Warrington Guardian*.

'In many ways, as Welch [Sandy Welch, who adapted the novel for this production] points out, Mrs Gaskell succeeded in "having it all" where later, more emancipated generations of women failed. "She managed to have a happy marriage and lots of

children at the same time as bringing out a book every year and having a fulfilling intellectual and social life. At the end of her life she travelled to Italy, where it is rumoured she took a younger lover.'" Article in the *Radio Times*. [Ed.: Not entirely accurate!]

From the internet:

The following comments were sent to the BBC website by members of the public. There is also a message board devoted to *North and South*, which had received 13846 messages (all favourable, and some starting interesting discussions) while the message board devoted to all the soap operas had received a total of 2002.

'My Sunday nights will not be the same without my weekly fix of *North and South*.'

'It was a lovely, lovely ending. But I just wish that the producers had used the ending in the book. Anyway - thank you BBC, for cheering up these cold winter nights with some real smouldering passion!'

'I speak as an average teenager - for a television drama to have coaxed me into a bookshop to buy a book written over 150 years ago - well, it's impressive! I thought the production was fantastic - the costumes, locations, the script and screenplay...and the acting! I have found the entire series gripping!'

'Up until the final scene everything was just great then disaster struck! What was Sandy Welch thinking of when she wrote the last scene?'

'Wonderful! The re-written final scene was one of the most moving bits of drama I have watched for years.'

'I was crying solidly for the last 15 minutes! I can't believe it's over. I definitely prefer Mr Thornton to Mr Darcy...it's the smouldering looks! Mmmm!'

'I've not enjoyed a programme so much since the BBC's *Pride and Prejudice*.'

Editor: We are much indebted to Elizabeth Williams for collecting all these items and to members who helped.

A Forgotten Wedding Custom

Jenny Uglow writes:

A week or so ago, I had a query from Natasha McEnroe, who is Curator at Dr. Johnson's house in London, saying "You know in your book on E Gaskell she is bogged down labelling all her clothes prior to getting married - why were they being labelled with the initials of her maiden name? Am I correct in assuming that it is bad luck to sign your married name (or initials) before you are actually are, maybe that was why?" I immediately thought I had got it wrong, then remembered that my grandmother's trousseau - of which some bits are still here - was also labelled with her maiden name. So Natasha looked further, and found an old *Dictionary of Superstitions* (1948):

A more active superstition is that which forbids the use of the married-name-to-be before the wedding day. If anyone addresses an engaged girl by it, or if she writes it down for the pleasure of seeing what it looks like, she may never bear it in fact. At one time, this idea extended even to the marking of clothes and house-linen in advance; they had to either be left unmarked until after the wedding, or marked with the girl's maiden name.

Editor: Dr. Josie Billington is to read a paper at our Manchester Conference entitled 'A commodity of good names: Elizabeth, Mrs, or ECG'.

A Visit To Japan

Alan Shelston

Last year I had the great good fortune to be invited by the Gaskell Society of Japan and the Dickens Fellowship of Japan, to speak at a specially organized joint meeting of the two societies. When I mentioned this invitation to friends they expressed surprise - how can the Japanese be interested in an English novelist? However, Gaskell Society members have good reason to know of the interest shown in Elizabeth Gaskell and her work by Japanese scholars and enthusiasts, and in fact there is a wide interest in nineteenth and twentieth-century literature in English generally in Japan. The Dickens Fellowship there, under the presidency of Professor Takao Saijo is both long-standing and very active, and other nineteenth-century British authors, like the Brontës, George Eliot and Thomas Hardy, are held in high esteem. Where Gaskell is concerned this interest perhaps originates from the fact that the distinguished Gaskell scholar A. Stanton Whitfield taught for a considerable period in Niigata, Japan, earlier in the twentieth century, while the establishment of the Japanese Gaskell Society, hard on the foundation of our own society, gave added impetus to the study of her work. Since that time many of Gaskell's works have been translated into Japanese, and now Japanese scholars and critics are producing their own critical commentaries and biographical studies. One has only to consult the Japanese society's website (<http://www.soc.nii.ac.jp/gaskell/index-e.html>), established by our old friend Professor Mitsuharu Matsuoka - surely the best of its kind - to see how this tradition of Gaskell scholarship has been sustained. Equally we have been privileged in England to receive many Japanese students of Gaskell in Knutsford and in Manchester, when they have visited this country. The link is a strong one, and likely to continue so.

The main event of my visit was the Dickens-Gaskell lecture at Nishinomiya, a location between Kobe and Osaka, where I endeavoured to satisfy all parties by speaking on the subject of the publishing relationship between Mrs Gaskell and Dickens. The lecture was chaired by Professor Matsuoka, himself a Dickens as

well as a Gaskell specialist. This was a great personal pleasure to me, since I have very good memories of the year Mitsu spent with me in Manchester when I supervised his thesis. Along with another Gaskell and Knutsford friend, Professor Tatsuhiru Ohno, Mitsu had been responsible for much of the organization of the visit: indeed without his efforts on our behalf it could never have taken place. At the reception after the lecture my wife and I were delighted to meet Professor Yuriko Yamawaki, founding President of the Japanese Society, and another friend known to Gaskell lovers through her Knutsford visits. She was accompanied by the Secretary of the Society, Mariko Tahira, who does so much to sustain the Gaskell tradition.

Our hosts had arranged two further lectures, the first at Jissen Women's University in Tokyo, where Professor Yamawaki had a long and distinguished career, and where we were entertained by Emeritus Professor Akiko Suzue, who has translated *Sylvia's Lovers* into Japanese, and the second at Kobe Women's University, where the English department was headed by Professor Yoshiko Hiyashi. These lectures were extremely enjoyable occasions, not least on account of the enthusiasm of the students, who were brave enough to try out their English both with questions and in informal discussion. Much in Japan was different, but students are the same everywhere - especially the keen ones, and of these there were plenty.

But as well as the lecture programme we extended our visit to include an exciting tour that took in the mountain resort of Hakone, Tokyo itself, the historic site at Nikko, where Professor Hidemitsu Togo, whom I first met some years ago at Knutsford, was our guide, and finally Kyoto, famous for its shrines and temples. Hakone was spectacular, with a range of volcanic mountains, and sulphur springs gushing up below us. Had I seen the video of the cable-car crossing high over the site that Mitsu sent us afterwards I might not have embarked on it! It was here that Mitsu arranged for us to stay at a beautiful Japanese hotel, with a room of great serenity, complete with its own hot tub on the balcony - an especially Japanese experience. The room was positioned to provide a fine view of Mount Fuji, provided that atmospheric conditions allowed. Tokyo was quite different - a very modern city with skyscrapers and brilliant neon lighting at night; we saw it from the fifty-fourth floor of a skyscraper where Akiko Kimura (another Knutsford visitor) and Tomoko Kanda had taken us for dinner. Later we were shocked by mild earth tremors in our hotel - our hosts assured us that it was nothing, and indeed that they slept through these things. Nikko, a World Heritage site, gave us a lovely day, with excellent weather and an extended visit through its various shrines and temples. Little parties of Japanese schoolchildren were being taken round in their distinctive baseball caps - yellow for one group, red for another; things like this reminded us again that in Japan one should not always think of difference. It was so good to renew our acquaintance with Hidemitsu Togo, who if memory serves me right first floated the

idea of our going to Japan when he came to Knutsford some years ago - if that is the case, we had very good cause to be grateful to him. Finally Kyoto - and one more weather scare because a typhoon was threatened. It did indeed rain very heavily, and we had only a short visit, but we were able to visit its beautiful gardens and shrines, and we had the bonus of watching a traditional Japanese wedding, apparently quite a rare event. At the airport we had one last evening with Mitsu before our early morning departure.

It is difficult to do justice to the kindness of our hosts throughout our visit. If Mitsu and Tat Ohno deserve special mention for their organisation of our itinerary - and everything went like clockwork, or perhaps I should say, like a bullet-train - they organized a team of helpers who simply could not do enough for us. We could never have managed such a journey on our own, and we shall always be grateful to them. We went to Japan not knowing what to expect, and we came back having made many new friends, some of whom will be contributing to the Gaskell Conference in Manchester later this summer. That, I hope, will give us a chance to renew our acquaintance, and to repay at least some of their kindness.



Alan Shelston (on the right) at a reception for the Gaskell Society & Dickens Fellowship of Japan.

Lancaster Visit

Mary Clark

On a bright September day, over forty Gaskell Society members enjoyed a visit to the Ruskin Library of Lancaster University and the city of Lancaster. Elizabeth Gaskell knew the artist and philosopher John Ruskin and had a profound admiration for his writings, especially the seminal work *Modern Painters*. She also had a number of associations with the city of Lancaster itself. Samuel Gaskell, who was her husband William's brother, was the Resident Medical Superintendent at Lancaster Asylum from 1840 to 1849. She had a long-standing friendship with James Langshawe and his wife Emily, who was a niece by marriage of the Knutsford doctor, Peter Holland. Mrs Gaskell visited Lancaster on several occasions and recorded that on a hurried visit in 1857 with her daughter Meta, they had 'cold beef, bread and beer' at the King's Arms Hotel, which was the establishment where Charles Dickens stayed during visits to Lancaster.

The Ruskin Library is a splendid new building opened in 1998 and housing an outstanding collection of manuscripts, books, drawings and watercolours by Ruskin in optimum conditions and with the latest research facilities for scholars. The Curator, Stephen Wildman, gave us a guided tour of the reading room, with its view out over Morecambe Bay, the art galleries and the archive room, where we were able to appreciate some rare editions of Ruskin's work. Mr Wildman's immense knowledge and enthusiasm for his subject made me want to return to spend more time there.

After lunch in Lancaster, we were free to visit a range of buildings in the historic centre of the town. The Castle is an impressive building, with its stone keep dating from the 12th century, and is still in use as a Court and Gaol - fortunately none of our members was incarcerated by mistake! Near the Castle, the Priory and Parish Church of St Mary's was founded in 1094 and has fascinating fourteenth-century misericords; it is the church where Mrs Gaskell's friend, James Langshawe, is commemorated in the church porch added in 1903. The Cottage Museum is an eighteenth-century artisan's house, saved from demolition and restored by the City Council in the mid-1970s. Now furnished as it would have been in the early nineteenth-century, it is a tiny, cramped house on five levels - we had to mind our heads as we went up and down the stairs. The Judges' Lodgings, a superb 17th-century town house, reputedly the oldest in Lancaster, was magnificent in comparison, with its splendidly restored period rooms, featuring furniture by the Gillows of Lancaster and a Childhood Museum. We all appreciated tea and cream cakes in the tearoom at the end of the afternoon. Our last glimpse of Lancaster, from the M6, was of the austere buildings of the Lancaster Asylum, where Samuel

Gaskell was Medical Superintendent, and which is now Moor Hospital.

We owe our thanks to Janet Kennerley for her meticulous organisation of the visit, her thorough research and detailed documentation. Thank you, Janet, for a most interesting day.

Editor: Elizabeth Gaskell and Emily Langshawe, née Sharpe, had known each other from childhood days in Knutsford and exchanged visits over the years. In 1857 Emily stayed at Plymouth Grove for few days after visiting Knutsford. Away from home on one occasion Elizabeth wrote to Marianne: 'If the little Langshawes come over get buns'. Elizabeth wrote, after Marianne had visited them in Lancaster, that: I do think Mr and Mrs Langshawe are charming and as you say he is so thoroughly good, and true and kind' (*Letters*, No. 198a). He was a doctor and probably like his father and grandfather before him, was organist at the parish church and all the family were involved in music. When the Gaskells were buying a piano 'Uncle Langshawe was to have "the trade reduction of price"'. An obituary in the local Lancaster paper dated March 1893 records that Emily was

an enthusiastic supporter of the Lancaster Choral Society, founded by her brother, the late Mr E Sharpe, and sang for many years at the concerts. She also displayed a lively interest in the management of the Girls' Blue Coat school and was very diligent as a district visitor.

'E. Sharp' was the Edmund who many years earlier had been tipped out of a hand-cart while riding with Elizabeth and had suffered a broken arm, which Peter Holland set. He was an architect noted for 'pot churches' - so named from his use of terracotta; his architectural firm became Paley and Austin, who built many noted Northern churches.

LANCASTER GRAND THEATRE

Tuesday 19th - Saturday 23rd April at 7.30pm

Jane Eyre

'Willis Hall's creative adaptation, originally staged at the Crucible Theatre, Sheffield, has retained all the familiar passionate qualities of Charlotte Bronte's classic novel.

Monday 25th - Thursday 28th April at 7.30

Lancaster Royal and Lancaster Girls Grammar Schools present

North and South: a musical

'With a large, talented cast, performing exactly 150 years after the original novel was published, this promises to be a very special production.'

www.lancastergrand.co.uk or phone 01524 64695 for tickets.'

84 PLYMOUTH GROVE

Work continues on the Lottery application and on the upkeep of the house.

Open Days

The house is now open every first Sunday in the month, from 12 - 4 pm. There will be a bring-and-buy bookstall, refreshments and displays.

Friends of Plymouth Grove

We now have over 100 Friends of Plymouth Grove, and a programme of events, fuller details of which have been sent to members. Do join us!

Sunday, 27 February 2005, 11 am. - 1.30 pm:

LITERARY LUNCH, PLYMOUTH GROVE STYLE

Anthony Burton, Chairman of Trustees, The Charles Dickens Museum, will give an illustrated talk on 'Writers' House Museums: their attraction and purposes'. This is to be followed by a buffet lunch. There will be a charge of £6 per head to help with fund-raising.

Saturday, 2 April 2005, 12 noon - 3 pm:

SPRING LUNCH WITH WILLIAM AND ELIZABETH GASKELL

Please come and bring your friends! Leicester Warren Hall, Bexton Lane, Knutsford will be our venue. It has been used by both the Literary festival and the Gaskell Society. The food is traditional, there is a nice bar and ample car parking. After lunch Delia Corrie (whom many of you will remember reading from Elizabeth's letters at Plymouth Grove) and her colleague Charles Foster will present *At home with Elizabeth Gaskell*. Cost: £18 per head.

For more information, contact: Janet Allan, 10 Dale Road, New Mills, High Peak, SK22 4NW; tel: 01663 744233, or: Elizabeth Williams, 15 Cawley Avenue, Culcheth, Warrington, WA3 4DF; tel: 01925 764271.

General Meetings

On Saturday 9th April, the Annual General Meeting at Cross Street Chapel.

10.30 for coffee:

11.00 Annual General Meeting.

11.45 approx. Alan Shelston will deliver The Daphne Carrick Lecture: The Eagle and the Dove: Dickens. Elizabeth Gaskell, and the publishing culture of the Nineteenth Century

1.00 Buffet Lunch

2.15 Visitors at Plymouth Grove introduced by Joan Leach, Robin Allan and others

3.45/4.00 approx. Finish

On **1st October**, the Autumn meeting at Knutsford will celebrate our twentieth anniversary with a special programme.



Autumn meeting 2004

From left to right: Joan Leach, Josie Billington, Angus Easson, Alan Shelston, John Chapple and Janet Allan. Thanks to Tat Ohno for the photo.

North West group

Meetings at Cross Street Chapel, Manchester:

Tuesday 8th March, 1.00pm (bring your own sandwich lunch 12.15):

Dr. Julie-Marie Strange: 'Popular religion, class and ethnicity'

£2 members, £3 non-members

Knutsford meetings at St John's Church Centre:

Wednesday 16th March: Speaker: Professor Angus Easson: *Secrets in Wives and Daughters*

Wednesday 27th April: Final discussion on *Wives and Daughters*

Wednesday 25 May: Visit to Over Peover Hall, which has some features of Hamley Hall. £8 to include entrance and Tea. List, cars etc to be arranged at Knutsford Meetings, or contact Joan Leach.

The London and South East Group

PROGRAMME FOR 2005

Saturday 14th May: 'Who exactly were Mrs Gaskell's friends, the Winkworths?' by Professor Peter Skrine

Saturday 10th September: 'George Eliot and Mrs Gaskell: Mutual fascination between two sister writers, and a common interest in their two greatest novels' by Dr. Brenda McKay

Saturday 12th November: '*Cranford*: Mrs Gaskell's most radical novel?' by Caroline Jackson-Houlston.

Meetings are held at Francis Holland School, 39 Graham Terrace, London SW1W 8JF starting at 2pm. Francis Holland is a few minutes walk from Sloane Square tube station which is on the District and Circle lines. It is necessary to ring the security bell in order to gain access to the building. Someone will answer the door!!

During the course of 2004 **sandwich lunches** prior to the meeting at the school were introduced. By common consent these will continue. Lunch (which consists of sandwiches, cake and a cold drink) will be provided and tea and biscuits will follow the meeting. Lunch and tea afterwards give members an opportunity to have a chat and get to know one another. Everyone is very welcome to come for lunch anytime after 12.45pm. It is not necessary to let me know in advance although it is helpful to have some idea of numbers!

Contributions for lunch and tea will be collected at the meeting for which a nominal charge of £2 is made.

A **bookstall** has been established to raise money for Plymouth Grove. If you have unwanted books that you think other members might like to buy please bring them along. You need not take them home again. They can go into store until the next meeting!

I hope that the programme appeals and I hope to see you during the course of 2005 at some or all of the meetings.

Fran Twinn

The South-West Group

PROGRAMME FOR 2005

Thursday 5th May: Visit to Clevedon, including the Poets' Walk to St. Andrews Church where there is a Memorial to Arthur Hallam. In the afternoon there will be a visit to Clevedon Court (National Trust), where our group will be given a tour by a dedicated guide. (Tennyson's 'In Memoriam' was a great favourite with Mrs. Gaskell: *Letters*, Nos. 73, 79).

Saturday, 2nd July: Mrs. Joan Leach, with two other readers, will give her lively presentation of the Winkworth sisters. Professor Peter Skrine will add his unique view of the Winkworths in Bristol. Bath Royal Literary and Scientific Institution, Queen Square, Bath. 2.00pm for 2.30pm

Sunday 12th August: Summer Tea by kind invitation of Kate and Alec Crawford, at Norton St. Philip.

We hope to arrange a visit to Knutsford to coincide with the Autumn Meeting on **1st October**. There should be a chance for South West members and friends to see some of Mrs. Gaskell's Cheshire and make a visit to Plymouth Grove.

All members and friends are very welcome. For more details, contact Mrs. Rosemary Marshall on 01225 426732 or email rosemary_marshall@yahoo.com.

Group Meetings in York and Edinburgh

Joan Leach

After enjoyable meetings in Manchester and Knutsford I often have regrets that more members are prevented from joining us by reason of distance. When Rosemary Marshall moved from Cheshire to Bath she missed our meetings, so, with encouragement from Professor Peter and Mrs Skrine from Bristol, the South West group was formed.

The London and South East group started from an annual meeting held in November; Richard Beckley consulted members about more regular meetings and Dudley Barlow agreed to act as group secretary. Recently Dr Frances Twinn has taken on this task. Dudley and Howard Gregg have moved to Yorkshire; we were considering getting together with other Yorkshire members when The Jane Austen Society, Northern branch, invited our members to join them at a meeting in York on 20th November 2004. The speaker was Dr. Joanne Shattock of Leicester University, who is also a member of our Society and editor of the forthcoming Pickering & Chatto edition of Gaskell's works. She spoke on 'Jane Austen and Elizabeth Gaskell: Lives and Letters'. The two societies have members in common and it was a pleasure to meet at The King's Manor. York is accessible and offers many attractions so we plan to follow this up with a Gaskell meeting: if a regular group results from this we might consider Leeds as an alternative meeting place. A date has been fixed for Saturday 21st May at The Meeting House, Friargate, York, probably with a buffet lunch. Yorkshire area members will be mailed with further details, or send an SAE to Joan Leach. Further details will be on the homepage.

Edinburgh

Elizabeth Gaskell had several links with Scotland particularly through her father, and from her own visits to Edinburgh we have the first and last portraits of her. She admired the Scottish accent which she attributed to Dr. Gibson in *Wives and Daughters*: perhaps she had in mind her cousin, Sir Henry Holland, who had studied medicine at Edinburgh University. The Society has several members in Scotland who would like to participate in Gaskell events but too few at present to form a group. With assistance from Professor Ian Campbell, editor of the Carlyle Letters and a good friend to our Society, we shared a day with The Carlyle Society. Braving railway problems five members travelled from Cheshire, almost as a diplomatic mission: myself, Elizabeth Williams, Mary Syner, Sheila Stephenson and Janet Kennerley.

On the morning of 26th November members from both Societies met at The Centre for Continuing Education, Edinburgh University, for a Gaskell morning. After I outlined Elizabeth Gaskell's Edinburgh and Carlyle associations, Elizabeth Williams gave an introduction to Gaskell's life and works; then Dr Brian Ridger considered how Gaskell collected and used information for *The Life of Charlotte Brontë*. We look forward to reading more of this in Brian's work on the writing of biographies.

During the buffet lunch Professor Paul Kerry of Brigham Young University, Utah, arrived from America just in time to deliver his paper for the Carlyle Society afternoon, after a brief AGM.

He read a paper 'On history again': how history is interpreted for us by historians and especially Carlyle. I wonder how much of Carlyle's historical writings the Gaskells read. We concluded a lively day with an informal Christmas party.

We hope to follow this up with a seminar at the same venue on Victorian writers.

Residential Course on Gaskell and Brontë theme

Jackie Wilkin (University of Manchester part-time tutor) will be giving a 24-hour course to University Adult Programme students at Chancellor's, the University's Residential Conference Centre in Fallowfield, from 2pm on **Saturday 21 May to Sunday 22 May**. The course finishes after lunch on the Sunday. Cost is £79.50 for accommodation plus approximately £18 for course fee. A £10 deposit will be needed for residential students (cheques made out to 'The University of Manchester') with the balance due in April. Copy of the programme and day student cost (depending on whether lunch is required) from: Jackie Wilkin, Room W.213 Humanities Bldg. (Lime Grove); E-mail: jackie.wilkin@manchester.ac.uk; Tel. 0161 275 3079 (Voicemail: leave a message).

The Charles Lamb Society

has much pleasure in inviting you to
THE ALLIANCE OF LITERARY SOCIETIES WEEKEND
in London on 21st and 22nd May 2005

Programme of Events

Saturday, 21st May

Swedenborg Hall

10.00 am Coffee

10.30 Welcome and introduction to Charles and Mary Lamb

11.00 Alliance of Literary Societies annual general meeting

12.30 pm Lunch

2.00 Guided walks around Lamb's London
or visit(s) to local museum(s) of relevance to the Lambs

4.00 Tea at Swedenborg Hall

4.30 'Lamb's Tale or My Gentle-hearted Charles' - a One-man Play in Two
Acts, based on the life of Charles Lamb, written and performed by G.
Leslie Irons

At Ye Olde Cheshire Cheese

7.30 Drinks, 8.00 Dinner

Sunday, 22nd May

Sunday will be given over to a visit to the Lambs' delightful cottage and their graves
at Edmonton in North London. Details to be announced.

General Information

Venues: Swedenborg Hall is at 20-21 Bloomsbury Way, London, W1. It is located
on the south side of Bloomsbury Square, just along from St George's Church,
Bloomsbury (the 'artists' church', by Hawksmoor). The entrance to the Hall is around
the corner to the right from the Swedenborg House shopfront.

Meals: coffee and tea are courtesy of the Charles Lamb Society. Lunches and
dinner will need to be paid for individually. If you have any special dietary needs
please tell us.

Travel: We shall assume that everyone will travel by public transport. Although
there is car parking close to Swedenborg Hall it is extremely expensive.

While it is not essential to book in advance for any of the weekend events, apart
from the dinner on Saturday evening, it would assist us to have an indication of
numbers, especially for the coach on Sunday and for those guiding the walks. If you
would like to attend any weekend events, please contact The Charles Lamb Society,
ALS, BM-ELIA, London WC1N 3XX as soon as possible, or go through the website
named above (www.allianceofliterarysocieties.org) and look for 'Charles Lamb
Society AGM' where all details and an application form can be found.