



Greta Hall, home of Southey and Coleridge



**The Old Grammar School at Hawkshead
where Wordsworth and his brother were pupils**

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

The Gaskell Society



NEWSLETTER

Autumn 2005 - Number 40

Editor's Letter

Joan Leach

The highlight of our year has been the Manchester Conference at which Gaskell members, from the UK and overseas, were joined by other delegates; you can read some members' comments in this Newsletter and will be sure to hear more in future Journals. We are grateful to all at Manchester Metropolitan University who worked to make this such a success.

Congratulations are due to Jo Pryke, our Journal editor and her team for being chosen in August as the journal of the month, by The Council of Editors of Learned Journals. With this accolade Jo feels it is time for her to retire as editor and will work with Frances Twinn who will take on the task after the next issue.

Talking of accolades I must express my thanks to those members who sponsored me for the award of an M.B.E which was a lovely surprise and a great honour. You can read about how this was achieved. I will soon be getting a 'summons' to go to Buckingham Palace to receive this and have recently had my 'warrant' for the award.

The Gaskell Society of Japan are to be congratulated on completing their translation of Gaskell novels by the end of this year. We hope they will attract new Gaskell readers. I am delighted that to have been invited to visit their Society next June.

Our trip to the Lake District in May was most enjoyable and we are grateful to Mary Clark for writing an account of our visits so that some of you may like to follow our footsteps. Robin Allan was with us on this trip and members will be sorry to know that he has been dangerously ill but is out of intensive care and recovering. We wish him well. Our next venture in group travel may be a trip to Rome next September. Please consult our home page (address is on back cover) if you have not received details of this or other events.

William Gaskell's 200th anniversary on 24th July did not pass unobserved for Cross Street Chapel held a fine commemorative service and provided birthday cake. In the afternoon Terry Wyke led a city centre walk to re-discover buildings and sites known to the Gaskells. Alan Shelston has also written on the Manchester background and we hope to print a booklet on this theme using funds from Brian Hechle's bequest to our Society. Please make a note of forthcoming meetings. AGM for next year will be 8th April at Cross Street Chapel and we are to have our New Year Lunch there on 10th January with a programme from North-West film archives.

News has just come to us about a new event to be launched at Whitby: The 1st Caedmon Literary Festival will be from 23-28 April 2006 with a varied programme. There will certainly be a Gaskell input with a *Sylvia's Lovers* theme. The organisers aim to draw 'artists and writers to this cradle of English Literature on the East Coast just as nearly 2000 years ago it drew kings, scholars and more to the great Synod of Whitby in 664 AD.'

The Cober Hill Conspiracy

Chapter 1

Elizabeth Gaskell and her daughters were able to keep the secret from William Gaskell of the purchase of a new family house in Hampshire. Following in this tradition some Gaskell Society members were also entrusted with a secret in September 2003.

With her usual expertise Joan Leach had organised a visit to Cober Hill near Scarborough - a lovely Centre which is perfectly located for exploring Whitby and the surrounding areas linked with *Sylvia's Lovers*. Joan had been looking forward to returning, following a previous Gaskell Society visit some years earlier which she had also organised. Unfortunately the ill health of Joan's husband Christopher prevented her second visit. As we sat round the dinner table feeling very fortunate to be in such a lovely location - Cober Hill is within walking distance of the cliffs above Cloughton Wyke - three members discussed with two Committee members how sorry we were that Joan had not been able to join us. The discussion continued around Joan's activities for the Gaskell Society and the Committee members related Joan's achievements in and around the Knutsford area. These included extensive connections with the Knutsford Heritage Centre, the Knutsford Literature Festival and lecturing on local history. As far as we could tell Joan must have turned down an honour in recognition for all her voluntary work. The Committee representatives were certain that this was not the case but in response to a request that the Gaskell Society Committee pursue an honour for Joan, the task was promptly entrusted to the non-Committee three although the support of the Committee was assured. The plot was hatched.

On returning from Cober Hill the first stage of the process was to find out through the Internet how the procedure worked. A site named 'Ask the Prime Minister' proved to be useful. It later became clear where Prime Minister Blair had stolen the idea - 'Ask Joan Leach' on the Knutsford Heritage Centre's web site had obviously been his inspiration. The Society's Manchester meetings at Cross Street Chapel were ideal for updating the conspirators. By November 2003 the promised support from Committee Members increased our number by three so our hopes of containing the secret were high.

Once the necessary letters of support together with the nomination had been provided (which resulted in three more conspirators) the process was set in motion in March 2004. The hardest part was trying to be patient! We discovered that the whole procedure can take as long as eighteen months and the recipient of the

honour is the only person who is notified of the outcome. A conspirator gathering information found that the greatest hurdle to overcome was trying to contact the Knutsford Heritage Centre without Joan's knowledge. In the end this was overcome by the adoption of the traditional fictional private detective's idea of using an alias and telephoning when Joan was actually in view at Cross Street Chapel.

Many Manchester meetings later, an AGM, a visit to Worcester in July 2004, another AGM (and one more conspirator) and the Society's visit to Grasmere in May 2005 passed and the conspirators remained in the dark as to the outcome.

Chapter 2: Joan Leach

Our trip to the Lake District in May was a memorable experience which I thoroughly enjoyed (see Mary Clark's report in this Newsletter). I arrived home, tired and gasping for a cup of tea, to find a large pile of post which I thought I would tackle the next day; however as I flipped through it one letter stamped '10 Downing Street' demanded attention.

It was telling me that I had been awarded an MBE and would I reply, by return, to acknowledge my acceptance. What a wonderful surprise! However I could not share my excitement because my official instructions were that no-one was to be told until 12 hours before the announcement of the Queen's Birthday Honours list on 11th June. The MBE was to be listed as: Joan Leach, *Secretary of The Gaskell Society: for services to Literature and the Community of Knutsford*. I decided that Janet Allan, our Chairman, must know something about what had happened behind the scenes so I let her know, trusting that she would contact others who needed to be told.

A few days before the Honours list was due to be released I was at a committee meeting for Knutsford Literature Festival with Marie Moss a Gaskell committee member who was then going abroad for a holiday so I thought it permissible to drop a hint about the forthcoming announcement; then she told me a little about all that had been done for me. I am really touched by the faith in me which so many have evinced and regard it as an accolade to The Gaskell Society. The *Manchester Evening News* gave it a mention after the announcements and our local Knutsford papers had a field day.

Many are the congratulations I have received, ranging from flowers and delightful cards to thumbs-up from passing cars...I have not, at present, been told of the date for my visit to Buckingham Palace but hope a few Gaskell members will accompany me. And I am filing offers of hats to borrow!!

Thank you all for your friendship, support and encouragement.

Manchester Conference Reviewed

Elizabeth Gaskell and Manchester: Identity, Culture and the Modern City
sponsored by the Gaskell Society and the Manchester Centre for Regional History
at Manchester Metropolitan University, 19-21 July 2005

This conference was attended by 130 delegates including a number from overseas. The wide range of papers read and varied events made this event was an outstanding success as you will gather from these comments by delegates:

Robert Poole
Reader in History
St Martin's College
Lancaster

Last week's Gaskell conference was one of the most enjoyable I have ever attended. It was made so very largely by the informed enthusiasm of the Gaskell Society members, and I just had to join. What you have achieved is quite remarkable - congratulations.

Mary Haynes Kuhlman, Ph.D.
Department of English
Creighton University
Omaha, Nebraska 68178 USA

Message posted on the Gaskell Correspondence page:

Our recent conference "Elizabeth Gaskell and Manchester: Identity, Culture and the Modern City", sponsored by the Gaskell Society and the Manchester Centre for Regional History at Manchester Metropolitan University, was so excellent and so enjoyable (to me, but I'm CERTAIN to others) that I just have to use this list to broadcast a THANKS and a REPORT.

THANKS first, last, and long after to the committee who planned and worked at this event and particularly Craig Horner and Melanie Tebbutt of Manchester Metropolitan University.

I would also thank every single person who attended and thus contributed to the fine audiences, insightful discussions, and friendly conversations. I might list various attendees and committee members and presenters that subscribers to this list already know - people like Janet Allan, Mary Syner, Joan Leach, Mary Clark, Christine Lingard, John and Kate Chapple, Brian & Elizabeth Williams, J. Geoffrey and Heather Sharps, Tat Ohno, Jenny Uglow - but no, I'll stop there today, but I wish to thank so many MORE people, many of whom readers of our messages or of the *GS Journal* know whose presence contributed to the conference's success.

REPORT: just a quick summary of the impromptu summing-up remarks of keynoters & organizers in a final summing-up session, including Alan Shelston, Linda K. Hughes, Alan Kidd, Martin Hewitt and Melanie Tebbutt: they spoke of Gaskell's 'diversity' (range of genre, theme, etc.), her connection to the wider culture, complexity of her relationship to Manchester, her emerging stature as a major author, 'visiting' as a mode of knowledge, and the delight of conference organizers and delegates in bringing literature and history together in an event that really lived up to the conference's title.

Alan Shelston
Manchester University

Various things stood out for me from the conference - the quality and diversity of the contributions; the responses to them; the coming together of specialist academics and wider readers; the appropriateness of the various supporting events; the conjunction of the two themes 'Gaskell' and 'Manchester', plus the fact that this never acted as a constraint on wider considerations; above all the atmosphere of friendship and cooperation that existed.

A message from two of our Japanese delegates, Professor Masaie Matsamura and Tomoko Kanda who gave papers at the conference:

Congratulations on the great success of the conference. We were honoured to read our papers at such a wonderful conference. The time we spent there was made thoroughly enjoyable by the courtesies extended to us from Japan, by the conference committee members, presenters, and attendees. Many thanks to the lecturers and presenters for the excellent and highly informative lectures and papers, and deepest thanks to the committee members for everything you did for the conference. And our heartfelt thanks to every fellow Gaskellian with whom we enjoyed talking. We also would like to express special thanks to Alan Shelston and Joan Leach, for their efforts to develop a deeper friendship between the Gaskell Society and the Gaskell Society of Japan. Again, our thanks for a very pleasant and enlightening experience. It will be always our fondest memories of your country.

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 history 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.

Elizabeth Gaskell and the Isle of Man

Peter Skrine

Elizabeth Gaskell's associations with North Wales and the Lake District are well known, but what about the Isle of Man, visible on clear days from both these favourite holiday haunts of hers? She mentions it seldom, and her references to it have attracted little attention. Yet, astonishingly enough, the Isle of Man is mentioned no fewer than eight times in her first novel, *Mary Barton*. These allusions are all connected with Will Wilson, Mrs Wilson's foster-son, and play an integral part in the creation of suspense as the events of the narrative are followed through. As such, they are of no particular consequence except insofar as they help to conjure up a sense of space. Margaret's singing of the old canzonets she has lately learnt, and its effect on the 'handsome, dashing, spirited' sailor-lad Will Wilson in Chapter 13 lead to Will's offer to bring Job Legh a live Manx cat. 'A what?' exclaims Job. 'I don't know its best name,' says Will humbly, 'but we call 'em just Manx cats. They're cats without tails.' In spite of all his knowledge of natural history Job has never heard of such animals. But Will's offer is quite genuine, since he intends to see his mother's friends on the island before joining his ship, so as a further inducement he adds: 'They look so queer ... Especially when you see 'em walking a roof-top, right again the sky, when a cat, as is a proper cat, is sure to stick her tail stiff out behind, like a slack-rope dancer a-balancing; but these cats having no tail, cannot stick it out, which captivates some people uncommonly.' Further on in the novel, Will, now in much less buoyant mood, comes to say good-bye to Mary, and in doing so reveals more of his insider's knowledge by telling her he must be off because he promised his uncle - and he specifies 'my mother's brother, him that lives at Kirk-Christ beyond Ramsey in the Isle of Man that we would go and see him and his.' This topographical detail is more telling. How did Elizabeth Gaskell come to know that Kirk-Christ is the name of a parish in the North-West of the island? In fact Kirk Christ Lezayre was in those days the parish in which the small fishing port of Ramsey was located.

Elizabeth Gaskell visited the Isle of Man only once, as far as we know, and little importance has been attached to her visit: the island is not even mentioned in the

index to Jenny Uglow's expansive biography, though she mentions the visit in some detail on p. 360.ⁱ It took place in late August 1854, and the only evidence for it are the letter she wrote to her daughter Julia, containing the news 'We have seen two Manx cats without tails and uncommonly ugly they are', and a shorter one to her daughter Marianne.ⁱⁱ Neither letter is dated or carries an address, but she does tell Marianne that 'there is scarlet fever in Ballaugh,' the place which Meta, with whom she was holidaying, had 'set her heart upon, 8 miles from here', a detail which indicates she is writing from Ramsey, which *The People's and Howitt's* journal had described as a 'very pretty place' in 1849. What this scanty documentation also tells us is that the weather was uncharacteristically bad for the time of year, so plans had to be altered and they ended up staying somewhere where the arrival of small children soon after them caused some irritation. However, the letter to Julia also tells her that 'there is not a dirty little cottage by the road-side but what has its fuchsia growing as high as the roof', a detail which rings true to anyone familiar with the Island today. Ballaugh, fuchsia and real Manx cats. Beyond these sparse facts there is only speculation.

Or are there echoes of this Manx experience in 'French Life', the fascinating piece Elizabeth Gaskell published anonymously in *Fraser's Magazine* ten years later in April/June 1864? Here she recalls staying at an inn in Avignon, where, gazing at the flying sparks of a fire which one of her daughters was poking, she is reminded of a story heard long ago in Ramsey, in the Isle of Man. 'We were questioning a fisherman's wife ... about the Mauthe Doog of Peel Castle, in which she had a firm belief,' she writes. This is an obvious allusion to one of the Isle of Man's best-known legends, that of the 'black dog', or 'moddey dhoo' in Manx, which is said to haunt the picturesque ruins of Peel Castle. From this, the conversation turns to fairies. 'Are there any on the island now?' she asks. 'Gravely, of course, for it was a grave and serious subject with her, the fisherman's wife replies, 'None now. My brother saw the last that ever was in the island. He was making a short cut in the hills above Kirk Maughold, and came down on a green hollow ... He heard the larks singing up above; but this time he heard a little piping cry out of the ground.' He looks more carefully, and finds 'a fairy ever so weak and small, crying sadly. Her own people have left her behind all alone, and she is faint and weak.' Well-meaningly he picks the crying fairy up to take her home as a plaything for his children. But when he opens his hand to tell her he is doing this for her own good, he finds he has crushed her to death. 'So, as he said, there was no use bringing her home in that state; and he threw her away; and that was the end of the last fairy I ever heard of in the island.' Gaskell's 'folktale' sounds authentic, almost as if told in a true Manx voice, yet it does not seem to have a Manx source and is quite different in tone from authentic Manx folktales. Perhaps she created it for her daughters when their holiday was over and they had come home on the 'Manx Fairy', a smart iron vessel which came into service with the Ramsey Steam Packet Company in 1853, prompting intense

'fairy' mania, or later still, when they heard about the misfortunes which soon befell the elegant but unlucky steamer, and inspired a thirteen-year-old Ramsey girl called Margaret Kermode to write an elegy which ends with the lines:

She is gone, she is gone! She will never return
Fare well to thee, bright little fairy.ⁱⁱⁱ

Notes

- i. In the text of her biography of Elizabeth Gaskell Jenny Uglow refers to a 'hilarious account' sent by Meta to Marianne, but mentions no source. See *Elizabeth Gaskell. A Habit of Stories*, p. 360.
- ii. *Letters*, nos. 208 and 209.
- iii. Constance Radcliffe, *Shining by the Sea. A History of Ramsey 1800-1914* (Douglas, 1989), p. 67. The young author of this poem was a great-great-aunt of the author of this article.

John Ashton Nicholls in Boston

John Chapple

John Ashton Nicholls (1823-1859), the lively son of two members of the Cross Street congregation, toured America between 29 August 1857 and 21 February 1858. In Boston he saw the 'Faneuil Hall, so celebrated in the revolution'. The next day, 1 November, he made another kind of historical pilgrimage to see the Federal Street church, 'a nice, clean-looking, old-fashioned place'. This was where the great American Unitarian William Ellery Channing (1780-1842) used to preach. The inward and spiritual nature of his eloquence had confirmed James Martineau in his break with the rationalistic tradition of Joseph Priestley. But Channing's influence amongst British Unitarians extended far more widely, even amongst traditional ministers, as we see from the many copies of his publications in the Gaskell Sale Catalogue of Books (1914). Nicholls attended a Federal Street service in November 1857, taken by Dr E. S. Gannett (1801-1871), Channing's co-pastor and eventual successor. It was 'an excellent discourse', but it had its unexpected side.

He wrote to his mother:

The pulpit was very wide, and the minister sat down, quite away from the desk, during the singing, performed by the choir, and not joined in by the congregation, who all sat still and listened. I do not like that way; I prefer to hear the voices of all united.

Three or four times during the sermon the minister coughed, cleared his throat, and leaning to one side, gave a good genuine spit out, so I presume, must have been

furnished with a spittoon, which article I saw was in all the pews; fancy, at the end of a beautiful passage, a climax in the divisions of the sermon, the preacher spitting out, and then wiping his mouth with his handkerchief? What should we say if Mr. Gaskell did so? I will ask him, when I see him, how he would feel under similar circumstances. It disgusted me, and I hoped, in my mind, that Dr. Channing did not spit in the pulpit, yet I fear the practice is universal in places of worship. There are nearly twenty Unitarian churches here, our body being the largest and most influential in this city.

(*'Letters from America', In Memoriam. A Selection from the Letters of the Late John Ashton Nicholls*, edited by his mother and privately printed, 1862.)

Sadly, this mischievous young man died not long after his return from America. William Gaskell delivered one of his finest funeral sermons about him at Cross Street on 15 September 1859. We also know now, from *Further Letters*, (pp. 203-5) that it was Elizabeth Gaskell who wrote a description of his deathbed for his travelling companion, John Rotherham, on behalf of the stricken mother.

The Alliance of Literary Societies

The 2005 AGM weekend in London 21/22 May was hosted by The Charles Lamb Society with an excellent programme. There are now 109 member societies.

The 2006 AGM weekend will be in Bath, May 13/14 hosted by The Jane Austen Society.

It was sad to hear of the death of Giles Hart, Chairman of The H.G. Wells Society, who was killed on the No. 30 bus on 7th July. He was a "prominent British support of the Solidarity movement in Poland throughout the 1980s, especially when Poland was under martial law. His obituary in the Times demonstrates Mr Hart to have been an exemplary person who will be missed greatly. He came to many of the A.L.S. A.G.Ms

For info. on ALS: <http://www.allianceofliterarysocieties.co.uk>

There are details of many literary events and societies including Gaskell. You might like to read the newsletter of the ALS here.

A forgotten wedding custom and Jane Eyre

Ian M Emberson

I was interested to read Jenny Uglow's short article 'A Forgotten Wedding Custom', with its reference to the superstition that it's unlucky for a bride-to-be to label her things with her married name before the wedding, and that if she does so, she may never bear that married name (Newsletter 39, p. 9). After reading it I wondered if there was an echo of this in Chapter 25 of Charlotte Brontë's *Jane Eyre* (Volume 2, Ch.10 in some editions). On the eve of her wedding to Mr. Rochester, Jane writes of '....my trunks, packed, locked, corded, ranged in a row along the wall of my little chamber....', but adds: 'The cards of address alone remained to nail on: they lay, four little squares, on the drawer. Mr. Rochester had himself written the direction, "Mrs. Rochester, - Hotel, London", on each. I could not persuade myself to affix them, or to have them affixed. Mrs. Rochester! She did not exist...'. If Jane is obeying the ancient superstition, her obedience is in vain, for the next day the wedding service is interrupted by those terrible words: 'The marriage cannot go on: I declare the existence of an impediment'.

The Lake District in the footsteps of Elizabeth Gaskell

Mary Clark

From the early years of her marriage, Elizabeth Gaskell had a long association with the Lake District and Morecambe Bay on its southern fringe. In 1836, she stayed at Grange-over-Sands with her infant daughter Marianne and from 1843 onwards spent many summer holidays at Gibraltar Farm and Lindeth Tower in Silverdale, and then at Mrs Preston's Mill Brow Farm, up from Skelwith Bridge. Her letters show all of her immense enthusiasm for the Lake District, with its busy social and literary scene. Through the good offices of Wordsworth's son-in-law, Edward Quillinan, she met, to her delight, the 'sage of Rydal Mount' shortly before his death, and visited also the Arnolds of Fox How, the Davys of Lesketh How and Mrs Elizabeth Fletcher of Lancrigg, as well as Harriet Martineau at The Knoll, the house which she had built on the edge of Ambleside. So it was fitting for a group of almost forty Gaskell Society members to spend four days in the Lake District in early May visiting so many of the places associated with Gaskell and her friends, as well as with the Lakeland poets whom she so greatly admired. We were based at the Prince of Wales Hotel on the shores of Grasmere Lake, within a stone's throw of Wordsworth's Dove Cottage.

On our first day, we headed north to Morecambe and from Hest Bank looked out across the treacherous sands of Morecambe Bay, the setting for 'The Sexton's Hero'. In Silverdale, we visited the farm where Gaskell often stayed, in a 'queer pretty crampy house', as she described it in a letter to Charles Eliot Norton. In a drawing-room at the top of Lindeth Tower she wrote a considerable part of *Ruth* and from the roof, it was easy to recall her description of the shimmering sands of the Bay where the Bradshaw daughters played so joyously, but which seemed much more threatening at Ruth's fateful meeting with her former lover Bellingham. A few miles away, we were able to visit the Sheiling, the late Victorian house built for Gaskell's unmarried daughters, Meta and Julia.

With Gaskell's profound admiration for Wordsworth, it was appropriate that in the evening we should have a lecture given by Dr Pamela Woof of the University of Newcastle, who is the leading authority on Dorothy Wordsworth. In her lecture Dr Woof concentrated on Dorothy's relatively little known early life, with great erudition but also immense sensitivity towards her subject. The following morning we headed for Cockermouth to visit the Wordsworth House, a fine Georgian town house, the birthplace and childhood home of William and Dorothy Wordsworth. It has recently been refurbished by the National Trust, to reflect the family home and garden as it would have been in Wordsworth's day. After visiting Crosthwaite church, near Keswick, where are the graves of the poet Southey and Canon Rawnsley, a founder of the National Trust, we went on to Greta Hall, an imposing square white house set up from Keswick, in which Southey, Coleridge and their families had lived in the early nineteenth century. The present owners gave us a warm welcome and we enjoyed a home-baked afternoon tea. To round off the day, we joined the Wordsworth Society for an evening reading of poetry and prose by the Scottish poet Kathleen Jamie. I felt that her feeling for place and the sensitivity of her recollections were not too remote from those of Elizabeth Gaskell herself.

On the following morning, we headed for Hawkshead to see the Grammar School attended by William Wordsworth and his brothers. In the schoolroom, where William had carved his name on his desk, there was still the atmosphere of the rigorous discipline of those schooldays, though we were fascinated to learn that the boys were each allowed two pints of small beer with their dinner. In the afternoon, we took to minibuses to negotiate the narrow roads leading to a variety of houses with Gaskell associations. We visited Briery Close, where, as a guest of Sir James and Lady Kay-Shuttleworth, Gaskell first met Charlotte Brontë, famously describing her in a letter to Catherine Winkworth as 'a little lady in a black silk gown' who 'came up & shook hands', though she was evidently quite overcome with shyness. The house has been extended and radically altered in Victorian times and more recently, with the impressive gardens being designed in the early years of the twentieth century, but the glorious view across Windermere to Coniston Old Man remains exactly as

Elizabeth Gaskell and Charlotte Brontë would have known it. Townend Farm, Troutbeck, owned by the National Trust, is much as it would have been in the seventeenth century - a solid stone and slate house. It belonged to the same family of wealthy 'statesmen' farmers, the Brownes, from 1626 to 1943, and its collection of books, papers, furniture and domestic implements was largely accumulated by the family. It seemed a rather grander version of the 'stateswoman' Mrs Preston's Mill Brow Farm, where Gaskell often stayed and of which she wrote in a letter to a young friend, Charles Bosanquet, that 'the family [had] lived in that house and on that land for more than 200 years'. Gaskell no doubt had Mill Brow Farm and the Prestons much in mind in her short story 'Half a Life-Time Ago' and its precursor 'Martha Preston'. In 'Cumberland Sheep-Shearers' also, Gaskell describes the solid stone farmhouse, with its great bed-chamber and 'houseplace', and all the excitement of the annual sheep-shearing festivity. Lancrigg, in Easedale, which is now a vegetarian hotel, was the home of Mrs Elizabeth (Eliza) Fletcher, found for her by Wordsworth. Mrs Fletcher had been the wife of an Edinburgh attorney and had a wealth of friends prominent in the intellectual, artistic and political life of the city, and was known to Gaskell's father, William Stevenson, at the turn of the century and to Elizabeth herself when she visited Edinburgh shortly before her marriage. Gaskell's memories of Mrs Fletcher's 'salon' may have inspired her collection of short stories, 'Round the Sofa'. Mrs Fletcher's son, Angus, was the sculptor of Wordsworth's bust in Grasmere church and of Dorothy Wordsworth's gravestone.

Outside the formal programme, a few of us were privileged to be invited to visit The Knoll, the house which Harriet Martineau built on the edge of Ambleside and where she established her small model farm. The house, half of which is now owned by Barbara Todd, who edited the recent edition of Martineau's 'A Year at Ambleside', seems to have changed little in outward appearance from Martineau's time, when Gaskell visited her, seeking information for *The Life of Charlotte Brontë*, and it was fascinating to look down and still see the boundaries of Martineau's farm.

In the evening, after the earnestness of the day's pursuits, we had a little gentle relaxation in watching the BBC *Omnibus* programme on Elizabeth Gaskell and seeing the members of the Gaskell Society Committee following in her footsteps in Rome and elsewhere.

On our final morning, we visited Cartmel, with its fine Norman priory, where we caught the end of the Ascension Day service, and then Lindale, where the characters of 'The Sexton's Hero' had their home. We went on to Levens Hall, where the BBC filmed *Wives and Daughters*. In Kirkby Lonsdale, on a dank and rainy afternoon, only a brave few followed up the Ruskin connections, while the second-hand bookshops and the tearooms seemed to do a brisk trade. On our way home, through the Lune valley, we paused briefly at Cowan Bridge, where Charlotte

Brontë and her sisters attended school and which was to be Lowood School in *Jane Eyre*. We recalled how movingly Gaskell described the scene: the burbling river, the garden which the girls had tended and the sad, deserted dormitory. From the coach, we had a fleeting glimpse of Burrow Hall, where Gaskell stayed with the Alcocks when she visited Cowan Bridge; they rented the house from the Fenwick family: Mrs Alcock was the sister of Dr Robberds.

While the Lake District has changed greatly over a hundred and fifty years, for a few brief days we were able to feel all of its beauty and its spirit, so dear to Elizabeth Gaskell and her friends, and to the Lakeland poets. Our thanks are due to all those who so generously opened up their houses to us, to Alan, our coach driver, and especially to Joan Leach and Jean Alston for all their detailed research and the excellent organisation of the tour. Thank you, Joan and Jean, for a most memorable trip.



Lake District Trip - Members outside The Shelling

Plymouth Grove

The house was open the day before the Manchester conference, and we welcomed new and old friends to a performance in the drawing room of 'Elizabeth Gaskell and Charlotte Brontë' by the InterTheatre team. This raised £500.

The regular open days are on the first Sunday of the month, from 12-4. The house will also be open during the national Heritage Open Days, on 10 and 11 September from 10-4. As well as refreshments, exhibitions, tours and our bring-and buy bookstall, there will be special childrens' activities and a local corner for people who have memories of Plymouth Grove and its neighbourhood. We welcome visitors and volunteers.

Fundraising is crucial, and much needs to be done. We have had some successes. English Heritage have awarded £17,650 towards general upkeep and a further grant of £19,000 has been applied for. The Local Mayor's Charity Fund have given £1000, and the Manchester Guardian Charitable Trust £500. Our application to the Heritage Lottery Fund for a £50,000 Project Planning Grant has been submitted.

You can help by joining the Friends of Plymouth Grove, and by organising fundraising events. Please do!

In the autumn Greater Manchester Cares will provide a team of 45 volunteers to paint and clean the house and the Cultural Regeneration Partnership for Inner Manchester plan to convert the lower ground floor for short term leasing and community use.

Book Notes

Christine Lingard

Voice and the Victorian Storyteller by Ivan Kreilkamp (Assistant Professor of English at Indiana University) in the series, Cambridge Studies in Nineteenth-century Literature and Culture, Cambridge University Press, £45. This demonstrates the way in which Victorian culture represents the human voice, from political speeches and governesses' tales to staged performances, and shows that the printed word did not supersede audience interest in oral story telling; with discussion of Charlotte Brontë, Browning, Carlyle, Dickens, Disraeli and Gaskell.

The Idea of Music in Victorian Fiction, edited by Nicky Losseff and Sophie Fuller in the series, Music in Nineteenth-century Britain. Ashgate, £57.50. A collection of eleven critical essays, including 'The voice, the breath and the soul; song and poverty in *Thyrza* (Gissing), *Mary Barton*, *Alton Locke* (Kingsley) and *A Child of the Jago* (Arthur Morrison)' by Phyllis Weliver, which discusses various aspects of the function and depiction of music in Victorian fiction.

The Carlyles, John Ruskin and Elizabeth Gaskell by their contemporaries: third in the series of 'Lives of Victorian Literary Figures', general editor Ralph Pite. Pickering and Chatto, 3 volume set, £275. Gaskell volume edited by Valerie Sanders. An anthology of articles and criticism dating from 1866 to 1932 on a group of authors for whom London as a centre was a pressing concern; Gaskell, though living and working away from the capital, retained her contacts with its literary world. There are extracts from Henry James, Matthew Arnold, Harriet Martineau, Mrs Oliphant and Anne Thackeray Ritchie.

Femmes et Filles: translated by Béatrice Vienne. Paris, Cahiers de L'Herne, 2005. A welcome indication of the international reputation of Elizabeth Gaskell, this translation of *Wives and Daughters* fills a gap identified by our French members.

Voices from the Past by Jean M. Wright. Privately published, 144 pages and 130 photographs, £15 + postage, from 1a Hall Hill, Bollington, Macclesfield, Cheshire SK10 5ED. Jean Wright inherited from her husband's family a fascinating collection of letters and memorabilia which she draws on for this amply illustrated book, partly in colour, of family photographs and Victoriana. The narrative is also filled out by recollections of Martha Ann Wright (1868-1969) who lived a full century in this Cheshire manufacturing community. Of special interest to our members is the material on the Gregs of Bollington and the village life supported by Lowerhouse Mill. Martha Ann's mother served as lady's maid at The Mount to Miss Agnes Greg, who went from Quarry Bank, Styal, to live with her brother Samuel and his family. The letters of this period are revealing social history, as are letters from family who emigrated to New Zealand and Canada - a course of action at one time considered by Samuel Greg himself when Elizabeth Gaskell was a house-guest at The Mount (*Letters*, no.114). The surviving material, mainly letters, is not used to tell the family story chronologically but follows individual family members' lives through their letters: this is sometimes repetitive or confusing: more linking annotation might have helped.

ANNUAL SUPPLEMENTS TO

**Elizabeth Gaskell: An Annotated Guide to English-Language Sources
TO BE ADDED TO GASKELL WEB SITE**

<http://lang.nagoya-u.ac.jp/~matsuoka/EG-Society.html>

Nancy S. Weyant

Even in the age of "camera-ready" manuscripts and "print-on-demand" publishing, there are a variety of realities that impact the currency of any published bibliography, especially, an annotated one. In addition to the time required to locate, acquire, read and write the annotation, there is a time-lag of anywhere between six months and three years between the publication of a scholarly work (be it a journal article or a book chapter) and the indexing of that work in one of the many electronic databases. Furthermore, some book chapters are not separately indexed anywhere. To date, I

have identified almost 175 sources published since 2001 that conform to the criteria for inclusion in my two previous bibliographies. Because the next decennial bibliography won't be considered for publication for another seven years, I contacted Mitsuharu Matsuoka and proposed that I create comprehensive annual supplements that can be added to his Gaskell Web. (He not only graciously accepted my offer; he facilitated my having a separate web page to which he will provide a link. The supplements for 2002 and 2003 should be available by October 1st. Any sources for those years that subsequently come to my attention will be added as discovered. The annual supplements will not have annotations. (I do plan on a third book and Scarecrow Press is not likely to be interested in publishing something that is freely available on the Internet.) However, if the title does not clearly identify the work(s) discussed, that information will be added to enhance the value to anyone seeking to identify ALL the publications discussing a particular Gaskell work. I will add the 2004 supplement as soon as the electronic databases catch up with indexing that year. I am pleased by this collaboration between myself and Mitsu and hope the improved bibliographical control of works about and by Elizabeth Gaskell proves an asset to Gaskell scholars.

The Yorkshire branch of The Gaskell Society

Dudley J. Barlow

With the support of the Gaskell Society Committee a meeting was held in York in May to discuss the formation of a Yorkshire Branch of the Society. A letter had been sent to all members living in the county or within easy travelling distance. There was a good response and the meeting was attended by twelve members, two non-members and two Gaskell Society committee members. A further ten members were unable to attend but expressed support.

Considerable enthusiasm was shown and it was agreed that a Yorkshire Branch should be formed. York was felt to be the most central point for us to meet and the Quaker Meeting House in Friargate to be a suitable venue. We hope to meet four times each year. In order to cover expenses we decided to ask members to contribute £3 per meeting attended and non-members to contribute £4. I was asked to make the necessary arrangements.

Saturday, 12 November: Brian Spencer (Editor of the *Transactions of the Yorkshire Dialect Society*): 'Mrs Gaskell and the Dialect of Whitby'.

The meetings will commence at 2.00pm, though the room will be available from 12.30pm so that those who wish may bring a picnic lunch. Tea and coffee will be provided at lunchtime and again with biscuits at the close of the meeting.

Several of our members are also members of the Jane Austen Society, Northern Branch, and we look forward to a close and friendly contact between the two groups.

All members of the Gaskell Society able to attend our meetings are warmly invited to do so. Further details, if required, from Dudley J Barlow, 6 Kenlay Close, New Earswick, York YO32 4DW. Telephone: 01904-750 366.

North-West Group Programme

Saturday 1st October: Autumn Meeting

This will be a special meeting to celebrate the 20th Anniversary of The Gaskell Society at St Vincent's Church Hall, Knutsford (near Tatton Street Car Park).

- 10.30am for Coffee
11.00: Welcome, introductions and appraisal of The Gaskell Society's first twenty years
11.30: 'Elizabeth Gaskell's Cheshire': illustrated talks by Joan Leach and Marie Moss
12.45: Buffet Lunch
2.30: At Knutsford's Little Theatre:
Elegant Economy: presented by The History Workshop

Members will be welcome at Brook Street Chapel's morning service at 11.00am, after the laying of a commemorative flowers on the Gaskell Grave at 10.45am.

Monthly meetings at Knutsford Parish Church Rooms will be held on the last Wednesday of each month, except December. 26 October, 24 November, 26 January, 23 February, 23 March, 27 April.
The book for study is *The Life of Charlotte Brontë*.

Buffet Lunch is served from 12.15 at a cost of £7.50 which includes room-hire expenses etc.

Meetings at Cross Street Chapel, Manchester

Lunch time on Tuesdays (not always the 2nd Tuesday) at 1.00pm. Tea and coffee available from 12.15. Bring sandwiches or buy from Pret a Manger, next door.

A series of talks on 'Women of note' known by Elizabeth Gaskell:

18 October: 'Elizabeth Gaskell's "Eternal Woman": Mme de Sévigné' by Howard Gregg

8 November: 'Harriet Martineau at Ambleside' by Barbara Todd

6 December: 'A Christmas Miscellany' with carols and mince pies

10 January: 'The North West on Film' by Marion Hewitt of the N.W.Film Archive followed by lunch

7 February: 'Queen Victoria as a woman of letters' by Dr. Deborah Wynne

14 March: 'Florence Nightingale' by Dr. Aled Jones

The South-West Group

On Monday 17th January Celia Skrine led a preliminary trip to Clevedon to plan a visit later in the year, suggested by Mrs. Gaskell's admiration for Tennyson's 'In Memoriam'. Arthur Hallam is buried in St. Andrews Church, Clevedon, and Tennyson made several visits. Even in January Clevedon is a pretty little seaside town and it was wonderful to get some sea air as we went to the church along the Poet's Walk. On Thursday May 5th, ten Gaskell members met at the Beach Cafe and made the walk to the church with its cliff-top graveyard. Celia had arranged for the church to be opened so we were able to see Arthur Hallam's memorial tablet imagined by Tennyson....

And in the dark church like a ghost
Thy tablet glimmers to the dawn.

We sat in the graveyard and read Mrs Gaskell's account of Samuel Bamford's feelings about Tennyson and some verses from 'In Memoriam', and went back to a good lunch. In the afternoon we went on to beautiful Clevedon Court, home of the Elton family. Hallam's mother was the favourite daughter of the Rev. Sir Abraham Elton, and Tennyson stayed there in 1850. Thank you to Peter and Celia Skrine for organising this memorable day.

We all enjoyed having Joan Leach's visit to Bath on July 2nd when she gave the South-West group her readings of letters between the Winkworths, Charlotte Brontë and Elizabeth Gaskell. (Peter Skrine's characterisation of Catherine Winkworth was much admired!) The letter in which Charlotte Brontë, by then Mrs. Nicholls, described her fall from her horse in Ireland provoked some speculation about why Mrs. Gaskell made no reference to the incident in her biography. My own feeling is that she did not wish to revive or make public any painful memories for Arthur Nicholls who may have blamed himself for not realising that Charlotte was trapped under the horse. The event was preceded by a pleasant lunch at the Francis Hotel where we made the acquaintance of some new members, including Mr. Tom Murray who had come by train from Exeter.

Sunday August 14th is the annual Summer Tea hosted by Kate and Alex Crawford

in Norton St Philip. Their house is called Valley View and with good reason. We sit in the sun and read poetry and eat cake and drink tea - what could be better?

A small group is planning to come to the Autumn meeting at the beginning of October, staying at Radbroke Barn. While making arrangements with the Proprietor I mentioned that we had lived in Alderley Edge for 20 years. 'Oh you poor things', was his reply. If anyone wants to join us, do get in touch as soon as possible. (email to rosemary_marshall@yahoo.com or phone 01225 426732).

London and South-East Group

Meetings are held at Francis Holland School, 39 Graham Terrace, London SW1W 8J, a few minutes walk from Sloane Square tube station. Sandwich lunch at 12.45 (£2 only) and meeting at 2 pm. Contact Frances Twinn 85 Calton Ave; London SE21 7DF Tel. 020 8693 3238 email Frantwinn@aflex.net

Sat 12 November:

Cranford: Mrs Gaskell's most radical novel?

By Caroline Jackson-Houlston

Invitation to Carlyle Society Meeting in Edinburgh on 24th September

Gaskell members are invited to join the Carlyle Society at their meeting on 24th September 2005, when the subject will be: "The 'Dark Expounder' and the 'Melodious Voice': Thomas Carlyle and Elizabeth Gaskell on Chartism", a paper by Maurice Milne.

The Meeting will be held at 11 Buccleuch Place, Edinburgh, at 14.15 p.m.

Mary Barton: the Opera

An obituary in The Times of the British composer Arnold Cooke, who died recently in his 99th year, noted the fact that 'during the late 1940's and early 50's he laboured on his only full length opera: *Mary Barton*'. Unfortunately 'it has yet to be staged'. Cooke was a prolific composer, and was a professor at the Royal Manchester College of Music in the 1930's which was where, presumably, he discovered Mrs Gaskell's novel. It is not clear whether the score still exists; if it does perhaps one of our more musical members might like to explore the possibilities. A. J. S.