

## Editor's Letter

Joan Leach

This Newsletter is a little delayed by the late circulation of the Journal. You can read something about activities in our various groups and it brings you notice of future events which we hope some of you will be able to attend.

Our programme for the Canterbury Conference, next July, is not yet finalised but there is some information in this newsletter to whet your appetite. You will see that the programme and events will be wide ranging and the venue delightful.

September will be a busy month in the Manchester region with the production of *Mary Barton* at the Royal Exchange which runs until 14th October and Gabrielle Drake's brilliant one - woman performance *My Dear Scherherazade*, 14-16 September. We are greatly indebted to her for giving us a special performance, in Knutsford, on 15th October, to raise funds for the Gaskell house at Plymouth Grove. You can help to swell funds by reminding people that the house is open on the first Sundays in the month from noon to 4pm, teas are served and there is fine selection of second hand books on sale; plants, too, on the 2nd October.

We hope you will enjoy reading about our various activities, Jean Alston organised for us a most interesting trip to Ashbourne and Derbyshire. My trip to Japan to speak at a general meeting in Tokyo to our members was a wonderful experience that I am happy to share with you. I was privileged to be shown something of their fascinating artistic and historic culture and the fish diet suited my arthritic knee. It remains to be seen how the Italian food in Rome will affect it; you will have to wait until our next Newsletter to hear about our visit in Gaskell footsteps.

Members of the Brontë Society visited Plymouth Grove on 5th June. They first visited Manchester in February 1910 when they held their AGM at the Atheneum. They were addressed by Bishop Welldon, Dean of Manchester, who drew largely on the letters from Charlotte to Elizabeth Gaskell that had been lent to him by Meta. He and other speakers emphasised the need for preserving such mementoes of the Brontës as Manchester now possessed and notably the house of Mrs Gaskell. The Society did not visit it on that occasion. It was recalled that Patrick Brontë had come to Manchester for an operation on cataracts. At one time there was discussion about a statue of our two authors.

Many of you will have seen the photograph of Florence Nightingale, recently rediscovered and now on display at the Nightingale Museum at St Thomas Hospital, at Lambeth, London\* (until November). It shows her at the age of 38, sitting in the

garden of the family home at Embley, Hampshire and looking thin despite the voluminous crinoline. She shunned fame after her return from the Crimea and only seven other photos are known. Elizabeth described her in similar pose 'with her head a bent a little forwards one hand lying in repose on the other on her knees (Letters 217) She was writing to her friend Emily Shaen and told how her doctor brother-in-law Sam, had been 'carried off his feet' on meeting her, though before he saw her 'he called her my enthusiastic young lady and irritated me by speaking very contemptuously of her as *well-meaning etc.*' Elizabeth had met Florence at Lea Hurst, the Nightingales' Derbyshire home where she wrote part of *Ruth*.

\*For information: [www.florence-nightingale.co.uk](http://www.florence-nightingale.co.uk) or phone 020 7620 0374.

## My Visit to Japan

Joan Leach

Soon after The Gaskell Society was inaugurated in October 1985, our first president, Professor Arthur Pollard, told me that there was an interest in Japan in the writing of Elizabeth Gaskell and suggested that I should contact Dr Yuriko Yamawaki in Tokyo. She became our first Japanese member and in September 1987 spoke at our second AGM about Gaskell's works in Japan. Dr Yamawaki's interest had led her to visit Knutsford some years earlier but she and I did not meet then. It might be said that she was the Gaskell ambassador to Japan and with her enthusiasm and encouragement the Gaskell Society of Japan was formed and has worked so consistently to promote knowledge of Gaskell's works by their translations.

Dr Yamawaki was kind enough to invite me to visit The Gaskell Society of Japan some years ago but family circumstances made this impossible until this year, when I was delighted to accept the invitation - though in some trepidation about travelling so far with my very limited experience. Through the generosity of the Gaskell Societies here and in Japan all arrangements were made for my visit, from 30th May to 8th June, to meet members and to speak at the Regular Meeting on 3rd June at Jissen Women's School, Shibuya, on *Knutsford and Cheshire in Mrs Gaskell's Life and Works*.

Mrs Gaskell called Knutsford her 'dear, adopted native town' but I was born there and grew up knowing Gaskell landmarks such as the Memorial Tower, and the house where she grew up on Gaskell Avenue and her burial place in Brook Street Chapel graveyard. As a local historian I have researched the links between the town and Mrs Gaskell's life and works. I have collected pictures which I enjoyed showing to members in Japan, though there had been some difficulty in finding a slide projector for me as they are now becoming obsolete; but I am backward in mastering technology and in England slides are still used in talks to groups and Societies.



**Group in Japan**

I am particularly indebted also to Mrs Mariko Tahira, until recently secretary of the Society, Mrs Akiko Suzue, now President of the Society, Mrs Hisako Nagase, secretary, the committee and all those who made plans for me, arranged a varied and fascinating programme and those who were my guides. It was a special pleasure to be welcomed and cared for in the homes of Professors Hidemitsu Tohgo, Mitsuharu Matsuoka and Tatsuhiro Ohno.

The itinerary gave me great pleasure in seeing so much of Japan in a short time and I will be sharing my experiences by speaking to UK members and various other groups. I am grateful to have received gifts which are in the fine style and traditions of Japan and these I will enjoy showing when I give talks.

On 31st May, landing at Narita International Airport after my Air France flight via Paris, I was met by Professor Hidemitsu Tohgo who took me to his home in Saitama City. I was impressed by my first experience of rail travel in Japan. Hidemitsu and I had first met in 1983 when he came to Knutsford, not because of its Gaskell connections, but to meet my writer husband, Christopher. We were pleased to meet him, and his wife, Tomoko, on other occasions and it was good to renew our friendship at his home and to enjoy such fine hospitality with Japanese food and lifestyle, including my first visit to a sushi bar. Bathing at the hot springs was also a

novel experience for me and my only regret was that I could hear but not see the singing frog in the river valley!

Hidemitsu and I went on to Tokyo, which we saw from a tour bus skirting the Imperial Palace, and then joined a welcome celebration party of a splendid Chinese dinner on the evening of 2nd June, hosted by Dr Yuriko Yamawaki. We were all happy to share this evening with Yuriko and remember all she has done for our Gaskell world. Such a variety of dishes and I almost mastered the chopsticks! It was so good to meet some members again and those I had only exchanged e-mails with. From the hotel rooftop Ms Akiko Kimura showed me Tokyo's night scene with the tower lit up and next morning with Ms Kyoko Imamura showed me more of Tokyo, including the iris garden.

After the meeting at Jissen Women's School Professor Mitsu Matsuoka took me to his home in Nagoya. We visited the Tokugawa Art Museum where there is a replica of the scroll of the Gengi: the original can only be shown every ten years because of its frail condition. Nagoyua is home to Toyota and also a splendid castle. The Meiju-mura museum had fascinating buildings dating from about 1850 onwards, reconstructed in a park setting; these including homes of Lafcadio Hearn and Natsume Soseki, writers who played such an interesting role in links between Western and Japanese literature. It was a surprise to note that the engine of the steam train carrying tourists around the park had been made in Manchester! I enjoyed the ride by shinkansen train from Nagoya to Kyoto where I was met by Ms Fumie Tamai and taken to the splendid Shin Miyako Hotel. My guides for the next day in Kyoto were Ms Akiko Nakajima, and Mr Oomaie. We visited the splendid Sanjusangen-do with its 1,000 standing Buddhist - style images founded in 1164 and completed in 1266; and the beautiful Temple of the Golden Pavilion. I am now reading the novel by Yukio Mishima which is set there.

Ms Ishizuka arrived early on 6th June to take me by bus to Itami airport on my way to Kumamoto airport where Professor Tatsuhiro Ohno was to meet me. We had a nerve-racking journey as there were traffic delays but all was well in the end. At the Kumamoto Middle School I stood in the classroom once used by Lafcadio Hearn. Professor Ohno and his wife, Yuka, took me to the lovely Suizenji Gardens and the spectacular Mount Aso, where there is the world's largest caldera. I was happy not to experience the earthquake which happened near the area a few days later.

I am grateful to him, Professor Mitsu Matsuoka and other members who took fine pictures for me to remember and relive my tour. It was a special pleasure to be welcomed in the homes Hidemitsu and Tomoko Tohgo, Mitsu and Mio Matsuoka and Tat and Yuka Ohno. Thank you to all who introduced me to the culture and delights of Japan.

## *Visit to Ashbourne, Alstonefield and the Hope House Costume Museum, 5th July 2006*

Thirty members and friends set off from Congleton, Knutsford and Macclesfield. We were well on time, arriving at St Oswald's Church, Ashbourne, as the clock struck 11.00. Church members generously allowed us to use their parish room facilities and prepared coffee and biscuits in return for a contribution to their church appeal fund. We were met in Ashbourne Church by Ruth, who had retired to Ashbourne but had been a Derbyshire resident for much of her life. Ruth appropriately began her talk with a reference to Gaskell. Named 'Ruth', she had been given a copy of the novel during her teenage years. She claimed to have then gone on to enjoy Gaskell's other works.

In Ashbourne Church, we were pleased to see an engraving of Captain Frederick Holland's home, Ashbourne Hall, as it would have been in his day. There was also a plaque in appreciation of his life and his contribution to life in the town. St Oswald's is described as 'one of the grandest churches in Derbyshire'. Its many fine features include: a Tree of Jesse window by Kempe, 1902; a pre-Raphaelite window designed by Christopher Whall, 1904, commemorating the Turnbull sisters of Sandybrook Hall; and exceptionally fine tombs and effigies, dating from 1372, of the Cokayne and Bradbourne families. However, probably the finest effigy is of Penelope Boothby, aged 5 years, who is said to have spoken four languages. Penelope died in 1791; this fine white marble tomb was the work of Thomas Banks. She was the daughter of Sir Brooke and Lady Boothby of Ashbourne Hall, who had disagreed on how to deal with her illness and, in their distress, had refused to communicate with each other after her death.

From Ashbourne, we travelled to Hartington, an old Derbyshire market village, where some of us sat by the village pond and others ate lunch in one of the various cafés. After Hartington, we made a short visit to Alstonefield Church, famous for its very early oak pulpit and box pews, and for its connection with Charles Cotton and Isaac Walton.

Hope House, Alstonefield, the beautiful seventeenth-century home of Notty Hornblower, was to become a very enjoyable highlight of the day. Her museum of finely restored fashion clothing, covering several centuries, is situated in the barn close to the house. As well as individual costumes, there were 'stage sets' of groups, such as Miss Marple and Hercule Poirot in a set from an Agatha Christie novel.

Tea, consisting of large scones, cream, jam and Victoria sponge, was served in

Notty's fine, early Derbyshire stone home. We were able to see her tastefully furnished guest bedroom and Victorian-style bathroom.

We were very fortunate that the occasional rain showers, forecast for the area, seemed to miss us by a mile or so. We saw the clouds on occasion but never the rain. On our return journey, our driver was tempted to drive through the Manifold Valley; however, we managed to warn him of fragile narrow bridges and divert him to Warslow and to the Ashbourne-Leek road home.

Just another enjoyable and successful day with Gaskell friends.

**Jean Alston**

**Lost Property?**

At the end of the outing to Alstonefield, a bag was left on the coach, containing a pair of Flyflot sandals and a polythene box; would the owner like to phone Mary Syner on 01625 583622 to recover them?

## *Cranford Houses*

**Joan Leach**

As a Knutsfordian by birth and growing up in the town I have been long acquainted with Elizabeth Gaskell; in childhood days I ate cakes from the Cranford Cake shop, bought aspirins at The Matty Pharmacy and often walked down Cranford and Gaskell Avenues. I share with Elizabeth Gaskell a great affection for the town, which led her to recreate scenes and people she knew in childhood.

As a local historian I was fascinated by finding links between characters, events and settings in fictional *Cranford*, *Wives and Daughters* and other works, and their real life counterparts. The parallels seem to have been acknowledged by her contemporaries, including the Rev Henry Green, minister of Brook Street Chapel, who wrote in his *Knutsford: Its History and Traditions*:

Cranford which in my judgement, while depicting life in almost any country town, is specially descriptive of some of the past and present social characteristics of Knutsford. I know that the work was not intended to delineate this place chiefly or specially, but a little incident within my own experience will show the accuracy of the pictures as applied to our town.

He wrote that when he had lent the book to an elderly lady she returned it to him saying,

'Why, Sir! That Cranford is all about Knutsford; my old mistress, Miss Harker, is mentioned in it; and our poor cow, she did go to the field in a large flannel waistcoat, because she burned herself in a lime pit.'

Note the name 'Miss Harker', who became Cranford's Miss Barker. The sale of her house contents included a large milk-cooler.

The *Manchester Guardian* obituary of Elizabeth Gaskell, 14th November 1865, noted that the

greatest work and that for which she will be longest known, is her *Life of Charlotte Bronte*. In the earlier editions of this now standard work, some personal references were made which created much discussion, and which were omitted from subsequent editions. A similar feeling had been occasioned at an earlier period in Mrs Gaskell's literary career, for in sketches entitled 'Cranford', which appeared in *Household Words*, she had drawn portraits rather too accurately of some living personages.

If there was some feeling in Knutsford about Mrs Gaskell's fictional portraits being identifiable as Knutsford residents no evidence of this is now to be found; perhaps if her own relations recognised themselves any objections they had were not made public.

Linking actual buildings with fictional counterparts was less controversial and when post cards became popular there was a series of scenes from *Cranford*. One of these shows Mrs Jamieson's house as Brook House, which stood below Brook Street Chapel. It was a large, rambling house, probably late seventeenth century in origin with Georgian additions, a walled garden and a stable block; it was demolished after suffering wartime occupation. It was certainly Knutsford's most aristocratic house, having been, from about 1780-1803, the home of Lady Jane Stanley, daughter of the 11th Earl of Derby. She was a strong-minded spinster lady who suggested for her epitaph 'A maid I lived and a maid I died, I never was asked and never denied'. A relation from the Stanleys of Alderley family wrote,

It is a pity that she sometimes has a roughness of manner that conceals from those who are unacquainted with the valuable qualities of her heart. Her vivacity, memory and strength of body and mind are wonderful. She is very poetical too and such a connoisseur of painting, statues etc.

Many of such items she bequeathed in the longest will I have ever seen. She also left legacies to many ladies, mostly single, who might have been her protégées in the style of the fictional Lady Ludlow

Henry Green described how Lady Jane Stanley had walked the pavements with her gold - knobbed cane and reproved those who did not 'give her the wall' by rapping

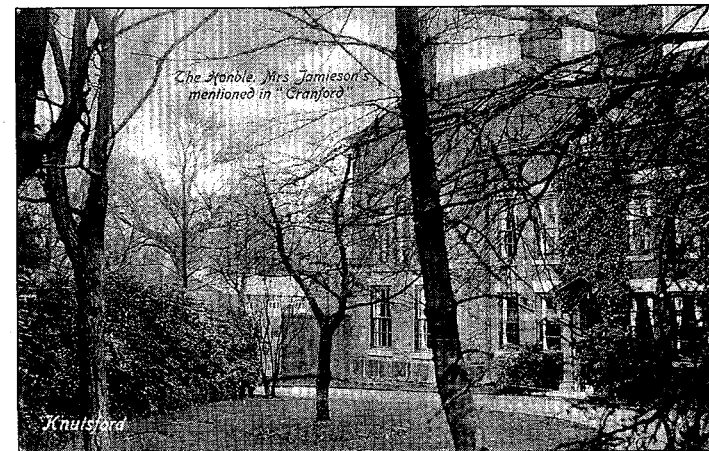
them on the shoulder with it: *My Lady Ludlow* behaved in a similar manner. Lady Jane had paid for the pavements to be laid, stipulating that they should not be wide enough to accommodate 'linking', that was courting couples walking arm-in-arm. The charity money she left in her lengthy will helped to maintain the paths and roads for many years and part of it still provides for patriotic flags to be flown, as her will decreed.

Lady Jane's religious principles and prejudices were shared by Lady Ludlow who deplored the Baptist baker. Lady Jane was well known in the town for her acts of charity, but when an aged silk weaver, no longer able to walk to Macclesfield, appealed to her for assistance she refused at first because he was a Methodist, then relented when she found him staunch in his principles too. Her sedan chair makes an annual appearance at Knutsford Royal May Day Festival.

Mrs Gaskell would not have known Lady Jane Stanley but her aunt and other relations would tell her about this redoubtable lady who seems to be a twin to Lady Ludlow, but whose house in that story bears no resemblance to Lady Jane's. In *Cranford* there is reference to Lady Jane's house. When Mrs FitzAdam came to live in the town she

had taken a large rambling house which had been usually considered to confer a patent of gentility upon its tenant, because, once upon a time, seventy or eighty years before, the spinster daughter of an earl had resided in it...the Earl's daughter, Lady Jane, had a sister, Lady Anne...

The Cranford ladies' doubts about Mrs FitzAdam's gentility were partly dispelled by the status that her occupation of this house conferred.



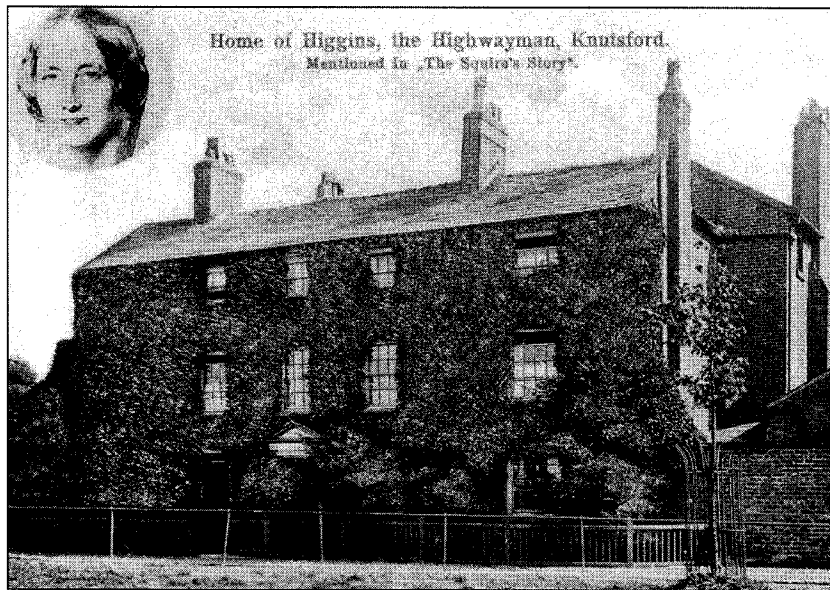
**Brook House, once Lady Jane Stanley's Home**

That the postcard defines it as *Mrs Jamieson's house* is not surprising as she was *the* aristocrat of Cranford who dictated the social mores, so local tradition ascribed to her the most aristocratic house. But in *Cranford* her house is described as on a street that

ran right before the house, which opened out upon it without intervening garden or court. Whatever the sun was about he never shone on the front of that house'.

Mr Mulliner's head, with powdered wig, could be seen from the road as he read the *St James Chronicle*, a fact that irked the ladies who were waiting their turn for it. This house must have been Heath House on Gaskell Avenue and possibly the real life Hon. Mrs Grey, resident there in Elizabeth Gaskell's early years, was a model for Mrs Jamieson. It also had a history as the home of Edward 'Highwayman' Higgins, whose story was related by Henry Green and adapted by Elizabeth Gaskell for 'The Squire's Story'. Mrs Legh, another scion of an aristocratic family, followed Lady Jane as tenant of Brook House; she left money in her will for an annual dinner for the Ladies Benefit Society.

Henry Green's *Knutsford Its Traditions and History* grew from a series of lectures he gave. Elizabeth Gaskell made several enquiries on his behalf. It was published in 1859 by Smith and Elder and has had several reprints since.



**This house fits the description of Mrs Jamieson's house in *Cranford***

## BOOK NOTES

Christine Lingard

*Cranford & Selected Short Stories* with introduction and notes by John Chapple. Wordsworth Classics. £1.99

One of the most welcome of publications as many of Gaskell's shorter works have been out of print for some time. As well as *Cranford* this edition contains 'Mr Harrison's Confessions', 'The Doom of the Griffiths', 'Lois the Witch', 'Curious if true', 'Six weeks at Heppenheim' and *Cousin Phillis*, and, unusually for Wordsworth editions, it contains notes and an interesting introduction by Professor Chapple.

Ed: We hope to have copies to sell at group meetings and at Plymouth Grove

*William Gaskell's Poetry and Poetry Lectures* by Irene Wiltshire, first published in the *Transactions of the Lancashire and Cheshire Antiquarian Society* 101 (2005), has been issued as a separate pamphlet and is available from Janet Allan, 10 Dale Road, New Mills, Derbyshire SK22 4NW.

This is an important piece of research which provides a valuable insight into a figure who deserves to be assessed on his own merit not just as the husband of a great novelist.

*The Oxford Companion to the Brontës* compiled by Christine Alexander and Margaret Smith, Oxford University Press, £14.99

A useful A-Z sequence reference work which is a valuable contribution not only to Brontë studies but also to Gaskell. Originally published in 2003, it is now available in paperback.

*The Idea of City in Nineteenth-century Britain* edited by B.I. Coleman, Routledge, £80, due November.

A reissue of the book originally published in 1973. A collection of extracts and quotations concerning urban matters from such authors as Gaskell, Dickens, Ruskin, Engels, Morris and H.G. Wells.

*Nineteenth-Century Narratives of Contagion* by Allan Conrad Christensen, Routledge, £80. A discussion of the reaction to disease, health, nursing and the hospital environment with particular reference to Dickens' *Bleak House*, Gaskell's *Ruth* and Zola's *Le Docteur Pascal*.

*The Ideas in Things: Fugitive Meaning in the Victorian Novel* by Elaine Freedgood, University of Chicago Press. Due November, \$26. Taking mundane materials, the author explores the social background to their production and the political implications they reveal, such as mahogany furniture and slavery in *Jane Eyre* and Negro head tobacco in *Great Expectations*. Chapter Two is entitled 'The Vicissitudes of Coziness: Checked Curtain and Global Cotton Markets' in *Mary Barton*.

Gaskell production on the Continent still continues to flourish with translations of *North and South* in Spanish: *Norte y sur*, Alba Editorial, 30 Euros; and French: *Nord et Sud*, Fayard, 25 Euros; and *The Life of Charlotte Brontë* has now been translated into Latvian: *Šarlotes Brontë dzīve*.

## Mrs Gaskell and the OED (Part 2)

Christine Lingard

The *Oxford English Dictionary* credits Elizabeth Gaskell as the first author to use these words in the English language

27. shopper, *n.* 1860, Mrs Gaskell, *Letters*, No. 476, 27 Aug 1860 - one who frequents a shop or shops for the purpose of inspecting or buying goods.
28. slummocky, *a.* ?1861, Mrs Gaskell, *Letters*, No. 484, 28 Feb 1861 - slovenly, untidy. Hence slummockiness.
29. slushing, *ppl. a.* 1863, Mrs Gaskell, *Sylvia's Lovers*, X. That slushes or splashes, *spec.* pertaining to or designating a viscous oil or grease used to protect bright metal surfaces, when paint or other fixed coatings cannot be used.
30. softy, *n.* 1863, Mrs Gaskell, *Sylvia's Lovers*, II. A weak-minded or silly person; a simpleton, noodle, gull.
31. squiffy, *a.* ?1855, Mrs Gaskell, *Letters*, No. 273. 'Curious enough there is a Lady Erskine, wife of Lord E, her husband's eldest brother living at Bollington, who tipples and "gets squiffy" just like *this* Mrs. E'.
32. sticky, *verb trans.* 1865, Mrs Gaskell, *Wives and Daughters* XXXV. To smear with something sticky.
33. sweet Nancy. 1848, Mrs Gaskell, *Mary Barton* VIII. The pheasant-eyed narcissus, *narcissus poeticus*, esp the double variety.
34. unbeknownst, *a. or adv.* 1848, Mrs Gaskell, *Letters*, No.30, 11 November 1848.
35. uncleaned, *ppl. a.* 1854, Mrs Gaskell, *North and South*, I.x.
36. unnative, *v.* 1855, Mrs Gaskell, *North and South*, XLI.
37. villino ?1863, Mrs Gaskell, *Letters*, No. 527, 16 July 1863. A small (rural, suburban or urban) house in Italy.
38. yo 1848, Mrs Gaskell, *Mary Barton* I.vi. In mod. Use, repr. dialect pronunciation of *you*, *your*, esp. in Black Country English.

Note from Mary Syner: I looked up some of these in the *Letters* and found that 'slummocky' occurs there as 'slammocky-as-to-figure' (though the OED does give slammocky as an alternative spelling). If Mrs Gaskell puts quotation marks around 'gets squiffy', she must have regarded it a questionable usage herself: perhaps she had only recently come across it. In the *Letters*, 'unbeknownst' is printed with the last three letters (nst) in italics, so it seems that Mrs Gaskell underlined the ending of the word: again, perhaps she wondered whether she was correct in adding those

letters - the OED offers 'unbeknown' and 'unbeknowns' as alternatives. It seems that Mrs Gaskell was, as we might expect, an experimenter in language use!

## Visit to Plymouth Grove on Monday 5 June 2006 by Members of The Brontë Society.

As part of the events for their AGM weekend the Brontë Society was fortunate to gain access to the house of Elizabeth Gaskell in Plymouth Grove, Manchester. The house is currently being cared for by the Manchester Historic Buildings Trust and, although work is only in the planning stage, we were delighted to go into a house which features in Charlotte Brontë's correspondence and also in the letters and biographies of Elizabeth Gaskell herself.

Despite the house having last been used as a university hall of residence the atmosphere in the beautiful drawing room was moving. We could almost see Elizabeth at work there, coping with the many interruptions she had before she could start her real day's work. We were delighted with the talk given to us by Mrs Janet Allan, Chairman of the Manchester Historic Buildings Trust, and also with a skilled theatrical performance, based on correspondence, of the relationship between the two women. Between the two we were treated to the best lunch of the weekend, which was organised by members of the Gaskell Society. We are tremendously grateful to have had this opportunity and look forward to the final refurbishment of the house, which will certainly be another visit for us.

**Coreen Turner**  
**Brontë Society Council member and Chair of the Membership Committee**

**Recent events at Plymouth Grove**  
**Ann Waddington**

'Thank you from the North Texas Visitors'

'I can't thank you enough for the wonderful memories you made for us at the Gaskell House. The lunch, the talk and slides, the house were all wonderful. But best of all was seeing the dedication the group has to Gaskell herself! I will think fondly of 84 Plymouth Grove often, especially when I am teaching one of her novels. Thank you again'.

The above tribute was paid by Sandra Spencer of the University of North Texas and addressed to Janet Allan. The visit had been organised by the University as part of their country-wide tour this Summer. In addition to a lecture by Janet the students met the writer and poet Jackie Kay at Plymouth Grove. Jackie Kay will return in October to read her own short story as part of the Manchester Literary Festival



when the BBC will record for radio specially commissioned short stories in the Dining Room in front of an invited audience.

Other Groups have visited this year and included the 'local' visitors from the Bramhall History Society and the Tameside Local History Forum. In June The Bronte Society returned after a gap of ninety-six years.

At the beginning of April the first of what is hoped to become a regular feature at Plymouth Grove took place. Professor Michael Rose gave a Talk 'Across the Class Divide: Philanthropy and The Gaskells in Victorian Manchester' to a packed Drawing Room. Due to the speaker's enthusiasm and his involvement of the audience in questions afterwards this was an occasion full of atmosphere. To look around the Drawing Room and notice the present Minister of Cross Street Chapel provided an instant thought of William Gaskell in the same room discussing the same subjects.

Topics for 2007 have already been chosen by the Speakers who have been kind enough to volunteer their services. The first of these events will take place on Saturday 17 March 2007 when Ann O'Brien will speak about Meta Gaskell. Full details of the Talks will be available nearer the time. The Talks are open to non-members of the Friends and it is hoped that they will result in an increase in the membership and widening of the interest in the preservation of the Gaskell House.

Members were lured to The AGM in April by the promise of a Victorian Tea afterwards. Thanks are due to all the Friends who volunteered to bake a Victorian recipe. These recipes were provided by Olga Shipperbottom who also gave a talk on the subject.

Involvement with the local community continues and the House was open to visitors during the Swinton Grove Park Fun Day on Saturday 6 July. The quiet sanctuary it provided on the day was appreciated by the families who attended.

At the moment the House looks a little forlorn as the garden needs a lot of attention. It is hoped that by the time the English Heritage Open Days on 9 and 10 September take place everything will look welcoming. A new Banner will be in place across the front of the House as a regular feature. Heritage Banners will also advertise those Open Days. It must not be forgotten that without the hard work from all those who volunteer their services at Plymouth Grove none of the events and Open Days would take place.

The house is open every Sunday from 12 noon until 4.p.m. and has a large selection of second hand books on sale. On the 1st October there will also be a plant sale.

## *The next GASKELL CONFERENCE,*

*27-30 JULY 2007*

The Society's next conference will be held at Christ Church University, **Canterbury**, from **27th to 30th July 2007**. The general theme is the religious and scientific background to three writers, Gaskell, Dickens and Charles Darwin. We have (so far) four distinguished speakers: Dame Gillian Beer from Cambridge, on Darwin; John Beer, who is Emeritus Professor at Cambridge and will speak about the Romantic period; Professor Andrew Sanders, who has just retired from Durham University and has spoken to us before, on Dickens and science; and Professor Elisabeth Jay, who has also spoken to us before, on Gaskell and religion. Jenny Uglow will be there, and John Chapple, and so will our President, Alan Shelston.

**Christ Church University** is just outside the walls of Canterbury but within easy walking distance of the centre and the cathedral. Its facilities will be good: the lecture rooms are modern, you can choose en-suite accommodation or the cheaper bed-only-shower-down-the-corridor type; all our meals will be in their dining-hall (self-service mostly), and tea and coffee will be provided. We shall have to move between buildings (sleep in one, eat in another, attend talks in another) but the campus is self-contained and easy to negotiate. Canterbury is full of interest and all of it easily reached; a great deal of the centre has been pedestrianised. You will have two free afternoons: we are arranging a visit to Down House, where Charles Darwin lived, and this will be done on Saturday **and** on Sunday afternoons, as only half the party can go at one time (the car park can accommodate only one coach at a time); the other half will have the afternoon free to explore Canterbury - with a guided walk if wanted. Down House is an attractive large house with a splendid garden, and has been arranged to show both Darwin as a working writer and scientist and as a family man: and in upstairs rooms there are displays about his work: the mixture of information and instruction is similar to that in Erasmus Darwin's house in Lichfield.

### **Travel**

The University campus has only limited parking for cars. As it is impossible to drive into the centre of the city (because within the walls it is mostly pedestrians only), we recommend that everyone who can should come by public transport; once you are there, you really will not need a car. For those who live in the North West, we are thinking of providing a coach on Friday 27th July from the Knutsford/Manchester area - a coach which will stay with us and take us to Down House and bring the north-west party home again on Monday 30th July, making a stop at an interesting place on the way back. For those making their own way there by train, there are two stations in Canterbury, Canterbury East and Canterbury West; which one you arrive

at depends on whether you started from London Victoria or London Waterloo East (Waterloo East is accessible from the main Waterloo concourse). But both stations are within walking distance of the College, though it might take about 15 minutes. There are taxis available at either station.

**The cost of the conference** itself will be in the region of £315 (this is for ensuite accommodation; for a non-en-suite room, it would be £270). This may seem expensive compared to the last conference in Manchester, but that one was subsidised for Society members (by a grant from English Heritage which the organisers, MMU, were fortunate enough to obtain). For those going and returning by coach the cost of travel will be in the region of £30, if we can get at least 35 people to use the coach. The fewer who do, the greater the cost will be, so do consider it - it will certainly be the easiest way to make the journey from the North West.

We do think that the facilities at Canterbury will be good and that we have some prestigious speakers: we hope that you will support this conference - and come and have a good time!

## *Society Events in the North-West*

The Royal Exchange Theatre, Manchester, is to stage *Mary Barton* from 6th September to 14th October. The programme says 'Fast-paced, epic and exciting, Rona Munro's adaptation presents a panorama of Manchester life from the mill-owners' new prosperity to the thousands of ordinary working people living and dying in their factories'. North-West members have already been notified about this (and the events given below), but for anyone who is interested in this production the Box Office is on 0161 833 9833 or at [www.royalexchange.co.uk](http://www.royalexchange.co.uk)

There is to be a special Meet the Director event in connection with *Mary Barton* on Tuesday 26 September from 2-4 p.m. This is by invitation to Gaskell Society members, Friends of Plymouth Grove and Friends of the Royal Exchange. The charge per person will be £6. This covers the cost of coffee/tea and biscuits, plus a donation to the Friends, all of which goes to the Theatre, There will be a raffle, with the proceeds split between the Theatre and Plymouth Grove. No tickets will be required but we need to know numbers and to have payment in advance; cheques should be made out to 'The Royal Exchange Theatre Co. Ltd.' And sent to Janet Aslan, Friends Organiser, Royal Exchange Theatre, St Anne's Square, Manchester M2 7DH.

### **Gabrielle Drake in *Dear Scheherazade***

Elizabeth Gaskell is the subject of a one-woman show, using extracts not only from the novels and short stories but also from her wonderful letters.

Gabrielle Drake, who has created this show and is giving a few performances of it in the Royal Exchange's Studio Theatre during the run of *Mary Barton*, is very generously giving a special performance at Knutsford's Little Theatre, Queen Street, Knutsford, in aid of Plymouth Grove's restoration fund; this will take place on Sunday, 15th October at 2.00 p.m. Tickets cost £18 (£15 concessionary). If you would like to book, please contact Joan Leach; cheques should be made payable to 'Manchester Historic Buildings Trust'.

## *North West Group*

At Knutsford, meetings are held at St John's Church Rooms, on the last Wednesday in the month, beginning on 25th October (then Nov 29, Jan 31, Feb 28, March 28). The book for study this year will be *Mary Barton*, under the expert guidance of Elizabeth Williams.

If you have not already got a copy you are recommended to buy the OUP edition 2006, edited by Shirley Foster; and reviewed in the Journal (p.137)

At Cross Street Chapel, Manchester, At Cross Street Chapel, Manchester, there will be a series of talks on social and philanthropic aspects of Victorian Manchester, on the Tuesdays at 1.00 p.m. Members may choose to meet for a sandwich lunch before the meeting; bring your own or buy them from Pret-a-manger next door. The cost of meetings is £2 to members and £3 to visitors.

**10 October 2006:** Geoffrey Head: '*Cross Street Chapel's social and philanthropic role in Manchester*'.

Geoffrey is a retired Civil servant and Chairman of Cross Street Chapel Trustees. He was former Treasurer and President of the General Assembly of Unitarian and Free Christian churches and served in many other capacities. He is author of a number of studies of Unitarianism in the Manchester area.

**14 November 2006:** Alan Fowler: '*The Cotton famine and relief*'

Alan has 36 years experience of lecturing at Manchester Poly. now the Metropolitan University, on economic and social history of the region. He has served on the committee of the Economic History Society and has recently published *Lancashire Cotton Operatives and work 1900-1950*.

**13 December 2006:** The Minister Rev John Midgley will conduct a carol service

**13 February 2007:** Terry Wyke: '*Mingy Mancunians: Charity in Cottonopolis*'.

Terry Wyke teaches social and economic history at Manchester Metropolitan University. His interests include the history of Manchester, including the writings of Elizabeth Gaskell.



**13 March 2007:** Professor Alan Kidd: '*Rich lives, poor lives in the first industrial city*'. Alan lectures at MMU, working with the Manchester Centre for Regional history and is co-founder of the Manchester Region History Review. He is author of the recently published *Manchester : A History* (Carnegie Press).

## *The Yorkshire Branch of the Society*

### **Programme, Autumn 2006**

**Saturday, 18 November:** 'Speaking for himself: the letters of Reverend Patrick Brontë'  
Speaker: Dudley Green, Editor of the recently published Letters of the Reverend Patrick Brontë and member of the Gaskell Society Committee.

**Saturday 10 February :** Speaker Howard F.Gregg

All the meetings will be held at the Friends Meeting House, Friargate, York, and will commence at 2pm. The room will be available from 12.30pm for those who wish to bring a picnic lunch. To cover expenses a contribution of £3 is requested from members of the Gaskell Society and £4 from non-members.

## *London and South East Group*

Meetings are held at The Francis Holland School, 36 Graham Terrace, a few minutes walk from Sloane Square tube station. 12.45pm for sandwich lunch, meeting begins at 2pm. It is necessary to ring the security bell in order to gain access to the building. Someone will answer the door! After the meeting there is tea, biscuits and cake.

Email [Frantwinn@aflex.net](mailto:Frantwinn@aflex.net) or phone for info. 020 8693 3238

**Saturday, 11th November:** Professor Angus Easson, Research Professor of English in the School of English at the University of Salford

His subject will be:

Secrecy and Revelation in *Wives and Daughters*

Angus has indicated that he likes to have audience dialogue and is happy for you to make comments as he goes along so again you may wish to be refresh your memory of the text. It makes it all more worthwhile. Hence the homework!!

**Saturday, 10 February:** Mrs Joan Leach, Secretary of the Gaskell Society, 'A visit to Japan and literary links'

Joan will talk about her recent experiences in Japan which she visited on behalf of the Society and where she went to a general meeting, gave a paper and met and visited many Japanese academics and our members.

**Saturday, 12 May:** Dr Brenda McKay, 'Dramatising Mrs Gaskell'; Discussion, with excerpts from TV adaptations from the novels'

Brenda has given this presentation to other groups and has found it to be popular. We have been treated to adaptations of Gaskell's novels in the past few years and I know everyone has views about the BBC interpretation of her writing. This will be an opportunity to listen, watch clips and offer opinions!!

## *South West Group*

**November 4th:** Bath Royal scientific and Literary Institution, 16-18 Queen Square 10.00 "Always at My Post" Dudley Green will give us an insight into the life of Patrick Brontë as revealed in his letters which Dudley has just published.

11.15 Dr. Tom Winifrith of the Brontë Society will speak on "The Brontës and Religion", with special reference to Mrs. Gaskell

12.15 Finger Buffet lunch

To cover expenses we ask for £4 from Gaskell and Brontë members and £5 from non-members

**January 8th New Year Supper** at 138, Fairfield Park Road . "Bring and Share". Let me know if you would like to come nearer the time. R.Marshall

**Saturday March 31st** 99, Sydney Place, Mrs Joan Chandler.

"Mrs. Gaskell and the Roman Experience" Members £2 Non Members £3

Any queries to Rosemary Marshall, 138, Fairfield Park Road, Bath, BA1 6JT  
Tel: 01225 426732 Email: [rosemary\\_marshall@yahoo.com](mailto:rosemary_marshall@yahoo.com)

## *Autumn Meeting*

**Saturday, 30 September at St Vincent's Catholic Church Hall, Knutsford.**

10.30 a.m for coffee.

11.00 a.m. Michael Rose, Professor (retired) of 19th-century History at Manchester University, Chairman of the Friends of Manchester Regional History Centre: 'Across the Class Divide. Philanthropy and the Gaskells in Victorian Manchester'.

Buffet Lunch 12.30 approx.

2.00pm. Joan Leach will give an illustrated talk on her visit to Japan and the literary links.

There will be a book stall. Cost £10, to include buffet lunch, to be paid on the day.

**Sunday 1st October**

The Gaskell House at Plymouth Grove will be open, with a plant sale

**Saturday 11th November**

Book Sale at Plymouth Grove

Further information or booking;

Joan Leach 01565 634668 or email: [joanleach@aol.com](mailto:joanleach@aol.com)