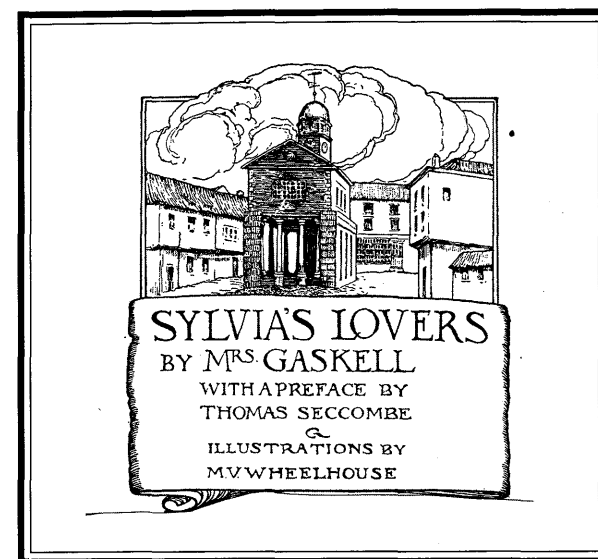


# The Gaskell Society



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

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## NEWSLETTER

Autumn 2007 - Number 44

## Editor's Letter

Joan Leach

The Society's conference at Canterbury at the end of July will be long remembered by all participants as an excellent event, indeed the organising committee, though inspired to start thinking of the next conference, wonder how we can live up to this standard. The programme worked out so well with excellent speakers and we can look forward to reading some of the papers in the next Journal.

We hope members will support the various branches in the forthcoming events. At the autumn meeting in Knutsford on 29th September we will be celebrating the 150th anniversary of the publication of *The Life of Charlotte Brontë* and the Gaskell's year of 1857, the year of the Art Treasures Exhibition. Manchester City Art Gallery has arranged an exhibition: *Art Treasures in Manchester: 150 years on* which will run from October 6th to January 27th. Some of us will make a group visit in November.

Ann O'Brien has researched and written for us in this newsletter the history of the Exhibition and Pat Barnard arranged a fine exhibition at Plymouth Grove showing the artistic links and will talk about this at the autumn meeting. John Rylands Library also has an exhibition until 14th November.

We are grateful to Fran Baker, assistant modern literary archivist at John Rylands Library for writing about Geoffrey Sharps collection which has been added to their archives. Some of our members will have a special tour there in January.

We bring you news of progress at Plymouth Grove and hope some of you will be able to participate in the events. The website [www.thegaskellhouse.org](http://www.thegaskellhouse.org) gives details about these and how to become a Friend of Plymouth Grove.

Our homepage is currently being re-designed: [www.gaskellsociety.co.uk](http://www.gaskellsociety.co.uk).

I think you will all have seen news of BBC's forthcoming production of *Cranford* to be screened in November. Script writer Heidi Thomas has told us about her involvement and she will also speak at Knutsford Literature Festival on 14 October. (Tickets sold out).

We had thought of revisiting HEIDELBERG next year as this was our first overseas visit and was much enjoyed; however we have met with problems in finding a suitable hotel with sufficient single rooms at a reasonable cost. We are sorry to disappoint those who hoped to go with us but the trip will not happen. For any of you who choose to visit that area, at any time in the future, we could supply information on the Gaskell links.

We hope, instead, to plan a visit to Berwick-upon-Tweed and Scotland to follow Gaskell and other literary links.

## The Papers of J.G. Sharps

Fran Baker

As Heather Sharps reported in the Spring issue of the Newsletter, her husband indicated that he wished most of his pre-eminent Gaskell collection to go to the John Rylands University Library (University of Manchester), to be made available to scholars, students, other readers and visitors. We are delighted that Mr Sharps considered the Rylands to be an appropriate home for his collection, and very grateful to Mrs Sharps for arranging the transfer of his papers - and for donating further material to the Library in her own right.

As the custodian of our Gaskell manuscript collections, I had a most enjoyable visit to Scarborough in April 2006, when Heather Sharps allowed me privileged access to her husband's Gaskell collection as well as providing me with lunch and (as a first-time visitor) an informative tour of the sights. The Sharps Gaskell collection has been credited by John Chapple as being perhaps the largest in private hands, and on close examination it became clear that I was looking not just at this extensive Gaskell collection, but at J.G. Sharps's own archive in its entirety - including much correspondence, as well as photocopies of research resources, manuscripts and typescripts of his own writings, papers relating to the Gaskell Society, and more. His archive and collection are inextricably linked; the correspondence, for instance, sheds light on the provenance of the books, manuscripts and other items that Mr Sharps collected over the years. He stored his papers carefully, meticulously labelling envelopes and packages with notes of their content, and my survey of the collection was further assisted by the work of Dr David Iredale and Alyne Slasor, archivist friends of the Sharps family who had already undertaken some appraisal and organisation of the papers. I hope to give some indication here of the archive's content and significance as a resource for Gaskell researchers and enthusiasts.

J.G. Sharps - like Gaskell herself - was well known as a voluminous correspondent, and although exact figures will not become clear until it is fully catalogued, the archive includes at least 2,500 pieces of correspondence, dating from the 1950s to 2005. Correspondents include literary societies, publishers, booksellers, libraries, museums, Gaskell collectors and those with a general interest in her work. Most significant are the Gaskell scholars past and present - whom initially Mr Sharps sought out for information, and who subsequently turned to him as an authority on Gaskell and her work. A cross section of scholars represented in the archive includes: Miriam Allott; Richard D. Altick; Barbara Brill; John Chapple; Dorothy Collin; Annette B. Hopkins; Coral Lansbury; Arthur Pollard; Gerald DeWitt Sanders; Robert L. Selig; Joanne Shattock; Alan Shelston; Walter E. Smith; Kathleen Tillotson; Jane Whitehill (née Coolidge); A. Stanton Whitfield; and Edgar Wright.

Much of the correspondence relates to Mr Sharps's exhaustive research - both his hunt for accurate facts about Gaskell's life and work, and his efforts to track down previously unknown primary sources from all over the world. He was engaged in his Gaskell research and correspondence from as early as 1959, and his findings fed into his Oxford BLitt thesis (awarded in 1964 and converted to an MLitt during the 1970s); this in turn formed the foundation of his encyclopaedic work, *Mrs Gaskell's observation and invention: a study of her non-biographic works*, which remains an indispensable resource for Gaskell scholars. Manuscript and typescript drafts of his thesis are included among his papers, as are drafts and proofs of his book.

Mr Sharps's efforts to track down and acquire important primary sources were highly successful, as reflected in the quality of his Gaskell collection. He became acquainted with the pioneering Gaskell scholar, A. Stanton Whitfield, from whom he acquired important papers, including four holograph Gaskell letters and another letter dictated by Gaskell. From the same source came over 30 holograph letters either sent to, or collected by, Whitfield; the latter category includes letters written by the historian E.A. Freeman, and the literary scholars Ernest de Selincourt and George S. Gordon among others.

Another highly significant group of manuscripts reflects Mr Sharps's interest in Gaskell's early life. These were purchased from Mrs Ethel Smith whose husband, when alive, wrote to the editor of the *Manchester Guardian* about the manuscripts in his possession. These letters, some of which are fragmentary and rather fragile, include: part of a lively letter from Marianne Lumb to her mother, Hannah (Gaskell's aunt and 'more than mother'), which dates from 1811 and gives an insight into their life in Knutsford; another letter to Hannah from Gaskell's brother John, dating from 1825; and a series of four incomplete, and two complete, letters to Gaskell from her brother, dating from 1825-28, shortly before his disappearance from her life forever.

Complementing these manuscripts are five even earlier letters which were given to Mr Sharps by Miss J. Carter. Dating from the 1790s, these include four letters from Gaskell's paternal aunt Dorothy Stevenson (Miss Carter's great-grandmother) to another brother - probably Robert - which make reference to the birth of Gaskell's older brother John, and offer a tantalising glimpse of Gaskell's mother, about whom little is known.

Also closely related are a series of typescript transcripts of letters, purchased by Sharps from the widow of Joseph Torry Lancaster. These include not only over 80 letters by Gaskell - which are thought to have some authority as sources, and were used as copy text for missing holograph letters by the editors of *Gaskell's Letters* - but also further letters to the young Elizabeth Stevenson from her brother, her father, and her former schoolteacher Jane Byerley.

These letters all provided valuable source material for John Chapple when writing *Elizabeth Gaskell: The Early Years* (1997), and were also drawn on by Jenny Uglow in her biography - just two examples of Mr Sharps's well-known generosity in sharing his collection and his discoveries with other scholars. His close association and work with other scholars is evident from his archive, which includes: correspondence relating to, and galley proofs of, *Elizabeth Gaskell: A Portrait in Letters* (1980), on which he collaborated with John Chapple; galley and page proofs of the Chapple and Pollard *Letters* volume; the typescript of an unfinished biography of Gaskell by Jane Whitehill; the typescript of, and notebooks relating to, A. Stanton's Whitfield's 1929 biography; and a typescript of Graham Handley's 2005 publication, *An Elizabeth Gaskell Chronology*.

Some of the gems of the archive can be found among the original manuscripts acquired by Mr Sharps. In addition to the items already discussed, the collection includes: a further 11 holograph Gaskell letters (all of which have been published in either the *Letters* or *Further Letters* volumes); Gaskell's holograph transcription of a ballad by the famous seventeenth-century royalist James Graham, First Marquis of Montrose; a letter to Gaskell from Richard Cobden; three letters written by Ellen Nussey (one to Gaskell, and two to Charlotte Brontë's widower, Arthur Bell Nichols, dating from 1855 when Gaskell was researching her biography of Brontë); a six-line manuscript verse signed by William and Mary Howitt, and dated September 1840 at Heidelberg (where Gaskell met them for the first time); a letter from William Gaskell to Manchester novelist Mrs Linnaeus (Isabella) Banks; and 14 letters (including six from Meta Gaskell) sent to the literary scholar and biographer, Thomas Seccombe, who edited some of Gaskell's novels for the Everyman library in the early twentieth century.

Mr Sharps also acquired some significant publications which he treated as part of his manuscript collection rather than storing them with his library. This material includes two Christmas numbers of Dickens's periodical *All the Year Round*, preserved in perfect condition in their original paper wrappers, rather than the volume format in which we so often encounter them today. There are also a number of copies of *"My diary": the early years of my daughter Marianne* (privately printed by Clement Shorter in 1923), and one of only 25 privately printed copies of Clement Shorter's *Letters on Charlotte Brontë* by Mrs Gaskell (1915).

The scale of J.G. Sharps's research and the breadth of his reading are reflected in a large number of photocopied journal articles, critical works and news cuttings, including some he tracked down from obscure publications - thus creating an invaluable reference resource for future researchers.

Of course Mr Sharps played a prominent role in the Gaskell Society from its foundation onwards, and maintained an active involvement even during his final illness. Naturally, then, the activities of the Gaskell Society are well-represented in his archive, which includes: notes for Society talks he gave; photographs taken at events; copies of the Newsletter and Journal; correspondence with members and officers relating to activities; and copies of agendas and minutes.

As well as Gaskell scholars, students and enthusiasts, J.G. Sharps also numbered other significant individuals among his correspondents - Lord Shuttleworth and Sir Walter Bromley-Davenport, for example - and twentieth-century literary figures as diverse as Valentine Ackland, Michael Horovitz, Daphne Du Maurier and John Lehmann.

The Rylands was also given the privilege of being able to select from Mr Sharps's outstanding library early editions of Gaskell's works not already represented in its collections. Armed with Walter E. Smith's indispensable bibliography, and acting on the advice of Julie Ramwell, our Assistant Keeper of Printed Books, I was able, with Mrs Sharps's permission, to choose volumes which have augmented the Library's holdings of Gaskell first editions from just 14 to 23. A high proportion of these are in their original bindings, whereas most of the Library's existing early editions had been rebound. These volumes will therefore be of some bibliographical interest, and - along with the inclusion of some Tauchnitz and other early editions - will be of considerable value to those researching the textual history of Gaskell's works.

Taken as a whole, the J.G. Sharps archive and book collection provide an invaluable research resource for Gaskell scholars, and have greatly enhanced and augmented the Rylands' existing holdings of Gaskelliana. However, their interest is not limited to those studying the life and work of Elizabeth Gaskell. A recent review of the Rylands' archive and manuscript collecting policy identified the principal subject strengths of the Library's holdings, and the J.G. Sharps papers build on many of these areas, including: Language and literature in English - notably the history of the nineteenth-century novel and belles lettres, biography and life writing, and textual criticism; the history of the book, printing and publishing; the history of collecting; biography and life writing; local history; and Religious Nonconformity, particularly Unitarianism in Manchester.

The book collection has now been accessioned, and is currently with our cataloguing department where it will be added to the Library's online book catalogue. The archive has been accessioned, an overview of it added to our Guide to Collections, and it is now in the process of being box listed. Every effort will be made to ensure that researchers can access material in the archive, within the usual restrictions of Copyright and Data Protection law. One postgraduate student has

already been working on the archive, and I plan to use items from the collection in a forthcoming seminar focusing on the literary history of Manchester, being organized by the University's Centre for Continuing Education, as well as a Cranford study day being run by the Centre next year. The collection will also be featured in a Gaskell-themed event for the public being run by Manchester's Blue Badge Guides later this year.

Finally, I would also like to acknowledge Heather Sharps's generosity to the Library in her own right. When undertaking her important research into the fiction of James Kay-Shuttleworth, Mrs Sharps made extensive use of the Rylands' Kay-Shuttleworth papers, and last year she donated to the Library six published works by or relating to Kay-Shuttleworth, which support and complement the manuscript material.

(Fran Baker, who spoke at the Conference in 2005, is Assistant Modern Literary Archivist at The John Rylands University Library.)

## *Visit to Bamford country 9th June, 2007*

**Adrienne Stennett**

Samuel Bamford (1788-1872) was known to Elizabeth and William Gaskell through his poetry (some in broad Lancashire dialect, a special interest of William's) and through his writings. His autobiography, *Passages in the Life of a Radical*, published in 1842, recorded his experiences in the radical reform movement a generation earlier, particularly the Peterloo Massacre. Elizabeth quotes from Bamford's poem 'God Help the Poor' in *Mary Barton* and, knowing his love of Tennyson's poetry, she begged a signed copy from the poet for him.

Gaskell members gathered at the attractive stone-built Middleton Grammar School where Samuel had been a pupil. We enjoyed two very interesting talks with slides, one by Morris Garratt who gave us a glimpse of old Middleton in Bamford's lifetime, and one by Robert Poole who told us about his activities and achievements.

Born in 1788 to a muslin weaver Bamford knew from a child his father's interest in radical political ideas. He had read Tom Paine and supported the French Revolution. Not only that, his father had started a local radical group and at the same time left the Methodist church. While still a boy Bamford read *The Iliad*. This inspired him and began in him a lifelong love of poetry. He and his wife as silk weavers suffered poverty and he became secretary of the local campaign for parliamentary reform. He assembled the men to attend the Peterloo rally in 1819 but gave strict instructions that there was to be no provocation or bad language, and no one was to take a weapon of any kind, nor any sticks. All turned out in their

Sunday clothes, the men wearing a laurel leaf in their hats, some carrying laurel branches symbolising peace. In spite of these efforts Bamford spent a year in Lincoln Gaol.

A collection of Bamford memorabilia was displayed for us in Middleton Library. We dined in the Sessions Room at the Old Boar's Head Inn where Bamford had delivered lectures, then visited St Leonard's parish church, rebuilt in 1513, which Bamford had written about. We crossed the road to the Old Burying Ground to his grave. The inscription bears testimony to his courage and dedication to his cause, telling that '... for promoting a reformed Commons House of Parliament and repeal of taxes on food he was twice arrested on charges of high treason, was five times taken in custody before the Privy Council, he was on five different occasions escorted in chains or manacles to various and distant parts of the country he stood trial of ten days and conducted his own defence ...' Here Paul Booth recited for us Bamford's dialect poem, 'Tim Bobbin's grave'. We also saw the handsome obelisk memorial with a medallion portrait erected in his memory in 1877.

Local historians Heather Mawhinney and Brian accompanied us to the site in Blackley where Bamford's beloved cottage stood, high on a hill in a beautiful spot with views over Boggart Hole Clough. Here Elizabeth Gaskell had brought her gift of Tennyson's poems. We returned home in sunshine after a very enjoyable and enlightening day.

## *A letter from Bamford, probably to William Gaskell*

**Robert Poole**

The Society's outing to Middleton on 9 June saw copies of a previously unseen letter to William Gaskell from the weaver and writer Samuel Bamford. Written from Bamford's home at Blackley on 26 June 1846, it reads as follows:

Revd Sir

At the request of the committee of the literary section of the Manchester Literary and Philosophical Society I am engaged in copying the glossary of Lancashire words and phrases which I forwarded to the society, and also some words supplied by other parties.

Mr [Vanbergue?] drew my attention to some marks which you had made in the margin of the MS which I sent in and said it was the wish of the Committee that I should consult you as to their meaning. I perceive that the names of places and one or two other words are marked thus ^, that several repetitions are marked thus – , and that certain pencil notes explain themselves. The first seems to indicate what

you suppose to be superfluous words, the second repetitions, and the third corrections in spelling.

As I shall be very happy in attending to any suggestion from you would you oblige by a note saying whether or not I am right in so construing your marks.

I am Revd Sir,

Your Obedt Humble Servant

Samuel Bamford

The identification of the 'Reverend Sir' as William Gaskell is not certain, but the circumstances make it very likely. Bamford was at this time well known in Lancashire as a working man poet and author of the memoir *Passages in the Life of a Radical* (1839-42), dealing with the 'Peterloo' period of the radical reform movement, 1816-21. William Gaskell's interest in vernacular poetry and dialect brought him into contact with Bamford, a practitioner of both, in the late 1830s or early 1840s.

We know from William Gaskell's *Two Lectures on the Lancashire dialect* (1854) that in the 1840s the Manchester Literary and Philosophical Society had begun to compile a glossary of Lancashire dialect, when 'a pretty large collection of words was obtained, chiefly through the aid of Mr Samuel Bamford' Bamford handed a full manuscript glossary to the Society in 1843 (there is a copy in the John Rylands Library) but the project then appeared to lapse.

This new letter shows that the glossary was being prepared for publication in 1846, almost certainly by Gaskell. He seems to have annotated Bamford's manuscript for publication; perhaps it floundered because of the ensuing trade depression. Part of the glossary went into Bamford's own 1850 *Dialect of South Lancashire*, and it was drawn upon in Gaskell's *Two Lectures*. Both these works were published after the success of *Mary Barton*, whose dialect in turn owed much to both men.

How has the letter come to light? After Bamford's death in 1872 some of his papers and effects came into the hands of his friend James Dronsfield of Oldham, a blacksmith turned journalist with good connections to the publishing and newspaper world, including the Lit. and Phil. of which he was a member. Two Bamford letters, including this one, passed through the hands of a manuscript dealer formerly based in Oldham, and have finally been tracked down after years of patient inquiry by Brian Leicester, a Bamfordologist from Middleton. They are now back in Bamford's native Middleton.

**Ed.** Christine Lingard has been able to identify the gentleman mentioned in the Bamford letter ; she writes:

He is listed in Lit and Phil publications as:

F Eugene Vembergue

He was librarian of the Society from 1831, and wrote a couple of articles on ancient languages. He was born in Paris c. 1801.

He is listed in the 1851 directory as Professor of Languages, 55 Cottenham St., Chorlton on Medlock though according to the census he was living in Gloucestershire by then. (Directories are always a bit out of date by the time they get to press).

There are many other renderings of his name. His first name was Francis, Frances or Francois and after he left Manchester all variations of his surname begin with W. Frances Eugene Wembergue died in Cheltenham in 1879. Francois Eugen Wemberque (with Q) was married in London in 1849 to Julia Friclot. He doesn't appear to have had any children, though given his age at the time of marriage this is not surprising.

His wife Julie Friclot (or Frielot) was a teacher in Chorlton in 1841 living near James Herford and his daughters Caroline and Emma. Emma Herford was visiting the Vembergues in 1851 and 1861 was with her sister. They were born in Worcestershire. The Charles Herford who married Mary Robberds and Edward Herford the coroner were from Birmingham.

I think she may have taught the Gaskell girls. *See Further Letters of Mrs Gaskell* page 34 (1847):

'Mondays and Thursday they will have an hour's french lesson here from Mme Frielot; a very good teacher who sets a good deal to be done in her absence; but is so kind and spirited that all her pupils are fond of her.'

**LITERARY EXERCISES.**

**SAMUEL BAMFORD**

Respectfully informs the inhabitants of Middleton and the adjacent townships that, on the Evening of

**WEDNESDAY NEXT,**

At the Assembly Room, Boar's Head Inn, Middleton,

HE PURPOSES

**READING AND RECITING**

Extracts from his own works, and those of other Authors.

He will also, if required, enter into statements as to when he ceased being a handloom weaver; what employment he next adopted, when he ceased that employment, why he ceased it. Why he removed to London, the nature of his employment there, why he ceased to be so employed, with correspondence relative to the same. His present engagements, his future prospects, and various other matters.

The Doors will be open at half past Seven, the Exercises will commence at Eight. TICKETS: Platform One Shilling, Front Seats Six pence, other seats Three pence. Tickets may be had at the above Inn, of Mr. Wm. Jones, Rhoads, and at the Printer's.

7th July, 1850.

T. HILLS, PRINTER AND BOOKBINDER, MIDDLETON.

# The Manchester Art Treasures Exhibition

Ann O'Brien

In his novel, "Coningsby", Disraeli referred to Manchester as "as great a human exploit as Athens". While today such a comparison may elicit a wry smile, in the nineteenth century it did not seem so strange; even Thomas Carlyle called Manchester "as sublime as Niagara, or more so". Unfortunately the more typical descriptions of Manchester which emanated from the writings of commentators such as Engels and Alexis de Tocqueville focused on the appalling living conditions of the poor; they paid little heed to the cultural side of Manchester life. True the slum housing was appalling, but in contrast, many of the public buildings such as the Portico Library, the Exchange and Charles Barry's Royal Manchester Institution were of real architectural merit. Even many of the warehouses were built not simply in utilitarian fashion but in the palazzo style.

Cultural life in Manchester not only manifested itself in its architecture but also in its numerous cultural and philosophic societies; they reflected the growing concern of the middle classes about the lives of the poor. Whilst societies, such as the Provident Society, were formed to alleviate the material distress of the poor the Royal Manchester Institution for the Promotion of Literature, Science and Art from its inception was interested in education. Thus one of the prime motives of the Art Treasures Exhibition was to enrich the lives of the masses.

The story of the Art Treasures exhibition began in early 1856, when Thomas Fairbairn son of the engineer, William Fairbairn received a paper from J.C. Deane, commissioner for the Dublin Great Industrial Exhibition of 1853, and his friend Peter Cunningham. They had read "Treasures of Art in Great Britain", a book written by Gustav Friedrich Waagen, a distinguished art historian: Dr Waagen had remarked that the art treasures in the United Kingdom far surpassed those in all the collections in Europe. Unlike In Europe, however, where there were many art galleries displaying their national treasures, in the U.K. most of these collections were in private hands. Deane and Cunningham "thought of the grand idea of bringing the elite of these works into view under one roof for the edification of their fellow men". They believed that the owners would look favourably on loaning their works of art if such an intention was made known to them and suggested to Fairbairn that Manchester would be a suitable location.

Fairbairn, who had been a commissioner at the Great Exhibition of 1851 enlisted the help of a group of his friends and with their support a meeting was called in the Town Hall on March 28th 1856 with a group of influential merchants and manufacturers, to discuss this suggestion. It was decided to go ahead with the proposal to hold an Exhibition of Art Treasures of the United Kingdom in Manchester

in 1857, Fairbairn and some of his friends organised a guarantee fund and within a month £60,000 had been raised, soon increasing to £74,000. The next step was to obtain royal patronage and this was readily given by the Queen and her consort, Prince Albert. An executive committee was set up and Thomas Fairbairn was elected chairman.

It was decided that the Exhibition should take place away from the grime of the city and a spot was found just two miles away on a piece of land in Old Trafford, adjoining the Botanical Gardens. At that time it was leased to the Manchester Cricket Club and, despite many protests they were swiftly evicted. However, they soon found a suitable alternative just a short distance away and this remains the home of the Lancashire County Cricket Club which was formed from the Manchester club. The railway line to Altrincham ran close by the site so a new station was constructed - now the Trafford Bar station on the Metrolink line.

The actual building was mainly constructed of wrought and cast iron, timber and glass; with a brick entrance façade and a barrel-vaulted roof, which was 104 feet high. There were some critics who compared the exterior to "three steam boilers, side by side but the interior was palatial. The use of so much glass made it light and airy. Dr. Waagen wrote "With the exception of the Palais de Beaux Arts in which the works of art were exhibited in the Paris exhibition of 1855.

Following the support from the royal family many more of the aristocracy and gentry were encouraged to give their support both in lending the "cream of their collections and fortunately there were not many who took the Duke of Devonshire's view; he is reported to have said "What in the world do you want with art in Manchester? Why can't you stick to your cotton spinning?" He was one of the very few members of the nobility who did not lend works to the exhibition. He did not even visit until the last day but so impressed was he that he later gave a banquet and ball at Chatsworth as a tribute to the organisers.

The Exhibition itself was divided into ten major sections ranging from Old Masters to photography, with smaller sections devoted to tapestry, furniture and armour, a section which apparently, was particularly popular with the working classes who visited. Paintings were hung in chronological order, at the suggestion of Prince Albert and Waagen, so that they would show the progression of art from primitive to Old Masters.

Of course promotion of the British school of art was a key component of the exhibition and one of the aisles was filled with modern British art. Visitors were given the opportunity to see the most avant-garde of the British work - the paintings of the Pre Raphaelites - Millais's "Autumn Leaves", now in Manchester City Art Gallery,

was praised as "a perfect miracle of intense colour". There was unanimous admiration for Henry Wallis's "Chatterton" which was so popular that "it needed two policemen for its protection from the crushing crowd".

And, of course one cannot write of the Art Treasures Exhibition without mentioning, one of the highlights of the Exhibition, the Hertford collection. The fourth Marquis of Hertford, sent forty-four paintings from his vast collection to the Exhibition among them works by van Dyck, Gainsborough, Rembrandt, Reynolds, Rubens and Velasquez; this collection entirely filled one gallery.

On 5th May 1857, less than eighteen months after the idea was first mooted, the exhibition was opened by Prince Albert; he was representing the Queen, who was unable to be there as she had just given birth to Princess Beatrice. Thousands turned out to welcome the Prince and in July the Queen herself came to see the Exhibition along with three of her children.

The Exhibition was a huge success, more than 1,300,000 visitors came by road or rail in the five and a half months that it was open. On a single day the show was seen by the Duke of Wellington, the Bishop of Oxford, Florence Nightingale and the painter, David Roberts. Of course Mrs Gaskell made a number of visits, accompanying the guests who filled her house for almost the whole duration of the exhibition. Her daughter, Meta, who was an amateur artist herself, was given special permission to go in one day, before the Exhibition opened, in order that she might make a water colour sketch of "A Woman Drinking" from Murillo's painting, "Moses Striking a Rock" for the Gaskell's friend, Lady Hatherton. It is a mark of how well respected the Gaskell family were for Meta to be allowed to do this, as the making of copies of any of the works in the exhibition was strictly forbidden.

As well as the great and the good who flocked to the Exhibition both from this country and from overseas, the lower classes came along in their thousands and, despite the fears of some, behaved themselves. Admission, normally one shilling, was reduced to 6d on Saturday afternoons to encourage them to come and families were able to picnic on the lawn outside if they did not want or could not afford to use the refreshment tents. Many generous employers in the region brought along their workforce, at their own expense. One such was the firm of Messrs Horrocks, Miller and Company of Preston, who hired two trains to bring 2,500 employees. Thomas Cook ran "Moonlight" trips from Newcastle which left at midnight, arrived in Manchester in time for breakfast and returned in the evening. Fifteen hundred people took advantage of these trips.

It is regarded by some as the most significant event in the history of art in the nineteenth century. Not only did it encourage those who sought to establish an





expanded National Gallery, to look to the Manchester Exhibition for an example of how this should be done; it also paved the way for other galleries to be set up, both in London and in the regions. In Manchester itself the following year saw the inception of the Manchester Academy of Fine Arts but it was to be another twenty-four years before Manchester City Art Gallery was established and, interestingly Julia Gaskell was one of its early supporters.

There was, however, one immediate benefit to the citizens of Manchester, the orchestra which had entertained visitors throughout the exhibition and won such plaudits from all who heard it was due to be disbanded. Its young conductor, decided to take a risk and engage the orchestra at his own expense. It became the Hallé Orchestra which entertains the Manchester audiences today, just as it did in 1857 and that conductor was the friend of the Gaskells, Charles Hallé.

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## *Elizabeth Gaskell's Guests To The Manchester Art Treasures Exhibition*

Pat Barnard has arranged a fine exhibition at Plymouth Grove tracing the various artistic links and the visitors who came to the Gaskells and will speak about this at our Autumn meeting.

Mrs Harriet Beecher Stowe was the first of the Gaskell's visitors at the beginning of June 1857, after Elizabeth and Mrs Stowe had returned from Rome where they had met.

Elizabeth wrote to Charles Eliot Norton on 3rd June 1857:

*'...When will you come to us? I have not yet been to the Exhibition, having had too much to do in other ways, but Meta says it is charming and exceeds her expectations. Mrs Stowe comes to us today for one night and tomorrow I shall go for the first time with her. (GL 349)*

A month later she wrote again to Norton:

*'...However you must come to us as soon as you are well; even if we have to find a night's lodging for you - which I hope won't be the case.*

Ruskin Lectures Here On the 10th and 13th - on our exhibition. It will be worth hearing.(GL 360)

And on Sept 28th:

*'... Meta really did get up this morning to a seven o'clock breakfast, and went, before I was down, to the exhibition to try and make a water-colour sketch of the Murillo study - a woman drinking, for Lady Hatherton . . . There comes a ring - there comes a caller! - Our house has been fuller than full, day and night since you left, and this last fortnight it will be fuller than ever, as everyone will want to see the Exhibition before it closes. I am very fond of all the people who are coming; but so worn out that it is hard work to lash myself up into properly hospitable feelings.'*

*Marianne said yesterday 'Oh! Are you not tired of being agreeable! I do so want leisure to sulk and be silent in; and really after long hard hot days at the Exhibition showing the same great pictures (GL 374)*



Their visitors had included publisher George Smith, M. and Mme. Mohl, Florence Nightingale and her sister, Ellen Nussey and Eliza Fox whom Elizabeth told, on 26 August, that she had nineteen people still due to come to Plymouth Grove.

## *Mary Barton as a school prize*

Anthony Coles, who was our guide to Rome, sent us this from *The Tablet* archive 100 years ago. [The Tablet, 29 June 1907.]

The London County Council has been debating the question whether or not *Mary Barton* is a suitable prize book for school children. In spite of some spirited speeches in defence of Mrs Gaskell's well-known novel, it was eventually decided that it should be struck out of the list of prizes. The speakers who supported this decision were naturally anxious to make it clear that they did not condemn the story as a bad book. For a general censure of this kind would only serve to show their incompetence as moralists or literary critics. But it was justly argued that a book may be excellent in itself and yet treat topics that render it unsuitable for young readers.

It may be observed that this discussion is but a particular phase of the general question of the censorship of books - a subject which has given rise to a voluminous literature and has excited considerable prejudice against ecclesiastical authorities. But however little the modern world may like the censorship exercised by the Church, its underlying principle is tacitly admitted even in unlikely quarters. Only the other day we found an organ of the most liberal form of Nonconformity putting its readers on their guard against the subtle and insidious publication *An Alphabet of Saints*.

*The Tablet*, 29 June 1907.

## *Report from Plymouth Grove*

**Ann O'Brien**

There is an air of optimism at Plymouth Grove these days, as we have learned that in less than 12 months time work will begin on making the building 'safe and sound'. This will be achieved by underpinning the walls at one corner, replacing what Elizabeth Gaskell called 'the pestilential drains', putting on a new roof and doing other essential work. This is, of course, dependent upon having the necessary funds in place. The total cost of all this work will be approximately £650,000. Of this £280,000 is already available, and funding applications for a further £200,000 have been sent off. This means we still have to find another £170,000, so you see we need all the help we can get! Your support in our fund-raising activities at the house

is a vital part of this. Of course if anyone has any other ideas for generating further income or knows of any other sources where we might obtain further funding, do please feel free to contact Janet, Elizabeth or Joan.

So far this year we have had a very successful series of fund-raising events at the house. In March there was a talk on Meta Gaskell, the second of the Gaskell daughters and the last remaining Gaskell to live in the house. She and her younger sister Julia went on to become much loved and respected members of Manchester society. The talk was followed by a delicious Italian buffet provided by the Friends.

This was followed in April by the 'Crimea Day', when we had extremely interesting talks by Alan Shelston on the effect that the war had on the life of the Gaskells, Major Robbins who spoke about various incidents in the war and Therese Meehan who gave us an insight into the little-known role of Irish nurses in the Crimea.

Both these events were over-subscribed (we are only allowed 60 people in the house at any one time, this includes speakers, helpers etc.); the lesson is therefore, do book early for any of our future events, if you want to be sure of a seat!!

The May Open Day included another highly successful Plant Sale when people were able to pick up pre-ordered plants and were also able to buy other plants brought in by members from their own gardens.

There were also a number of visits by private groups, among others, the Birmingham Victorian Society and a Unitarian Group; there are further group visits already booked in for this year but we are always pleased to welcome any other groups if you know of any who may be interested.

Finally I would like to mention our programme of events for the autumn: the Open Days will continue on the first Sunday of each month until December. On the first Sunday, September 2nd, and on the following Saturday 8th and Sunday 9th the Heritage Open Days, there will be a poster presentation, 'Artistic Links - An Artistic Trail', when Pat Barnard will be on hand to explain and discuss any points that may be raised.

We have another of our popular Plant Sales on our October Open Day (7th). Wallflowers, pansies and cyclamen may be ordered in advance for collection on the day. All are good quality plants at reasonable prices. For further details and orders, phone Hilda Holmes on 0161 487 2593. Other plants which members bring in from their own gardens will also be on sale. Contributions of plants always welcome!

On Saturday 20th October there will be a talk by Professor John Pickstone from the University of Manchester, entitled 'Manchester Medicine and Science in the time of the Gaskells'. The talk will not presume any knowledge of science or history - 'it will gently explore a world which was newly constructed, and to which Manchester was

then crucial'. This will be followed by afternoon tea (cost £7.50, pay on the door but please book in advance - phone Hilda Holmes, as above). Talk at 2.30pm, doors open 2pm.

To celebrate the diversity of life in Manchester we are making Sunday 4th November an International Open Day (12 - 4pm). We hope to have some international dishes to sample as well as our usual delicious refreshments, our new exhibitions and ever-popular book shop. If you haven't been before, do come and see us. Gaskell Society members are always especially welcome!

Then in December we have another Christmas entertainment - 'A Christmas Miscellany', with Delia Corrie and Charles Foster, and carol singing. This will be followed by a glass of mulled wine and mince pies (cost: £7.50, pay on the door, but please book in advance - phone Hilda Holmes on 0161 487 2593). Doors open 12pm, entertainment begins at 3pm.

To conclude, as you see, we have a wide range of events and we are always grateful for your support. Many thanks to those who have come to our previous events, we look forward to seeing you at Plymouth Grove again; and to those who haven't been before, you will find a warm welcome there when you do come.

## *The 2007 AGM of The Alliance of Literary Societies*

**Janet Kennerley**

The AGM of the ALS was held in Oxford on 19th May 2007 at St Hilda's College, Cowley Place. There were approximately 45 people attending, including two other members from the Gaskell Society. Quite a large proportion of societies in membership of The ALS were represented. My travelling companion, Lynda Stephens, was also wearing her 'Arnold Bennett Society' hat! (It may be worth reminding Gaskell members that anyone in membership of a society which subscribes to the ALS is entitled to attend this annual event, usually held in May.)

The host this year was The Tolkien Society and the weekend's events were ably co-ordinated by Trevor Reynolds.

The "Vernon Harcourt Room" was well signed as our meeting venue from St Hilda's main gate and a welcome cup of coffee awaited our arrival. The President of the ALS, Aeronwy Thomas, daughter of Dylan Thomas, was also enjoying the weekend with us and chatted to delegates prior to the start of the AGM at 11 am.

The main part of the meeting was taken up with several new appointments. The Chairman for the past 3 years, Nicholas Reed, handed over to Linda Curry, and

Rosemary Cullen stepped down after many years as ALS Secretary but she is willing to continue running the website. Julie Shorland stays on as Treasurer. There are some new members on the ALS Committee, including myself, replacing Joan Leach who has served The Gaskell Society for many years in this role. A hard act to follow!

It was pointed out that ALS Committee Meetings are held twice yearly in the Birmingham area which has proved central for those attending and also less expensive than London. Costs seem to be rising constantly, but it was suggested that the subscription rates are very modest and could be raised slightly from April 2008.

The Richard Jefferies Society will host the 2008 AGM weekend, provisional dates being 17/18th May in the Swindon area.

Looking ahead, it has been suggested that the 2009 AGM will be held in Dublin, possibly during June of that year. The Gaskell Society has already offered to host the 2010 ALS Weekend, this being the bicentenary year of Elizabeth Gaskell's birth.

There was much discussion about the new style Journal of the Alliance of Literary Societies to replace the Newsletter, entitled 'ALSo ....'. Volume 1, 2007, has as its theme 'Censorship and Copyright', edited by Linda Curry and R. Healey. Joan Leach and I both have copies for reference. Further copies may be purchased via the ALS at £7 each. However, it is also available for member societies in electronic format from the ALS website :-[www.allitsoc.org.uk](http://www.allitsoc.org.uk) (notice the triple 'L')

There was a plea for contributions for the 2008 edition of 'ALSo .....' when the theme will be 'Literary Tourism', e.g. acquiring and maintaining a literary heritage site, what to do with a heritage site and how a society has promoted its author. Plymouth Grove may feature in this.

Comments or suggestions may be sent to [l.j.curry@bhamac.uk](mailto:l.j.curry@bhamac.uk)

Once the AGM business was complete, we had two interesting talks. David Doughan spoke about 'Women, Tolkien and Oxford', followed by Mrs Pat Reynolds who was an expert on the 'Publishing History of *The Lord of the Rings*'.

We dispersed to find our own lunch before meeting up again for a leisurely walking tour of Tolkien's Oxford (plus others), enjoying the somewhat unexpectedly beautiful weather.

Dinner was attended by about 24 members at Rewley House, at the Department for Continuing Education in Wellington Square. This concluded with an impromptu poetry and singing session in the lovely inner courtyard - our two friends from Dublin, Desmond and Michael, and Aeronwy's husband, Trevor, showing their expertise in these skills. This was a delightful conclusion to a busy day.

The next day we were invited to visit 'The Oxford Story' in Broad Street where we experienced a "journey" through 900 years of Oxford University's history.

A memorable weekend - do consider attending the ALS event in May 2008!



ALS members at Oxford

## *The BBC and Cranford*

We are looking forward to the BBC's presentation of *Cranford*, to be shown in November. Script-writer Heidi Thomas, who will give a talk at Knutsford Literary Festival on 14 October, explains her involvement:

I was commissioned to write the scripts for *Cranford* in August 2002! Sue Birtwistle, the producer, approached me with her idea to create an entirely original drama based on three novellas by Elizabeth Gaskell - *Cranford*, *'My Lady Ludlow'*, and *'Mr Harrison's Confessions'*. I was familiar with only the first of these three works, but fell completely for the world of Knutsford as depicted there. I am fond of that period of history in any case, but my interest was increased by the fact that (having grown up in Liverpool) I settled after my marriage in the small market town of Saffron Walden, in Essex. I saw many parallels between the two towns and it helped make *'Cranford'* feel very real and vivid.

The series was originally to be 6 one-hour episodes in length, and it took a full 18 months of work to get the scripts to the point where they were ready to be filmed. Shooting was due to take place in the spring of 2005, but at that time the BBC did not have the financial resources to make such a large scale production, and even though we reduced the number of episodes from 6 to 5, we had to wait a while before appropriate funds and casting were in place.

## Book Notes Christine Lingard

Two reprints of *My Lady Ludlow* have been issued in the last year, though copies already seem to be in short supply according to Amazon, the Internet bookseller. Dodo Press at £7.99 and Echo Press at £5.99. These should be particularly welcome as the book will be included in the projected BBC serial *Cranford Chronicles*.

*Round of stories by the Christmas fire*, edited by Charles Dickens. Hesperus Press, £6.99, due November.

A reprint of the original Christmas number of *Household Words* in which Gaskell's ghost story *The Old Nurse's Story* was first published. This modern edition is edited by Melissa Klimasewski.

*Masculinity and the English Working Class: Studies in Victorian Autobiography and Fiction*, by Ying Lee. (Criticism and Cultural Theory Series). Routledge, £60, due July 2007. A treatment of masculine characters in autobiography and in the fiction of Dickens, Gaskell and Kingsley.

*A Brontë Encyclopedia* by Robert Barnard and Louise Barnard. Blackwell, £55, due July 2007. An A-Z review of people, characters, topics and places in the Brontë story, by a former chairman of the Brontë Society, who is also a member of the Gaskell Society. Over 2,000 entries include literary judgements and treatment of the unfinished works and juvenilia.

*Servants and Paternalism in the Works of Maria Edgeworth and Elizabeth Gaskell*, by Julie Nash of University of Massachusetts at Lowell. Ashgate Press, £45, due November, 2007.

Offers a new reading of *Castle Rackrent*, *North and South* and *Cranford* by studying characters who were at the same time expected to be invisible but were privy to the intimate secrets of their employers. The author was a speaker at the 2005 Gaskell Society Conference in Manchester.

## *North West Branch*

Meetings at Cross Street Chapel, Manchester are held on the second Tuesday in the month at 1.00pm. Members may meet at the chapel from 12.15 for a sandwich lunch, (bring your own or buy from Pret-a-manger next door to the Chapel). Meetings cost £2 for members, £3 for non-members.

**Tuesday, 9 October:** 'The Domestic Interior in the Victorian novel', by Dr Jane Hamlett, whose book *Material Relations: middle-class domestic interiors and the family in England, 1850-1910*, will be published by Manchester University Press in 2009.

**Tuesday, 13 November:** 'The Growth of Manchester's Victorian Suburbs' by Professor Alan Kidd of the Manchester Centre for Regional Studies at MMU.

**Tuesday, 11 December:** Christmas Carol Service.

**Tuesday, 12 February 2008:** 'Parks for the People: Municipal Parks in Manchester 1890-1912' by Carole O'Reilly, Senior Lecturer in Media and Culture Studies at Salford University.

**Tuesday, 11 March 2008:** 'Reporting Manchester in 1848: Perspectives on Cottonopolis' by Terry Wyke Lecturer in Economic and Social History at MMU, author of *Public Statues in Greater Manchester*.

**Knutsford meetings are held at St John's Church hall**, on the last Wednesdays in the month. Buffet lunch is from 12.15pm. Cost £7.50.

The course book for the next season is *Cranford and other Stories*, Wordsworth p/b edition.

**October 31:** Joan Leach on the Knutsford background to *Cranford*, *Mr Harrison's Confessions* and *My Lady Ludlow* (to be combined in the BBC series)

**November 28:** Elizabeth Williams on the TV *Cranford* and *Mr Harrison's Confessions*

**January 30:** TV *Cranford* and *My Lady Ludlow*

**February 27:** 'The Doom of the Griffiths'

**March 26:** 'Lois the Witch'

**April 30:** 'Lois the Witch' and 'Curious if True'.

## *London and South East Branch*

**Saturday November 10th 2007:** Dudley Green, 'Always...at my post'. The letters of Patrick Brontë.

Dudley Green has been an active Gaskell Society Committee member and member of the Brontë Society, and recently has edited Patrick Brontë's letters. (Published 2005). He will talk about the letters with particular reference to the relationship between Patrick Brontë and Gaskell over *The Life of Charlotte Brontë*.

**Saturday February 9th 2008:** Dr Patsy Stoneman, 'Wives and Daughters from page to screen: what does it mean to "adapt" a novel?'

The session will involve a close reading of specific passages.

Patsy Stoneman is an Emeritus Reader in English Literature at the University of Hull. The second edition of her excellent critical volume of Gaskell has just been published. She has made an extensive study of the translation of the Brontë works into other media so she is well qualified to look at Gaskell in this way too.

**Saturday May 10th 2008:** Dr Graham Handley, 'Mrs Gaskell and *Scenes of Clerical Life*'.

Graham will talk on George Eliot's *Scenes of Clerical Life*, the warm response of Mrs Gaskell to them, and then go on to consider Gaskell's scenes of clerical life in her own fiction both before and after George Eliot's were published.

Perhaps we should read George Eliot's novel before this meeting!

Dr Fran Twinn, 85 Calton Avenue, Dulwich, London SE21 7DF  
Tel: 020 8693 3238 Email: [frantwinn@aflex.net](mailto:frantwinn@aflex.net)

## *South-West Branch*

**Saturday, November 4th**, at 2 for 2.30 p.m, Bath Royal Literary and Scientific Institution, 16-18 Queen Square, Bath:

Dr and Mrs Boyd Schlenther will be talking about Mrs. Gaskell's American connections, including the importance of Unitarianism in the 19th century.

Mrs Rosemary Marshall, 138 Fairfield Park Road, Bath BA1 6JT; tel: 01225 426732  
Email: [rosemary-marshall@yahoo.com](mailto:rosemary-marshall@yahoo.com).

## *Yorkshire Branch*

**Saturday 27th October:** 'Regionalism in the novels of Mrs Gaskell and Sir James Kay-Shuttleworth' by Heather Sharps

At the Friends Meeting House, Friargate, York

Meetings will commence at 2 p.m. The room will be available from 1.00 pm 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.

Enquiries to: Dudley J. Barlow, 6 Kenlay Close, New Earswick, York YO32 4DW  
Tel: 01904 750366 Email: [dudleybarlow@hotmail.co.uk](mailto:dudleybarlow@hotmail.co.uk)

**Visit to the John Rylands Library, Wednesday, 9th January 2008**

Members are invited for a guided tour of the newly redeveloped and extended building with information about its history, the architecture, the redevelopment project etc, and a 'close-up session' - essentially a chance to see and discuss some Gaskell-related items from the collections. The tour lasts an hour and a half. Numbers are limited to 20 but we plan to have one tour at 10.30 and a second about 2.15pm, having lunch for both groups at 12.15pm in the new restaurant. The cost will be £14.50.

Make a note in your diary for 2008 AGM at Cross Street on April 5th.