

The Gaskell Society



Brook Street Chapel

THE GASKELL SOCIETY HOME PAGE has all the latest information on meetings.
<http://gaskellsociety.co.uk>

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ISSN 0954 - 1209

NEWSLETTER
Spring 2010 - Number 49

Editor's Letter

Joan Leach

We hope you are all ready to celebrate the Gaskell bicentenary. Many of the events are in the Manchester and Cheshire areas but there are others elsewhere and we hope members will stimulate interest their own areas. For up-to-date information please consult our home page www.gaskellsociety.co.uk; there is also a web page at www.elizabethgaskell.co.uk and a leaflet will soon be available for the North West programme: all these will give booking details. The Portico Library exhibition: Elizabeth Gaskell- *A Writer's Life* will be shown in April (excluding 2nd and 5th). The library, where William was Chairman for 30 years is well worth a visit and the exhibition will feature some rarely seen items.

Tabley Old Hall where Elizabeth enjoyed picnics as described in *Mr Harrison's Confessions*, is now a ruin on an island in Tabley Park. I hope to conduct a guided walk on 10th April. Booking information is on www.tableyhouse.com or contact me on joanleach@aol.com.

We hope members will support us, and act as hostesses too, for the AGM of The Alliance of Literary Societies in the 15th and 16th of May. Our representative on the committee, Janet Kennerley, has organised an excellent programme. Brook Street Chapel will be a colourful attraction as a flower festival will coincide with the ALS event. It is a great pleasure to meet members of other literary societies and they are looking forward to coming to Knutsford and Plymouth Grove.

Our groups in London, Bath and York continue with their programmes and hope members will support them. If you live near an area with Gaskell connections that has not yet organised a bicentenary event you might consider taking some action.

In this issue there are details of a Gaskell Study Day at Sheffield University on 9th June: early registration is recommended. A garden Party at Heathwaite, Elizabeth's childhood home, on 12th June from 2pm to 4pm will also need early booking (Email: patbarnard@live.co.uk) to avoid disappointment.

You will have received information about the AGM on 17th April at Cross Street Chapel and our Westminster Abbey window dedication ceremony on 25th September and watch out for many other events to be held in the autumn. We hope to see many of you at these events.

Christine Lingard has written for us about the Gaskell's London connections from her extensive researches. Some of us will visit Chelsea and other places she knew, in September.

You may be interested in an obituary of Elizabeth from The Manchester Guardian of 14th November 1865 and a copy of her death certificate.

Akiko Suzue, retiring President of the Gaskell Society of Japan sends us this information: The Society of Japan has three plans to commemorate Gaskell's 200th anniversary. The first one, publication of an Elizabeth Gaskell Study, is already launched. Many members of our society contributed to it, so that it should come to be one of the best Gaskell Study of the world to commemorate her bicentenary. The book will be published on Gaskell's birthday.

Another plan is The Gaskell Exhibition under the auspices of Jissen Women's University. Versions of Gaskell books, translations and studies will be exhibited in late September to early October around our AGM period. Now we are considering to borrow a dress and hats of mid Victorian period from Bunka University Museum. But it requires some money. I wonder if any of you has your great great grandmother's dress in your closet!

Our third plan is to make our AGM a commemorative one. It is most welcome if someone would take DVD or video of the ceremony at the Poet's Corner, and show it at the meeting Prof. Suzue will conclude the meeting with the lecture "On the topos of Elizabeth Gaskell."

Elizabeth Gaskell's London

Christine Lingard

During this special bi-centenary year members may well be visiting London and may want to find some of the places that Elizabeth Gaskell visited. She was born at Lindsey Row, now known as no. 93 Cheyne Walk, Chelsea, near Battersea Bridge, in 1810 — a plaque marks the house; but within a few weeks the family moved round the corner to no.3 Beaufort Row [1] before being taken to Knutsford to spend the rest of her childhood in the care of her beloved Aunt Lumb. This house is no longer standing. Elizabeth's two half-siblings were baptised, not in a Dissenting chapel, but at nearby St Luke's, often referred to as Chelsea Old Church, where her mother had been buried in October, 1811. This church is still in use but has been extensively rebuilt after war damage. Elizabeth returned to Chelsea during the last years of her father's life (he died in 1829) and recorded the time in a famous letter to Mary Howitt in 1838:

Long ago I lived in Chelsea occasionally with my father and stepmother, and very, very unhappy I used to be; and if it had not been for the beautiful, grand river, which was an inexplicable comfort to me, and a family of the name of Kennett, I think my child's heart would have broken. [GL, 616]

However she must have retained some affection for the area, for in May 1849 she wrote 'And then to Chelsea to see the old place once more'; seven years later she stayed at Parham Place, off the King's Road, when introducing her two younger daughters to the capital. Other visits in the years before her marriage were to family. Her mother's brother, Swinton Holland, a banker, lived at Norfolk St, Park Lane. This street has been renamed Dunraven St, and substantially rebuilt. Here she got to know several of his Wedgwood and Darwin relations. It remained the home of his widow Anne and two of her daughters, Charlotte & Louisa. Susan Darwin preferred Charlotte to Louisa. Another cousin, Sir Henry Holland, son of her Uncle Peter, had an even more prestigious address: no. 25 Lower Brook St, Mayfair, in keeping with his role as doctor to the royal family. His wife Emma died of cancer in 1831 leaving a young family. His sisters, Lucy and Bessy, moved in to help until he remarried.

Once her identity as an author was revealed Elizabeth's visits to the city became frequent; sometimes she stayed in inadequate lodgings, such as the little, dusty, noisy rooming-house in Panton Square (off Haymarket), especially for longer trips when she did not wish to inconvenience people. But she had numerous friends who were always willing to entertain her. Her first hostess was a former Manchester friend, the infamous Mrs Tayler (who had the 'impromptu baby' in Blackpool). They had moved to no. 27 Woburn Square. Another early visit was a pleasurable Christmas (1850) spent at the home of her literary mentors, William and Mary Howitt, then living at no. 28 Avenue Rd, St. John's Wood, where they sat around a roaring fire telling ghost stories. [2]. Their neighbours included an associate of William's, Edward Tagart, minister of Little Portland St. Chapel, who numbered Dickens among his congregation. There are numerous references to this family in her letters around this time, though she found the atmosphere in their home cold. It was on a visit to the Tagarts that she met the Shakespearean editor, Mary Cowden Clarke:

We found a charming, brilliant-complexioned, but quiet-mannered woman; thoroughly unaffected, thoroughly attractive-so modest that blushed like a girl when we hazarded some expression of our ardent admiration of her "Mary Barton" [3]

Many of her friends lived in grand Georgian houses in the vicinity of Hyde Park or Regent's Park. These elegant terraces, designed by John Nash, were named after the ducal titles of the Prince Regent's brothers. Hensleigh Wedgwood, brother of

Mrs Charles Darwin, and Hensleigh's daughter Snow, lived at no. 17 Cumberland Place (since renumbered), her new friend Tottie Fox lived at no. 3 Sussex Place, and further along at no. 13 lived Alfred Austin, a civil servant, who did much to alleviate the effects of the cholera epidemic in Manchester. His daughter Annie spent some time at Plymouth Grove and met her future husband, Fleeming Jenkin, an engineering apprentice, there. He became a Professor at Edinburgh University and is known for his friendship with Robert Louis Stevenson.

Cousin Louisa was married at the age of 47 to Robert Croft, Vicar of Hillingdon, and lived at no. 18 Clifford St, Regent St, which is now Buck's Club, the haunt of P.G. Wodehouse and the like; at no. 8 Hyde Park Gardens was another Manchester friend, Lady Coltman, and the judge Sir Charles Crompton lived at no. 89 Oxford Terrace, Hyde Park. Lady Caroline Crompton was the daughter of a Liverpool merchant and a member of one of those bewildering inter-connected Unitarian families. Several of her sisters or their families are mentioned in Elizabeth's letters - Mrs Noble of Silverdale, Mrs John Shuttleworth (wife of the radical Manchester newspaper owner), and Mrs Charles Booth among them. Mrs James Booth (née Jane Noble), the latter's cousin and sister-in-law, and wife of a future Secretary of the Board of Trade, was eager to play host at no. 39 Hyde Park Square in 1853 - 'such a charming person'.

Other regular hosts included William Ewart, the radical politician, at no. 6 Cambridge Square, Hyde Park; he also entertained her at Broadleas, his home near Devizes. Her great friend, Mrs Davenport of Capesthorpe, re-married to Lord Hatherton, had her London home at no. 42 Berkeley Square; William Shaen, her solicitor, who was married to Emily, one of the Winkworth sisters, at no. 8 Bedford Row, Holbein; and Maria James, the wife of the judge, William Milbourne James, a student with William at Glasgow University, at no. 47 Wimpole St.

MA. & I agree that yours is one of the 3 houses we like best to stay at [FL, p.123]

Her newly found fame brought Elizabeth many invitations from the literary circuit, especially the celebrity breakfast; in particular the poet, Samuel Rogers at St. James Place, who entertained her in May 1849:

... poor old man; he looks so very old, and feeble ... though he again showed us some beautiful things - ornaments for the head, ears, neck dug out of Etruscan, Pompeian, & Egyptian tombs; some were as elegant as anything that is made now. [GL, 47]

There was also the politician, Richard Monckton Milnes (Lord Houghton), in Pall Mall;

... we cabbed it to Mr Monckton Milnes' ... There were the House of Lords there, Miss Holland says; but independently of the Lords, there was Guizot, and Whewell, and Archdeacon Hare. We were very merry, and it was a very short two hours which every one had said was the proper number of hours to stay at breakfast. [GL, 45a]

This was followed by her first visit to Dickens' home, for dinner, 'making ... a rich day'. This would be in Tavistock Square, though this house is no longer standing:

We were shown into Mr Dickens' study... It is the study where he writes all his works; and has a bow-window, about the size of Uncle Holland's drawing room. There are books all round, up to the ceiling, and down to the ground; a standing-desk at which he writes; and all manner of comfortable easy chairs. Anne [her cousin] sat between Carlyle & [Samuel] Rogers, — I between Dickens & Douglas Jerrold. Anne heard the most sense, and I the most wit... [GL, 45a]

Her first meeting with Carlyle was disappointing, especially as he had spoken so appreciatively of Mary Barton. The invitation had come from Jane Carlyle, without consulting him. Emily Winkworth, who accompanied her, was disgusted that she was kept waiting for an hour in the drawing-room with Mrs Carlyle looking out at the garden, where 'her great rude husband was walking backwards & forwards in a dirty Scotch plaid smoking', and where he was sent out to four times, and wouldn't come in. At last Mrs C. went out to him herself, — 'but it was no use, and she came back looking so mortified'. [4] Carlyle lived in Cheyne Row, Chelsea, very near to her birthplace. The house is open to the public.

Years later she visited William Makepeace Thackeray at no. 2 Palace Green Rd, opposite Kensington Gardens (now the Israeli embassy). His daughter Anne Ritchie described the occasion:

Once, only a year before, Mrs. Gaskell had come with one of her daughters to see us in my father's house, and I can just remember her talking to him in the big dining-room at Palace Green; looking up laughing, inquiring, responding, gay, yet definite, such is the impression I have of her presence. Nor do I forget the motherly letter, full of truest warmth and expression of feeling, in which, after our father's death, she invited us to stay at Manchester, to come to that home in Plymouth Grove in which, for years, and years to be, such true hospitality, such life-long friendship, awaited me and mine. [5]

There numerous other people for social occasions — too many to name. Among them, the geologist Sir Charles Lyell in Harley St, Leigh Hunt (formerly a neighbour of Carlyle in Chelsea) at no. 16 Rowan Rd, Hammersmith, Dante Gabriel Rossetti,

then living near Blackfriars Bridge (his later home was at the other end of Cheyne Walk); Charles Kingsley at Chelsea Rectory, and John & Effie Ruskin at no. 163 Denmark Hill, Herne Hill (April 1855). She went to hear Frederick Maurice preach at Lincoln's Inn.

Some visits were just for business — her publishers Chapman & Hall had offices in Park Lane, and George Smith in Corn Hill. There were plenty of occasions to become a tourist, often using Peter Cunningham's Handbook of London past & present, as a guide. The energetic Lady Anna Coltman (née Duckworth) was very keen to keep her busy.

... Ly Coltman plans to take me to the Zoological Gardens ... and Kensal Green Cemetery. At 4 we are to go with the Dean of Hereford, and the Dean of Salisbury (for a good Unitarian Ly Coltman knows a mighty number of Deans) (GL, 156a)

She visited Hampton Court in 1856 (her guidebook is preserved in Manchester Central Library), and Kew. William Ewart offered to show her the Houses of Parliament, though it is not clear whether she took him up on the offer, and there was always time for art galleries, theatres, shopping (Baker St Bazaar) and tea (Chapter Coffee House).

Elizabeth was just as keen to see the other side of life and made several visits to charitable institutions, though most of these are no longer to be seen. In 1851 she went to the Convent of the Sisters of Mercy at Bermondsey:

Bermondsey is a very bad part of London; and these Sisters have been established about 11 years, and have done a good deal of good and established a great large school. [GL, 100]

She went to see her friend, James Pillans Wilson, at Mr Price's candle factory, a benevolently run company which provided a Christian Society, and rewarded the boy employees with games of cricket & outings; and to see Mr Nash's reformatory schools, or ragged schools, at Westminster:

[he] was a clerk and has given up his life and his time to reforming criminals for some years past. Sending out as many as 100 every year to the Colonies; [GL156a]

And she even went to Tothill Fields Prison (near Westminster Cathedral) in May 1849 to see 'the silent associated system of which our dear Mr Wright thinks so highly'. [GL, 47]

She ventured into the suburbs, evidently being familiar with Putney & Wimbledon, where she spent a lot of time trailing round looking for lodgings. Friends to visit there were the Christian Socialists — Thomas Hughes & J.M.F. Ludlow and their families, who shared a house at The Firs, Ridgway, William Rathbone Greg, and her rarely mentioned cousin, George Holland, at Gayton Lodge. Hampstead was also in reach even if it proved difficult. She once wrote to the critic, Henry Morley:

Did you ever hear how Mrs Wedgwood & I toiled & broiled in search of the very mysterious place where you live...and just as we must have been in sight of the New Hampstead Road, had to turn back for our time was up... [GL 278]

She was more successful visiting George Smith, Clarkson Stanfield the artist, and the Tagarts, who had moved there. Marianne Gaskell went to school at Holly Lodge.

Her two married daughters later had homes in London. Marianne lived at Lansdowne Rd, Wimbledon. A memorial was dedicated to her husband Edward Thurstan Holland in All Saints Church. Florence started her married life with her in-laws but later lived at no.13 Cromwell Place, South Kensington. She continued the family tradition of hospitality. Henry James was a guest on more than one occasion:

and also [dined] with Mrs Crompton again, and took out her sister Miss Meta Gaskell (the Nortons' friend), a most pleasing, amiable, sympathetic woman. [6]

Further reading:

[GL] Chapple, J.A.V. & Pollard, Arthur. The letters of Mrs Gaskell, [new ed], 1997.

[FL] Chapple, J.A.V. & Shelston, Alan. Further letters of Mrs Gaskell, 2000.

[1] Chapple, J.A.V. Elizabeth Gaskell: the early years, 1997.

[2] Lee, Amice. Laurels and rosemary: the life of William and Mary Howitt, 1955.

[3] Clarke, Mary & Charles Cowden. Recollections of writers, 1878.

[4] Uglow, Jenny. Elizabeth Gaskell; a habit of stories, 1993.

[5] Ritchie, Anne Thackeray. Blackstick papers, 1908.

[6] Edel, Leon (editor). Henry James: letters, volume II, 1875-1883, 1975.

A Tale of Two Centenaries: Elizabeth Gaskell and Lev Tolstoy

Dr Katherine Jane Briggs

A literary centenary stimulates new interest in the life and works of a famous author; and prompts us to consider the significance of their novels for the present day, as

well as their influence on other writers. This year marks the bicentenary of the birth of Elizabeth Gaskell; and also the centenary of the death of Tolstoy, one of the most significant Russian writers of all time. The links between these two events may appear tenuous at first sight, but a chain of reference may be established within the context of world literature.

Much of my research has been centred on the influence of one writer on another, and the ways in which writers in England and Russia promoted the Christian social gospel of compassion for the poor and oppressed. Writers such as Elizabeth Gaskell, George Eliot, Charlotte Bronte and Charles Dickens all drew attention in their novels to the lives of poor people in their own country, as did Tolstoy, Turgenev and Dostoevsky in theirs – at a time when modes of communication were very different from what they are today.

My work explores the relationship between public work and influence, and private faith and spiritual development, through female characters created by all these 19th-century authors, in which they portray the experience of women in terms of their relationships and work, and conflict with personal and institutional evil. A modern novelist, Howard Jacobson, says: 'Novels matter, in my view, because they show how each individual life feels to the person living it.' To enter into another person's understanding of self, we need what writers and teachers call the 'sympathetic imagination' – the attempt to stand and walk in the shoes of another person.

In the context of cross-cultural understanding, it is also essential to consider questions of translation from one language to another – and to consider how a Russian lady in St Petersburg came to be offered a novel by an English lady from Cheshire as a suitable subject for translation by a marginally disreputable journalist like Dostoevsky – and why she agreed to do it.

Ed. Dr K J Briggs will speak on this topic in the afternoon of the AGM meeting to be held at Cross Street on 17th April.

Vernon Lushington: Mrs Gaskell's 'Cousin V'

In the 1860s Elizabeth Gaskell was concerned about the plight of the Manchester cotton operatives who were suffering from lack of work because of the blockade of imported cotton which resulted from the American Civil War. She arranged for an assistance fund to be set up and sought help in collecting funds in London. One of those who came to her assistance was the lawyer Vernon Lushington. Mrs Gaskell and Lushington became good friends, with Lushington often visiting the family at their home in Plymouth Grove where a room was kept for him when he was in

Manchester on legal business. In one of her letters Mrs Gaskell referred to Lushington as 'Cousin V'.

Little has been known about Lushington until the recent emergence of an important but little-known archive of Lushington correspondence and diaries. These were made available to historian David Taylor whose interest in the Lushingtons stretches back many years. David Taylor has been helping to catalogue the archive and is currently researching for a thesis on Lushington for a PhD at Roehampton University.

Lushington moved in a remarkable circle of friends, which included the Pre-Raphaelite painters, Charles Darwin, George Eliot, William Morris, Thomas Hardy, George Gissing and many more household names from the second half of the nineteenth century. Through his friendship with Leslie and Julia Stephen, Lushington's three daughters became friends of Virginia Stephen (better known as Virginia Woolf), who used Kitty Lushington as the model for her 'Mrs Dalloway'.

* David Taylor will give the Daphne Carrick Lecture after the AGM on 17th April at Cross Street. He is a local historian living in Cobham, Surrey, which is where the Lushington family had their summer residence. He is an archivist for the Cobham Park estate and has written many books and articles on various aspects of local history. He is well known as both writer and speaker and was, last year, invited to give a short lecture tour in the USA based on his work on the Lushingtons.

A Brontë letter: Correction

In the Autumn Newsletter no. 48, a letter from Charlotte Brontë to Elizabeth Gaskell about a visit to Chatsworth, is mentioned, suggesting that it may never have appeared in print. Margaret Smith, editor of *The Letters of Charlotte Brontë*, points out that the letter has in fact been published. Dated 27 August 1850, it appears in *The Letters of Charlotte Brontë*, Vol. II (OUP 2000), pp. 456-8, and also as early as 1908 in Clement Shorter's *The Brontës: Life and Letters*, London 1908 Vol. II, pp. 163-4.

Also in the previous Newsletter, Dr John Ross considered the cause of Elizabeth Gaskell's death. This inspired Christine Lingard to send for a copy of the official death certificates for Elizabeth Gaskell and for her daughter, Florence, who died at the early age of 38. Elizabeth's death is recorded as 'Heart Failure'.

But Florence's, dated October 5th 1881, gives the cause of death as: '*Found dead. Poisoned by an overdose of chloral hydrate accidentally*'.

This sedative drug, often taken as a sleeping draught, was addictive but as it had an unpleasant taste it seems unlikely that an overdose could be taken 'accidentally'.

The Death of Mrs Gaskell reported

A member kindly sent me a clipping from *The Guardian* which was a reprinting of the paper's report of Elizabeth Gaskell's death, dated 14 November 1865:

Last evening the melancholy intelligence reached the city of the death of Mrs Gaskell, the wife of the respected minister of the Unitarian Chapel, Cross Street . . .

Her death was very sudden, and that there could have been no expectation of so speedy a termination of her life work, nor even a thought of danger, is shown by the fact that Mr Gaskell preached in his own chapel on Sunday, and was at home when the news of her decease reached him . . . (a few details of her life are given) With the modesty of no doubt in her own gift she issued her first work, May Barton, anonymously in 1848. It attracted great interest from the fact that its scene was laid in this neighbourhood. Another of her popular novels was North and South, in which the painful details of a strike in the manufacturing districts were narrated with great vigour). But the greatest work, and that by which she will be longest known, is her 'Life of Charlotte Brontë', of which it has been said that no biography has equalled it since Boswell's Johnson. 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 of 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 . . . (then follows a mention of the Art Treasures Exhibition of 1857 and her distinguished visitors) Her conversational powers were of no mean order, and she was at all times an important acquisition to the social order. Of late years she has travelled much abroad but her inspiration was always found in English life and character. Her death leaves a blank that will not easily be filled

Exciting times ahead at Brook Street Chapel

The Chapel and the Gaskell Grave are places of pilgrimage for Gaskell enthusiasts from all over the U.K. and the world. The popularity of the B.B.C. filming of "Cranford" and the subsequent programmes has vastly increased interest in Gaskell.

The Chapel itself is reached by steep stone steps and cobbled paths which elderly and disabled people find impossible to manage and so, more than five years ago, the committee decided to improve the access to the Chapel, the Gaskell grave and to the tranquil garden at the rear of the Chapel.

Columns:-	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9
No.	When and where died	Name and surname	Sex	Age	Occupation	Cause of death	Signature, description and residence of informant	When registered	Signature of registrar
216	Twelfth November 1865 Hollybourn	Elizabeth Cleghorn Gaskell	Female	55 Years	Wife of William Gaskell Unitarian minister	Disease of the Heart Certified	Ann Hewitt Present at the death Hollybourn	Fifteenth November 1865	W. Gaskell Registrar

Columns:-	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9
No.	When and where died	Name and surname	Sex	Age	Occupation	Cause of death	Signature, description and residence of informant	When registered	Signature of registrar
192	5 th October 1881 13 Cromwell Place Wensington	Florence Elizabeth Crompton	Female	38 Years	Wife of Charles Crompton Barrister	Found dead Poisoned by an overdose of Chloral Hydrate Accidentally	Certificate received from Thomas Bramah, Medical Coroner for Middlesex Inquest held October 1881	Fourteenth October 1881	S. A. Hume Registrar

The project sounded simple enough but the Chapel's Grade 1 status and the ancient yew trees meant that there were many restrictions to overcome. The architect came up with an ingenious plan that solved the access problem but left us with another problem — how to pay for it! For the last few years the Chapel members have fund raised themselves, applied for grants and been blessed by generous donations from benefactors until finally, in January, the work began.

So what is happening?

- 1 A lift is being installed in the schoolroom to enable disabled people to reach the newly installed first floor.
- 2 The new room will exit to a level wheelchair-friendly path which leads to the Chapel.
- 3 The gravestones by the Chapel are being levelled and a viewing platform is being built which will overlook the Gaskell grave.
- 4 The garden will be reached via slightly stepped gravestones.
- 5 New toilets and other facilities will be installed.

What next?

- 1 The new room will be developed into an exhibition centre dedicated to Elizabeth Gaskell.
- 2 There will be other temporary displays, eg. important Knutsford characters etc
- 3 The Chapel will be open regularly for visitors and tourists.
- 4 Interpretation of the history of the Chapel will be introduced in the gallery.
- 5 Work closely and co-operatively with Knutsford Heritage Centre.

What does this mean for Brook Street Chapel and Knutsford?

- 1 Everyone will be able to reach the Chapel.
- 2 The overall facilities including the main hall will be good and so other local organisations can use the premises for meetings, workshops, readings, rehearsals, concerts etc.
- 3 It will be open for people wishing to find out about the Chapel and its history
- 4 It will be a focal point for Gaskell enthusiasts.
- 5 We hope that local people will be encouraged to come to Brook Street Chapel and find out for themselves what a wonderful friendly place it is and to enjoy its unique beauty
- 6 It will be a tourist attraction.

Emily White 1925-2010

Her many friends in the north-west were very sorry to learn of the sudden death, on January 31st, of Emily White, a long-standing member of The Gaskell Society.

Emily was born in Macclesfield on 17th March 1925, the only child of a Manchester manufacturer of water-proofed cloth. She lived for most of her life in Prestbury and was educated locally before becoming a pupil at Manchester High School, where Meta Gaskell was still celebrated as a benefactor on Founder's Day. Aged seventeen, Emily gained a place to read P.P.E. at Lady Margaret Hall and was fortunate in being able to stay at Oxford for 3 years to complete her Honours Degree. At this time women had to leave their studies on reaching the age of twenty to be called up for war service. Even so, like all students, Emily had to contribute five hours a week 'war-work', scrubbing floors and picking potatoes on the College hockey field, sacrificed for the duration to the 'Dig for Victory' campaign. Emily played in goal for the second varsity hockey team and in her final year was awarded a tennis blue, contributing to a celebrated away win against Cambridge.

After Oxford Emily trained as a Housing Manager, a career which, before the welfare state, embraced many elements of social care. She worked in Chester, London and Manchester before leaving to join the Manchester and Salford Council of Social Service, as assistant secretary, in 1955. Her job there was to promote co-operation with and between voluntary organisations and to identify gaps in social provision and innovate projects to meet these needs. The many-faceted voluntary social scene gave Emily full scope for her ideas and administrative skills, and her valuable work led to her appointment as the first woman General Secretary to the Council in 1964, and the award of OBE in 1976. In the 1970s Emily joined the social development department of the recently created Warrington New Town as a principal officer and was promoted to Head of Community development before her retirement in 1982.

On retirement, Emily enrolled immediately for a local history diploma at Manchester Polytechnic and for her dissertation subject chose 'Women in public service in early 20th-century Macclesfield'. Her favourite research tool was her tape-recorder, with which she interviewed the daughters and granddaughters of the leading 'platform people' of that time. One such pioneer of women's causes was Susan Elizabeth Gaskell, always known as Lily, a niece of the Gaskells and friend of Meta and Julia, who came to live in Prestbury on her marriage to Walter Greg. Emily presented a paper on the work of this public-spirited heir to the Gaskell tradition at a meeting of the Manchester Lit. and Phil. Society, which was later published in their Transactions. She also published a number of short histories of local churches and historic church schools and a biography of Joan Gaddum OBE. Emily's concern for others did not cease with retirement. Some twenty years ago she helped to form Age Concern in Cheshire and was still president of Age Concern Cheshire and a trustee of Age Concern East Cheshire at the time of her death.

Emily gained great pleasure from her love of music and after her move to Kerridge played the organ for the local church and sang with the Bollington Festival choir, but

at the end of a working life spent largely in committees, she was now most happy out of doors. She was Lady Captain, and later Lady President of Prestbury Golf Club, as her mother had been, and won more than her share of trophies. She loved her garden and rambling the hills with her dog or local walking groups. In old age she continued to take strenuous walking holidays in the mountain ranges of Europe and on a recent African safari holiday took over the controls of a light aircraft to fly over Victoria Falls. She valued the company of the friends she made in the Gaskell Society at our Knutsford meetings, and particularly enjoyed the conferences, holidays and day trips which offered that wonderful mixture of learning and outdoor activities for which her appetite never diminished. Some will remember her striding the Lakes in the footsteps of Shirley Foster at our last conference.

A Service of Thanksgiving held for Emily at St Peter's Church, Prestbury, on 17th February, brought together a large congregation, expressive of the affection of her many friends and the respect earned by her lifetime's work making things better for others, wherever she saw the need.

The Alliance of Literary Societies

Kenn Oultram

Following a phone call from Joan Leach I agreed to accompany her, on 30 April, 1988, to the Birmingham and Midland Institute to support the setting up of an Alliance of Literary Societies (ALS). The inspiration came from Kathleen Adams, who retired as secretary of the George Eliot Fellowship in 2008 after forty years in office. Her husband Bill was later to become secretary of the ALS, and the Coventry-based couple are today vice-presidents of the Alliance.

A follow-up meeting in Birmingham on 8 October 1988, attracted a capacity audience to the BMI lecture theatre, and the appointed officers were: Joseph Hunt, Chairman (Francis Brett Young Society), Herbert Woodward, Secretary, and John Bates, Treasurer (both of The Dickens Fellowship, Birmingham branch). I volunteered and was appointed newsletter editor (a position I held for 10 years) and Joan was elected as a committee member; a position presently held by Janet Kennerley.

Annual meetings at the BMI, in those early years, featured presentations by member societies with readings, including some from the relevant author's work by the actor Gabriel Woolf, the ALS's first President. The Alliance is currently set to appoint a new president, following the death last year of Aeronwy Thomas, the daughter of Dylan Thomas, who supported the ALS with enthusiasm and charm.

Latterly ALS annual general meetings have been hosted by various societies in locations as diverse as London, Oxford, Stoke-on-Trent, Swindon, Bath, Swansea, Ledbury, Berkhamsted and (last year) Dublin. The 2011 event will be hosted by The Johnson Society in Lichfield, with a provisional date of 14/15 May; while the following year the honour falls to the Dickens Fellowship on the occasion the bicentenary of the great man's birth.

Finally, the progressive ALS has achieved international recognition by affiliating to the ALG, a Berlin-based organisation funded by the German government, which embraces European literary societies and related museums. Annual conferences have been held in Berlin and Budapest, when the ALS delegate has been its Chairperson, Linda Curry (The John Clare Society). She hopes that the ALS will ultimately be hosts.

Ed. Kenn Oultram, is one of our founder members and served on the committee for sixteen years. He recently completed forty years as secretary to the Lewis Carroll Society (Daresbury).

The Alliance of Literary Societies

**The Gaskell Society welcomes the
ALLIANCE OF LITERARY SOCIETIES
to the AGM and Weekend Event
Saturday 15th May – Sunday 16th May 2010**

PROGRAMME (may be subject to change)

Saturday 15th May – The Methodist Church, Princess Street, Knutsford

10.30 am **Registration and Coffee** – (£2 if not staying for lunch)

11.00 am **Welcome & Introduction** by The Gaskell Society
followed by **Annual General Meeting of the ALS**

12.15pm approx. **Buffet Lunch** (optional) - £10 including tea/coffee

1.45pm **"Elizabeth Gaskell – Her Life and Works"**
- talk by Elizabeth Williams, Chairman of The Gaskell Society

2.30pm **"Mrs Gaskell & Knutsford"**
- talk by Joan Leach MBE, Hon. Secretary, introducing:-

3.00pm **"A Cranford Walk around Knutsford"**
(lasting approximately 1.5 hours)

7.00/7.30pm **Dinner** – The Cottons Hotel, Manchester Road, Knutsford
(must be pre-booked – 3 courses plus coffee £27)

Sunday 16th May – Brook Street Unitarian Chapel, Knutsford

10.00am Coffee followed by illustrated talk by Joan Leach MBE:-
“Mrs Gaskell’s Cheshire”

10.45am Laying of wreath on Elizabeth Gaskell’s grave

Various options – possibly:-

11am-12 noon Morning Worship at Brook Street Unitarian Chapel

Visit to 84 Plymouth Grove in Manchester – subject to building works
(former home of Rev & Mrs Gaskell and family)

Opportunity to explore ECG’s Cheshire – e.g. Tabley House and/or
Tatton Park (halls open 2pm) Capesthorpe Hall, Peover Hall, Styal
Mill.

Please note this weekend is open to any member of a society affiliated to the ALS,
but only one delegate from each society can vote, if necessary, at the AGM. This
annual event, held over a weekend at a venue associated with one of our member
societies, is an opportunity to learn about a particular author, whilst socialising with
members of a wide range of literary societies.

This year’s venue will be Knutsford in Cheshire. Mentioned in the Domesday Book
of 1086, Knutsford has a long, rich and varied history. The town is known as being
the childhood home of author, Elizabeth Gaskell, born in London during 1810 as
Elizabeth Cleghorn Stevenson, an outstanding novelist of the early Victorian era.
Following her mother’s death a year after her birth, the young Elizabeth was brought
to Cheshire to live with her late mother’s sister, “Aunt Lumb” at “Heathwaite House”
in what is now known as Gaskell Avenue, Knutsford. She married the Unitarian
Minister, Reverend William Gaskell, in 1832 at Knutsford Parish Church, and then
lived in Manchester. From 1850, the Gaskell family home was at 84 Plymouth Grove
in the Manchester suburbs, currently undergoing a major restoration project to
return this literary house to its former glory. However, Elizabeth Gaskell was fond of
her childhood home town and immortalised Knutsford in many of her works,
especially “Cranford” which is considered a charming portrayal of the town in
Victorian times and of its mainly female population.

Today, Knutsford is a popular tourist destination, with its eclectic mix of unique
Italianate architecture, quaint cobbled streets and grand buildings. It is also a
bustling commuter town with a lively shopping centre full of specialist shops,
boutiques to antiques, interior design centres and art galleries. From “Top Street”

(Princess Street) to “Bottom Street” (King Street) there are many delightful
attractions for visitors to explore, along with numerous restaurants, cafes and pubs.
There is access to open heathland and the attractive parkland surrounding the
mansion at Tatton Park is at the end of King Street.

Knutsford is justly regarded as one of the most attractive towns of its size in
Cheshire – with a story to tell around every corner!

Janet Kennerley

BOOKING FORM

To secure your place at the above event, complete this form and return with your
remittance payable to “The Gaskell Society” by **31st MARCH 2010** please to:-

Mrs Joan Leach MBE, Honorary Secretary, The Gaskell Society,
Far Yew Tree House, Chester Road, Tabley, Knutsford, Cheshire. WA16 0HN

Name(s):

Address:

Telephone: Email:

I/We wish to attend the ALS Annual General Meeting on 15th May 2010.

£10 per person – for the day, inclusive of 2 course buffet style lunch
and coffee/tea

OR £2 per person – for the day without lunch but including morning coffee/tea
(This may be paid on the day)

£27 per person – Formal Dinner at The Cottons Hotel, Manchester Road,
Knutsford (3 course set meal incl. coffee, vegetarian option)

I/We enclose remittance – please make cheques payable to The Gaskell Society
as follows:-

Total: £

If you would like to visit Plymouth Grove on Sunday 16th please ask Joan for
details.

Gaskell Study Day at Sheffield

As part of the Bicentenary celebrations, the University of Sheffield's School of English is holding a Study Day on the topic of 'Gaskell's Longer Short Fiction', on 9th of June 2010. The main speaker will be Professor Joanne Shattock, who will deliver a paper on 'Elizabeth Gaskell and her Readers: from Howitt's Journal to the Cornhill'. There will also be postgraduate speakers, and Alan Shelston and Shirley Foster will lead a round-table discussion.

Draft Programme:

11.30 a.m.	Coffee and Registration
12.00	Main speaker
1.00-1.45 p.m.	Buffet lunch
2.00-4.00 p.m.	Postgraduate papers and round-table discussion
4.00 p.m.	Tea and departure

The cost of the day will be £7.50, to be paid in advance.

Please indicate by 31 March if you would like to attend. There is no official booking form; replies and cheques (made out to the University of Sheffield) should be sent to Dr Shirley Foster at either The School of English, University of Sheffield, Jessop West, 1 Upper Hanover Street, Sheffield S3 7RA, or reply to: s.foster1@sheffield.ac.uk. Please be sure to include a contact address.

BOOK NOTES

Christine Lingard

Elizabeth Gaskell by Alan Shelston. Hesperus Press Ltd £7.99. This concise biography by the President of the Gaskell Society is a welcome addition to the acclaimed Brief Lives series. This book will be launched at the Portico Library, Manchester on 8th April.

Victorian servants, class, and the politics of literacy, by Jean Fernandez, (University of Maryland, Baltimore County). Routledge Studies in Nineteenth-century Literature, £70.

Discusses the development of mass literacy, and the class structure, illustrated in particular by the role of the servant in Victorian literature. It includes a chapter on 'Oral Pleasures: Repression and Desire in Emily Brontë's *Wuthering Heights* (1847) and Elizabeth Gaskell's "*The Old Nurse's Story*" (1862)'. Mary Wollstonecraft, Catherine Crowe, Wilkie Collins and Robert Louis Stevenson are also discussed, as well as some unfamiliar diary writers.

Also due for publication this Spring:

Cousin Phillis and Other Stories, ed. Heather Glen (Oxford World's Classics) OUP, £8.99.

Contents: Lizzie Leigh; Morton Hall; My French Master; Half a Life-Time Ago; The Manchester Marriage; Cousin Phillis – a group of stories that have been out of print for some time.

The Moorland Cottage. Hesperus Classics, £7.99. This novella, which was a special Christmas publication in 1850, provided some of the material for the 2009 television adaptation of Cranford.

The Penguin Book of Ghost Stories: from Elizabeth Gaskell to Ambrose Bierce, edited by Michael Newton, Penguin Classics, contains The old nurse's story, £10.99

Two new audio productions are also due to be released:

Wives and Daughters by Elizabeth Gaskell (Audio CD) Naxos AudioBooks; Unabridged edition read by Patience Tomlinson, £75 (available on Amazon for £37.50) Abridged edition, £15.

Cousin Phillis by Elizabeth Gaskell (Audio CD) Naxos AudioBooks; Unabridged edition read by Joe Marsh, £14.

A Report on progress at Plymouth Grove

Janet Allan

Work on the exterior of the house should be completed in April, later than expected due to the unexpectedly bad winter. It will be a transformation from the dingy 'Pink House' we have known for so long with beautiful covering of lime plaster, restored windows and doors, new handrails and front steps, and a lot of interior structural work as well. We are very grateful to our major funders, who together contributed three quarters of a million pounds for this. They include English Heritage, the Bowland Trust, Biffa and the Oglesby Trust, but also to so many individuals who have sent us donations totally over nine thousand pounds.

Our application to the Heritage Lottery Fund for the work on the interior is going to their regional committee on 11 March. By the time this reaches you we hope that we will have been awarded the first stage of a million pound grant.

If you are a member of the Friends of Plymouth Grove, you can have your preview at our AGM on 8 May at 2pm. The house will be open for the ALS on Sunday 16 and our first public open day is on Sunday 6 June, 12-4pm.

Our forthcoming events include:

Wednesday 31 March- Friday 30 April, 9.30-4.30, Monday-Friday excluding Easter.
Portico Library, 57 Mosley Street, M2 3HY *Elizabeth Gaskell Exhibition*

On Thursday 8 April, 6.30pm Alan Shelston will talk about writing his new biography of Elizabeth Gaskell, when we hope that three generations of Elizabeth's descendents (including the Trust's Patron Mrs Rosemary Dabbs) will be with us and on Tuesday 13 April there will be an InterTheatre performance of Elizabeth Gaskell and Charlotte Bronte. Book with the Library for these events, 0161 236 6785

Tuesday 25 May starting at 9.00 *Visit to St Deiniol's Library,*

The Library was founded by Gladstone in the picturesque village of Hawarden, It has an outstanding collection of over 250,000 items, specialising in Theology and Victorian Studies. Travel by coach (starting opposite Chorlton Street bus station). This tour is shared with the Portico Library. Cost £20 includes travel, coffee or tea and cake on arrival and tour of the library. You can order lunch individually in the library cafe. Please book with Hilda Holmes on 0161 487 2593.

Wednesday 16 June, 7 for 7.30 *Dear Scheherazade,*

Gabrielle Drake's one-woman show on Elizabeth Gaskell, postponed from January because of the bad weather, will be performed at MMU's Capitol Theatre in the Mabel Tylecote Building, All Saints, M15 6BH. Tickets are £15 including refreshments. Book via the Box Office on 0161 247 1306. Space is limited so book

North West Group

Knutsford meetings are held at St John's Church hall, on the last Wednesday in the month from October to April. Buffet lunch is from 12.15pm. Cost £8

A selection of Gaskell stories from *Tales of Mystery and the Macabre* (Wordsworth edition) will be studied and discussed with Elizabeth Williams. The Crooked Branch, The Grey Woman etc.

London and South East Group

Saturday, 8 May 2010: Professor Marion Shaw: 'Neither beginning, middle, nor end': a discussion on *My Lady Ludlow*.

This will follow the pattern of this year's May meeting. Marion Shaw will introduce Gaskell's work and then a discussion will ensue.

Professor Shaw is Emeritus Professor of English Literature at Loughborough University, with special interests in Tennyson and Elizabeth Gaskell.

Homework!! It might be advisable to read or re-read the work before the meeting!!

Meetings continue at Francis Holland School at 2pm with a sandwich lunch from 12.45pm.

South- West Group

Saturday, 13th March, 2.30 p.m: Discussion group at Bren Abercrombie's, 12 Mount Road, Lansdown, BA1. To continue the discussion on *Mary Barton*.
(Tel: 01225 471241)

Saturday, 24th April, 2.30 p.m: at BRLSI, Dr Frances Twinn, editor of the Gaskell Journal, will speak on: 'From Monkshaven to *Middlemarch* - the Provincial Landscapes of Elizabeth Gaskell and George Eliot'.

Tea/Coffee will be served after the talk. £2.00 to members; £4.00 to non-members.

August, date to be announced: Summer tea at Kate and Alec Crawford's, Norton St Philip. Tel: 01225 331763.

Any queries to Mrs Elizabeth Schlenther, 14 Vellore Lane, Bath, BA2 6JQ.

Yorkshire Group

Saturday, 1st May at the Friends Meeting House, York, 2.00p.m.

David Taylor will give a talk on "**Vernon Lushington, Mrs Gaskell's Cousin V**". Lushington was a lawyer who helped Mrs Gaskell when she set up an Assistance fund for the Cotton Workers during the Cotton Blockade. He became a firm friend, so much so that a room at Plymouth Grove was put aside for his work whenever he was in Manchester. The talk will cover their friendship and also Lushington's friendship with other famous names of the time such as George Eliot, Thomas Hardy and the Pre-Raphaelite Brotherhood.

Saturday, 9th October at the Friends Meeting House, 2.00p.m.

Janet Allen will give a talk on "**Plymouth Grove**". Janet's talk will cover the time the Gaskells lived in the house, and also the progress of the work being carried out on the house today.

In addition to the above, in this bicentenary year the Group has established links with the **Unitarian Church in York** and several events are planned to take place in the Church:

22nd May: a talk on "**Unitarianism**" by **Adrian Lovett** (Chairperson of the Church).

10th September: "**Elizabeth Gaskell**", a talk by **Elizabeth Williams** (Chairman of the Gaskell Society).

Date to be arranged: "**Manchester New College in York**", a talk by **Adrian Lovett**.

For further details of all the above, contact Kate Smith at shepleysmiths@tiscali.co.uk.

Meetings will commence at 2 p.m. The room will be available from 12.30 p.m. 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.