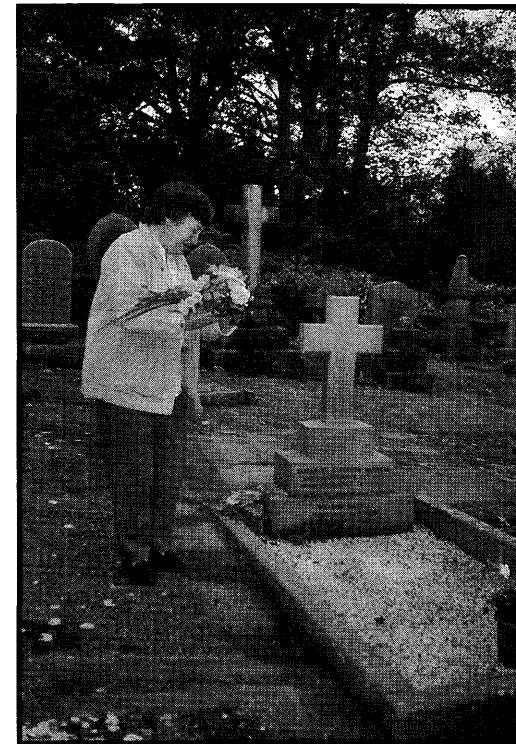


# The Gaskell Society



25th September 2004

Joan Leach puts flowers on Elizabeth Gaskell's grave, Brook Street Chapel

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

If you have any material or suggestions for future Newsletters, please contact Mrs. Helen Smith,  
11 Lowland Way, Knutsford, Cheshire, WA16 9AG.

Telephone - 01565 632615 E-mail: [helenisabel@ntlworld.com](mailto:helenisabel@ntlworld.com)

**Hon Treasurer:** Brian Williams, 15 Cawley Avenue, Culcheth, Warrington, Cheshire WA3 4DF

**Membership Secretary:** Miss C. Lingard, 5 Moran Crescent, Macclesfield SK11 8JJ

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## NEWSLETTER

Autumn 2010 - Number 50

## *Joan Leach*

**Janet Allan**

After most of this Newsletter had been compiled Joan was taken ill and is now undergoing radio-therapy, before she had a chance to complete her Editor's Letter. I know that on hearing this sad news everyone will be sending their very best wishes to her. We hope very much that she will be with us on 25 September at Westminster Abbey, when Elizabeth Gaskell will be installed in Poets' Corner.

As usual the newsletter has been typed by Mary Syner and I have just finished off the 'tops and tails'.

## *"Such happy days as my schooldays were": Elizabeth Gaskell and Warwickshire*

Dr Elizabeth M. Cox

Elizabeth Gaskell's enthusiasm for the places and history of Warwickshire, where she attended school for five years, is conveyed most effectively in her own words. On August 18, 1838 she opened a long letter to Mary Howitt, primarily about Cheshire customs, with the following paragraphs about Warwickshire:

*I am very glad indeed Mr Howitt thinks of going to Clopton; and one of my reasons for wishing to write soon is that I may beg him thoroughly to explore the neighbourhood (that of Stratford-on-Avon). As a schoolgirl I could not see much, but I heard of many places that I longed to know more about; and yet I can only give you glimpses of what those places were. I know there was a mysterious old farmhouse near Clifford, which had been the family mansion of the Grevilles, and where Sir Fulke Greville, the servant of Queen Elizabeth, the counsellor of King James, and the friend of Sir Philip Sidney, was born and bred. [...].*

*Then there is an old curious seat of the Marquis of Northampton, who married Miss Clephane, Sir W. Scott's friend, Compton Winyates, near Edgehill, and someway connected with the history of the battle. Shottery, too, where Ann Hathaway (she hath a way) lived, is only a mile from Stratford. Charlecote, of course, is worthy of a visit, though it was not out of that park that Shakespeare stole the deer. I am giving but vague directions, but I am unwilling to leave even in thought the haunts of such happy days as my schooldays were.*

Gaskell's interest in Warwickshire and her recollection of details are remarkable given that, by the time she wrote this letter, she had left school and the county twelve years earlier. The letter also provides an unmistakable indication of her fascination with historical incident, family lineage and mystery which were to become such important themes in her published fiction, particularly her short stories and tales.

Gaskell's memories of her time in Warwickshire, where she spent some of her formative years, are clearly happy ones. In the autumn of 1821, when she was just eleven years old, she left Knutsford to attend a girls' boarding school in the village of Barford, a couple of miles south of Warwick. The school was run by the Byerley sisters (relations of Josiah Wedgwood) and provided Gaskell with 'one of the best educations available to girls' in the nineteenth century. Indeed the school educated a number of women who became well known in their day, and in 1830 when she was

aged ten, Florence Nightingale visited the school. In May 1824 the sisters moved their school from Barford to Avonbank, an eighteenth-century mansion situated near the River Avon and Holy Trinity Church in Stratford-upon-Avon. Gaskell remained a pupil at the school until sometime in the first half of 1826. Sadly most of the school was demolished in 1866, but two original buildings still stand in the Avonbank public gardens, one of which may have been the schoolroom.

William Stevenson, Gaskell's father, selected the Byerleys' school in Warwickshire for his daughter despite existing family associations with schools in Bath and Liverpool. The choice may have been influenced by a connection between Gaskell's stepmother, Catherine and her sister-in-law, Katharine Thomson (formerly Byerley), who had taught at the school before her marriage. The education provided by the sisters supported, whilst it also gently challenged, the social expectation that their pupils' future lives would be confined to the domestic sphere, as wives and mothers. Indeed, Katharine Thomson, who married the brother of Gaskell's stepmother, was a prolific published author whilst also bringing up their many children. Gaskell may have found a role model in Katharine. Many years after she had left school, Gaskell is believed to have received literary advice from her regarding her first full-length novel *Mary Barton* (1848).

Readers of The Gaskell Society Newsletter will know that the connection between Gaskell and her time at school in Shakespeare's Stratford-upon-Avon has been commemorated by both the Society and the Shakespeare Birthplace Trust. In March 2002 Professor John Chapple, then President of the Gaskell Society, planted a mulberry tree in the garden of Brook Street Chapel. The tree is marked by a plaque that reads:

### *The Gaskell Mulberry*

*This tree is a scion of the mulberry tree growing in Shakespeare's garden in New Place, Stratford upon Avon; it was planted by Professor John Chapple, President of the Gaskell Society, on 20 March 2002 in memory of Elizabeth Gaskell's two years at school in Stratford upon Avon.*

Interestingly Gaskell sought out family connections and the peacefulness of rural Warwickshire in May 1849. *Mary Barton* had been published anonymously in the previous October and had been met with a mixed reception and, indeed, a degree of anger by some Manchester manufacturers. Gaskell's identity as the author was quickly exposed and in mid-April 1849 she escaped to London, where she was treated as a celebrity, being invited to dinners with writers such as Charles Dickens, William Makepeace Thackeray and Thomas Carlyle. On leaving the social whirl of London she stayed in Shottery for just under a week, rather than returning directly to

Manchester. It is thought that she may have stayed in the home of one of her cousins, Kate Greaves (née Holland) and her husband Richard, the latter being from a Warwickshire Quaker family. She wrote two letters recounting her visit, one of which was to her daughters, Marianne and Margaret Emily (Meta), dated May 17, 1849, written when she had just arrived in Shotton. According to this letter Gaskell did visit the 'old curious seat' of Compton Wynnyates this time, as well as Warwick Castle. Her second letter, sent to Eliza (or Tottie) Fox later that month (dated May 29, 1849), contains a vivid and evocative description of the sensory impact of the surroundings on her:

*... a very pretty, really old fashioned cottage, at Shotton ... near S. on Avon; a cottage where one's head was literally in danger of being bumped by the low doors, and where the windows were casements: where the rooms were all entered by a step up, or a step down: where the scents through the open hall door were all of sweet briar and lilac and lilies of the valley: where we slept with our windows open to hear the nightingales' jug-jug, and where the very shadows in the drawing room had a green tinge from the leafy trees which over hung the windows.*

Gaskell's prose captures the essence of Shotton as it still is today and has echoes of the significance she later bestowed on the image of houses adorned with the 'mother's flowers' in her fictional works, such as *Ruth* (1853) and 'Lois the Witch' (1859). In *Elizabeth Gaskell: The Early Years*, John Chapple quite rightly concludes a discussion of Gaskell's family and social connections in Warwickshire and North Wales with a comment that highlights the importance of these two regions for her in both her life and her art:

*Exact identities are doubtful, and more research needs to be done, but the links between Warwickshire and North Wales compose a kind of delicate web in which people and incidents were caught up from a very early stage in Elizabeth's writing career.*

Gaskell drew upon her Warwickshire experiences in a number of her fictional works. Critics believe that her first published story, a Gothic tale entitled 'Clopton Hall' (1840), was based on an essay she had written while at Avonbank following a visit to a fellow pupil's nearby home. This piece was published by William Howitt in the third chapter of his *Visits to Remarkable Places*, entitled 'Visit to Stratford-on-Avon, and the Haunts of Shakespeare'. Gaskell's later novella 'My Lady Ludlow' (1858) is a meditation on Lady Ludlow's sense of personal loss arising from social change, and is set in the Barford countryside. The village of Barford also provides an important

setting for her Gothic short story 'Lois the Witch', a disturbing account of the fate of Lois Barclay in the witch trials in Salem, Massachusetts in 1692. Lois moves from Barford to Salem following the death of her parents. Her memories of her former life in Barford and her hopes of a future marriage to Hugh Lucy, the Barford miller, ensure that the village remains an important presence throughout the story. Her recollections of 'peaceful Barford' provide her with emotional comfort whilst she suffers the hostility of her adopted family and the wider Salem community. Gaskell represents Barford as a morally better place than Salem and so it acts as an important counterpoint to the hysteria and horror that takes place there.

A further Warwickshire connection is to be found in the letters exchanged between Gaskell and George Eliot (1819-1880), although they were never to meet in person. Gaskell's admiration for *Scenes of Clerical Life* (1858) and *Adam Bede* (1859) was so great that on June 3, 1859 she initiated correspondence with the woman who has become Warwickshire's most revered nineteenth-century female novelist. In her first letter to Eliot, Gaskell clearly believes that the unknown author she admires is a man, and she playfully claims that the generally held belief in London that she (Gaskell) is the author of *Adam Bede* is correct. A number of Gaskell's subsequent letters to friends and acquaintances show her gradually overcoming her resistance to the fact that not only was the author of these fine works a woman, but she was also Mary Anne (Marian) Evans, who was living with (but not married to) George Henry Lewes, a man whose morals Gaskell evidently mistrusts. Gaskell's justified admiration for Eliot's work spread ultimately to admiration for the woman, and this feeling was clearly reciprocated, as demonstrated by Eliot's replies. Gaskell wrote a letter to Eliot's publisher, John Blackwood, telling him that she enjoyed the depictions of the Warwickshire countryside in *Adam Bede*. However, most gratifying for Gaskell must surely have been that Eliot told her that she had read Cranford whilst writing *Scenes of Clerical Life* and *Mary Barton* when writing *Adam Bede*.

Gaskell's connections with Warwickshire spanned her entire life, encompassing her schooldays in Barford and Stratford-upon-Avon in the 1820s, her spirited letter to Mary Howitt in 1838, her visit to Shotton as an established author in 1849, and her relationship with George Eliot in 1859. Her experiences in Warwickshire are known to have influenced her fictional work, and more research may uncover further treasures.

1 Letter to Mary Howitt, August 18, 1838, *The Letters of Mrs Gaskell*, edited by J.A.V. Chapple and Arthur Pollard (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1966), no.12, pp.28-33, at p.28.

2 John Chapple, *Elizabeth Gaskell: The Early Years* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1997), p.238.

- 3 Chapple, *Elizabeth Gaskell: The Early Years*, 236-246; Jenny Uglow, *Elizabeth Gaskell: A Habit of Stories* (London: Faber and Faber, 1993), pp.34-39, 44-46. A watercolour painting of Avonbank, The Byerleys' School for Young Ladies is included in both Chapple, *Elizabeth Gaskell: The Early Years* and Uglow.
- 4 The Literary Warwickshire website, [www.literarywarwickshire.com](http://www.literarywarwickshire.com), includes some information about the school as well as photographs of the preserved buildings.
- 5 Chapple, *Elizabeth Gaskell: The Early Years*, Chapter 13; Uglow, pp.34-39, p.182.
- 6 'Here we go round the mulberry bush,' *The Gaskell Society Newsletter* 36 (Autumn 2003), pp.16-17.
- 7 Uglow, pp.214-228.
- 8 Chapple, *Elizabeth Gaskell: The Early Years*, pp.322-23.
- 9 Letter to Marianne and Margaret Emily Gaskell, May 17, 1849, *The Letters of Mrs Gaskell*, no.47, pp.79-80.
- 10 Letter to Eliza Fox, May 29, 1849, *The Letters of Mrs Gaskell*, no.48, pp.80-82, pp. 80-81.
- 11 Uglow, p.476.
- 12 Chapple, *Elizabeth Gaskell: The Early Years*, p.324.
- 13 Laura Kranzler, introduction to *Gothic Tales* by Elizabeth Gaskell (London: Penguin Classics, 2000), p.xi; Uglow, p.37; Chapple, *Elizabeth Gaskell: The Early Years*, p.243.
- 14 'Clopton Hall', (1840) in *The Works of Elizabeth Gaskell*, edited by Joanne Shattock, Volume 1 (Pickering and Chatto, 2005), pp.37-41.
- 15 Gaskell, 'My Lady Ludlow' (1858), in *My Lady Ludlow and Other Stories*, edited by Edgar Wright (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1989), pp.1-210.
- 16 Gaskell, 'Lois the Witch' (1859), in *Gothic Tales*, edited by Laura Kranzler (London: Penguin Classics, 2000), pp.139-226.
- 17 Gaskell, 'Lois the Witch', p.223.
- 18 Uglow, pp.462-67; J.A.V. Chapple, assisted by John Geoffrey Sharps, *Elizabeth Gaskell: A Portrait in Letters* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2007), pp.135-38.

Dr Elizabeth Cox is planning to run a series of courses on the works of Elizabeth Gaskell in the Stratford-upon-Avon, Leamington and Warwick areas. The courses will be open to anyone who would enjoy exploring Gaskell's life and works in a relaxed atmosphere. **If you would like further information about the courses please send an expression of interest to her at [blaina@tiscali.co.uk](mailto:blaina@tiscali.co.uk)**

## Archibald Stanton Whitfield 1899-1974

Philip Ray

Archie was born on 5th January, 1899, in Walsall, Staffordshire, the only child of Thomas and Tilley Whitfield. Thomas owned a tobacconist and stationer's shop. Archie was educated at a private school called Willow House before transferring to Queen Mary's Grammar School for the full four-year course from January 1911 to December 1914; he was regarded as a bright boy though not physically strong. He therefore did not seek employment immediately after leaving the Grammar School, but occupied himself in private study. This included enquiries to the Bodleian Library and the Salt Society relating to various families he found interesting. He also wrote to the British Museum about coins and Roman soldiers, and to Lady Petrie, the Honorary Secretary of the British School of Archaeology in Egypt. In May 1915, the local paper published a short article in which he pointed out that Oak Apple Day, 29th May, celebrated King Charles II's birthday, not his escape after the battle of Worcester, which happened later, in September.

An improvement in his health enabled him, in the Michaelmas Term of 1915, to take up an appointment as a library assistant at Birmingham University, which he held for one year. Here he met Professor Raymond Beazley, who was impressed by his scholarly interests and proposed his election to the Royal Historical Society in May 1916, at the age of seventeen. He was rejected for military service in November 1916, on health grounds, but worked for the South Staffordshire Regiment in the recruitment office until February 1919. In October 1919 he entered Exeter College, Oxford, to read History, but transferred to English after one term. During the Easter vacation of 1921 he gave a public lecture on 'Thomas Hardy: the artist, man and disciple of destiny'. This was well received and he decided to try to get it published. Grant Richardson of Leicester Square agreed to publish it for fifty pounds. He then went on holiday to Portugal and Madeira, coming back at Christmas to find his forty-eight-page book on sale in the shops, price five shillings.

In 1922 he transferred to the B.Litt. research degree at Oxford, and in January 1923 he visited Professor Charles Herford in Manchester: it is clear that he was researching the life and work of Mrs Gaskell. Further visits to the Rylands Library and to Dorothy Holland, a descendant of Mrs Gaskell, confirm this. In November 1923, in London, he gave a lecture on Mrs Gaskell. He had meetings in 1925 with Professor Herford and Bryan Holland, grandson of Mrs Gaskell, to whom he lent a copy of his lecture. He went to a party given by the Hollands in December, according to his diary. This may have been a celebration on the completion of his thesis, as he was examined on it in February and awarded the degree of B.Litt on 13th February 1926. He sought to publish his thesis, which had been complimented

by the examiners, as a book. Professor Herford accepted Archie's dedication to him, as he was 'probably one of the few who remember Mrs Gaskell'.

Archie failed to get a fellowship at St John's in 1927, and failed to land posts in the Colonial Service for which he applied, but his book, *Mrs Gaskell: her Life and Work*, was accepted by Routledge for publication just as he was offered a post teaching English in Japan. This meant that he had to rely on two friends to read the proofs and see the book through the press in 1929, and they are thanked in the Preface.

Archie stayed for three years at the Niigata High School for Girls, teaching English; during this time he contributed to the *Cambridge Bibliography of English Literature*, and published '*The Sexton's Hero and other tales*', with his introduction. This brought Mrs Gaskell to the attention of Japanese students of English. He travelled back to England overland through Russia in the summer of 1931, after he had accepted an appointment as Lecturer in English Literature at the Imperial University in Tokyo. In September he returned to Japan via Canada. On this second visit, he lived in Tokyo and contributed to the following publications: *A History of English Literature*, published by the Hokuseido Press in 1934, *The Complete Lafcadio Hearn Lectures*, and in 1932, '*Malachi's Cove*' and *other tales* by Anthony Trollope. Unfortunately he had an attack of pleurisy in the spring of 1932, and further ill-health in winter 1933-4 led him to decide to return home for the English summer. He did not return to Japan.

Until the war in 1939 he did no academic work but built himself a house, which he engagingly named 'Wuthering Depths', on the estate in Wales where his family used to holiday; he enjoyed entertaining his friends there, among his Japanese treasures and memories. When war broke out, he was found unfit for a commission in the RAF, but accepted a commission in the Royal Artillery, then moved into the Education Corps. After an accident in the black-out, he was invalided out of the army in March 1942; he had injured his back and was subsequently in much pain. He spent the remainder of the war working for the Ministry of Information (1943-4) and the Central Council for Adult Education in H.M.Forces (1944-5), lecturing on Japanese life and culture.

After several spells in hospital he was saved from academic inertia by the appearance of an Oxford student, Geoffrey Sharps, who was researching Elizabeth Gaskell in 1959, just in time to celebrate the 150th anniversary of her birth. When the minister at Knutsford, the Rev. Albert Smith, appealed to Archie for some contribution to an exhibition, he sent a collection of works and a letter signed by Mrs Gaskell. Because of his ill-health, Geoffrey Sharps transferred the books for him. This was the beginning of the Stanton Whitfield collection now housed in the Public Library in Knutsford. He also made a contribution to the upkeep of the Unitarian Chapel.

In 1970 Archie gifted to the Merioneth County Council an area of sixty-one acres of sand dunes, including access to a mile of beach, for public use: this now forms part of a nature reserve in the care of Snowdonia National Park. In his will, four years later, he gave a thousand pounds to his old school and his oil painting, 'The Virtues' after Correggio, to Walsall Art Gallery; and £8,000 to the Royal Historical Society which funds an annual prize for an author's first book on history. His collection of books, later sold at Christie's for £1,290, included first editions of Burke's *Reflections on the French Revolution* (1790) and Henry Fielding's *Amelia*. The books were shared by Geoffrey Sharps and one other. Two thousand pounds were left to his former college, together with his papers on Thomas Hardy. Other bequests were made to charity and the residue was to be divided between Exeter College and Jesus College, Oxford. He may well be regarded as benefactor, booklover, collector and scholar.

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**Papers related to his life and work are available at the John Rylands Library, Manchester, and the County Record Office, Dolgellau.**

**Philip Ray is the great nephew of Archibald Stanton Whitfield.**

## *Alliance of Literary Societies*

**The Gaskell Society host the  
Annual General Meeting at Knutsford, 15-16 May 2010**

This being the bi-centenary of Elizabeth Gaskell's birth, it was only appropriate that the Gaskell Society should be our hosts for this year's AGM at Knutsford, the town where Elizabeth Gaskell grew up and which she made known to thousands of readers as 'Cranford'. A lovely spring morning, the kind that Mrs Gaskell was so good at describing, saw representatives of the following societies meet for registration and coffee at the Methodist Church Hall: Jane Austen; Arnold Bennett; John Betjeman; William Blake; the Brontës; Lewis Carroll; John Clare; Charles Dickens; Dubliners' Literary Circle; Elizabeth Gaskell; Kenneth Grahame; Richard Jefferies; Samuel Johnson (Lichfield); Charles Lamb; Leamington Spa Literary Society; Wyndham Lewis; Christopher Marlowe; Edith Nesbit; Anthony Powell; Barbara Pym; Arthur Ransome; Romany Society; Siegfried Sassoon; Shropshire Literary Society; Edward Thomas; Leo Walmsley; Mary Webb; Virginia Woolf. We then assembled in the main body of the church where we were warmly greeted by Alan Shelston, President, and Janet Kennerley, on behalf of the Gaskell Society.

At the conclusion of the business side of things we were more than ready for the delicious buffet waiting for us; the opportunity to chat to friends, swap notes on our respective authors and browse through the bookstall. Books were also provided for the raffle which raised welcome funds for the ALS. There then followed a most interesting and entertaining talk on Elizabeth Gaskell's life and works by Elizabeth Williams, Chairman of the Gaskell Society; it was the kind of talk that certainly made one want to find out more about the somewhat contradictory personality of Elizabeth Gaskell.

After this excellent talk, Joan Leach, MBE and Hon. Sec., spoke about Mrs Gaskell and Knutsford — another very entertaining talk serving as a prelude to her taking us on a 'Cranford Walk around Knutsford'. We began at Heathwaite, the attractive Regency home of Aunt Lumb, where the young Elizabeth was brought up; the wonderful deodar cedar at the back of the house would probably have sheltered Elizabeth while she was sketching or writing. The tour ended appropriately at Brook Street Chapel, the Unitarian chapel where William and Elizabeth are buried along with other members of their family. It was especially loved by Elizabeth and serves as the model for the chapel described in *Ruth*. Courtesy of the Knutsford and District Flower Club, the church was holding a flower festival in honour of its famous author, each lovely arrangement sensitively illustrating one of her novels. In the gallery we were also able to read of the chapel's history and its ministers. Outside, a lovely memorial wreath had been laid on the Gaskell grave; later this year there will be another wreath-laying ceremony at Westminster Abbey, when the name of Mrs Gaskell will be recorded in Poets' Corner, a proud moment for all members of the Society.

The tradition of after-dinner readings took place at Cottons Hotel, and there was no shortage of readers. Julie Shorland read from Jane Austen, Janet Kennerley from Mrs Gaskell, Deborah Fisher from Barbara Pym and Siegfried Sassoon; Michael Murray of the Dubliners' Literary Society recited by heart from the writings of James Joyce and W B Yeats, while Julian Barnard read some of his own poems on William Blake.

And last, but certainly not least, our Secretary, Anita Fernandez Young, dressed as Queen Victoria, gave her usual bravura performance with readings from *Pickwick Papers*; it will be interesting to see how she tops this performance next year!

On Sunday we heard another informal and light-hearted talk by Joan Leach on Mrs Gaskell's Cheshire, after which we split into two groups, one attending Morning Service at Brook Street Chapel and another going to visit the former home of the Gaskells at Plymouth Grove.

A Grade II listed building, 84 Plymouth Grove is literally under wraps, being encased in a cocoon of corrugated iron as it undergoes major renovation. The house has been acquired by Manchester Historic Buildings Trust, who are hoping to raise over £2m to complete the project. Even in its somewhat dilapidated state, we could see the tremendous potential for bringing the house back to the condition it was in when the Gaskells lived there. It really must have been the most wonderful place to live in. Structurally, it has been found to be in better condition than many modern houses; the pitch-pine woodwork is mainly intact, as is the elaborate cornice decoration, and the large and airy sash windows are now working smoothly. We gathered in the Gaskells' former drawing-room, where Janet Allan, Chairman of the MHBT, gave us a lively and interesting account of the history of the house, both in the time of the Gaskells and in subsequent years. Like many old houses that have survived the years, its history is somewhat chequered, its last tenants being university students. It was built in 1838, the Gaskells took up residence in 1850, and, to quote Mrs Gaskell, 'It certainly is a beauty'. Janet showed us slides of the house as it was in the Gaskells' time; a photograph of the drawing-room in 1897 will serve as a valuable guide when it comes to restoring the room to how it once was. The last Gaskell to live in the house was Meta, one of the Gaskells' two unmarried daughters, who died in 1913. Meta was an artist of considerable talent judging by the sensitive profile of her mother. What times and people the house must have seen; the Gaskells were excellent hosts and entertained on a regular basis. William Makepeace Thackeray, Harriet Beecher Stowe, John Ruskin, Charles Dickens and Charlotte Brontë were just some of their guests. In keeping with their Unitarian ethos of service and education the Gaskells were instrumental in the building of a new library, and their daughters in founding the Manchester High School for Girls.

We wish the MHBT well in this tremendous undertaking and look forward to seeing 84 Plymouth Grove returned to the magnificent house it must have been when Elizabeth and William were in residence.

It had been a most enjoyable weekend. The weather had been kind, our hosts even more so; if only William and Elizabeth could have joined us.... but who knows, perhaps they did. Special thanks to Alan Shelston, Joan Leach and Janet Kennerley for making all the arrangements and for ensuring that our visit was a happy one. Thanks also to Elizabeth Williams and Janet Allan, and indeed to all those who worked very hard behind the scenes.

On a personal note, I would like to thank Ann O'Brien and Ann Waddington for making arrangements to get me to Piccadilly in time to get my train.

**HELEN D NEWMAN**

**ALS Committee member and member of the Richard Jeffries Society.**

## CONFERENCE, 2011

Among all the excitement of 2010, we are planning the conference for 2011. Please put the date in your diaries - 22 - 25 July. We will be staying at Norton Park, Sutton Scotney, a few miles outside Winchester and a more luxurious venue than we have enjoyed in the past. It is part of the Q Hotel Group and stands in 54 acres of grounds. However, we have managed to negotiate a good rate, and expect that the cost for those of you wanting single rooms will be in the region of £325, and for those of you prepared to share twin rooms will be about £280.

We have yet to work out the details, but we shall be sending out more information and booking forms later in the year. The theme of the conference will be Elizabeth Gaskell and other women writers, and we shall be only a few miles away from Alton, which of course is near to both the house where Elizabeth Gaskell died and to Jane Austen's house. We look forward to seeing many of you there.

### *An Italian Bicentenary Event*

Elizabeth Gaskell has always had her enthusiasts in Italy; Francesco Marroni, Professor of English Literature at the Victorian and Edwardian Research centre at Pescara University has long been one of our vice-presidents, and Gaskell studies feature prominently at his institution. They too will celebrate the bicentenary with a two-day 'Convegno', to be held on 30th September and 1st October, with the title 'Elizabeth Gaskell and the Art of the Short Story'. Our president, Alan Shelston, will be giving a paper and chairing a session. Some papers will be in English, but the majority are likely to be in Italian. Should any Society members wish to attend they should **contact Alan (alan@shelston.freemove.co.uk)** who can provide more information. It will be an agreeable occasion but it should be said at this point that funding cannot be provided.

### *Brief Lives: Elizabeth Gaskell*

Alan Shelston's biography of Elizabeth Gaskell in the 'Brief Lives' series, published by Hesperus Press, is now expected later in the year. There have been many delays since the acceptance of the manuscript, but the book has been advertised for advance orders on Amazon, and should soon be available via the Society and local bookshops, at its price of £7.99. It focuses on Gaskell's life as much as on her work, as is the priority of the series, which already includes excellent 'brief lives' of Jane Austen and Charles Dickens. It was anticipated that the book would be available in time for the earlier events of the bicentenary year, but Alan hopes that we are now coming to the end of what has been a very protracted publishing process.

## *Gaskell Collection, Manchester Central Library*

The Central Library, Manchester is to undergo a major refit and development, along with the neighbouring extension to the Town Hall. The work is expected to take at least three years. In the meantime temporary premises are operating at Elliot House, Deansgate, where lending services will be maintained. Unfortunately most of the reference stock will not be available during this period. However arrangements have been made for the Library's Gaskell Collection (formerly in the Language and Literature Library) to be housed at the Greater Manchester County Record Office. This includes MS items, books belonging to the Gaskells, editions of William & Elizabeth Gaskell's works, monograph biographies, criticism, and newspaper cuttings. It does not include general criticism dealing only partly with Gaskell, nor the vast collection of Victorian periodicals. Though I no longer work for Manchester Public Libraries I have retained indexes and may be available to give some general advice on what might be available. **(Christine Lingard lingardgms@aol.com)**.

The Local Studies library however is operating on the second floor of the building and is offering a considerable increase in the amount of the material available on the open shelves.

**City Library, Elliot House, 151 Deansgate, Manchester M3 3WD (at the junction with Lloyd Street). Disabled access from Jackson Row. Telephone number 0161 234 1983, E-mail libraries@manchester.gov.uk Please consult the website for up to date information [www.manchester.gov.uk/libraries](http://www.manchester.gov.uk/libraries).**

**Greater Manchester County Record Office, 6 Marshall St., New Cross, Manchester M4 5FU; tel: 0161 832 5284; email: [archives@gmcro.co.uk](mailto:archives@gmcro.co.uk); web page: [www.gmcro.co.uk](http://www.gmcro.co.uk).**

Christine Lingard

## BOOK NOTES

Christine Lingard

*The American slave narrative and the Victorian novel* by Julia Sun-Joo Lee, Oxford University Press, £40. This work argues that Charlotte Brontë's *Jane Eyre*, Thackeray's *Pendennis*, two of Gaskell's works, Dickens' *Great Expectations* and works by Stevenson integrated into their text generic elements of the slave narrative. It devotes two chapters to Gaskell — female slave narratives in *The Grey Woman & My Lady Ludlow*, and the return of the 'unnative' in *North and South*.



*Performing masculinity*, edited by Rainer Emig (Leibniz University in Hanover), and Antony Rowland (University of Salford). Palgrave Macmillan, £55. This work discusses where the twentieth-century phenomenon - the male heart throb typified by David Beckham - originated, using a variety of media such as ballet and cricket as illustration. Examples in literature range from Byron and Oscar Wilde to Martin McDonagh's play, *The Lieutenant of Inishmore*, and the novels of Michael Ondaatje. It contains a chapter by Gerald Siegmund on 'Industrial heroes: Elizabeth Gaskell and Charlotte Brontë's constructions of the masculine'.

*Reading for the law: British literary history and gender advocacy* by Christine L. Krueger, in the Victorian Literature and Culture Series, University of Virginia Press, £35. This work uses examples of witchcraft to demonstrate the relevance of literary history to feminist jurisprudence, discussing realism, evidence, and historical justice in Elizabeth Gaskell's *Lois the Witch*. Other authors discussed are Sir Matthew Hale, Francis Hutchinson, Mary Wollstonecraft and Charles Reade.

## *Beyond the Bonnets!*

**Sunday, 12 September at 12.30pm at  
Cross Street Chapel, Cross Street, Manchester.**

A talk and a celebration of Elizabeth Gaskell's life in words and images, exploring her connections and networks with Unitarians nationally, her own religious views, and her opinions on the various Unitarian developments and tensions of her day.

It will be presented by the **Rev Dr Ann Peart**, Vice-President of the Unitarian General Assembly and recently retired principal of Unitarian College Manchester, who has researched the lives of Unitarian women.

## *Autumn Bicentennial Events*

Here is a reminder of the many events in the calendar from September onwards:

- |             |   |
|-------------|---|
| September   | <i>Exhibition on 'Elizabeth Gaskell's Cheshire' at Tatton Park, Knutsford.</i>  |
| September 1 | <i>Delia Corrie performs 'An Afternoon with Mrs Gaskell' at the Harris Museum, Preston, as part of their 'Industrial Revolutionaries' exhibition programme.</i> |

- |              |   |
|--------------|---|
| September 4  | <i>The Grace Darling Singers perform hymns and songs of the Gaskells' time at the John Rylands Library.</i>   |
| September 14 | <i>Talk about the Whitfield collection at Knutsford Library.</i>  |
| September 16 | <i>6.00 pm Jenny Uglow talks on 'Country and City' at the John Rylands Library.</i>   |
| September 18 | <i>11.00 History Wardrobe perform 'The Clothes of Cranford' at the John Rylands Library.</i>  |
| September 25 | <i>Dedication of window in Poets' Corner, Westminster Abbey.</i>  |
| September 29 | <i>11.00 am Elizabeth Williams talks on 'The Life and Works of Elizabeth Gaskell' at Brook Street Chapel, followed by optional lunch at 'La Belle Epoque' and Knutsford walk.</i> |
| October 2    | <i>2.00 pm History Wardrobe perform 'The Clothes of Cranford' at the Harris Museum, Preston</i>   |
| October 3    | <i>Commemorative service at Brook Street Chapel with wreath-laying, refreshments and walk.</i>  |
| October 6    | <i>Marie Moss gives talk on 'Elizabeth Gaskell and Cheshire' at Tatton Hall.</i>  |
| October 5-9  | <i>Victorian music hall at Knutsford Little Theatre (to include Old Poz).</i>   |
| October 8    | <i>Talk at Tatton Hall by Fran Baker and Ed Potten of the John Rylands Library.</i>   |
| October 11   | <i>Elizabeth Williams talks on 'The Life and Works of Elizabeth Gaskell' as part of the Wellington Literary Festival, Shropshire.</i>   |
| October 14   | <i>6.00 pm Alan Shelston talks on 'Gaskell and her Publishers' at the John Rylands Library - BOOKING ESSENTIAL.</i>   |
| October 17   | <i>Gaskell tour around Manchester as part of Manchester Literary Festival.</i>  |
| November 28  | <i>John Rylands exhibition closes.</i>  |

**Contact details:****Portico Library** - 0161 247 1306**John Rylands Library** - 0161 306 0555**Harris Museum, Preston** - 01772 906874Events at **Brook Street Chapel**, Knutsford, contact Beulah Cornes, 01565 632673

## *A Report from Plymouth Grove*

**Janet Allan**

We have now completed the structural repair of the house and the outside of the house has been transformed from a crumbling pink wreck to an elegant villa. We also have a new roof and new drains, and all the exterior woodwork restored or replaced. It is truly a triumph of our builders Mather & Ellis and our architect, Peter Hadfield of the Bernard Taylor Partnership.

## *Lottery development grant awarded*

Our application to Heritage Lottery Fund for one million pounds has passed its first stage and we have received £148,200 for working up the detailed plans for the big two million-pounds worth of work which will enable us to open up the whole house to the public, with a multiplicity of uses. We have already selected our team to do this.

There was a celebration at the house of our achievements and an announcement of the HLF grant on 23 July, when the speakers were Jennifer Latto, Chair of the Heritage Lottery Fund's North West Regional Committee, our Patron Sir Neil Cossons, and Henry Owen-John North West Regional Director of English Heritage.

## *Improvements to the Ground Floor*

Besides the new heating system and kitchen which have already been installed we are working to brighten up the ground floor. The exhibition from the Portico has now been installed. Some rooms have already been redecorated by the Probation Service, and the William Gaskell bookshelves have been replaced so that our bookstall will return to its proper home. There is a lot of new stock so it is well worth paying a visit.

## *2010 events*

Amidst scaffolding and skips, a packed AGM of the Trust was held in the Dining Room on Saturday 8 May.

Our first Open Day on 6 June had 100 visitors plus enchanting harp music played by the professional musician and Gaskell enthusiast Anna Christensen.

Our **Open Days** continue for the rest of the year on the first Sunday of the month from 12-4pm. As before we only have access to the ground floor.

### **Sunday 3 October Open Day and Plant Sale**

Anna Christensen will be with us again with her harp, plus our traditional bring and buy plant sale. Please bring cuttings or plants from your own gardens for sale and buy some winter bedding from us. **Details from Hilda Holmes, on Sunday 5 September Open Day or on 0161 487 2593 or [hilda.ibrahim@hotmail.co.uk](mailto:hilda.ibrahim@hotmail.co.uk).**

**Sunday 5 December Open Day 12-4pm followed by Christmas Entertainment** led by Delia Corrie and Charles Foster. Price £7.50 including seasonal refreshments. Cheques to Friends of Plymouth Grove. Please book with Margery Schofield, 202 Moston Lane East, New Moston, M40 3QH 0161 681 1439. No tickets will be issued.

## *Meetings at Cross Street Chapel, Manchester*

Meetings 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. Meetings cost £2 for members, £3 for non-members.

**Tuesday 12 October** Ann O'Brien on Meta Gaskell. Ann O'Brien, Chair of the Friends of Plymouth Grove, worked on Meta Gaskell's life at the University of Manchester.

**Tuesday 9 November** Ed Glinert on **Mary Barton's Manchester** Ed is a Blue Badge Guide who has a detailed knowledge of the city in Elizabeth Gaskell's time.

**Tuesday 14 December** Ann Peart on **Unitarian networks of William and Elizabeth Gaskell** plus some Christmas Cheer.

**Tuesday 8 February** **Manchester Lit & Phil** Peter Barnes, an Honorary Secretary of the Lit & Phil. Peter has been making a special study of the early years of the society and its influence on education.

**Tuesday 8 March Emma Marigliano on Portico People.** The Portico's Librarian will tell us about some of William Gaskell's contemporaries and others.

### **North West Group**

Knutsford meetings are held at St John's Church hall, on the last Wednesday in the month, starting on October 27th. Buffet lunch is from 12.15pm. Cost £8.

**Studying on October 27th - *The Grey Woman*.**

Subsequently, a selection of short stories from 'Cousin Phillis and other stories', ed. Heather Glen (Oxford's World Classics) will be studied: Lizzie Leigh, Morton Hall, My French Master, Half A Lifetime Ago, The Manchester Marriage.

**AGM 9 April 2011** - At Cross Street Chapel (to be confirmed).

### **London and South East Group Programme for The Bicentenary Year 2010-2011**

As usual there will be four hugely varied meetings in the coming academic year one of which will be a meeting with a difference. Our September meeting will be the Bicentenary celebrations in Westminster Abbey. Otherwise we shall have our usual three speaker/discussion meetings at Francis Holland School. In November we are privileged and honoured to be able to welcome the Rev Dr Ann Peart to speak to us. She is currently the Vice-President of the Unitarian General Assembly in Great Britain and will become the President next year. In February Ann Brooks, who is an expert on Victorian gardens, is coming to tell us what she has in mind when she takes on the task of restoring the garden at the Gaskell House in Plymouth Grove.

Next May, Professor Barbara Hardy, Emeritus Professor of English at London University has agreed to share her original ideas about *North and South*.

I feel we are very fortunate that we have such an interesting programme and that each one of these speakers is happy to give up her time to come to London to meet and speak to us.

**Saturday September 25 2010 - 3pm**  
***Westminster Abbey celebration and dedication of the Gaskell window in Poets' Corner.***

Tickets will be sent well in advance of the event which is preceded by the afternoon service and followed by drinks at Westminster School. Booking is essential and members already know about this via mailings. Please check the Society website or contact the membership secretary, Christine Lingard for further details.

**Saturday November 13th 2010**

***Rev Dr Ann Peart will speak about Gaskell and Unitarianism***

Ann Peart is a Unitarian Minister, Vice President of the Unitarian General Assembly of Great Britain and was previously Principal of the Unitarian College in Manchester. As yet I do not have a title for her talk but the theme was requested by a number of members who expressed an interest in learning more about the religion with which the Gaskells were involved.

**Saturday February 12th 2011**

Dr Ann Brooks will speak about the plans for the restoration of the garden at the Gaskell House, Plymouth Grove, Manchester. Ann's doctorate was about the Manchester Botanic Garden so she is an expert in the field.

Ann writes of the restoration project:

*An examination of the 1848 ordnance survey map of Longsight, Manchester shows that the garden at Gaskell house and its neighbours exhibited many features of the villa gardens and give a basic outline we can use. I am also examining Elizabeth Gaskell's novels and letters for references to plants that would be suitable to include in the planting and design of the garden. This will be a fascinating insight into both the genre of Victorian gardens and a chance to share in Ann's plans for the future garden at the Gaskell House, as it is now known!*

**Saturday May 14th 2011**

***Professor Barbara Hardy will lead a discussion on 'Elizabeth Gaskell: Dreams and Visions'.***

Barbara Hardy is Emeritus Professor of English Literature at the University of London. She will certainly refer to *North and South* and *Sylvia's Lovers* and will let me know nearer the time which other stories we need to have read!

The form of this meeting will continue the pattern of the last couple of years when the speaker gives an introduction to texts and a topic/theme of their choice and we have the opportunity to discuss as well as listen.

The meetings will follow the pattern of previous years. A sandwich lunch will be provided from 12.45pm onwards and tea and cake is available after the meeting that begins at 2pm and usually lasts in the region of an hour or so.

A bring and buy bookstall is available so please bring and buy. Proceeds go to the restoration of the Gaskell House.

We meet at Francis Holland School for Girls, a two-minute walk from Sloane Square. The Tube station is served by the District and Circle lines, or it is not a long walk

from Victoria Station. Access is via a doorbell in Graham Terrace please press the bell that is marked 'Reception' and someone will open the door for you. There are security reasons for this type of access. Please feel free to bring friends who might be interested, membership of the society is not a prerequisite for attendance at meetings. We charge £4.00 in these days of austerity and endeavour to provide lunch, tea and some intellectual stimulation for the afternoon!

Fran Twinn, 85 Calton Avenue, Dulwich, London SE217DF. Tel: 020 8693 3238.  
E-mail: [frantwinn@aflex.net](mailto:frantwinn@aflex.net)

### **South- West Group**

**Sunday, 1st August.** Summer lunch at Kate and Alec Crawford's home, Norton St Philip, 1.00 pm.

**13th November 2010.** The Gaskell Society South West will hold a Study Day in celebration of the Bicentenary at the BRLSI, Queen's Square, Bath. Speakers will include Alan Shelston on Gaskell's biography of Charlotte Brontë; Boyd Schlenther on '*Lois the Witch*' and the Salem witch crisis; and Janet Allan and Ann Brooks on Plymouth Grove house and garden. The day will begin at 10:00 am and finish about 4:30 pm. The cost will be £6 for the full day for members of the Gaskell Society and BRLSI, £8 for non-members. Coffee and tea will be included.

**February/March 2011.** Discussions on *Ruth* to be held at members' homes.

**Any queries about the programme to Mrs Elizabeth Schlenther, 14 Vellore Lane, Bath, BA2 6JQ (Tel: 01225 331763).**

### **Yorkshire Branch**

**11th September.** Elizabeth Williams will give a talk entitled 'Cranford and Beyond, the divided life of Elizabeth Gaskell', at The Unitarian Chapel, St Saviourgate, York YO1 8NQ, beginning at 12 noon. **(Please note new time, date and venue.) For further details and directions see [www.ukunitarians@hotmail.co.uk](http://www.ukunitarians@hotmail.co.uk)**

**9th October, at The Friends Meeting House, York, at 2.00 p.m.** Janet Allan will give a talk on 'Plymouth Grove - Then and Now'.

**For further details contact Kate Smith at [shepleysmiths@tiscali.co.uk](mailto:shepleysmiths@tiscali.co.uk).**