The Gaskell Society

Tabley Old Hall
by Sir Richard Colt Hoare

NEWSLETTER

Autumn 2012 - Number 54

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

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Editor's Letter

Helen Smith

STOP PRESS NEWS see page 40

A very warm welcome to Shirley Foster, our new President, elected at the AGM in April. Shirley has been an active member of the Society for many years and we are delighted to inaugurate her as our very first Madam President.

On the same day we had to bid a fond farewell to Alan Shelston as he passed the reins to Shirley. However we hope that, now released from presidential duties, Alan will be able to devote more time to research and to writing for the Newsletter. Thank you, Alan, for all you have done over the years for the Society.

Welcome also to the four new members of the committee and sincere thanks to the four members who have retired from the committee.

9 UK members will be linking up with 11 American members across the pond to explore some literary sites in the Massachusetts area, 12-19 September. (Mrs Gaskell herself cherished a notion of visiting the United States but did not live to achieve this.) Connections with Charles Dickens and Charles Eliot Norton will be traced in the Boston area. One of our American members, Nancy Weyant, is working hard to organise this study tour. A report of the transatlantic trip will appear in the next Newsletter.

Closer to home, on an early summer's day, Jean Alston led an amazing outing to Derbyshire and Jean has herself submitted a full report for this Newsletter.

We are sorry to have lost dear Mary Syner, a real stalwart of the Society and the very soul of discretion. (Without her help, advice and encouragement, I should never have embarked on the editorship of the Newsletter. She also came to my rescue on occasions when I managed to get lost at conferences.)

Very long-standing members John and Doreen Pleydell celebrated their Platinum (yes, that is 70th!) Wedding Anniversary in April of this year. When I called to see them just before the event, John was caught in the act of reading *My Lady Ludlow* on his Kindle. Our warmest congratulations and our best wishes for good health to the very happy couple.

On a very positive note, the hard toil of Janet Allan MBE and her team has finally been rewarded. We look forward to the restoration of the Gaskell House in the now not so distant future.

Reminders for 2013:

AGM 13 April and Conference 19-22 July

The conference sub-committee is already hard at work to achieve the high standards we have come to expect at our biennial conferences.

And now the 150th anniversary of the death of ECG is fast approaching. Does anyone have any ideas for celebrations?

Please remember not to forget to write for the Newsletter. The subject must be strictly Gaskellian in nature. I look forward to receiving articles, short or long, by e-mail, snail mail or by airmail and "even the typed and the printed and the spelt all wrong". Deadline for the next Newsletter is 31 January 2013.

To all who have written for this Newsletter and to W H Auden, I give heartfelt thanks. Our appreciation and thanks go to Rebecca Stuart of Lithotech Print in Knutsford for the finished product.

Presidential Address

Dr Shirley Foster

It is a great honour to be invited to become President of the Gaskell Society, following on, moreover, from such illustrious predecessors. Mrs Gaskell herself never presided over the charitable organisations with which she was involved, that role being reserved for men, but she was something of a committee woman, and certainly managed to organise herself and her daughters in the running of home and local affairs (most notable, perhaps, is her engagement with the relief work during the Cotton Famine and Distress in Lancashire, caused by the American Civil War). Ordering the diverse strands of her life showed what might be called today her administrative flair.

I have no intention of trying to organise the Gaskell Society, nor to chivvy its members into doing charity work, literary or otherwise. Having the sort of fun that Mrs Gaskell always so enjoyed (convivial gatherings, interesting discussions, and good eating) is, after all, one of our main purposes. But I recognise the huge effort that the committee puts into making such things happen and run so smoothly, especially since Joan's death, and I shall do my best to support and promote their admirable labours. I would also urge all members to consider offering their talents to help us continue to sail along so well. We are now deeply into the new electronic age, and our Society, too, is involved in this revolution, with our website, e-mail communications, and the likelihood of our *Journal* going online at a future date. All this will widen our influence in the literary and academic arenas, and will, we hope, bring in more members to carry on Gaskell scholarship and enthusiasm for her writings.

So it is an especially exciting time for me to be President, and I look forward to a bright future for us all, even in this period of unpredictability for the humanities and

literary societies in general. Let's all raise a glass to Mrs Gaskell (who **did** drink, despite her horror at smelling like a public house in front of the very proper Charles Bosanquet, after she had taken rum and peppermint for a headache), and hope for many more years of celebrating Mrs Gaskell and her work.

NB Cri de coeur from Madam Editor: Delighted as we are with our new President, we are however still seeking a Minutes Secretary and a Treasurer. Do not be afraid and hide your talents. Please contact any member of the committee if you are able to help. **YOUR SOCIETY NEEDS YOU.**

An Appreciation of Alan, now Former President, Shelston

Elizabeth Williams

Alan Shelston, who stood down as President of the Society at the last AGM, served us in that capacity for seven years. But his connection with the Society goes back much further than that and his interests are wide.

As a boy in London, he attended Latymer Upper School in Hammersmith. This was followed by national service as an officer in the RAF, a post which apparently involved counting pigs in Norfolk. He later went to King's College, London, where he took a first in English and then produced a Master's thesis on Mrs Gaskell.

Alan came north in 1966 when he gained a position at Manchester University, where he remained until his retirement as a senior lecturer in 2002. The year 1985/86 was spent teaching at the University of Missouri, which he thoroughly enjoyed. American students are apparently much more willing than British ones to ask questions, and his enthusiasm about this reveals a man who genuinely enjoys interaction with students. When he came back to Britain in 1986, he was met by a reception committee consisting of Joan, Arthur Pollard and John Geoffrey Sharps, asking him to start a Journal for the Gaskell Society. We all know that it was not easy to say no to Joan, and Arthur Pollard was apparently an even more forceful personality. The first number of the Journal, edited by Alan, appeared the following year - the first of eleven issues which he was to edit. It says much about him that he still feels indebted to that group of people who got him involved, as well as to John Chapple, his predecessor as President, with whom he edited *Further Letters of Mrs Gaskell.*

Other publications include editing works by Gaskell, Dickens, Henry James, Hardy and Carlyle, as well as writing *The Industrial City 1820-70* jointly with his wife Dorothy, and producing *Biography* as part of the Methuen Critical Idiom series. In 2010, to mark Elizabeth Gaskell's bicentenary, Hesperus Press brought out *Brief Lives: Elizabeth Gaskell* written by Alan. He is an Honorary Fellow of the John Rylands University Library and an Honorary Professor at the Victorian and Edwardian Research Centre at the University of Chieti-Pescara in Italy. He has

lectured in Italy and Japan as well as giving talks to a variety of groups in the Gaskell Society and beyond, within the UK.

And there are other activities. He and Dorothy have three sons and four grandsons, so can be relied upon for tips on entertaining small boys. He paints, and the results are impressive. Although not a church-goer, he enjoys hymns. He says that he learned about his understanding of poetry from his exposure when young to the language and structures of hymns, something that many modern students lack. He has a splendid collection of books, and is interested in illustration, on which he has given talks. He is an active member of the Portico Library. He never stops researching, as is evidenced by the number of papers he continues to publish, and he was recently in London to investigate the poetry of Elizabeth Holland, Elizabeth Gaskell's sister-in-law.*

He says that he has gained a great deal from his involvement with the Society, and feels that literary societies make a tremendously important contribution to the study of literature, attracting the true enthusiasts, academic and non-academic, each of whom can learn from the other. We have certainly been fortunate in his continuing willingness to be involved. I am sure that I speak for us all, when I thank him wholeheartedly for all that he has done for us.

* The fruits of this research can be read on page 17

Mary Syner: a personal tribute

Alan Shelston

Mary Syner, who has died after a long illness, was a colleague and friend of mine in the English Department at Manchester University and then, again as colleague and friend, in the Gaskell Society. Mary was a senior secretary at the university; she also had a BA and an MA, in Mediæval History, which she had acquired, also at Manchester, as a mature student in the History Department. Extremely efficient as an administrator, she always kept up her academic interests, and this she was able to continue when she became involved with the Gaskell Society. At the university she handled the students with wisdom and with skill, as indeed she did the staff, often a more difficult proposition; to me in particular her help became invaluable.

She was instrumental from the start in the preparation of the Gaskell Society Journal; last Christmas she wrote to me: 'I have lots of good memories too [she was by then very ill]; I often wonder how we managed to create the early Journals on a typewriter!' Well, she was her own answer to that one.

Editing for her was not simply a matter of tidying up the punctuation; with the acuteness that was the result of her historical training she would suggest developments and sometimes deletions to my wider flights of editorial fancy. Mary was quietly and clearly incisive in her judgment of people as well as ideas, not always a common quality in universities, then or now, and she was a very human person to work with.

We both retired from the university in the early years of this century. Mary stayed on with Professor Donald Scragg, to work on an AHRC funded research project in the field of Anglo-Saxon language. In that respect her interests went back in time rather than forward: she never lost her love of the early period. At the same time she found she could devote more time to the Society, by involving herself, in particular, in the organisation of its biennial conferences, where she became invaluable. When she knew that she was suffering from a serious illness she moved to the South of England, first to a house of her own and then to live with her son Christopher and his family. Never nervous of technical novelty, she used a Kindle to replace the books whose pages she found difficult to manipulate and, as she once explained, for the pleasure she got from reading to her grandchildren.

Three generations of Mary's family gathered with friends and colleagues at Mary's funeral at Redditch, once her home town. The chapel where the service was conducted surprised those who had not seen it before in that it was bathed in light coming from a huge framed plain glass window at what Philip Larkin calls 'the holy end'. Through the panes of this window on a clear day in early spring we could see the outline of the distant hills beyond. It was difficult to grieve in such surroundings, easier to remember and give thanks.

Mary Syner was a modest and a truly remarkable person, and her qualities were an influence on all who knew her.

Life before the Gaskell Society

Doreen Pleydell

The Gaskell Society was founded in 1985, but before that time there had been great interest in Mrs Gaskell's life and work. In 1960, the 150th anniversary of Elizabeth's birth, a ball was held in the Assembly Rooms at the Royal George, together with performances of *Lois the Witch* at the Little Theatre and an exhibition of Gaskell memorabilia in the Unitarian Chapel Schoolroom.

At that time, there was a Knutsford Society which later became the Knutsford Civic Society. A small committee grew from that - we met in Aunt Lumb's house in Gaskell Avenue. Our task was to arrange various events connected to Mrs Gaskell - we went to Townley Hall near Burnley for instance, and to Rufford Old Hall in Lancs. But the main event was an annual lunch held at the Angel Hotel at, or near, Mrs Gaskell's birthday. This was a dressy affair - hats were worn!

As nowadays, speakers were invited: one year Brian Redhead, the broadcaster, came (What happened to *The Manchester Guardian* was his theme). On another occasion we invited the Editor of Cheshire Life.

We were particularly keen to have Olive Shapley, the Editor of Woman's Hour. On the radio she sounded an attractive person and a good speaker. Accordingly our secretary, Elsie Graver, wrote to ask if she would be willing to come. Olive Shapley replied that she would be delighted and that her fee would be £20. In those days £20 was a vast sum, far more than our committee could afford. Elsie Graver wrote back explaining this, adding that "As you know, the ladies of Cranford have to practise 'Elegant Economy'" so regretfully, we should have to cancel our invitation. Olive Shapley was so amused by this that she was willing to reduce her fee to £5, the talk was given: satisfaction all round!

The Gaskell Society as it is today, was started in 1985 and at first took very tentative steps towards becoming today's very successful organisation.

A committee was formed of which I was a member. My job was to act as hostess for the committee meetings, as our house on Ladies' Mile was deemed the most suitable venue...

Editor adds: Doreen claims that her memory of those early days is now rather shaky and that she does not think chronologically. She has given me permission to finish off this article.

Well, many early notables spring to mind: some intimidating, some reverential, some boring, some adoring, but all united in their worship of Elizabeth Gaskell. Today we remember these very active early founders with respect and great affection.

On a very wet July afternoon, I called to pick up Doreen's article and had tea chez Doreen and John. Doreen enquired about the set book for next session (they had been on their Platinum Honeymoon in Shropshire and had missed the last meeting in April). When informed that it was *Ruth*, Doreen revealed that she had reached the stage in life when she doesn't enjoy doom and gloom any more. However she would take *Cranford* to her Desert Island. (That should bring some light relief to Doreen after The Bible and the complete works of Shakespeare.)

'That unfrequented stone hall': Elizabeth Gaskell and Tabley Old Hall

Sarah Webb

Among the many delights of her Cheshire youth Elizabeth Gaskell looked back fondly on visits to Tabley Old Hall, just outside Knutsford. Tabley Old Hall was the original home of a local gentry family, the Leicesters of Tabley, and was situated on a picturesque moated island site with a backdrop of ancient oaks and a chapel nestling in its shadow. It was abandoned by the Leicesters in 1767 for their new Palladian mansion, Tabley House. In contrast to its 'plain, substantial' replacement, the Old Hall always charmed and delighted its guests. Although it is likely that she visited its grander usurper, Elizabeth Gaskell preferred to leave an account of the Old Hall, rather than Tabley House, revealing its enduring powers of attraction.

Her brief memoir is reproduced in Joan Leach's revised *Knutsford and Elizabeth Gaskell:*

> Near the little, clean, kindly country town, where as I said before I was brought up, there was an old house with moat within a park called Old Tabley, formerly the dwelling place of Sir Peter Leycester, the historian of Cheshire, and accounted a fine specimen of the Elizabethan style.... Here, on summer evenings did we often come, a merry young party, on donkey, pony or even in a cart with sacks swung across - each with our favourite book, some with sketch books, and one or two baskets filled with eatables. Here we rambled, lounged and meditated; some stretched on the grass in indolent repose, half reading, half musing, with a posy of musk roses from the old-fashioned trim garden behind the house, lulled by the ripple of the waters against the grassy lawn, some in the old crazy boats, that would do nothing but float on the glassy water, singing, for one or two were of a most musical family and warbled like birds, 'Through the Greenwood' or 'A Boat, A Boat unto the Ferry' or some such old catch or glee. And when the meal was spread beneath a beech tree of no ordinary size (did you ever notice the peculiar turf under beech shade?), one of us would mount up a ladder to the belfry of the old chapel and toll the bell to call the wanderers home. Then, if it rained, what merrymaking in the old hall! It was galleried, with oak settles and old armours hung up, and a painted window from ceiling to floor. The strange sound our voices had in that unfrequented stone hall! (Leach p.4-6)

This account was utilised in *Mr Harrison's Confession* (1851) and there was, as Esther Chadwick suggested in *Mrs Gaskell Haunts, Homes, and Stories,* something of Tabley Old Hall in the creation of Hamley Hall in *Wives and Daughters*.

Since 1927 Tabley Old Hall, undermined by the local brine pumping industry, has slowly collapsed. The Leicester Warrens (as they had become) rescued as much as possible and left the building to be colonised by the elements. Now the only substantial part that remains is the twisted and broken brick façade, hidden by ivy and just about kept upright by the aid of wooden props until it finally gives way. Elizabeth Gaskell's joyful account of her visit seems to awaken what is left of the Hall from its slumbers and help it rise, however momentarily, from its decay.

Tabley Old Hall, or more properly, Nether Tabley Old Hall was, as Mrs Gaskell wrote, 'an old house' the ancestral home of the Leicesters from the fourteenth century. Unlike the Hamleys, the Leicesters of Tabley, being merely Norman in origin, could not trace their ancestors back to the Heptarchy. John Leycester (d.1398) built the original timber-framed hall but it was the Cheshire historian Sir Peter Leicester (1614-1678) who improved it so sensitively creating the beautiful house so admired by visitors. For a man so attached to the authenticity of historical records the house he produced was built to deceive the eye. His symmetrical E-shaped east front seemed to have three stories. In reality there was only a ground and first floor and the circular windows above looked into the rafters. Visitors only had to wander round to the back of the Old Hall to find a very different looking building – no battlements and three jutting wings overlooking a garden.

Sir Peter had built his private chapel partly so that he would never have to listen to nonconformist preachers again as he had had to during the Commonwealth. As in his old chapel at Brasenose College, Oxford, (the model for this one), worshippers were seated by sex (men on the south and women on the north); and there was a pre-Reformation statue of St Peter. The tower and spire were added by Sir Peter's grandson, Sir Francis Leicester, and it was only because of the latter that the Old Hall was still in existence and Elizabeth Stevenson was able to see it. With only one surviving daughter, Sir Francis was anxious for the future of his Tabley estate. When he died in 1742 his will, later confirmed by the Court of Chancery, directed that the Old Hall always had to be kept in good order, and if an heir neglected this requirement they forfeited the entire estate.

In the Regency period the Old Hall was in the care of Sir Francis's great-grandson Sir John Leicester. Sir John must have given a general permission to Dr Holland, Elizabeth Gaskell's uncle, to enjoy the Old Hall whenever he, or his friends and relations, liked. The unfrequented Hall seems not to have been of much interest to Sir John who was busy attending King George IV, directing the Cheshire Yeomanry and creating his own collection of modern British art. This was in contrast to the mid-Victorian period when the Old Hall was more widely known and locals, ramblers and those coming by train, wished to see it in increasing numbers. By the Edwardian period the then owner Eleanor, Lady Leighton Warren fought assiduously against

day trippers and succeeded in reducing them to single figures. Although Mrs Gaskell's account recorded the Old Hall before the heritage tourists, they were moved and interested by the same things as she was.

The Gaskell description intrigues because it implies that the Old Hall was entirely unoccupied. Other later accounts recorded that retired Tabley servants were lodged there and acted as guides; some were garrulous entertainers and others let visitors roam at will. In exchange for shelter and a little dole, these occupants kept the Hall secure, rooms tidy and free from dirt and vermin, lit fires to keep damp at bay and threw open windows and let the air circulate. Perhaps while some of the Holland party sang 'Hark, hark the lark at Heaven's gate sings' and 'Blow, blow thou winter wind' from the gallery delighted aged retainers listened from the shadows. In *Mr Harrison's Confession* the farmer and his wife seemed to act the part of custodians and hosts for the Duncombe party.

How the party got over to the island is itself curious. The illustration* by Sir Richard Colt Hoare shows an impressive stone bridge but this was removed by a later generation (possibly Sir John or his son) and its fabric used to build a new boathouse. What had replaced it by the end of the nineteenth century was a wooden bridge. From the bridge (of whatever material) a path of flags followed the edge of the island, over the neatly clipped lawn, and then turned at right angles to give a dignified approach to the entrance porch.

On either side of the porch stood ionic columns, lions sat on their tops, and at the apex of the arch was the Leicesters' shield. The stone flags continued into the screens passage, cold beneath their feet, and the light changed as someone closed the 'battlemented front door ... a thing of beauty which the artist or the lover of the picturesque must contemplate with delight' (Newns p4). On the right-hand wall were 'dagger or spear marks in the plaster' but their history was hard to decipher. 'Various theories have been advanced to account for the marks; one of them is that they were made by bolts from crossbows shot across the lake.' Or perhaps they were 'signs of an attack by Parliamentarians during the Civil War' (Newns p4).

Light came into the passage from the left through the two arches into the Great Hall but the visitors had several choices of how to explore. At the end of the screens passage was a room that looked over the garden. On the right-hand side of the passage were three doors – probably the doors leading to what had been the ancient kitchens. The first (nearest the porch) led into a pretty sitting-room, the second on to a staircase and the third into the kitchen. The draw, as Mrs Gaskell indicated, was the Great Hall.

The stone flags, set diamond-wise, continued from the passage into the Great Hall. This space was dominated by the great bay window, sometimes called the oriel window. Elizabeth Gaskell's slight exaggeration that it was a 'painted window from ceiling to floor' reveals its magnificence as it was 'emblazoned [with] the Leycester pedigree in stained glass' (Newns p.5). In addition there were portraits of English

**The illustration is reproduced on the cover of this newsletter.*

monarchs, an older slightly cruder set and a more sophisticated group paid for by Sir Francis Leicester in the 1730s. Then there were panels of glass engraved by family members or visitors over time. One poignant message was engraved by Sir Francis's daughter Meriel in the 1720s on her first marriage: 'Tabley I must leave with grief'. Alas, there is no evidence that Elizabeth Stevenson was allowed to engrave her name on a pane there. The Great Hall rose to forty feet in height, a 'lanthorn' hung from its apex, and it was panelled in oak probably grown on the estate. The 'old armours hung up' were certainly from the Civil War when the Leicesters had been for King Charles I. Sir Peter Leicester 'came under the Parliamentary vengeance he was imprisoned, but eventually allowed to compound for the Tabley Estates for the sum of £778 18s. 4d.' (Newns p13).

One of Mrs Gaskell's omissions was the exuberant and still brightly painted Jacobean fireplace, almost opposite the large window. Mr Harrison noted 'the glorious wood fire in the wide old grate ... and a huge black kettle stand on the glowing fire' (Gaskell 1995 p209). It celebrated the marriage of Sir Peter Leicester's parents although it was created a few years after the event in 1619. There is a great armorial centrepiece with the arms of the Leicesters combined with those of the Mainwarings of Peover, but this is overshadowed by wooden statues of Lucretia stabbing herself and Cleopatra pressing asps to her breasts. Beneath their feet huntsmen chase large hares across the fireplace while Adam and Eve, as terms, support the whole edifice. The frieze at the top has a mermaid, merman and a child with an hourglass interpreted as 'Truth conquering Corruption and discovered by the light of Learning and Time' (Newns p5) and an owl and dove perched at each corner.

Although Elizabeth Gaskell mentioned the oak settles the whole building contained 'valuable articles of furniture' many of 'which have been there in all probability since the earliest days of the Hall' (Newns p4). When the Leicesters left for Tabley House in 1767 they took the best of the heirlooms with them but abandoned the majority of the antique pieces behind at the Old Hall as they thought them old and outdated. This meant that the Hall resembled a house where time had almost stopped; there was china in the kitchen, chairs to be sat on, beds to be lain in and pictures on the walls. The experience must have been a little disconcerting and rather reminiscent of the dislocated feeling in her short story *Curious, If True.*

Without a housekeeper or cicerone to guide the way, Elizabeth Stevenson was able to explore this house in a way she could not, for example, at nearby Tatton Park, Toft Hall or Peover Hall (the latter two also perhaps inspirations for Hamley Hall). The staircase at the end of Great Hall climbed to the gallery where members of the party sang. The walls of the staircase bulged slightly as it was old and weak and in the late Victorian period would need a brick buttress on the outside to steady it. There were two bedrooms off the gallery (on either side of the Great Hall's chimney stack) and these were quite small. Further on, beyond what was called the minstrel's gallery, was the older wing of the Hall and this contained bedrooms too with those on the west side overlooking the garden.

Although inventories exist from over four centuries, it is quite perplexing to match them to the plans of the Old Hall; rooms changed names and those taking the inventories assumed that people reading them would always know where they had been standing. One bedroom, for example, contained: Jacobean bedstead, velvet top and bottom valance and a velvet bedspread, Elizabethan chair, walnut Queen Anne Bureau, powder stand with a blue and white bowl, walnut dressing table, needlework table, rush light holder, old engravings on the walls and a piece of old Brussels carpet (Tabley Old Hall Inventory 1916 pp19-21). The surviving Tabley inventories are perhaps given life by Elizabeth Gaskell's later description of Molly's room at Hamley Hall:

> All the furniture in the room was as old-fashioned and as well-preserved as it could be. The chintz curtains were Indian calico of the last century — the colours almost washed out, but the stuff itself exquisitely clean. There was a little strip of bedside carpeting, but the wooden flooring, thus liberally displayed, was of finely-grained oak, so firmly joined, plank to plank, that no grain of dust could make its way into the interstices. There were none of the luxuries of modern days; no writing-table, or sofa, or pier-glass (Gaskell 2000 p63).

When Molly opens her window and gazes out, what she sees could almost be what those gazing through the lattice windows of the Old Hall would have seen with Tabley Mere in the background.

> A flower-garden right below; a meadow of ripe grass just beyond, changing colour in long sweeps, as the soft wind blew over it; great old forest-trees a little on one side; and, beyond them again, to be seen only by standing very close to the side of the window-sill, or by putting her head out, if the window was open, the silver shimmer of a mere, about a quarter of a mile off. On the opposite side to the trees and the mere, the look-out was bounded by the old walls and high-peaked roofs of the extensive farm-buildings (Gaskell 2000 p62-63).

The 1918 guide to the Old Hall wrote of the 'old-world herb and flower garden, a real quiet retreat.' Visitors were informed that it was 'the accepted opinion that this garden has been here since the Hall was built' (Newns p7). Richard le Gallienne listed 'Wild Thyme, Star of Bethlehem, Wormwood, Spikenard ... Balm of Gilead, Rue, St James' Wort, Black Helebore, Balm for the Warriror's Wounds, Borage' (Le Gallienne p276) and of course there was also Mrs Gaskell's 'posy of musk roses from the old-fashioned trim garden behind the house'.

In the old wing was a secondary staircase back to the ground floor and the screens passage. The small room at the end of the screens passage contained much of what was left of the Old Hall collection of paintings. There were Hanoverian royal portraits and a *Mediterranean Seascape with Galleys* by Kasper van Eyck, then interpreted as a painting of the Spanish Armada. The other popular painting was a Jacobite contrivance 'for drinking the forbidden toast' to King Charles II while he was in exile. The picture was laid on a table and a glass set down on its centre 'into which glass the distorted features were reflected back in their normal expression

... the object being, for Jacobite squires, to be able to introduce at their banquets a portrait of the King at a time when to possess an ordinary portrait of him might lead to dangerous consequences' (Newns p8).

Although some of the party brought books with them, there were a few books still in the Old Hall for the curious to read, either here or in other rooms. It had once contained two important libraries. The earlier belonged to Sir Peter Leicester and was what he used to research and write his *Historical Antiquities* published in 1673 while the second was that of his grandson Sir Francis a minor local bibliophile. Both collections had been removed to the new Tabley House but one small part of Sir Francis's library, his collection of bound seventeenth century pamphlets, was left behind. They were not recognised as important until the late 1890s, when they were rescued from obscurity and damp and taken to Tabley House. An earlier reader, such as Elizabeth Stevenson, perusing their pages on an indolent summer's day, would have been drawn into the struggles and raging political debates of the seventeenth century and the terrifying religious struggles to be found in *Lois the Witch*. But the draw of 'the old crazy boats ... on the glassy water' was perhaps too much and putting the book down the visitor, casting a glance back at the old red-brick Hall, would be drawn to join those singing on the moat.

For those people intent on adding a further tour to the excellent *Knutsford and Elizabeth Gaskell*, Elizabeth Gaskell and Tabley Old Hall is a more difficult but nonetheless fascinating prospect. After the island was undermined by subsidence in 1927 Mr and Mrs Leicester Warren rescued as much as was salvageable. St Peter's chapel was moved brick by brick and erected by the side of Tabley House, a quite amazing architectural feat. A room was built connecting the Chapel to the House and this was decorated with items rescued from the island – the Chapel rafters, the painted panes of glass and Jacobean fireplace from the Great Hall - and it was called the Old Hall Room. After the University of Manchester acquired the Tabley Estate, in the 1970s, and opened the state rooms of Tabley House to the public the Old Hall Room became its tearoom. Here on summer afternoons come merry parties, young and old, although they no longer arrive by donkey, pony or cart, and lounging over their tea and cakes they can meditate on that lost 'unfrequented stone hall'.

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Editor: The following review is reproduced from The Morning Post, Thursday, September 29, 1910

MRS GASKELL, Haunts, Homes and Stories.

By Mrs Ellis H. Chadwick. Sir Isaac Pitman and Sons.

This being the centenary year of Mrs. Gaskell's birth, an interesting attempt to portray the gracious matronly presence of a very distinguished woman, of what we now call the Mid-Victorian Era, has been made by Mrs. Chadwick to make amends for the regrettable fact that no complete or satisfactory biography can be written, owing to the prohibition privately conveyed to the loving and obedient children.

One who vividly remembers the famous authoress of "Mary Barton" and "Cranford" and who was privileged on one occasion to enter deeply on a subject very near to Mrs. Gaskell's heart and conscience, is very glad of the opportunity to add a contribution to the story of those old days, being entrusted with the unlooked for privilege of reviewing the present book.

The editor and those who possess all the private family records are confronted with the initial difficulty of attempting to convey Mrs. Gaskell's thoughts and opinions by constant reference to the utterances of the people who throng her remarkable fictions. These are, of course, substantially true; Mrs Gaskell never paltered with her own convictions, and was remarkably clear in expressing them. She never would or could have dramatized a Dinah Morris, and captured a generation of readers by evoking an apostle of what George Eliot at that epoch of her life regarded as a creed outworn. But while fully admitting that the utterances of her good people do reflect Mrs Gaskell's own thorough goodness, it is disconcerting to find such fine sentences protected by inverted commas, and the image of another speaker confusing the memory of the author's gracious self. This is but the statement of an inevitable result.

Elizabeth Stevenson was born and bred up amidst Puritan associations, and the two years of her life as a schoolgirl were spent at Avon Bank, in Stratford, in the house of the Misses Byerley, great-nieces of Josiah Wedgwood, the famous potter. Two other inmates were granddaughters of Dr. Joseph Priestley, brought from America to England in infancy after the death of the famous old philosopher. They were contemporaries of the girl who was to become so famous in literature, and the three women who emerged from that school to play strenuous parts in the future (and one of whom survived to very great age) bore emphatic witness to the lasting impressions of an ideal sincerity in word and deed communicated by the teachers of their youth.

Mrs. Gaskell married young, and became the wife of a Unitarian minister, whose father had been a student at the Warrington Academy in company with the sons of

Josiah Wedgwood, and in friendship with the Aikins and the daughter who became Mrs. Barbauld, and whose poetic genius remains to us in one poem often quoted to this day. It contains the famous expression in reference to our happy dead: "Say not Good night – Good morning."

Up to the year 1850 the household of the young minister and his wife was carried out on the serene lines of peace and righteous economy so familiar to those who can remember the Puritan ideal. It was blessed with young children, and one precious infant, the only boy, was taken away, leaving a memory which no lapse of time could weaken. This little soul seems to have remained in Mrs. Gaskell's future years as a permanent visitant in his mother's heart and imagination. He is referred to with undying love and yearning, and it was owing to his death that she seems first to have sought occupation in the use of her pen. She planned and executed her first novel in the silence of her own heart, and when at last it was published it was under the assumed name of Cotton Mather Mills. The title was the simple one of "Mary Barton", and it is no exaggeration to say that it took the reading world by storm, and shook the conception of capitalistic power to its foundation. It raised an angry storm in the world of wealth, and a passionate yearning in the world of poverty. The use and the terrible responsibilities of riches were never again unquestioned. It was truly the first nail in the coffin, an articulate wail from the Hungry Forties, and the controversy then openly suggested is unabated today. Mrs. Gaskell's name was soon brought forward as the author of "Mary Barton" and she became not only a noted writer but the personal friend of that group of great geniuses who enlivened the Fifties with a glow which still lingers, and is one of the best items in our national assets of today.

Few looking on Mrs. Gaskell's dignified form and handsome features in those years of the early Fifties could have imagined that fifteen more years were to close her career of personal influence. Yet so it was. She wrote eight books of varying importance, of which "Ruth" was, perhaps, the least effective, because it warred against the peculiar reserves of the epoch at which it appeared. Yet it certainly aroused strong feeling at the time and the two main issues were hotly discussed. One concerned the falsehood, which to modern ears would sound so harmless, regarding the supposed widowhood of the heroine, which falsehood was painfully allowed by the very holy minister who rescues her and the boy Leonard; and the other pertaining to the initial tragedy of the seduction. When memory recalls the hot discussion as to the propriety of the subject at all, it seems as if our old England had oddly slipped away from the heroic heights of "Clarissa Harlowe"! "Ruth" is the one book in which Mrs. Gaskell seems to have felt that she could not possess a free hand, and yet it was on this one subject that on one unforgettable occasion she was heard to speak with fearless decision and wonderful tenderness. Where a woman was to be absolved and a man condemned for unspeakable wickedness Mrs. Gaskell's verdict left no room for doubt.

Turning to quite another subject she showed in "Sylvia's Lovers" how she could handle tragedy. The poignant effect of the culprit's resignation of his life made to one reader an absolute impossibility of a second perusal. Finally the book entitled "Wives and Daughters" with its last unfinished chapter interrupted by the hand of death, is thought by some to be the very crown of Mrs. Gaskell's achievement. She herself had a strange presentiment that if ever she was immortalised it would be through "Cranford". She said that so many had spoken to her of that book. It was "understanded of the people" with its mingling of tenderness and humour, and it will probably be reprinted as long as our language lasts.

As a critic "sixty years after" it remains to speak of the profound sincerity and appreciation shown in "The Life of Charlotte Brontë". Mrs. Gaskell drew a picture of the three sisters which is as true a work of art as any Rembrandt. "There are devotees of the Brontës who will travel miles to walk over the ground which the Brontës trod, often with a copy of Mrs. Gaskell's "Life" in their hands rather than a Brontë novel". And the colours of that picture will remain undimmed. Who that stood by the side of that aged father in his loneliness after Charlotte's death, and received his grave salute, and his permission to visit the empty room where Charlotte's portrait was all that remained of her, could doubt the penetrating truth of her friend's description. "I did so try to tell the truth," wrote Mrs. Gaskell to one of her correspondents after the "Life" was published. "I weighed every line with my whole power and heart so that every line should go to its great purpose of making her known and valued." And, moreover, "It is to Mrs. Gaskell that we are indebted for the record of the religious and ethical side of Charlotte Brontë's character." The elder woman understood the younger, and did her best to portray her, and that feat was immortal, and nothing of a later time can ever replace it. "People may talk as they will about the little respect that is paid to virtue, unaccompanied by the outward accident of wealth or station ... but all the better and more noble qualities in the hearts of others make ready and go forth to meet it on its approach; provided only it be pure, simple, and unconscious of its own existence." The nobility of Charlotte Brontë shines out in the pages written by her friend, against all that adverse criticism which has long died away. We may say with John Milton –

For if virtue feeble were,
Heaven itself would stoop to her.

B.R.B.

Editor thanks Janet Kennerley for typing this out at midnight on 29 September 2011.

London looks at Charlotte and Elizabeth: "The Life of Charlotte Brontë" - A Reading Day

Katharine Solomon

In March 2012, members of the London branch of the Brontë Society spent a day reading *The Life of Charlotte Brontë* by Elizabeth Gaskell. We met in the beautiful hall of the Concert Artistes Association near Covent Garden; sixteen of us sat around a long table, each with our own copy of the work. In turn we each read a pre-selected extract. The day was co-ordinated by Jenny Dunn, who had chosen the extracts; she introduced each of them, and chaired the discussion after each reading.

We started the day with a discussion about Elizabeth Gaskell's motives in treating the life of Charlotte Brontë in the way she did. We felt that Gaskell had been concerned to rescue her friend from the charge of "coarseness". We considered what the word meant to the Victorians, and whether *Jane Eyre* was correctly considered coarse.

Our readings started with Mrs Gaskell's impression of the "character of the people of Haworth"; they seemed to her to have a degree of self-sufficiency "rather apt to repel a stranger". We discussed whether she was right to perceive Haworth as remote and wild, or whether we should rely on a modern biographer's description of it as a well-populated semi-industrial area.

We moved on to an extract from the early years of the Brontë family. We read about Mr Brontë's alleged rages, his burning of coloured leather boots and his cutting up of his wife's silk dress. Mr Brontë was not happy with Mrs Gaskell's portrayal of him, and we considered whether Mrs Gaskell had been over-influenced by a report from a former servant. Mrs Gaskell contrasted her account with a much more favourable story about Mr Brontë seeking his young children's opinions, giving them the opportunity of speaking freely from behind a mask.

We read about the food at Cowan Bridge School, "Lowood" in *Jane Eyre*. There was a distinct contrast between Mrs Gaskell's comparatively benign account of the prime mover, Mr William Carus Wilson, and Charlotte's violent reaction to the school and to "Mr Brocklehurst" in particular. We moved on to Roe Head School, where Charlotte made two lifelong friends, whose correspondence provided much material for Mrs Gaskell's biography; she found that quoting Charlotte's own words was often more effective than her own narrative could have been.

We read the letter from the Poet Laureate, Robert Southey, written in 1837 after Charlotte had sent him some of her poems. The well-known sentence in Southey's letter, "Literature cannot be the business of a woman's life, and it ought not to be." proved to be misleading when read as part of the whole letter, which was kind and not entirely discouraging.

Two years later, Charlotte received her first proposal of marriage. Gaskell does not name the gentleman, except to say he was a clergyman, and by implication, the brother of a friend. We read Charlotte's letter about the episode, describing her "kindly leaning" but lack of "intense attachment". Mrs Gaskell comments on Charlotte's acceptance that marriage was not for her, but no obvious alternative presented itself – she was not a natural teacher of children.

So we come to Brussels – a critical period for Charlotte. Mrs Gaskell had visited Brussels and met M.Héger, and had been shown extracts from Charlotte's intense letters. But she only described, very unrevealingly, a "silent estrangement" between Charlotte and Madame Héger.

Back in Haworth, we read the account of Emily's final weeks in 1848 and her agonised death. Anne's more tranquil death followed only a few months later. Mrs Gaskell's narrative power conveyed the sadness of both these deaths, so different and yet both heart-rending.

We came to Mr Nicholl's first proposal of marriage, which was unsuccessful. Both Charlotte Brontë's and Elizabeth Gaskell's powers of description were fully deployed in the account of Mr Nicholl's proposal: "He made me, for the first time, feel what it costs a man to declare affection when he doubts response."

Finally, in order to show that Charlotte, like Elizabeth Gaskell, had to deal with unfavourable criticism, we read her hurt letters to G H Lewes after his review of Shirley. First Charlotte sent a short, angry note, then a more considered but still reproachful letter. Both Lewes and Mrs Gaskell considered that Charlotte's tone was "cavalier", but then none of us enjoys criticism. *Villette* excited some interest from female readers and we read Charlotte's reaction to a fan seeking more details about Paul Emanuel.

The day ended all too soon: we had only been able to read a limited number of extracts from this wonderful book, but we had been forcibly reminded of its excellence.

The Two Elizabeths

Alan Shelston

A little known volume of poems has recently come to light via a catalogue of the antiquarian bookseller, Charles Cox of Launceston, Cornwall. (Catalogue no.63). The book is entitled *Poems and Translations*; its author is referred to as Elizabeth Gaskell Holland. It has no publisher's imprint and no date.[1] Elizabeth Gaskell Holland was the sister of William Gaskell and thus the sister-in-law of Elizabeth the novelist. She enjoyed a long life, living from 1812 to 1892, during the course of which she bore ten children, including a pair of twins. What particularly took my eye in the description in the catalogue was its reference to a poem the then Elizabeth Holland wrote on the marriage of the then Elizabeth Stevenson to her brother.

This seemed to me a potentially interesting Gaskell find, but the book itself was surrounded by an element of mystery.

'Dearest Lizzie' with her five eldest children in 1845

In his catalogue Charles Cox describes the book as 'her (ie Elizabeth Holland's) only book' and this would certainly seem to be the case. He goes on to say that there are only two copies known in addition to the one he has for sale; one of these is held by the Women's Library at London Metropolitan University and the other is in North Carolina. There are other copies, I believe, in the possession of the Holland family. I have checked the Women's Library copy, and I must thank the librarian there for giving me access to it.

The volume itself was very attractively bound in dark green leather, with an elegant border of intertwining clover leaves in gold leaf. Its end papers give no indication of date, publisher or printer; there is no contents page but there are 310 pages of poems and translations. Most of the poems are relatively short, and some of them related to figures in Elizabeth Holland's family at various points in their lives. Some are dated over a period of a long life. Otherwise there are poems in a very Victorian mode about nature, the divinity, children, death – often these themes are interlinked – while the hundred pages of translations (mostly from the German) follow similar themes. It would be nice to be able to say that they show a genuine poetic talent, but in all honesty, apart from a facility for simple rhyme schemes, the talent, where it existed, was a very predictable one: Elizabeth Holland was mistress of the rhetorical cliché. Versifying was then seen as an accomplishment for young women, much as were drawing and musical performance. Did Elizabeth Holland learn her German from her brother William, as did Catherine Winkworth, the hymnodist whose *Lyra Germanica*, translations of German hymns, were published in two series, in 1855 and 1858?

[1] I am reliably informed that it was printed by the Women's Printing Society Ltd of 66 Whitcombe Street, London, WC, but their imprint does not appear on the copy I consulted.

The absence of any reference to publisher or date raises interesting problems: when, by whom, and under what circumstances, was this volume published? The first poem in the book, a dedication to Elizabeth Holland's unnamed son, is dated 1828, and the last 1890; her style never changes. In the Women's Library copy there is a pencilled signature on the fly-leaf: 'Edith H. Norton'.[2] This was the married name of one of Elizabeth's daughters, born in 1845, but again the signature is undated. All of this - the beauty of the binding, the anonymity of the publisher, the family centred content of many of the poems and above all the very few copies of the book now in existence suggests that the book was privately printed towards the end of Elizabeth Holland Gaskell's life as some kind of family tribute or memorial, perhaps for her eightieth birthday, which would have fallen on 21 September 1892; she died however on 8 March of that year. The fly-leaf signature on the copy I inspected suggests that it was kept in the family at least during the next generation, but after that its history disappears. It remains to consider the wedding poem written by one Elizabeth for the other. It reads as follows:

On the Marriage of E. C. S [Elizabeth Cleghorn Stevenson]
August 30th, 1832

Nay, blame her not for those dew-like tears,
She is leaving the home of her early years,
She is going to one that she knows not of,
With him to whom she has plighted her troth.

Nay, blame her not, 'twas a happy home,
One that she'll dream of in years to come —
The home where her childhood footsteps roved
The dwelling of all that she ever has loved

What though no dearly loved father is there
To mourn for the darling he watched with such care,
Though her mother, alas! in the damp grave is sleeping,
Yet one there is now in her loneliness weeping —

The one who has loved and cared for her when
She was motherless, friendless; oh, never again
Will she meet with affection so pure, so sincere,
As beams in that eye though 'tis dimmed by a tear.

Weep on aged mourner — no gay laugh to-morrow
Will playfully strive to beguile thee of sorrow,
No footstep be heard lightly bounding along,
No sweet voice to warble thy favourite song.

And the bridegroom so joyous that bears her away,
Does he chide his young bride for those sad tears to-day?

[2] *Professor Chapple tells me that Edith married a merchant. John Norton, of Norbiton, Surrey in 1875. They had 5 children.*

Ah no! he remembers the moment too well
When he bade his own home and loved inmates farewell.

Then blame her not; soon again she will smile,
And the flow'ret transplanted will wither awhile,
And the young bird transported to some foreign clime
Will droop and remember its home for a time.

It has to be said the Lizzie's poem to Elizabeth is a somewhat lugubrious affair: it is weighted towards the sadness involved in leaving the single state as much as welcoming the joys of marriage. This was perhaps a not unconventional view in the Victorian period: for inexperienced young women the entry into marriage might well seem forbidding. George Eliot's Celia Brooke expresses this anxiety in *Middlemarch* when she asks her sister Dorothea about her wedding journey with her gloomy husband and this may not have been entirely a special case. Elizabeth Gaskell's delight in her own marriage in her early letters is a refreshing corrective. One wonders what she might have thought of a wedding tribute in which her dead parents 'mourn' from the 'damp grave' and in which her surrogate mother, Aunt Lumb, is cast as an 'aged mourner'. One should say, perhaps, that the lines in tribute to Aunt Lumb confirm her importance in Elizabeth Stevenson's early life. Anyway they express the closeness of these Holland and Gaskell networks. We have Elizabeth's word that Aunt Lumb, 'my more than mother, expressed surprise that so serious a man as William would have taken a fancy to 'such a little giddy thoughtless thing' as she, and she herself joked that she was about to learn 'obedience' from her prospective husband. (*Gaskell Letters,* p1; *Further Letters* p19) As we know the 'young bird' was not transported to droop in some foreign clime after her marriage: she spent a month in North Wales discovering the delights of matrimony. (*Gaskell Letters*, pp2-3)

Elizabeth Holland, affectionately referred to by Elizabeth Gaskell as 'Lizzie', kept house for her brother in Dover Street in Manchester before he married. The two Elizabeths would have met often during these pre-wedding months, and they continued to correspond in the early years of the Gaskell marriage; from all the evidence they valued their mutual acquaintance. Elizabeth wrote excitedly to Lizzie from North Wales about 'this obstreperous brother of yours' (*GL*, p2) where the Gaskells went on their wedding journey and there is a sequence of early letters which reveal the closeness of their relationship. Two long later letters show that this continued into middle life. (*GL* nos 145, 424) where unstated family issues are alluded to.

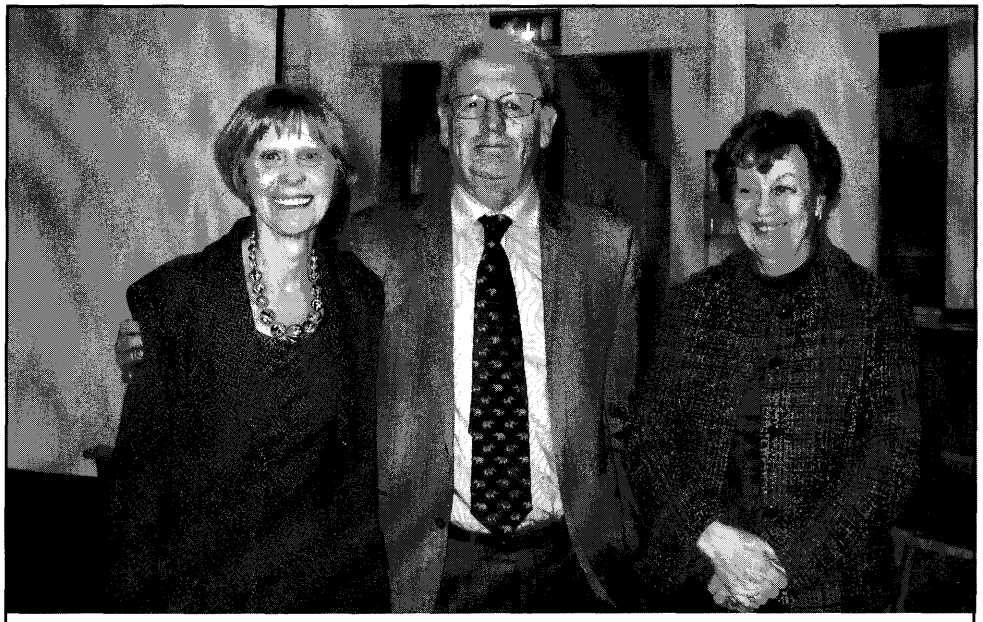
Lizzie married Charles Holland in 1838 and a long letter from Elizabeth Gaskell at that time clearly responds to anxiety on Lizzie's part about the prospect of her own marriage. It would seem that she has suggested that the marriage should wait. 'I would not have the engagement much prolonged', Elizabeth Gaskell replies, 'you will always (put it off for 20 years) [sic] have a month of nervousness at last to go through — a feeling of awe on entering a new state of life, and quitting old habits and old places &c, — but you only put off the evil time by delaying your marriage.'

The 'new state of life' may seem intimidating but she argues that 'you will gain more knowledge of his tastes and habits in a week living in the house with him, or in a day married to him, than by years of pop [sic] visits...where the joy of seeing you swallows up ... any individual peculiarity of character' (*GL*, pp36, 35, 19 August 1838). This sounds very much like the voice of experience.

Lizzie did not postpone her marriage, and she lived for a much longer time than her mentor. During that time she continued to write her poems, all much of the same kind on typically Victorian subjects. A delightful family portrait, showing her with five of her children playing in the drawing-room with their toys, exists in the possession of the Holland family. There are also portraits of her as a young woman and in later life, again in the possession of the family I am grateful to Professor Chapple and to the Holland family for access to copies of these materials. Unlike Elizabeth Gaskell's, all of Lizzie's children survived; nevertheless in her several poems about babies she invariably emphasises their vulnerability. Nature is given heavily Romantic significance: its features figure prominently as evidence of the divine. The poems are often self-questioning and they fill in some of the details of her family associations. For her translations, mostly from the German, she seems to have chosen poems similar in their subject-matter to her own; again a beneficent view of nature predominates. Her poems, by their very typicality, tell us much about Victorian attitudes, and much indeed about this Elizabeth who outlived her husband and lived on until the final decade of the century.

The Holland family were widespread through Lancashire and Cheshire — so much so that it is not always easy to sort out the connections between its various members. They became established in the Unitarian networks of the eighteenth century and most of them increased in prosperity in the nineteenth. Elizabeth Gaskell's mother was a Holland, and her eldest daughter Marianne, married another. It is a nice twist that Elizabeth Gaskell's first intentions were to write verse, one poem of which commemorated the grave of her first unborn child, and that the husband with whom she had written some early verse should have been the brother of another Gaskell poet who would one day connect the Gaskell and Holland families via marriage. While one Elizabeth was to abandon verse and become famous as a novelist, the other worked away consistently at her poetry which nevertheless remained a private affair. There is no record of what either of them thought of each other's literary achievements.

Mrs Charles Holland, neé Elizabeth Gaskell (aka Lizzie) 1812-1892, in 1870

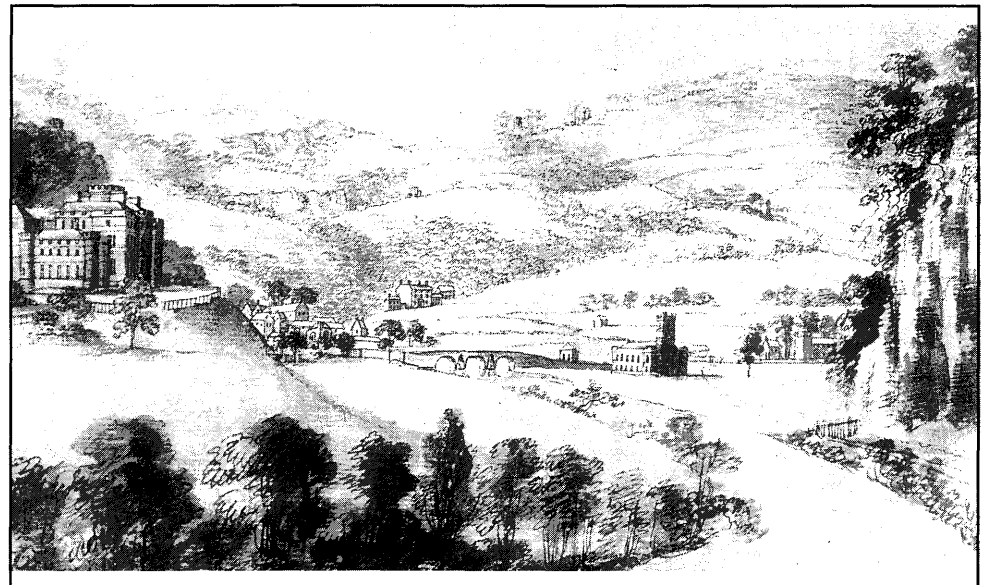


Alan, now Former President, Shelston
flanked by (R) Chairman Ann and (L) Secretary Pam, after AGM, 14 April 2012

Doreen and John Pleydell were married on 18 April 1942.

Here they are, 70 years later, enjoying their garden between April showers.

Lea Hurst with high turret where ECG toiled over North and South in 1854;
and visited by members of the Gaskell Society, 30 May 2012



Willersley Castle, Derbyshire, also visited by ECG; and the Gaskell Society.
Cromford Church and Canal Wharf on right
(from an early 19th century drawing supplied by Christine Linguard)

What a single word can do

Alan Shelston

Dr Johnson, in the Preface to his edition of Shakespeare, was scathing about the process of writing notes. Of the efforts of a fellow-editor, he wrote, 'the writing of notes is not of difficult attainment.' But the annotation of literary works can often be a frustrating business; all the more if one reflects on the possibility that most readers will pass over most notes. However they have their uses. Some years ago I was asked to edit *Mary Barton* for the new paperback in Everyman's Library. I was very conscious of the authority of Angus Easson's major edition of the novel (Ryburn Publishing, 1993). It is very authoritatively annotated and I did my best to limit my borrowings: however there was one occasion when I turned to it for enlightenment, and found the solution not there.

Chapter 8 of *Mary Barton* concludes with the singer, Margaret Jennings, who is losing her sight, singing a ballad the first line of which is 'What a single word can do'. The theme of the song is that a single word can on occasion transform an entire situation, and the song itself is unattributed. I was unable to discover who has written it. Easson passes over this item, and in private conversation he told me that it had not proved possible to trace its origin. This, as far as I could tell, was indeed the case, and my edition went to press with an admission of failure.

Somewhat later, though, and too late for inclusion in the edition, I found the answer quite by chance when working on Elizabeth Gaskell's unpublished correspondence. I was checking a letter in a file of correspondence held in the Library of the Wordsworth Centre at Dove Cottage, at Grasmere when I turned to the preceding page and found a letter from William Gaskell to an autograph seeker written to him after Elizabeth's death. Enclosed with the letter was a second sheet giving the two stanzas of Margaret's song exactly as they appear in the novel. The correspondence reads as follows:

Plymouth Grove
Jan 24th 1867

Dear Sir,

I have had so many claims on my time that, I am obliged to confess, your note was laid aside with some others and forgotten. I send a short song of mine which was inserted in "Mary Barton," and which has been thought worth setting to music by two or three different hands [.]

In haste
I am, dear Sir,
Yours faithfully
Wm Gaskell

A. Vogue Esq.

There was then an enclosure in William Gaskell's hand, on a separate sheet, giving the two stanzas of the *Mary Barton* poem:

What a single word can do!
Thrilling all the heart-strings through,
Calling forth fond memories,
Raining round hope's melodies,
Steeping all in one bright hue –
What a single word can do!

What a single word can do!
Making life seem all untrue,
Driving joy and hope away,
Leaving not one cheering ray,
Blighting every flower that grew –
What a single word can do!

We know little of William's correspondent: the 1861 census records an 'A. Vogue' as having been born in France but now living in Northamptonshire. William's letter to him is directed to a London address, but in fact there is an earlier letter to him from Elizabeth herself to a Nottingham address in which she apologises for delay in response to an earlier request for an autograph. This letter is included in Further Letters (p262) and is dated 8th March 1864. Vogue is not registered in the 1871 census: perhaps by this time he had returned to France, or possibly died.

It could be argued that little of this matters in any material way. But that is not entirely so: apart from confirming the tendency of Victorian enthusiasts to seek autographs — a practice that Elizabeth herself indulged in — it extends our awareness of her husband's involvement in her early work, and also his post mortem willingness to respond to an enquiry related to it. Dr Johnson erred, I think, provided that is, that editors get it right.

I am grateful for the assistance of the staff at The Wordsworth Trust, Dove Cottage, Cumbria for allowing me access to the correspondence referred to in this article [Stanger ms 2/104, 1-6] and for the permission of the Curator, Jeff Cowton, to reprint it.

A brief account of illustrated editions of Elizabeth Gaskell's works

Emma Marigliano

The mid-eighteenth century is widely acknowledged as the hey-day of Victorian book illustration. From the popular press to pamphlets, from volumes of instruction and information to works of great literature - pictures interpreted the words. Many authors had their own favourite illustrators; think of Hablot K Browne (otherwise

known as 'Phiz') and you think of Dickens; mention John Tenniel and you connect him with Lewis Carroll, Tennyson – willing or otherwise – attracted the artistic imagination of the pre-Raphaelites. There was no shortage of illustrators and illustrations for the Victorian novel, that's for sure. The publishers, in particular, quickly realised that a picture spoke a thousand words and, consequently, commissioned artists and illustrators to speak them.

One therefore has to wonder why the descriptive and dramatic tales that Elizabeth Gaskell wrote were so rarely adorned by the illustrators of the day. In fact there were no illustrated editions of her work until the very end of her career with the serial publication and illustration of *Cousin Phillis* and *Wives and Daughters* in the 'Cornhill Magazine'. As far as her novels were concerned it was her publisher, George Smith, of Smith, Elder, who decided to commission George du Maurier.

Elizabeth Gaskell was known to have made a very brief remark just once on du Maurier's illustration in a letter to George Smith, the publisher, dated 10th December 1863. "I like the illustrations to *Sylvia* much – but I must end." (Chapple and Shelston, p266, quoted in Recchio, p77, 2009, Ashgate Publishing). George du Maurier (1834-1896) and, briefly, Myles Birket Foster (1825-1899) were the only illustrators within her lifetime.

The serialisation in the Cornhill Magazine of *Cousin Phillis* and *Wives and Daughters* between 1863 and 1866 was the first time that Gaskell's fiction was illustrated whilst the first novel to be illustrated was *The Moorland Cottage* which was published as a Christmas Book in 1850 with Birket Foster's illustrations.

Du Maurier illustrated *Sylvia's Lovers* (1863), *Cranford* and *Dark Night's Work* in 1864; *Lizzie Leigh* (see right), *The Grey Woman* and *Cousin Phyllis* in 1865, *Wives and Daughters* in 1866 and *North and South* in 1867. *Cranford* had appeared in Dickens's 'Household Words' in serial form between 1851 and 1853 and *North and South* between 1854 and 1855 but neither title was illustrated at this time.

There is no evidence in Gaskell's correspondence with her publishers to suggest any plans on her part for illustration of her novels. Thomas Recchio, on this basis, assumes that her late fiction and the production of illustrated editions of her early work were driven by her publisher's concerns (2009). Given the

small number of du Maurier's illustrations for *Sylvia's Lovers* and *Wives and Daughters*, Recchio goes on to suggest that George Smith commissioned the illustrations to help sell Gaskell's books at a crucial time in the marketplace, setting her on a par with Dickens's serial publications and Chapman and Hall's novel publications.

Hugh Thomson (1860-1920) illustrated Cranford in 1891, about 25 years after Mrs Gaskell's death. It was so popular that it set off a stream of illustrated editions between the United Kingdom and America throughout the 1890s and the first 20 years or so of the 20th century. Recchio points out the stylistic differences between du Maurier and Thomson's illustrations, charging the latter with producing 'a set of visual stereotypes in the service of a cultural narrative that evokes a nostalgic sense of national identity, a literary definition of what it is to be English.' (2009)

Thomas Heath Robinson (1869-1950), brother to Charles and the fantastically inventive William, illustrated *Cranford* at the close of the century in 1896 and, stylistically, did not depart dramatically from the pattern of his predecessors. T H Robinson had illustrated a number of fantasy and fairy tales and although he went on to apply himself to more realistic art, such as *Cranford* and *Hawthorne's Scarlet Letter*, he never entirely left whimsy as this can be seen in just a few of the *Cranford* illustrations (see figure on left for instance).

The first few years of the twentieth century saw another prolifically talented pair of siblings, Harry (H M Brock [1875-1960]) and Charles (C E) Brock [1870-1938], try their hand with *Cranford* although Charles was more inclined towards Jane Austen's works. It could be seen in these later interpretations that the drama that du Maurier had conveyed in his much more graphically heavy illustrations had been lost, somewhat, along the way. Nevertheless, not much more was changing, stylistically and the generally stereotypical illustrations hardly moved on.

In 1914 E H New (Edmund Hart New [1871-1931]) provided some illustrations for an edition of *Cranford* published by Methuen. New submitted a number of illustrations for George Musgrave's translation of Dante's *Inferno* around this time and, as he favoured pen and ink sketches of the geography of literary works, the illustrations for Dante tended towards Florentine locations in particular. New adopted the same style for Cranford, and the novel was a departure from his usual 'guide book' illustrations (*The English Lakes* and *Oxfordshire*, for instance). His sketches for *Cranford* were probably taken from those he produced for George Payne's *Mrs Gaskell and Knutsford* which, as Recchio suggests, effectively turned the novel into a guidebook of Elizabeth Gaskell's girlhood home (pp76-77).

E H New affords an almost irrelevant diversion, serving mainly to introduce the change of approach heralded by the twentieth century. It may be no coincidence that a more marked departure from the same-old-same-old was due to the advent of a spate of women illustrators on the scene which continues to this day. Mention here is made of a few more prominent names. M(ary) V Wheelhouse (fl 1895-1947) was better known as a painter and illustrator of children's books but, in fact, she took to Gaskell's works in a big way. *Cranford* seems to have been the favoured title for the majority of illustrators, except for George du Maurier who was selected to illustrate a number of novels and tales. Wheelhouse, however, was a popular and prolific illustrator and counted amongst Elizabeth Gaskell's works *Cousin Phillis* (1908), *Cranford* (1909), *Sylvia's Lovers* (1910) and *Wives and Daughters* (1912). Colour illustrations were being applied more frequently to the Gaskell illustrated editions and Wheelhouse's designs picked up details of furnishings and wall and floor coverings as they had never been seen before. Costume design had a more three-dimensional quality to them because of the colour and gardens took on a new life and the children seemed to jump out of Kate Greenaway's nursery.

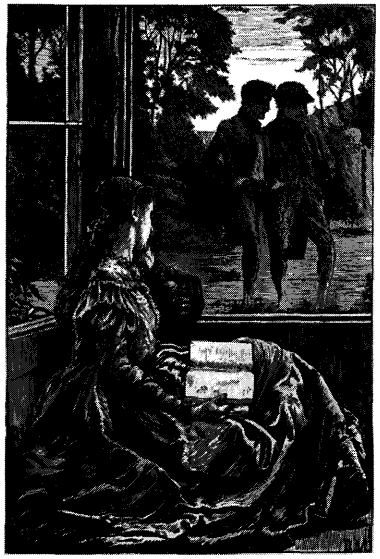
In the same year as E H New's rather pedestrian guide book (1914), another edition of *Cranford* was published which continued to emphasise the feminine touch that Elizabeth Gaskell's work had hitherto lacked. One can't help wondering if she would have been more pleased with this change of style than she appeared to be over du Maurier's faithful illustrations. Sybil Tawse (fl 1900-1940) painted portraits, designed posters and illustrated books in line and colour. She chose colour for the *Cranford* illustrations and, although the influence of Thomson and the Brocks is evident in the design of the costumes her attention to detail and accuracy in historical context and setting is all her own. There is a warmth and homeliness in her painterly illustrations that turns the characters into individuals with personalities that the reader could better relate to. This was probably lacking in previous interpretations, including those by Wheelhouse. At the same time Tawse was able to project a theatricality that the moment requires (see figure above).

We must travel some considerable years now to one of the more distinctive illustrators of Mrs Gaskell's works, even though *Cranford* is, again, the choice of title – whether the artist's or the publisher's. Joan Hassall (1906-1988) was the daughter of John Hassall and her wood engravings added a style and elegance to many classic works of literature, including those of Gaskell, Brontë and, in particular, Jane

Austen. Not surprisingly, the Folio Society commissioned this superb draughtswoman to illustrate all of Austen's works, and a subsequent Folio set included not only the earlier wood engravings but also later scraperboard versions of Jane Austen's novels. She was obviously extremely well regarded by the Folio Society because they asked Hassall to illustrate Gaskell's *Cranford* (1940) and her inimitable and fresh approach to the line and style of these designs is immediately recognisable. There is quality almost of caricature of some of the characters and the meticulous line and detail of the illustrations display a skill and dedication to her art that is unmistakable. Miss Jenkyns' earnestness, as she reads Dr Johnson's *Rasselas* to Captain Brown is worthy of Rowlandson. Joan Hassall also collaborated with Margaret Lane in a book based on Elizabeth Gaskell's biography of Charlotte Brontë.

Our final, and probably most recent illustrator is another female who has chosen to return to the line-drawing style of earlier illustrators. Having illustrated Wilkie Collins and Anthony Trollope for the Folio Society, Alexy Pendle was asked by them to illustrate Elizabeth Gaskell also. Pendle hails from the East coast of England but, after attending the Central School of Art and The Institute of Education, London University, she went to live, briefly, in the Middle East before she emigrated, in 1976, to the USA and now lives in Boulder, Colorado. She has taught drawing and painting for many years and has illustrated numerous books. She was delighted receive this commission from the Folio Society as Elizabeth Gaskell is one of her favourite authors.

Her style retains a distinctly romantic element but is more reminiscent of du Maurier's than might at first be thought. There is evident inspiration from this earliest of illustrators to the latest (see the comparisons in the two illustrations from *Wives and Daughters*, du Maurier on the left and Pendle on the right).



Though this has been a brief account of the more noteworthy British illustrators of Elizabeth Gaskell's works, it is clear that Mrs Gaskell has not inspired a great many artists. Her works, however, continue to inspire visual interpretation with more recent theatre and television adaptations, growing to great acclaim. These mini-series have captured the interest and imagination of creator and audience alike far more than the illustrations; and the actors have conveyed the wit and the passion of Elizabeth Gaskell with originality - perhaps more successfully even than the illustrations so far seen.

References:

Thomas Recchio, *Elizabeth Gaskell's* Cranford*; a publishing history*, Ashgate Publishing Ltd, 2009, Farnham

Alan Horne (ed), *The Dictionary of 20th Century British Book Illustrators*, Antique Collectors' Club Ltd, 1999, London

Elizabeth Gaskell, *Cranford*, illustrations by A V Wheelhouse, 1909

Elizabeth Gaskell, *Cranford*, illustrations by Joan Hassal, The Folio Society, 1991, London

Emma Marigliano is Librarian of The Portico Library, Manchester.

Casa Guidi, Florence

Pauline Kiggins

Casa Guidi, in Piazza S. Felice, Florence, is an apartment primarily remembered in connection with the poets Robert Browning and Elizabeth Barrett Browning. On their first wedding anniversary, 12 September l847, the couple had watched from Casa Guidi as the crowds below, assembled from many regions of the not-yet-unified Italy, surged towards the courtyard of the Pitti Palace to rejoice together at the granting by the Austrian Grand Duke Leopold II of Tuscany the right to form a civic guard, an event which signalled political change and the first stirrings towards unification. It had been an event that thrilled the Brownings, especially Elizabeth.

The apartment in Palazzo Guidi became home to Robert and Elizabeth and there, on 9th March 1849, their son Robert Wiedemann (later known by his self-chosen nickname Pen, or Penini) was born. Elizabeth Barrett Browning died in Casa Guidi on 29th June 1861.

After expressing the wish to have Casa Guidi recreated as it had been during his parents' time there, and preserved in their memory, Pen Browning bought the whole of the palazzo in 1893, but all was sold again in 1912 after Pen's death. However, although Pen did not see it fulfilled, his wish was remembered and carried out many years later. In 1971 the apartment was acquired by the Browning Institute based in New York. Restoration work was started, using as a guide the painting by Mignaty commissioned by Robert after his wife's death and before he and Penini left Florence. Eventually the Institute realised that restoration was beyond its resources. The apartment was sold and is now owned by Eton College. At the end of 1990, the Headmaster, Dr Anderson, proposed that the Landmark Trust might support the school in the use of this property. (The Landmark Trust is an independent charity, founded in 1965, with two main aims, the first, to rescue worthwhile buildings and their surroundings from neglect; the second, to promote the enjoyment of these places and make them available for short breaks or longer holidays. Most of Landmark's properties are in England, Scotland or Wales, but there is also one in the USA and there are four in Italy. I have mentioned the Landmark Trust here with this account of its aims, because of the interest I believe Gaskell Society members have in the preservation and use of buildings with interesting histories!) When not being used by Etonians, Casa Guidi is available for private bookings.

A stay in Casa Guidi is a magical experience on many levels. Situated in the Oltrarno district, (south of the river on the other bank from the immediate centre round the Duomo and Battistera) along the Via Maggio and almost opposite the Pitti Palace and the Boboli Gardens, it is an ideal location, within easy walking distance of central Florence, over either the famous Ponte Vecchio or the Ponte Santa Trinita.

In her biography, *Elizabeth Gaskell: a habit of stories*, Jenny Uglow mentions two

visits to Casa Guidi intended to be made by Mrs Gaskell as the party was travelling homewards through Florence, after their memorable stay in Rome in 1857. Uglow covers the visits in a single paragraph, as follows:

(Elizabeth Gaskell) arrived in Florence. Robert Browning paid a long call as soon as they arrived and Elizabeth took Katie Winkworth to meet his wife. Elizabeth Barrett Browning, however, scarcely spoke a word and Elizabeth desperately filled the silences by telling long stories about Charlotte Brontë, with Katie acting as chorus and the Brownings' friend Isa Blagden stopping the gaps [-----]. Even Katie was driven to admit the evening was 'not particularly brilliant'. Elizabeth and Charles (Eliot Norton) tried to call again before they left, but the news of Mr Barrett's death had just reached the Casa Guidi; his daughter was devastated and would see no one. [i]

So it seems that Mrs Gaskell's experience with both of the Brownings was rather strained and difficult. In Letter 421 of Chapple and Pollard, Mrs Gaskell writes of the Brownings to Tottie Fox: "I liked her better than him; perhaps for the reason that he fell asleep while I was talking to him." Perhaps the second visit planned with Charles Eliot Norton to Casa Guidi, might have been more successful. But it was not to be - their timing was so unfortunate. The glimpses we get of the interwoven lives of these 19th century writers are fascinating, and are made so much more real when pictured in the places where they actually happened. Walking into Casa Guidi seems like stepping back in time: the drawing room and main bedroom in particular, have been recreated as they were when Mrs Gaskell visited.

Photograph of the drawing room at Casa Guidi, Florence, Italy, furnished by the Landmark Trust to look as it was at the time of Robert and Elizabeth. A painting of the room, commissioned by Robert Browning after his wife's death in 1861 was used to recreate the colour scheme, furnishings and fabrics, while some of the items seen in the room are actually the originals.

[i] *Uglow, Jenny, Elizabeth Gaskell: a habit of stories, (London, Faber and Faber, 1993) p.425.*

Away From It All

Christine Lingard

The major subject of the problems faced by Elizabeth Gaskell, in juggling the demands as the wife of a busy minister and the mother of four lively daughters, and also as a successful writer, is well-documented. For her, home and family always came first but her publishers and editors were always imposing deadlines for her latest work. While we may have a romanticised image of her writing at the table in the dining room of Plymouth Grove, her solution was more likely to get away from it all. Frequent visits to friends and relations were often an excuse to get some time to devote to her latest project. Much of *North and South* for example was written at the Nightingale home at Lea Hurst near Matlock.

This was particularly the case when she embarked on *Sylvia's Lovers*. This was a mammoth project, comprising three volumes to be published by Smith Elder. She had first met the former Arctic explorer, Dr William Scoresby in Dunoon as long ago as 1855 and got underway on the book after a visit to Auchencairn, on the Solway Firth, in 1859. Her exploratory trip to Whitby where she did most of her research took place in November 1859. Work was well underway in 1862 when the blockade put on exports of cotton from the United States during the American Civil War caused the cotton mills of Manchester to fail. Thousands of mill workers were made destitute and the Gaskell women were among the many middle-class Manchester women who rallied to the call to organise sewing circles and soup kitchens.

This had taken its toll on their health, Meta's especially, and all work on the novel was suspended. In order to catch up Gaskell took herself and her daughter Meta away for a month in September 1862 to a town on the south coast of England: Eastbourne in Sussex. Though a fishing village of some antiquity, its reputation as a sea-bathing resort was relatively recent. It had long been overshadowed by its grand neighbour, Brighton, the favourite haunt of the Prince Regent. Despite its Georgian appearance, it was not until the 1850s that work began to turn it into a serious rival, and this was still on-going at the time of her visit.

The long sea-front at Eastbourne, which consists almost exclusively of hotels, was developed by the 7th Duke of Devonshire, who had inherited land in the town from his mother's family. This duke was not the one who entertained Elizabeth at Chatsworth in 1857 but his cousin, previously known at the Earl of Burlington, who succeeded him in 1858. His statue can be seen in nearby Devonshire Place. The front is divided into several terraces known as parades. The Gaskells' lodgings were at 35 Marine Parade, the section to the east of the pier. (Though this had not yet been built at the time of their visit). Number 35 (almost at its eastern end) is one of the most modest buildings in the terrace, consisting only of two bays and only the simplest of metal work decoration. It was run as a lodging-house for many years by William Cummins. The Queen's Hotel, which later dominated this parade, was not completed till 1870.

Despite being so busy Elizabeth and Meta had time for sight-seeing. It is generally believed that it was during this visit that Mrs Gaskell got the idea for another piece – a short story (one of seven) entitled *How the First Floor Went to Crowley Castle*, that was contributed to *Mrs Lirriper's Lodgings*, the extra Christmas number of Dickens's *All the Year Round* of 1863. This is a Gothic story describing a ruined Norman castle within easy reach of Brighton and its neighbouring church, where the family was commemorated with ancient brasses.

As Geoffrey Sharps explains there are several possibilities in the neighbourhood, most notably Pevensey Castle, built shortly after the Battle of Hastings by William's first half-brother on site of a Roman fort near to the point where the Conqueror landed. Originally on the coast the bay has silted up and it had long been a ruin. It is now administered by English Heritage, but neither of the local churches fit with the description in Gaskell's story.

There was another castle in the area at Herstmonceaux (sometimes spelt Hurstmonceaux), although it wasn't Norman. Built in the 1440s by the Fiennes family, it was more of grand manor house than a fortification. It had been in ruins since the end of the eighteenth century and partially dismantled. It has now been restored and for many years it was the home of the Royal Observatory. Now it is a conference centre and the grounds and gardens are open to the public. Nearby All Saints church contains tombs and brasses of the Dacre family dating from the sixteenth century and this church fits the bill. It would have been of interest to Gaskell for other reasons. Several members of the Winkworth family had visited it and a former rector was known to her – Julius Hare, Archdeacon of Lewes, who was active in the campaign of Charles Kingsley to alleviate the lot of tailors and seamstresses.

35 Marine Parade Eastbourne where ECG wrote and Meta rested in Sept 1862

Whatever the case, there is no local legend that could have furnished the plot. As usual Mrs Gaskell has skilfully mixed fact with imagination, to create a unique story. It is unfortunately one of her rarer stories only reprinted in the Knutsford edition of 1908 and in the Pickering & Chatto edition of 2006. The manuscript is in the collection of the Manchester Central Library.

Further reading:

Sharps, J G *Mrs Gaskell's observation and invention: a study of her non-biographic works*. 1970.

Gaskell - Nightingale Tour, 30 May, 2012

Jean Alston

On Wednesday, 30 May, thirty-four members of the Gaskell Society and friends enjoyed a day in the Peak District. Participants joined the coach in Manchester, Knutsford and Macclesfield, and were fortunate to have warm dry weather, a comfortable coach and an excellent driver.

The tour began with a short stop at Ashford in the Water, where we enjoyed coffee and delicious home-made biscuits at the Riverside House Hotel. The sheep dip and bridge on the River Wye, and tympanum and virgin lanterns in the church would surely have been appreciated by Mrs Gaskell. Did she travel near this location by coach at any time? She would travel principally by train when she went to the Nightingale's home in 1854 but may have used a combination of the two. One can well imagine that the Arkwright family would visit Ashford when they used their coach for outings in Derbyshire.

Our next stop was Cromford to learn about the influence of Sir Richard Arkwright; some members enjoyed the factory tour while other strolled by the canal, enjoying the mallard and coot with young, and the hawthorn bushes and trees in full blossom.

Clive Tougher, who has studied the Nightingale family and buildings, joined the coach in Cromford and led some of the groups into Willersley Castle Hotel. This building was commissioned by Sir Richard Arkwright and on completion was lived in by his three sons. The hotel is now a location for Christian Guild Holidays but retains many of the architectural features that ECG would have enjoyed when she visited the Arkwright family in 1854. We were shown a remarkable three story oval atrium and original Georgian staircase which Elizabeth would have appreciated; she would also have enjoyed walking in the gardens and observing the river below and spectacular limestone outcrop on the rise beyond. In a letter from Lea Hurst to daughter Marianne in 1854 she referred to Mr and Mrs Arkwright:

> They were sorry I had not spoken to them on Sunday at church & sent to ask me to lunch there yesterday, & were very friendly and agreeable.

From Willersley Castle we travelled up the hill to the village of Lea. Clive pointed out Riverside House on our left, which was owned by Florence Nightingale's aunt, and where Florence spent many years in her later life.

We had all been looking forward to seeing Lea Hurst and had fortunately been given permission to visit the garden by the Kay family who had recently acquired it. Lea Hurst is a fine stone building originating in Jacobean times. It was purchased in 1771 by Peter Nightingale II and in 1822 was inherited by William Edward Shore (Peter's nephew, who changed his name to Nightingale). William Edward was father of Parthenope and Florence Nightingale. The house was extended and redesigned by William during the following two years.

However, it is reputedly described by Florence Nightingale's mother as not a very large house as it had only fifteen bedrooms. Elizabeth was invited to stay in the house when demands of visitors and family at Plymouth Grove were preventing her from meeting deadlines imposed by Charles Dickens who was awaiting her serial contributions of *North and South* for the journal *Household Words*. During her stay at Lea Hurst, Elizabeth wrote several letters including one to her daughter Marianne, in which she wrote:

> the gardener and his wife ...will live in one part, far far away, & I shall have all the rest of the large place to myself, i.e. two rooms downstairs and a room & a balcony high up at the top... all to myself

To Catherine Winkworth, she wrote:

> It is getting dark. I am to have my tea, up in my turret - at 6. And after that I shall lock my outer door & write. I am stocked with coals, and have candles up here; for I am a quarter of a mile of staircase & odd intricate passage away from every one else in the house.

Janet Kennerley read excerpts from the letters, as we sat or stood around in the garden of Lea Hurst, examining the building and enjoying the views that ECG had appreciated when she stayed there.

Although we were reluctant to leave Lea Hurst, we eventually walked back to the village of Lea, where Clive had arranged that we should visit the Florence Nightingale Memorial Hall. This village hall was built in 1932 on land donated by the Nightingale Estate. The villagers have made it a centre for Nightingale studies and, on the wall, there are maps showing locations of battles and events of the Crimean War, and other collections relating to Florence Nightingale. We were invited to have afternoon tea at this hall on a future occasion.

Our final stop was at Lea Hall. This is the Nightingale ancestral home and where the family lived as it built up its fortune (on lead). It was built in the 17th century and bought by Thomas Nightingale in 1707. The newer Georgian front was added by Peter I in 1754. It was inherited from his son, Peter II, by Florence's father in 1822, the year after Florence was born. Florence lived at Lea Hall during her early years

and enjoyed walking from there to the nearby church at Dethick. Lea Hall is now one of the properties owned by Nicola and Peter Bunting, who have several Derbyshire country houses and furnish them with antique furniture appropriate to their age and architecture. These beautiful houses are available for Peak District holidays. We were provided with 'mountains' of delicious scones, butter, cream and jam by the resident caretakers at Lea Hall and could make ourselves at home in many of the rooms, garden and large patio. The weather continued to be warm and pleasant for the whole day.

Again, we were reluctant to leave but duly boarded our coach for the return from Nightingale country to Gaskell country. Once again, we must thank the Gaskell reputation for the opportunity to visit so many interesting and pleasant locations.

Editor adds: And **WE** must thank Jean for organising such a wonderful day. It would appear that Jean has control even over the weather.

Book Notes

Christine Lingard

Elizabeth Gaskell: the Life of Elizabeth Gaskell in Photographs by Tatsuhiro Ohno. Ohsaka Kyoiku Tosho, Osaka. ISBN 978 -4-271-21014-6

Members who have been on Society holidays and outings in the last ten years may remember Professor Ohno of Kumamoto University with his camera and tripod. The result is this book consisting of 502 of his colour photographs illustrating numerous places in the United Kingdom associated with Elizabeth Gaskell including places mentioned in her writing. The book is chronologically arranged annotated with quotations (in English) from the letters and other writings. It is particularly useful in establishing the current condition of the places mentioned.

The Selected Letters of Charles Dickens, edited by Jenny Hartley. Oxford University Press. ISBN 978-0-19-859141-1

The British Academy Pilgrim edition of the Complete Letters of Charles Dickens encompassing twelve volumes includes over 14,000 letters was edited by a number of distinguished academics, including Professor Angus Easson, so it is useful to have 450 of the most interesting in a single volume, and revealing his work as writer, publisher, editor and family man. The work includes seven of his letters to Elizabeth Gaskell outlining their difficulties in producing *North and South* in instalments for *Household Words* in 1854. The book contains the same detailed textual notes as the original.

Letters of Mrs Gaskell's Daughters, 1856-1914, edited by Irene Wiltshire, available in hard copy and as an E-book (PDF and Kindle) from Humanities Ebooks, Tirril Hall, Penrith CA10 2JE, http: humanities-ebooks.co.uk ISBN 978-1-84760-204-6

Elizabeth Gaskell's two eldest daughters Marianne and Meta were their mother's confidantes and their letters include useful extra information illuminating events in her life but all four continued to lead interesting lives after her death, and deserve to be better known in their own right. Correspondents include Charles Eliot Norton and members of the Wedgwood family. A lot of Meta's correspondence dates from the 20th century and deal with the establishment of the Gaskell Collection in Manchester. The book contains copious footnotes. Dr Wiltshire, a former membership secretary of the Society, is still remembered for the regular meetings she conducted in Knutsford.

Please note that the Gaskell Collection in the Manchester City Library has now been added to the library's online digital catalogue. A link to the catalogue has been placed on the Gaskell Society web page. The Library itself is still closed pending extensive renovation and is due to reopen in 2013 but the collection is available at the Greater Manchester Record Office. (The website gives directions.) The temporary library at Eliot House, Deansgate has a good collection of background material in its Manchester room.

The collection contains an extensive range of Gaskell editions, including some early translations, major monographs and biographies including some doctoral theses, books from Gaskell's personal library, cuttings and periodical articles as well as an extensive range of material by and relating to William Gaskell. To browse the collection it is advisable to do undertake a keyword search including the word Gaskell Collection in addition to the term you are interested in.

Editor adds: I was delighted to receive recently from Masuko Adachi a copy of her latest book published in March 2012 (not yet available in English translation): A Study of Elizabeth Gaskell's fiction: exploring themes and techniques. (ISBN 978-4-7553-0266-4) Masuko covers the six novels and seven of the Novelle and short stories. Quotes are given in the original English as well as in Japanese translation. There are photographs of Knutsford, Silverdale, "Heppenheim" and elsewhere. This is a beautifully produced hardback. Masuko is now Emeritus Professor at Notre Dame Seishen University, but she will continue to do some part-time teaching. We wish her a very happy retirement.

Cranford makes a cameo appearance in *The Heather Blazing*, by Colm Tóibín.

Alliance of Literary Societies AGM Weekend

12-13 May 2012

Lynda Stephens

This year's ALS weekend was hosted by the Nottingham Branch of the Dickens Fellowship. We gathered at the Mechanics Institute for coffee before being welcomed by Rosemary Longland, Chairman of the Nottingham Branch and also by Joan Dicks of the International Dickens Fellowship. Rosemary told us that they have a tradition of reading the books out loud at their monthly meetings and this year it is *A Tale of Two Cities*.

The Fellowship is very active in this bicentenary year and they are particularly proud of the permanent legacy of the work done by the University of Buckingham in putting all of the journals online to be freely available at djo.org.uk.

Anita Fernandez Young gave Michael Eaton's presentation of Dickens's Screen Heritage and recommended imdb.com as a resource for films. There was a 1922 film about the London locations in the books.

Karen Mersiowsky of the D H Lawrence Society showed us a film of her researches in Eastwood into Lawrence's home and family. She had interviewed elderly residents and recorded their insights.

We had a pleasant lunch and a chance to meet some of the other delegates, all of whom were enthusiastic about their own authors and keen to advertise upcoming events.

It was announced at the AGM that next year's event will be hosted by the Barbara Pym Society and will be held on the first weekend in June at St Hilda's College Oxford. In 2014 it will be in Canterbury with the Christopher Marlowe Society; in 2015 hosted by the Trollope Society and in 2016, by the Brontë Society.

We had an enjoyable dinner followed by the traditional readings, Janet Kennerley of the Gaskell Society read the letter in which Mrs Gaskell wrote of a train journey during which she read some of a Dickens novel over a gentleman's shoulder and regretted that he wasn't a quicker reader.

On Sunday morning we met at D H Lawrence's birthplace museum in Eastwood for a fascinating tour led by a well-informed guide.

We said our goodbyes and journeyed back to Cheshire through the delightful Derbyshire countryside. Another excellent ALS weekend.

Exciting News from 84 Plymouth Grove

Janet Allan

We now have the go-head! £1,851,800 has been awarded by the Heritage Lottery Fund, with a further £500,000 in match funding raised by the Manchester Historic Buildings Trust ensures the future of the House.

The announcement was broadcast on television, press and local radio on 13 June, when Professor Hannah Barker from Heritage Lottery Fund met representatives of the Trust and the Gaskell Society at the House.

We will have a restored and converted House – the garden setting and the ground floor as they were in Elizabeth Gaskell's time, the lower ground floor with sympathetically restored kitchen and servants' hall, new toilets, and a connecting lift. Upstairs the large original bedrooms will be available as conference, exhibition and office spaces, with a new staircase connecting it to the rear. There will be sensitive interpretation (sponsored by the Gaskell Society), research material, a book collection and hopefully the best home-made cakes in Ardwick! The money will also pay for a house manager and audience development post for five years, and the success of the house will depend upon them and upon our team of volunteers from near and far.

Work is due to start in September on the disabled ramp and damp-proofing the basement. Our architect and his team are currently preparing detailed plans for the main work, and we hope the builders will be on site by February. Completion is planned for early 2014 when the whole house will be open to the public.

It's taken a long time and we could not possibly have achieved this remarkable result without the dedication and commitment of many people. So thank you all, and please come and see us when we reopen!

Forthcoming Events

Autumn General Meeting

Saturday 29 September, 2012, at the Methodist Church, Knutsford

10.30am Tea and coffee

11am Alison Lundie will deliver the Joan Leach Memorial Lecture
A Woman's Touch: Domestic Arts in the Work of Elizabeth Gaskell

12.30pm approx. lunch

2pm Tracy Vaughan
The Gospel According to Gaskell: Flawed Family and a Father's Sin in Lizzie Leigh

3.30pm approx. finish.

Cost £12.50 to include lunch

Annual General Meeting

Saturday 13 April, 2013, at Cross Street Unitarian Church, Manchester. Further details TBA in next Newsletter.

North-West Group

Manchester Meetings

Gaskell Society Meetings at Cross Street Unitarian Church
held on the first Tuesday of the month (October to March excluding January) Street at 1.00pm.

The Chapel will usually be open at 12 o'clock so that you can bring your own lunch This session's meetings, including lunch will be held in the Percival Room.

The theme for the meetings is **Victorian Contemporaries.**

Tuesday October 2, 2012, Barbara Hardy on George Eliot's novel Middlemarch

Tuesday November 6, 2012, Geoff Thomason on Charles Hallé

Tuesday December 4, 2012, Professor Angus Easson on "*Christmas stories*".
A look at the Christmas stories (not always very "Christmassy") that Dickens wrote in 1850s and 1860s for his magazines

Tuesday February 5, 2013, Ian Emberson on 3 Quartets: the Rossettis, the Mendelssohns and the Brontës.

Tuesday March 5, 2013, Dr Patsy Stoneman on Charlotte Brontë and her relationship with Elizabeth Gaskell and the marked differences between them.

Knutsford Meetings

Meetings are held on the last Wednesday of the month (October to April excluding December) in St John's Church parish rooms, Knutsford, Cheshire.

An excellent buffet lunch is served at 12.15 (£8, pay on the day), followed by a talk and discussion, led by Elizabeth Williams at 1.30pm. Meetings end about 3pm.

The meetings will start again on 31 October 2012 when the work to be studied will be ***Ruth.***

The Gaskell Society South-West

Sunday, 2 September 2012, 12.30 pm
Bring and Share lunch at Bren and Nick Abercrombie's, 12 Mount Road, Lansdown, Bath, Tel: 01225 471241. All members and partners welcome.

Please phone Kate Crawford to tell her you can come (Tel: 01373 834353). Food and drink will be organised by Veronica Trenchard (Tel: 01225 852155).

Saturday, 10 November 2012, 2.30 pm
At the BRLSI, Queen Square, Bath, we will have a lecture by Professor Michael Wheeler, Visiting Professor at the University of Southampton. His topic will be *One of the Lost Continents: religion in nineteenth-century fiction*. Professor Wheeler has had a distinguished career as an academic at Lancaster University where he masterminded the project to build the Ruskin Library.

He then moved on to Hampshire where he served as co-director of the Chawton House Library. He is now an independent scholar and lecturer as well as a Visiting Professor at Southampton.

Discussion Groups

We will hold our discussion groups again in 2013, on **Saturdays, 23 February and 23 March, 2.15 pm**, and the book will be *North and South*.

The groups will again be held in homes, the first at Elizabeth Schlenther's, 14 Vellore Lane, Bath, and the second at Bren Abercrombie's, 12 Mount Road, Lansdown, Bath. The cost will be £5 for both sessions.

Any queries to Elizabeth Schlenther, 14 Vellore Lane, Bath, BA2 6JQ, Tel: 01225 331763.

London and South-East Branch

Sandwich lunch will be available from 12.45pm. Meetings begin at 2pm; tea and cake will be served after the meeting. Usually the formal part of the meeting finishes about 3.30pm for those needing to catch trains.

Venue: Francis Holland School, Graham Terrace, London.

The entrance is via doors on Graham Terrace, please ring the bell marked 'RECEPTION' loudly to gain entry. For security reasons the door must be locked until opened from inside.

The school is a three minute walk from Sloane Square tube station (on the District and Circle lines) and about a 15-20 minute walk from Victoria. There are also buses from Victoria. (Please check running of the tubes as they often carry out engineering work at weekends).

Book Stall: We have a 'bring and buy' book stall (proceeds for the renovation of the Gaskell House in Manchester). Please bring unwanted books and buy replacements.

Meetings are £5.00 (including everything) payable on the day. You are warmly invited. All meetings are held on Saturdays.

Further details from Dr Fran Twinn frantwinn@aflex.net

Saturday, 13 October, 2012, Elizabeth Williams: **Elizabeth Gaskell and Gossip**

Saturday, 9 February, 2013, Ann Brooks: **The Portico Library and the Gaskells' connections**

Ann (and Bryan Howarth who may join us) became volunteers at The Portico,

Manchester, in 1985 and Ann continued to serve for 20 years. They are the co-authors of the official history of the library, *Boomtown Manchester 1800-1850 The Portico Connection. A History of the Portico Library and Newsroom.* (The Portico Library, 2000).

Saturday, 11 May, 2013, Carolyn Lambert: **Sex, Stability and Secrets: Artefacts and rituals in Elizabeth Gaskell's fiction.**

Carolyn will share the fruits of her PhD research.

Saturday, 14 September, 2013, Alison Lundie: **Domestic Arts in *Mary Barton* and *North and South.***

Alison, a founding member of the London Gaskell Reading group, is studying for a PhD at Roehampton. Her talk will focus on shawls and needlewomen in *Mary Barton* and *North and South.*

Academy Service

Sunday, 16 Septetember 2012, 3 pm
Dickens Bicentenary: "Dickens's Correspondence with Elizabeth Gaskell".

This event at Cairo Street Chapel, Warrington, will be a service of hymns and readings with the address given by two members of the Dickens Fellowship in full period costume.