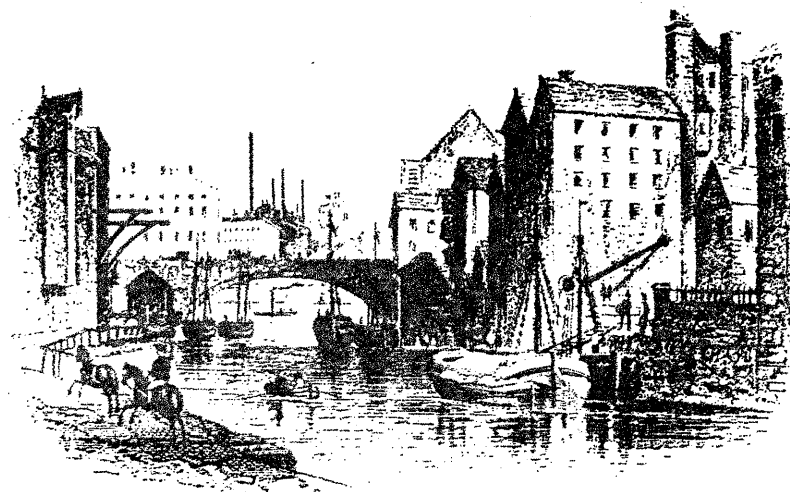


# The Gaskell Society



*The River Irwell & Ancoats Bridge Manchester*

NEWSLETTER

MARCH 1990

NO. 9

As I am busy preparing this Newsletter, Alan Shelston is putting the Journal to bed, and both of us feel we are offering our members interesting reading. We hope, too, that you feel happy in sharing Gaskell interests through our publications or at our meetings. Looking back on 1989 I think all our meetings were enjoyed by those who attended and we hope even more members will try to get to a meeting in 1990. We look forward to a very full year.

Please don't forget that we are always ready to consider ideas for improving our Society in any way. Items for publication are welcome though space is limited.

Plans are well in hand for our joint conference with The Brontë Society at Ambleside on September 7th to 9th. Our President, Arthur Pollard will be chairman. We hope it will not prove too exacting a job as he must conserve his energies for a projected visit to Japan where he hopes to join The Gaskell Society there for their AGM in October. Professor Pollard's interest in Japan dates back to the war years when he worked on Japanese intelligence. The British Council will assist with travel costs.

Our Spring meeting will be held at Cross Street Chapel on 21st April. Work has been in progress there to restore an upper room to be known as The Gaskell Room; this will be dedicated in a special ceremony at our meeting. Minister, Reverend Denise Boyd, the Chapel members and ourselves all value the traditions enshrined there. Our speaker on this occasion will be Dr Edward Chitham on Elizabeth Stevenson's Education. Looking forward to this meeting, may I introduce our speaker?

Edward Chitham was born and has lived mostly in the West Midlands. He regards himself as a provincial, and was not too upset at being described by a London colleague as a 'hayseed, but a pleasant one'. His first book was a history of the Black Country, after which he wrote and published a children's novel and short story, but then began to formalise his research in English Literature, editing from manuscript a new text of Anne Brontë's poems.

This was followed by a number of other books on the Brontës, including a biography of Emily, based on research into her poetry which he is editing jointly with Derek Roper of Sheffield.

His interest in Elizabeth Gaskell dates from the 1970s, when he was called upon to devise a new novel course at Dudley College of Education and included Sylvia's Lovers. He has been working for some time towards a new biography, originally at the suggestion of Basil Blackwell of Oxford. His current posts include part-time lectureships at Wolverhampton Polytechnic, Westhill/Newman College, Birmingham, and the Open University, where he tutors the arts foundation course and makes use of his Cambridge Classics degree in teaching 'Augustan Rome'. He is also Education Consultant for the National Association for Gifted Children and enjoys teaching in schools when there is time.

JOAN LEACH

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#### THE SPANISH LADY'S LOVE

(see Postscript to following article)

"Will you hear a Spanish lady  
How she wooed an English man?  
Of a comely countenance and grace was she  
And by birth of high degree"

(Percy's Reliques)

The ballad relates how she had been taken prisoner but fell in love with Sir Urian and pleads to be taken to England. After making various excuses he finally admits to having a wife back home. The lady declares she will enter a nunnery and gives Sir Urian a 'chain of gold' for his wife.

For many years the Leghs of Adlington preserved a gold chain in a casket as an heirloom.

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After the delightful outings of 1987 and 1988, it was hard to believe that this year's could be anything but an anticlimax; and, being totally unmechanical, I had, to use Mrs Elton's phrase, "no great hopes" of Quarry Bank Mill. In fact, the outing of 8 October proved to be exciting and memorable, and the best of the three. The only fault one could find with the morning at Quarry Bank Mill was that it was too short. One lingered in this room and that, only to find that room succeeded room, and that, if one were to be at the Apprentice House by 2, there was nothing for it but to go faster and faster. Quarry Bank Mill, an unforgettable record of both human ingenuity and human inhumanity, provides, amongst other things, a vivid picture of the lives of the millhands of Mrs Gaskell's day - the din (if one or two machines could be so deafening, what must it have been like to work for twelve hours a day in a large room packed with machines?), the injuries, the brutality of the supervisors, and the houses in which the workers lived - a picture completed in the afternoon by the visit to the Apprentice House and Styal. Previous outings had taken us to places associated with Mrs Gaskell, some of which undoubtedly served as settings for her stories; this one introduced us to the substance of two epoch-making novels, Mary Barton and North and South, and sent me back to them.

In what was left of the day, we visited two seventeenth century chapels, Dean Row Unitarian Chapel (reminiscent of Brook Street) and the Baptist Chapel at Great Warford (previously seen in 1988) and Adlington Hall, where we had time to see the Hall itself, but not, unfortunately, to catch more than a glimpse of the grounds. Someone remarked to me recently - and I have some sympathy with the remark - that one stately home is very much like another. Adlington Hall, however, with its striking juxtaposition of Elizabethan and Georgian architecture and its Great Hall, adorned by that splendid organ flanked by the two forest trees, is, I feel, an exception.

POSTSCRIPT. Adlington Hall and The Old Nurse's Story

When I mentioned to my friend, Frank Whitehead, that we

had visited Adlington Hall, he asked if it had anything to do with The Old Nurse's Story. This had not occurred to me, but, on reflection, I think it has. The following notes are a composite effort; the names in parentheses are those of other people to whom I owe suggestions.

In the story, the organ in the hall of Furnivall Manor is played by ghostly hands.

(1) The distinctive feature of the Great Hall at Adlington is the organ. There cannot be many great houses with organs in their halls.

(2) The organ at Adlington was damaged in 1805 or thereabouts and remained silent until it was repaired in 1959 - i.e. during the whole of Mrs Gaskell's lifetime. In the story, the organ is "all broken and destroyed inside".

(3) Handel had played upon this organ. In the story it is a foreign musician who came to Furnivall Manor, had the organ brought from Holland, and won the love of the two sisters (Enid Duthie).

I know of no evidence that Mrs Gaskell ever visited Adlington Hall; the Leghs do not appear in her letters. However:

(1) Margaret's grandfather, in Mary Barton is Job Legh. There are plenty of Lees and Leighs, but the spelling Legh is uncommon.

(2) My Lady Ludlow, in the story of that name, has a son called Urian, who is drowned at sea (Enid Duthie). A portrait of Sir Urian Legh (1566-1627) hangs in the drawing-room of Adlington Hall. The name Urian is certainly not common; Sir Urian was a sailor, and took part in the expedition to Cadiz of 1596.

(3) Mrs Gaskell's friends, the Winkworths (at Alderley Edge) and the Gregs (at Styall) lived well on the Adlington side of Knutsford (Joan Leach). In any case, one did not need to know a family to visit their house: the housekeeper would show respectable people over, as the housekeeper shows Elizabeth Bennet and her aunt and uncle over Pemberley in Pride and Prejudice. We may be sure that, if she did, the housekeeper of Adlington would make the most both of the organ on which Handel was once believed to have composed "The Harmonious Blacksmith", and of the story of Sir Urian Legh and the Spanish lady of Cadiz.

P. J. YARROW

Annette B. Hopkins quoted several portions of William Gaskell's wedding-journey letter to his sister in Elizabeth Gaskell (1952). Since then it has only been mangled and inaccurately copied, though the original manuscript is available in the Brotherton Library Leeds. The crossed writing is admittedly not easy to read.

Plas Penrhyn Sept 16th 1832

My very dear Sister,

We seem to have been very much in the same mind - Whilst you were threatening me with a scolding for non-writing, I was preparing one for you. There were manifold reasons for my silence - not one that I can discover for yours. I shall only trouble you with one - we had no ink that we could make tolerably legible till we got here. Thank you for yours when it did come. Of our highways and byeways I cannot pretend to give you any thing like an account in an half-sheet. They must furnish subjects of talk for the fire-side.

We enjoyed our stay at dear little Aber very much indeed - and were not a little loth to leave it last Monday, though hope was leading us on to still more beautiful and grander scenes. We went that day through some of the finest which Wales has to shew. Our first stage was to Conway by coach - as beautiful a ride as heart could desire. On the left we had Beau maris and the sea shining and sparkling in the morning light, and on our right the hills covered with the richest and warmest tints, and the air so fresh and pure, and Lily (Elizabeth Gaskell)\* looking so very well, and two bugles playing all the way - wasn't it enough to make one very happy? We went through the fine old castle at Conway and, as I cannot tell you fully our feelings as we wandered through it and thought of departed greatness and all that - why I shall only tell you, that we felt very properly - and I (but I did not tell this before) felt very hungry.

However the next drive to Llanwrst was so lovely that all other sense was lost in sight - and it was not till we got there that I thought of applying to the cake which we

had brought with us. From Llanwrst we took another car on to Capel Curig, and our course seemed to be from good to better still. But you know in our highest enjoyments, it has been said 'Surgit aliquid amare' - and so it proved here. On the way Lily's boa took a fancy to some little nook or other, & though we stayed a considerable time at Capel Curig, consoling ourselves for its absence by eating and dinners, it made not its appearance before we left, and no tidings of it have reached us up to the present.

With hearts no lighter from our dinners, we proceeded on through the pass of Llanberis - and here boa and every thing else, but my own Lily, was forgotten in the wondrous wildness and rugged grandeur of the scene - but as I can give you no idea of it, I may as well tell you at once we reached Caernarvon about 8 in the evening, having just finished 50 miles - and such a 50 it would I imagine be very difficult to find elsewhere. I was rather hurrying through then, but we had fixed to be here on Wednesday, and wished to spend a night at Bedd Gelert. We left Caernarvon in the afternoon (of Tuesday,) and got there for tea.

The next day unfortunately proved very wet, and I only got a very short walk, which I regretted exceedingly, as there seemed some very tempting walks round about. Our ride to Tremadoc, which would have been so fine, if the weather had been at all so, was nothing but rain and wind, and when we got to the inn we were so washed in the showers that declining coming up here that night, we changed and got to bed as soon after tea as we could. On Thursday morning the carriage came for us almost before we had done breakfast, and we passed over the embankment (nearly a mile long) without much fear, though there is scarcely room for two vehicles to pass, and it is nearly 40 feet above the Sea. (Built by William Maddocks, between 1808 and 1811)\*

The scenery about here is very fine, and the view from the drawing-room windows quite glorious. We have not had good weather since we came - but on Saturday we had a delightful drive as far as Tan y Bwlch. I begin

now to feel myself at home here and shall be exceedingly sorry to leave. We talk of doing it on Wednesday. Mrs Holland is kindness itself - and Sam I like very much - and Ann I am quite in love with. My bonny wee wife - My bonny wee wife - grows I do think more bonny than ever. She is very much better than when we left Knutsford, and I hope will go on gaining strength, though she maintains she is already as strong as a horse. And now as I want her to fill up the other half (Gaskell Letter 2)\*, I must come to one or two little things which I wish you to do.

And first will you have any objections to go to Hargreaves & Hime, in the Square, and ask if they have disposed of the Piano, which Mr Shore recommended to me. It was one of Broadwoods Patents - price £55 for cash. If they have it still - get them to send it up, and say I will pay for it on my return. And had you not better get the remainder of the cake from Mrs Butterworth's, if it has not yet been sent. And have you got any saucers for the plants. And with respect to the celery be every now & then putting a little earth up round the plants - and while you do it, keep the stalks of the outside leaves well together, to prevent the earth from getting between them. Do this and there will be no need to apply to the gardener.

We can hardly tell yet when we shall be at home - but we proposing being (sic)\* at Knutsford at the beginning of next week. We will send a note letting you know the day when you may expect us. I hope the plants have been reviving since you wrote. Mind and water them well. I am feeling very much obliged to you for taking care of every thing so nicely as you are doing, I have no doubt, and with my kindest remembrances to Mr and Mrs Robberds believe me

Your very happy & affectionate brother

Willm Gaskell.

With my love to Sam (?Gaskell: a doctor, William's brother)\* tell him how glad I was to find he had nothing to do with the decapitation row -

J. A. V. CHAPPLE

\*Editor's notes, usually [ ]

Sisters in Time: Imagining Gender in 19th Century British Fiction by Susan Morgan, Professor of English at Vassar College, Oxford University Press, £25.00.

- Discusses the reasons why there are so many heroines in the Victorian novel when the society it depicts was so male dominated; and shows how these heroines have been used to shape history. Mrs Gaskell has suffered at the hands of critics, who while praising her descriptive qualities and her sympathy, have failed to find anything innovative in her work. Professor Morgan claims to offer a new appraisal and shows how the novels are more revolutionary than they have previously been credited and how they have shaped history. This is just as true of Cranford and Ruth as it is of the more dramatic novels. A particular influence on Gaskell's writing was Scott's Heart of Midlothian. Other novelists treated in this study are Jane Austen, George Eliot, Sir Walter Scott, George Meredith and Henry James.

A Victorian reader, edited by Peter Faulkner (Key documents in literary criticism) B. T. Batsford, £7.95.

An anthology of passages from 22 Victorian writers, 1830-1870 in which they describe their attitudes to their work. It includes the preface to Mary Barton and Mrs Gaskell's letter to Herbert Grey, c1859 (GL 420) in which she gives advice to a novice writer on his work. George Eliot's essay Silly Novels by Lady Novelists recently published in an Anthology of British Women Writers edited by Dale Spender and Janet Todd (Newsletter No. 8) is again reprinted.

The introduction also quotes from two other Gaskell letters which show her awareness of the problems of women writers. In GL 69 she writes to Eliza Fox 'I am sure it is healthy for them (women) to have the refuge of the hidden world of Art', while in 1862 to an unknown correspondent who had sent her the manuscript of a novel, she writes 'When I had little children I do not think I could have written stories, because I should have become too much absorbed in my fictitious people to attend to my real ones ...' (GL 515)

Now available on tape:-

Four short stories of Mrs Gaskell read by Judith Whale, Oasis 90025, £19.95, comprising four cassettes, playing time five hours. The contents are The Manchester Marriage, Lizzie Leigh, The Well of Pen-Morfa, The Three Eras of Libbie Marsh.

CHRISTINE LINGARD

How life goes! Essays in honour of Andrew Hughes by Hidemitsu Tohgo. Koyo Shoppan Ltd. Tokyo 1989.

Though not a study of Elizabeth Gaskell, this charming book is of interest to any lover of literature. The author charts, through a series of essays and letters, his growing enthusiasm for English literature and language, but learning so much more from his studies with his English teacher, Andrew Hughes.

Growing up in war-time Japan his ambition was to be a fighter pilot and kill for the 'glory of the Emperor and holy Japan' but through reading, paying his way through college by working in a US army camp he became aware of common humanity. 'And so I began to read books', the author writes of walking the moors at Haworth at dawn 'unable to express in poetry my feelings about the fluctuations of time and changes in personal position, I could only bow deeply towards the morning sun'.

He writes, in English, of meeting authors (including Christopher Leach) drinking in the Old Cock Tavern once frequented by Pepys, Sheridan and Dickens and the failure to 'reach' Hardy in a Dorchester shut down on December 30th. Hidemitsu Tohgo concludes that his life has become richer from the study of English and in this many of us will agree with him.

JOAN LEACH

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My first meeting with these two extraordinary women took place at the University of Pescara, where Professor Marroni, my teacher in English and a great "fan" of Mrs Gaskell, gave me the opportunity to become acquainted with Elizabeth Gaskell and Fredrika Bremer (1).

The research and the comparison between the two writers resulted in a thesis with the title "Elizabeth Gaskell and Fredrika Bremer - an analysis of a parallelism" -.

Is a comparison possible between these two writers? Indeed it is, is my answer. Though they were very different as women and writers, there were a couple of things that bound them together. Their friendship began when Fredrika was on her way home from America (1851), where she had stayed for more than two years, and decided to visit England, some friends and the Great Exhibition. She was very anxious to meet some of the most important writers of the moment and one of these was Elizabeth Gaskell. Fredrika Bremer's description afterwards of Elizabeth Gaskell, her home and the whole stay in England is documented by numerous articles in a Swedish newspaper, written by Fredrika herself. In particular she praises Elizabeth Gaskell with these words:

"Have you read a 'Manchester Story' called Mary Barton? If you haven't, do read this exciting and touching tale of the reverse side of the Manchester-workers' life. The novel has given the author Mrs E. Gaskell an excellent place among young English writers. I was so very surprised to see that it was she, this lovely little lady with the happy face and the nice voice in a most beautiful country-home, that had written this moving story of the earth's nightlife" (2).

Her admiration for Elizabeth Gaskell is so evident and this admiration leads further on to a close friendship, testified by some letters from Fredrika to Elizabeth. A letter from Fairfield, 19 October, 1851 says:  
"Bless you, Elizabeth for your kind heart and all the good and genial influences with which it has surrounded

me on my way, all from our meeting in your home"! ... (3)

Another one dated Stockholm, 29 September, 1853 finishes with an ardent appeal to Mrs Gaskell: "Dear Elizabeth, dear sister in spirit, if I may call you so, give me your hand in sympathy and in work for the oppressed or neglected of our own sex" ... (4)

The last letter gives us a vision of how much Fredrika expected of her in the woman question. They had the same wish to try to better the conditions for women and partly they also tried to raise discussions about delicate problems through their novels. But as writers they were different. Elizabeth Gaskell described all sorts of problems, from social and working problems (Mary Barton), problems related to moral (Ruth), to problems of human



FREDRIKA BREMER

relations (Wives and Daughters). Fredrika Bremer wrote mostly about human relations and particularly about relationships between parents and children and between sisters and brothers (The Home, Nina, Father and Daughter).

Lastly they were also different as women. Elizabeth Gaskell was more like a dove according to Lord Cecil (5) and I'm sure, that he would have classified Fredrika Bremer as an eagle in excellent company with ugly, dynamic, childless and independent women like Charlotte Brontë and George Eliot. But all these external things were not so important. The real importance was in doing something for those who were in need and this interest in common made their friendship lasting.

EVA AHSBERG BORRAMEO

#### NOTES

- (1) Fredrika Bremer, the Swedish writer, was born of Swedish parents in 1801 in Finland but was brought up in Sweden. She died in 1865 (incidentally the same year as Elizabeth Gaskell)
- (2) These articles with the title "England in the autumn 1851" were published between January and February 1852, in the daily newspaper of Stockholm "Aftonbladet"
- (3) R. D. Waller; Letters addressed to Mrs Gaskell, Bulletin of John Rylands Library, vol.19, 1935; p.165
- (4) A. Rubenius; The Woman Question in Mrs Gaskell's Life and Works, Cambridge, Mass., Harvard University Press, 1950; p.41
- (5) Lord D. Cecil; Early Victorian Novelists, London, Constable, 1934; p.97

#### EDITOR'S NOTE

In The Life of Charlotte Brontë (Chapter 27)  
Mrs Gaskell recalled a discussion between them when

Charlotte had been anxious that she might be accused of plagiarism, 'she thought every one would fancy that she must have taken her conception of Jane Eyre's character from that of 'Francesca', the narrator of Miss Bremer's story. For my own part, I cannot see the slightest resemblance between the two characters, and so I told her: but she persisted in saying that Francesca was Jane Eyre married to a good-natured 'Bear' of a Swedish surgeon.'

It is clear that both writers had read Bremer closely. Another link was through Mary Howitt, who had translated Bremer's works.

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#### BOOKS IN STOCK

These are mostly at special rates. If ordering by post please add postage at rate on receipt.

Elizabeth Gaskell. A Portrait in Letters by J. A. V. Chapple	£4.00
William Gaskell by Barbara Brill	£7.95
The Landscape of The Brontës by Arthur Pollard	£14.95
Manchester in the Victorian Age by Gary S. Messinger	£2.50
Cranford Revisited by John Rowe Townsend	£9.95
How Life Goes by Hidemitsu Tohgo	£7.50

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The Manchester City News, in 1878, printed several letters and notes about Greenheys, the De Quincey house, and the area surrounding it which was so charmingly depicted by Mrs Gaskell in the opening scenes of Mary Barton. One correspondent wrote:

'When this house disappeared in the changes taking place about four years ago piteous was it to see an old gentleman, its last occupant, who had lived in it nearly fifty years, turn away with tears running down his face. Well known was he in that neighbourhood and well liked. Poor old Walker. It was not long he survived the pulling down of his house. He had spoken with Mrs Gaskell on several occasions.'

Another correspondent wrote in detail of the Mary Barton background and characters:

'Another cottage which stood not very far from Jackson's farm, a white one-storey building, afforded less pleasing reflections. It was long the residence of a power loom weaver; who, however added botanical pursuits, and moreover was a leading delegate whenever disputes arose between masters and men upon trade questions. He is said to have been occasionally visited by the late Mrs Gaskell, and that he was the original of Job Legh, so graphically described by her in Mary Barton; but if so there seems to be no reason why she should have fixed his residence in the questionable quarters she names instead of the neat whitewashed cottage which her notice would have immortalized. But though a turn-out delegate, Job (as I may call him) had none of the fire-brand propensities which some of the disaffected indulged in.

'On the contrary, he was known to be more of a peace-maker, and never advocated violent measures, such as John Barton was accused of. The original John Barton I afterwards knew well, and a close comrade of his, also a delegate, both of whom were operative cotton-spinners.



Greenheys Lane, Manchester, 1827. Sketch by J.W. Ralston.

'The former whom I shall call R.K., was a thorough-going leveller, his motto being the three T's as "liberty, equality and fraternity" are occasionally described; and I can well imagine, from what I knew of him, that he was one of the most unflinching in upholding what he called the rights of the British Workman; but I have good reason to know that he was never guilty of the violent measures attributed to some of the turn-outs. Indeed, some of the acts of violence named in Mary Barton never occurred in Manchester at all, the locality of the murder of Mr Carson (a fictitious name) being changed from a neighbouring town to Manchester: neither were the murderers, two of whom were hung, Manchester men. But R.K. was ever after a marked man ... The disputes being happily settled, an agreement was come to between masters and men that bygones should be bygones, and that no workman, whether delegate or not, except actual criminals should be refused work. But though R.K. would be included in this amnesty, he found it impossible to obtain employment; so he decided to spend a few years in America, until as he imagined, the matter had blown over. But on arriving in the States, judge of his mortification to find his name had preceeded him, and that so prominent an

advocate of workman's rights would not be tolerated there.

'As R.K. had always regarded America as the El Dorado of freedom and liberty, this unpalatable extinguisher of his democratic theories took him by surprise; but only by changing his name and getting work in another trade could he obtain a livelihood, when after a stay of about six years, he returned to old England a sadder if not a better man. He, however, became painfully aware on his arrival here that his past political proclivities had neither been forgotten nor forgiven, as he was refused work on every hand. Indeed one of his old employers named to him that his rearrival in England had been made known to every master spinner in the country. Fortunately for him he had saved a little money, and this enabled him to open a retail coalyard in Ardwick, in which he prospered, and in after years, such was the reliance in his sterling integrity, particularly with those who had known him the longest, that he became one of the most trusted of men, having several trusteeships in his hands, one of them an estate of very considerable value, which virtually he rescued from the auctioneer's hammer, living to see it freed from its mortgages, and he restored it to the family descendants (whose previous ownership dated four centuries back) free from all incumbrance.

'He died only a few years ago, leaving property worth six or seven thousand pounds. The Greenheys cottage in question was long under the surveillance of the police, as ten delegates met there every Sunday, and many midnight sittings were known to be held. It was moreover searched more than once ostensibly for Chartist weapons, but nothing criminating was found. Many of these Sunday delegate meetings were professedly called botanist gatherings, but the police were able to point out those who had no pretensions to the science, and hence appearances were against their visits being so harmless a character as a botanical meeting would imply.

(signed) R. E. Bibby'

Manch. C. News 22 June 1878

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If you have any material or suggestions for future Newsletters, please contact Mrs Joan Leach, Far Yew Tree House, Over Tabley, Knutsford, Cheshire WA16 0HN (Tel: 0565 4668)

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