

Report on Elizabeth Gaskell's House

2020 was a year of two parts: pre-Covid and the pandemic. Until 23 March life at Elizabeth Gaskell's House continued as normal, with Open Days, group visits, etc., not forgetting, talks, book groups and weddings. All contributing to the success of the House. Then came 23 March and lockdown! Staff were furloughed and the House was closed except for the occasional security visits. Financial help was received in the form of grants from the Heritage Emergency Fund, Cultural Recovery Fund and other smaller grants; all undoubtedly helped the House while other activities, which would normally generate funds, were either curtailed or stopped altogether.

At last the House reopened on 12th August and for 80 days the House welcomed visitors and “a new normal” life continued at the House : visits were timed, limited to 6, and strict hygiene rules were in place. While closed, weddings had to be cancelled, but many were rebooked for a later date.

During the second lockdown new initiatives were implemented, including talks and book groups by Zoom . The online shop opened in time for Christmas and proved very popular,

Research and fundraising for Elizabeth's bedroom continued throughout the year. Furniture and textiles were bought or donated . In July the fireplace was fitted and in October the room was decorated. The end of the year saw us looking forward not only to the reopening House, but also to the unveiling of Elizabeth..and William's bedroom .

[The latest news is that the House will be reopening on 19th May, when at last we will be able to see Elizabeth's bedroom.]

Ann O'Brien