

10.45 Coffee

11.15 **Dr Carolyn Lambert - The Truth-life Dichotomy: Gaskell as a Reliable Travel Writer**

Travel writing has recently emerged as an area of academic interest. Scholars have theorised about the motivation for travel, the distinction between travel and tourism, the impact of travel on cultural awareness, and the ways in which tourism became democratised with improved methods of communication and transport. This talk examines Gaskell's travel writing in the context of women's travel writing in the nineteenth century. It will assess how far she is a reliable narrator and the links between her travel writing and her fictions.

*Dr Carolyn Lambert obtained her PhD from Sussex University in 2013. Her publications include The Meanings of Home in Elizabeth Gaskell's Fiction (2013), For Better, For Worse: Marriage in Victorian Novels by Women (2018) co-edited with Marion Shaw, Frances Trollope (2020), and Elizabeth Gaskell's Smaller Stories (2021).*

12.30 Lunch

1.30 **Coach leaves for Lichfield**

This beautiful cathedral city was home to Erasmus Darwin, physician, inventor, botanist, and a key figure in the Birmingham Lunar Society. He was grandfather to Charles Darwin, whom Elizabeth Gaskell regarded as a cousin. Samuel Johnson, lexicographer, author and wit, was born here in 1709. His writing is cited by Deborah Jenkins in her exchange with Captain Brown, (*Cranford*) as the model for literary taste. There are many teashops available for refreshments.

1.30 **Study Session, led by Elizabeth Williams (offered as an alternative to Lichfield outing) the conference area**

Elizabeth examines the opening chapter of *The Life of Charlotte Brontë* and some extracts from short stories. Copies will be issued in advance of the session.

7.30 **Dinner - to be followed by one of Helen Smith's amazing literary quizzes!**

## Monday 8 July

8-9.00 Breakfast

10.00 **Coach leaves for Newstead Abbey.**

This year marks the 200th anniversary of Lord Byron's death, so an ideal time to visit his home, Newstead Abbey, on our way back to Manchester. Approximate arrival at the Abbey will be 11.30am with the opportunity to have a guided tour (at additional cost). The gardens and grounds will be open for those wanting to enjoy the scenery. There is also a café, where visitors can purchase lunch or light refreshments. Please note that those travelling by car will have to pay to park.

2.30 **Coach leaves Newstead Abbey**

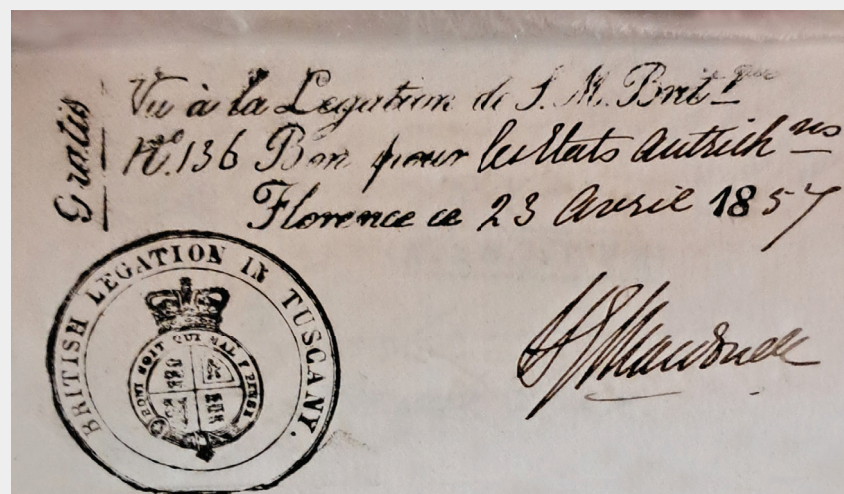
Arriving in Macclesfield at around 4.00; Knutsford at 4.30 and Manchester at 5.30.

## THE GASKELL SOCIETY CONFERENCE

5 – 8 July 2024

### *A Passport to Freedom: Women Travellers in the 19th Century*

*The Sketchley Grange Hotel and Spa, Hinckley*



*A page from Elizabeth Gaskell's passport*

*I would like to welcome everyone to our 2024 Biennial Conference. The theme is female travellers, and as most of us will know, Elizabeth Gaskell was an enthusiastic traveller both at home and abroad, which meant continental Europe; for despite having many friends in the US, she never travelled there, although many writers did cross the Atlantic.*

*Looking back, our last conference was a great success, I hope that, going forward, this year's will follow suit, since we have a range of speakers covering diverse topics, along with the usual afternoon trips and evening entertainments.*

**Dr Diane Duffy**  
**Chair, The Gaskell Society**

## Friday 5 July

### 3.00 Registration opens

### 5.30 Pre-dinner talk: Dr Diane Duffy – The use of Locations in the Early Works of George Eliot and Elizabeth Gaskell

“We are in the heart of Eliot country, so I want to introduce Eliot’s use of location and explore the links between her and Gaskell. In their early works, both women used places that they knew well, not just as a backdrop to their stories but for a specific purpose.” After the talk, all information relevant to our Saturday excursion will be uploaded to our website - gaskellsociety.co.uk.

*Dr Diane Duffy has a PhD in Early 19th-Century Women’s Writing. She retired in 2013 and volunteers at Elizabeth Gaskell’s House, where she is now a Trustee, guide and researcher. She is the Chair of the Gaskell Society and runs our monthly discussion sessions. Her publications include Elizabeth Gaskell and the Industrial Poor and Christmas with the Gaskells, both co-written with Anthony Burton.*

### 7.30 Dinner

## Saturday 6 July

### 8-9.00 Breakfast

### 9.30 Jane Baxter -An Introduction to Elizabeth Gaskell’s Travels in Europe

Jane introduces us to the places she visited; her passport and other travel essentials; methods of travel and briefly, some of the difficulties encountered by travellers in the mid-1800s, particularly women. She’ll highlight the two most significant places visited – Paris and Rome, which had a lifelong impact. She’ll also introduce some of the people Elizabeth and her daughters met - and the friendships they made - while travelling, as well as the influences on her writing.

*Jane Baxter has been a regular volunteer at Elizabeth Gaskell’s House since 2014. She joined the board of trustees in 2018 and was part of the team responsible for restoring Elizabeth’s bedroom at the House which opened in 2021. A keen traveller herself, Jane is especially interested in the travels of Elizabeth and her daughters.*

### 10.25 Coffee

### 10.40 Alice Jackman – ‘How I longed to walk!’: The ‘Rambling Habits’ of Elizabeth Gaskell’s Female Walkers

Gaskell’s novels are deeply concerned with the female experience, often perceived as domestic, but many of her heroines are keen outdoorswomen. Her analysis of the relationship between the female walker and her environment allows for a deeper understanding of character and how the spaces she inhabits contribute to narrative development. Alice considers the act of walking in a selection of Gaskell’s works as radical and vital to understanding their heroines.

*Alice Jackman is a PhD student at Anglia Ruskin University (ARU). Her PhD considers the work of Jane Austen and Elizabeth Gaskell, exploring how the interconnection of the female walker and their environment is presented in the narrative form. Alice has been published in The Gaskell Journal and was the joint organiser of the Elizabeth Gaskell Conference at ARU in summer 2023.*

### 11.35 Shirley Foster - Visits and Records: Nineteenth-century Women Travellers and their Writings

There has been much interest in nineteenth-century women travellers and the challenges they met and overcame. Many women wrote about their experiences, in letters, diaries or longer accounts, which were often published and widely read. Travel literature became one of the most popular genres of the period. Shirley offers an introduction to the phenomenon of women’s travel in the nineteenth century; a consideration of the characteristics of female travel writing, and examination of what may be considered Gaskell’s travel writing.

*Dr Shirley Foster lectured in American Studies at the University of Hull. She lectured in English and American Literature at Sheffield, before retiring as Reader in 2012. She has written widely on Victorian fiction (especially Elizabeth Gaskell), 19th-century American literature, and travel writing, particularly by women and is President of the Gaskell Society.*

### 12.30 Sandwich Lunch

### 1.20 Coach leaves for Nuneaton

We’ll visit the Eliot Collection in Nuneaton Museum and other Eliot locations in the town. We’ll pass by the gates of Arbury Hall to Astley, where we can view the castle and the church where Eliot’s parents were married; all places mentioned in Diane’s talk on Friday evening. Finally, a real treat - a visit to Astley Farm Book Shop, where we can browse and enjoy refreshments. We’ll return to the hotel via Griff House and Griff Hollows.

### 7.00 Drinks Reception

### 7.30 Conference Dinner - to be followed by entertainment

*Holidaying with the Gaskells* is written by Anthony Burton and performed by Anthony, Diane Duffy, Christine Willgoose, and Elizabeth Williams. A fun take on Elizabeth’s desire to get away from smoky Manchester.

## Sunday 7 July

### 8-9.00 Breakfast

### 9.45 Dr Edwin Marr - ‘Coaches isn’t good enough now-a-days’: Railway Space, Connection, and Disconnection in *A Dark Night’s Work* and *Cousin Phillis*

The arrival of the railway signalled enormous change in Victorian society, bringing connectivity and movement but also threatening the old ways of life and embodying a fixed, capitalist framework of linear movement, rigid timetables, and forced obedience to rules. Edwin explores how Gaskell grapples with these competing tensions in *A Dark Night’s Work* (1863) and *Cousin Phillis* (1863-4).

*Dr Edwin Marr completed his PhD in English Literature at Anglia Ruskin University in July 2021. His thesis explored the production of railway space within nineteenth-century literature from 1860-1880, with a chapter on Elizabeth Gaskell. He now works at the University of London, offering career guidance to PhD students across the humanities.*