

## Elizabeth Gaskell



The novelist and biographer Elizabeth Gaskell was born in London in 1810, but after her mother's death in 1811 she was brought up by her aunt in Knutsford, Cheshire. She married William Gaskell, a Unitarian minister at Cross Street Chapel, in Manchester in 1832. The Gaskells moved to their Plymouth Grove home (now a museum) in 1850.

An independent and energetic woman, Elizabeth drew upon a wide range of experience in her writing and was not afraid to tackle the social problems of the day. Her literary output was varied: *Mary Barton* and *North and South* dealt with the problems of industrial Manchester. *Cranford* and *Cousin Phillis* are both set in rural Cheshire. *Ruth* tells the story of an unmarried mother, while the biography of her dear friend, *The Life of Charlotte Brontë*, was a pioneering work of literary biography. Her historical novel, *Sylvia's Lovers* is a tragic tale of lost love, set in Whitby. She also wrote a large number of well-loved short stories.

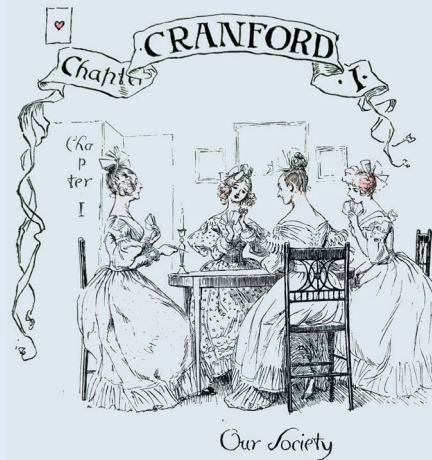
Away from her published works, Elizabeth's charming letters depict a lively, fun-loving person, who loved her family, foreign travel and a bit of gossip now and then.

She was very socially accomplished and had many famous and important friends.

Elizabeth Gaskell died suddenly in 1865, having almost completed *Wives and Daughters*, her final novel. She is buried in the churchyard at Brook Street Unitarian Chapel in Knutsford.

Image: Elizabeth Gaskell (1832) by William John Thomson

## Join the Gaskell Society



We promote the study of the life and works of Elizabeth Gaskell (1810-1865), Victorian author, biographer, humanitarian, social campaigner, wife and mother.

The Gaskell Society is a lively, active and very friendly group, with a busy schedule and an international membership that's open to all. We host meetings, trips, study sessions, social events and a conference every two years. We also publish a regular newsletter, an annual Journal and booklets on a number of themes.

If you're interested in Victorian literature or cultural and social history; if you loved Elizabeth's beautiful house in Manchester, or have strolled through picturesque Knutsford (aka Cranford) and you'd like to learn more about this extraordinary woman, her life and her work, then join us - we'd love to meet you!

[gaskellsociety.co.uk](http://gaskellsociety.co.uk)

 The Gaskell Society  @GaskellSociety  
[gaskellsociety@gmail.com](mailto:gaskellsociety@gmail.com)

Cover: Elizabeth Gaskell (1851), by George Richmond RA, from *Mary Barton* (Smith, Elder & Co, 1906).

Above: illustration from *Cranford* by Hugh Thomson (1891)

## The Gaskell Society



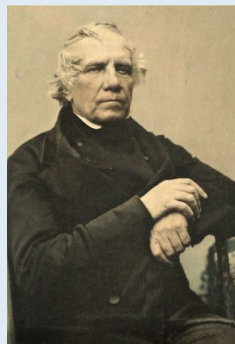
» What's On «  
2025-2026

*"Any friend of our friend is welcome."*

Mr Harrison's Confessions (1851)

Manchester meetings take place in Cross Street Chapel and we make recordings available for ticket holders. Doors open 1.00pm, talks begin at 1.30.

**Tuesday 7 October 2025**  
**Samuel Bamford and the Gaskells**



Robert Poole talks about the writer, poet, reformer and Lancashire dialect expert and reformer, Samuel Bamford (1788-1872), best known for his role at Peterloo and *Passages in the Life of a Radical*. He is the only real-life working man named in *Mary Barton*.

**Tuesday 4 November 2025**  
**“That wicked Paris”:  
 Fashioning the Good Englishwoman**



Amy L. Montz (University of Southern Indiana) argues that Gaskell's *Cranford* (1853) offers a microcosmic view of larger English concerns over the Empire's and France's influence on England through women's fashion choices.

**Tuesday 2 December 2025**  
**Christmas Travel in the Gaskells' Day**



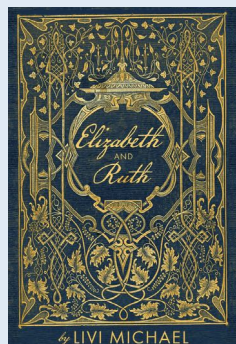
Elizabeth liked to spend Christmas by her fireside, but Victorians showed increasing seasonal mobility: “Home for the Holidays” was a recurrent theme, with trains even on Christmas Day. Anthony Burton tells the story of nineteenth-century seasonal travel.

**Tuesday 3 February 2026**  
**Early Continental Travellers' Tales of Manchester**



In the 1700s, the Grand Tour was a European education for young aristocrats. Less well known is the ‘Reverse Grand Tour’, when visitors came to see and experience Manchester. Philip Morey talks about their impressions of the world's first industrial city.

**Tuesday 3 March 2026**  
**Elizabeth and Ruth**



Livi Michael talks about her new novel, based on real correspondence. Elizabeth Gaskell, a newly-famous author, visits a young prostitute in New Bailey prison, Manchester. She is determined to help, so writes to her friend, Charles Dickens..

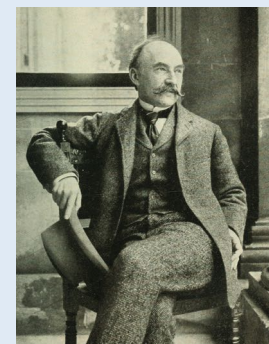
**Saturday 18 April 2026**  
**Annual General Meeting**



The Daphne Carrick Lecture - The Rural Idyll and the Changing World in the Novels of Elizabeth Gaskell and Thomas Hardy - will be given by our Chair, Dr Diane Duffy, Doors open at 10am, AGM is 10.30 and the lecture begins at 11.45. Free entry (no need to book).

Knutsford meetings take place at Brook Street Chapel, Adam's Hill and live over Zoom. Doors 1.00, Zoom from 2.00pm

**Thomas Hardy and Elizabeth Gaskell –  
 Far From the Madding Crowd**



These lively and interactive study sessions are led by Dr Diane Duffy: join in the discussion or simply enjoy listening.

Thomas Hardy is a writer who continued Gaskell's literary legacy. Wessex can be compared with Gaskell's Cheshire in works such as *Cranford* and *Wives and Daughters*. Like Gaskell, Hardy also explores the role of women and their marriage choices.

**Tuesday 28 October 2025**  
*Far From the Madding Crowd* - Chapters 1-11

**Tuesday 25 November 2025:** Chapters 12-24

**Tuesday 27 January 2026:** Chapters 25-35

**Tuesday 24 February 2026:** Chapters 36-46

**Tuesday 31 March 2026:** Chapters 25-35

**Tuesday 28 April:** Chapters 36-46

To book, visit  
[ticketsource.co.uk/gaskellsociety](https://ticketsource.co.uk/gaskellsociety)  
 or come on on the day. Members and non-members welcome.