

# The Gaskell Society



## *Elizabeth Cleghorn Gaskell 1810-1865*

The novelist and biographer Elizabeth Gaskell was born in London in 1810, but brought up by her aunt in Knutsford, Cheshire, after her mother's death in 1811. In 1832 Elizabeth married the Reverend William Gaskell, a Unitarian minister at Cross Street Chapel in Manchester. Four of their children, all girls, survived.

A remarkably independent, sociable and energetic woman, Elizabeth drew upon a wide range of experience in her writing. She was not afraid to tackle the pressing social problems of the day. Her literary output was varied, including many short stories, as well as *Mary Barton* and *North and South*, both dealing with the problems of industrial Manchester. She also wrote *Cranford* and *Cousin Phillis*, both set in Cheshire; *Ruth*, the story of an unmarried mother; *The Life of Charlotte Brontë*, a pioneering work of literary biography, and *Sylvia's Lovers*, a historical novel about Whitby.

Elizabeth Gaskell died suddenly in 1865, having almost completed *Wives and Daughters*.

The publication of *The Letters of Mrs Gaskell*, edited by J.A.V. Chapple and Arthur Pollard in 1966 marked the revival of interest in her work. This was supplemented by *Further Letters of Mrs Gaskell*, edited by John Chapple and Alan Shelston (2000). Jenny Uglow's biography, *Elizabeth Gaskell: A Habit of Stories* (1993) was a best seller. Alan Shelston's *Brief Lives: Elizabeth Gaskell* (2010) provides a fascinating insight into the author's life. Television adaptations of *Wives and Daughters* (1999), *North and South* (2004) and *Cranford* (2007 and 2009) have further widened Gaskell's following.

*Cover image:* Elizabeth Gaskell, by George Richmond RA, the frontispiece for *Mary Barton*, Knutsford Edition (Smith, Elder & Co, 1906).

## *About the Gaskell Society*

The Society was formed in 1985, after events to celebrate the 175th anniversary of Elizabeth Gaskell's birth. We are based in the North West of England with meetings in Manchester and Knutsford, and there is a branch serving London and the South East. We have members in many countries around the world and there is a separate Gaskell Society in Japan.

## *Our Events*

We are a lively, active and very friendly society with a busy schedule, including:

- A programme of meetings, lectures and study sessions, featuring Victorian history, literature and the works of women writers in addition to Elizabeth Gaskell. These take place in Knutsford, Manchester and London. Wherever possible, lectures are recorded for online viewing by ticket holders after the event, no matter where they may be.
- We hold our Annual General Meeting in Manchester each Spring and our Autumn Meeting in Knutsford or online. Both include guest speakers.
- We host a biennial Gaskell Society Conference. The 2026 Conference took place over three days in Ilkley, West Yorkshire
- We organise visits and outings to places associated with Elizabeth Gaskell and her contemporaries, both in the UK and overseas.

*Find dates for your Gaskell Diary*  
[at gaskellsociety.co.uk/events](http://gaskellsociety.co.uk/events)

An active society, open to all

*“Any friend of our friend is welcome.”*

Mr Harrison's Confessions (1851)

## Our Publications



*The Gaskell Journal* is published annually with scholarly articles on all aspects of Gaskell studies.

*The Gaskell Society Newsletter* is published twice a year and features interesting articles and information about events. The Journal and the Newsletter are free to members.

Our website carries regular features, blog posts and points for discussion on Gaskell and related subjects.

## Our Aims

- We promote and encourage the study and appreciation of the work and life of Elizabeth Cleghorn Gaskell (1810-1865).
- We record sources of information about the work of Elizabeth Gaskell and any other material relating to her life, family and memory.
- We foster and stimulate an understanding of her work and life.
- We promote and support special projects relating to her life and work, as well as encouraging republication of her works.
- We support and raise funds for Elizabeth Gaskell's House in Manchester.
- We co-operate with other societies having an interest in Elizabeth Gaskell and her times.

The Gaskell Society is a registered charity (1098017) and affiliated to the Alliance of Literary Societies.

## The Gaskell Society

Patron: Sarah Prince

President: Dr Shirley Foster

Vice-Presidents:

Professor Francesco Marroni and Jenny Uglow

Secretary: Christine Willgoose

### Meeting and Study Session Contacts

#### North West

Christine Willgoose | [gaskellsociety@gmail.com](mailto:gaskellsociety@gmail.com)

#### London and South East

Jenny Keaveney  
[gaskellsocietylondonse@gmail.com](mailto:gaskellsocietylondonse@gmail.com)

### Venues for Meetings

**Manchester - Cross Street Chapel**  
Cross Street, Manchester M2 1NL

**Knutsford - Brook Street Chapel Hall**  
Adam's Hill, Knutsford WA16 8DY

**London - Francis Holland School**  
39 Graham Terrace, London SW1W 8JF  
(Nearest Tube: Sloane Square)

### Elizabeth Gaskell's House

Open to visitors at  
84 Plymouth Grove, Manchester M13 9LW  
[elizabethgaskellhouse.co.uk](http://elizabethgaskellhouse.co.uk)



[gaskellsociety@gmail.com](mailto:gaskellsociety@gmail.com)



The Gaskell Society



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I consent to the use of mail and email to inform me about Gaskell Society matters.

Signed.....

### Subscription prices

Individual £26 / Joint £30 / Student £17

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