Elizabeth Gaskell's house saved from decay

14/06/2012

Thanks to this support, the Italianate villa of 84 Plymouth Grove, where the author of Cranford and North and South lived with her family for 15 years, will now be fully restored so that visitors can explore this heritage treasure and learn about the history of the building, and heritage of the Manchester in the time of the Gaskells.

The restoration will recreate the house to how it would have looked during the time when the Gaskells lived there. The period rooms will be preserved with exhibitions and interpretation detailing the society of the time. Learning spaces and education rooms will be created as part of the project, opening up Gaskell House to visitors of all ages to explore and enjoy.

Alongside this, community spaces will be created within the house so that it can be used by local people for a wide range of activities. Gaskell House is already used by community groups for meetings and events, and through the restoration work new facilities, including a new conference space will mean that many more people will be able to make use of this wonderful resource.

Sara Hillton, Head of Heritage Lottery Fund North West, said: “We at HLF are delighted to be able to support the Manchester Buildings Trust in the restoration of Gaskell House. This building is hugely important to Manchester – both because of its association with Elizabeth Gaskell and as a rare remaining example of a Victorian suburban villa. Alongside the preservation of the house itself, the creation of displays and exhibitions will enhance people's understanding of the Gaskells within the context of the local area and Manchester at the time.”

Gaskell House was the home of Elizabeth Gaskell from 1850-65 and it was here that many of her most famous novels were written. Elizabeth lived at the house with her four daughters and husband, William, a Unitarian and important Manchester figure in his own right, who actively engaged in social and industrial working reform.

Amongst the Gaskell's circle who visited the house were Charles Dickens and Charlotte Bronte, whilst the conductor Charles Halle lived close by and taught piano to one of the Gaskell's daughters.

The building is also of high significance for its architecture; it is a relatively rare surviving early Victorian suburban villa in Manchester and is symbolic of early 19th century social and urban development, reflecting the migration of middle class families from the city centre.

Further information

Contact Roland Smith, Communications Manager at the Heritage Lottery Fund, on rolands@hlf.org.uk or 020 7591 6047.