
London Particular

The Dickens Fellowship Newsletter

OLIVER FUND

As members will know, the Fellowship makes contributions to charitable organisations which further Dickens's own philanthropic interests by means of donations from the Oliver Fund. Decisions about which organisations are to receive donations are made at the April Council meeting (8th April this year). If members have any suggestions as to suitable charities, they should send them to the Joint Secretaries by the beginning of March. (Incidentally, we are often asked why the fund is called 'The Oliver Fund': the answer is very straightforward – it is a fund which is always asking for more!)

Contributions to *The Dickensian*

Members are invited to send in any items of Dickensian interest which would be suitable for inclusion in the 'When Found' section of our journal (now in its 101st year). These might include discoveries of connections with the author, in terms of places or people, or enquiries about possible connections. Please send any contributions to Dr Tony Williams.

FORTHCOMING EVENTS

Dates for meetings for part of 2006 were provided on the renewal form. Dates for the rest of the year are as follows:

Monday 11 September
 Tuesday 17 October
 Wednesday 15 November
 Monday 4 December

Following BBC TV's adaptation of Bleak House, the Swedenborg Hall meeting on 23rd February

will be a talk by Dr Tony Williams on "Picturing Bleak House".

We apologise for an error on the renewal form: the Christmas Supper will take place on Saturday 10th December.

On Thursday 23rd March, The Friends of the Dickens Museum will be hosting an evening on ADAPTING DICKENS FOR FILM AND TELEVISION. Recorded clips will be followed by discussion. The Museum is keen to enlarge its collection of recordings of Dickens's works and this evening is designed to promote the endeavour! Cost: £5 to include a glass of wine. From 6.30 pm. For information about the Friends and to book for the event, please contact the Museum on 0207 4052127.

THE HUNDREDTH CONFERENCE

This year's Conference will be held in Amsterdam, organised by the Haarlem Branch. It will run from 27th to 31st July. Details and booking forms can be obtained from Mrs Maria Werdmuller, Prins Willem Alexanderplein 68, 2012 KX, Haarlem, The Netherlands. Or visit the website:

www.home.planet.nl/~adel/Dickens.htm

email:

dickensannualconference2006@planet.nl

DICKENS IN THE NEWS

Once again, there has been a flood of Dickens clippings! Thanks to all those who sent in Dickens-related articles spotted in the press. Apologies that many are omitted for lack of space. If you see something you would like to share with other members, please send it to

the editorial address: Stephen Jarvis, 116 Riverbank Point, High Street, Uxbridge, Middlesex UB8 1JL, UK
Or by Email: stephenjarvis@hotmail.com

Jan Recknal-Turner sent in an interview with Sir Paul McCartney which appeared in *The Daily Telegraph* on October 8th. Dickens is Sir Paul's favourite writer and he stated: "I like the world that Dickens takes me to; I like the language. I like finding words that aren't in usage, one of which I put into a new song called *English Tea: "Do you know the game croquet?/ Peradventure we might play." Peradventure's from Dickens.*" McCartney has also released the song *Jenny Wren*.

Following the death of comedian Ronnie Barker, Peter Duggan saw one of Barker's spoof news items reprinted in *The Daily Telegraph* of 10th October: "And we've heard from a very disappointed guest at the Charles Dickens Society's annual nudist weekend. He had Great Expectations, but it was a very Bleak House and everybody laughed at his Little Dorrit."

Thanks to the sharp eyes and translation skills of Derek Mortimer, we are able to include a piece from *Der Spiegel*, Issue 51, December 2005:

"Good thieves have to be audacious and stalk their prey like cats. This one learns from Roman Polanski's new film Oliver Twist and if one watched it late one evening in an underground cinema by the Champs-Elysees the question whether such knowledge was still of any practical relevance to oneself today was answered.

The cinema is overheated and scarcely half full. On the screen Oliver's crafty Londoner friends show in nimble slapstick how to rob other people without their knowing. A fat purse, a watch, a few coins flit playfully from hand to hand. At the end of the performance, however, in the now brightly-lit Parisian cinema, two men and a woman are crawling around on the floor beneath their seats, because their mobile phones are missing. The phones have been stolen, each fished out of a handbag or jacket pocket by a cheeky thief under cover of darkness. "

Newspapers frequently make comparisons between current events and the works of Dickens. Most obviously, this occurs at Christmas, when it

is inevitable that someone will become a latter-day Scrooge. However, Allan Clack submitted an unusual piece from *The Daily Telegraph* which compared Lord (Conrad) Black to Merdle in *Little Dorrit*. *The Telegraph* quoted from Chapter 24: "That illustrious man, and great national ornament, Mr. Merdle, continued his shining course. It began to be widely understood that one who had done society the admirable service of making so much money out of it, could not be suffered to remain a commoner. A baronetcy was spoken of with confidence; a peerage was frequently mentioned." Of course, Merdle falls – and then the name of Merdle was "coupled with every form of execration".

An intriguing item with Dickensian associations appeared in *The Times* of November 26th, An article about the use of laughing gas as a modern drug of choice was illustrated with a poster from the nineteenth century, when there was a similar craze. Underneath the poster's banner for "A Grand Exhibition of the Effects Produced by Inhaling Nitrous Oxide, Exhilarating or Laughing Gas" was a picture showing a man thrusting a nozzle, attached to a bag of the gas, into an unhappy woman's mouth. The image was taken from a print by *Pickwick's* tragic artist, Robert Seymour. Although it is not a widely-known fact, Seymour was the first artist EVER to illustrate a work by Dickens - preceding even Cruikshank - when an extract from *The Bloomsbury Christening* appeared in *Seymour's Comic Album* (April 1834) under the name *The Omnibus*: the text was accompanied by a small sketch of a bandy-legged "cad" (or bus conductor) approaching the pot-bellied Nicodemus Dumps.

A Final Thought...

"...I have looked at the Subscription List, and find you didn't give anything!"

Letter from Charles Dickens to T.J. Thompson 10th March 1843.

...and if you still have to pay your subscription for 2006, please remember it is not too late! Please send subscription forms and payments to: Subscriptions, The Dickens Fellowship, 48 Doughty Street, London WC1N 2LX, UK

We look forward to hearing from you!