
London Particular

The Dickens Fellowship Newsletter

DICKENS MUSEUM *The Charles Dickens Museum, 48 Doughty Street, re-opened in December after extensive refurbishment. Improvements include new carpets, curtains and wallpaper – all of the period - and muted lighting by candles; it is now much easier to see it as primarily a home, not so obviously a museum. The basement room, for decades used as a library/meeting room, is now a kitchen again. The attics now contain, as in CD's time, the children's nursery and a servant's bedroom. A pleasure to visit. Remember, access to the Museum is free at any time for Fellowship members on production of your current membership card. Speaking of which.....*

REMINDER: Membership Renewal Members should have received a renewal form for 2013 with the last LP. Fees are unchanged, i.e. £17 for membership, £15 for The Dickensian. If you haven't renewed, please do so asap. If you have mislaid the form, send your name and address, with cheque payable to "Dickens Fellowship" or credit card details, to The Membership Secretary, Dickens Fellowship, 48 Doughty Street, London WC1N 2LX. If you have renewed, you will have received membership card/programme for 2013.

DR DAVID PARKER We were shocked and saddened to learn of the sudden death, on 1st February, of Dr David Parker. He suffered a massive stroke whilst visiting South Africa. David will be well-known to many of you as a frequent attendee at Central Fellowship meetings and throughout the international Dickens community as a speaker and writer. Many of his articles and reviews have appeared in *The Dickensian*, where a fuller tribute will be given in due course. David was Curator of the Charles Dickens Museum in London from 1978 – 1999.

Is Dickens intolerable? Prof Michael Slater has sent in a thought-provoking quote from Virginia Woolf. Anonymously reviewing Walter Crotch's *'The Secret of Dickens'* in the Times Literary Supplement in 1919, she comments: 'No one has suffered more than Dickens from

the enthusiasm of his admirers, by which he has been made to appear not so much a great writer as an intolerable institution'.

Step forward Mrs Skewton, Arthur Gride and the Aged P! DF member Dr Mervyn Eastman has been researching portrayals of older people in Dickens's works. He would be very grateful if LP readers could let him know which characters they consider give a positive or negative image of older people, and why. Please contact Mervyn on mervyn.changeagent@gmail.com or phone him - 07876 497 786.

Faces of Dickens (3) – An unusual one which goes unnoticed by most people. DF member Allan Clack says, "In Northington Street, Bloomsbury, a stone's throw from the CDM, it's a bit startling to come across a large framed painting of CD attached to a street wall! It hangs above a small nondescript office building on the corner of Kirk Street and there is no indication of what it's doing there. In fact, it was the inn sign of a former pub called *The Charles Dickens*, which closed several years ago. It looks a bit lonely and ghostly, but CD would surely be amused to see his portrait on the wall of a building near where he lived, worked and walked."

A Mysterious Letter

A previously unknown letter from CD, revealing his desperate attempt to be rid of his wife, has been discovered between the pages of a second-hand Bible in the village of Blockley in Gloucs. CD offered a settlement of £600 p.a. (at least £40,000 nowadays) in a letter to his lawyer, in May 1858. "This will keep her Brougham as well as she ever had it kept and will do all she wants, I am sure". It's a mystery how the letter turned up where it did, as CD had no links with the Cotswolds. Prof Michael Slater, author of *The Great Charles Dickens Scandal*, says, "The figure of £600 p.a. was mentioned in CD's will, but this is the first time we've seen it mentioned in a letter. The tone of it is a man just desperate to get this separation business finished as fast as possible. It was generating bad publicity for him and he clearly found the marriage intolerable. The way he refers to his wife as 'she' and 'her' is rather ungracious."

SITUATIONS VACANT

After three years of excellent service as the Honorary Treasurer of the Fellowship, Anita Fernandez-Young has decided to stand down at the Boulogne Conference in June. If any member of the Fellowship feels he/she has the experience, qualifications and time to devote to the role and would like further details, please contact the Honorary General Secretary on: Paulgrahamdf@live.co.uk

FORTHCOMING EVENT:

On Saturday, 8th June 2013, the Turner Society will have a Rotherhithe walk led by Pieter van der Merwe. Some members will have heard his talk on 'The Mutual Friend: Dickens, Turner and Clarkson Stanfield' at the Paul Mellon Centre on 13th November. The Society has generously invited members of the Fellowship to attend. Meet at Surrey Docks (Overground) Station at 10.30 am. The walk will be along the waterfront to discover traces of vanished shipyards. The route will take in St Mary's Church and the Mayflower pub via the site of Beatson's Wharf, where the Fighting Temeraire was broken up. Overall, a couple of hours walk and a pub lunch!

***Nicholas Nickleby** – We've just relished re-watching a superb TV version of the above from 1977, starring Nigel Havers as an appealing hero (I think he'd have made a very good young Dickens), together with two splendid villains – Derek Godfrey as Ralph and Derek Francis as Squeers; also Freddie Jones suitably over the top as Vincent Crummies, Robert James an excellent, knuckle-cracking Newman Noggs and Patricia Routledge a superb Madame Mantalini, capturing her pathos as well as her absurdity. A wonderful New Year treat. And if anyone can tell us where the stirring theme music came from, we'd be very grateful!*

REVEREND REG DEAN Fellowship member, Reverend Reg Dean, died recently aged 110! He was the oldest man in Britain, and a former United Reformed Church minister and army chaplain. He was born in 1902 in Tunstall, Staffs, and was living in Derbyshire at the time of his death. He had just renewed his DF membership for 2013.

DICKENS QUIZ

AudioGo, formerly known as BBC Audiobooks, is generously offering three members of the Dickens Fellowship the opportunity to win a boxed set of classic radio dramas containing six Dickens audiobooks. The set consists of 27 CDs, retails at £60 and contains versions of Oliver Twist, Bleak House, A Tale of Two Cities, Hard Times, Little Dorrit and Great Expectations. For further information, consult the website: www.audiogo.com/uk/charles-dickens-classic-radio-dramas. For your chance to win, answer these six questions about geographic locations in the novels concerned:

1. In Hard Times, in which town did Merrylegs die?
2. In Great Expectations, in which part of London is Wemmick's castle situated?
3. In Oliver Twist, in which small Surrey town is Oliver shot during a failed burglary?
4. In Bleak House, where is the place of abode of Mr Vholes's father and three daughters?
5. In A Tale of Two Cities, in which London churchyard does the fake burial of Roger Cly take place?
6. In Little Dorrit, according to Mr F's Aunt, where was Barnes's gander when it was 'stole' by tinkers?

Send your answers by email only to postbox@dickensfellowship.org under the sub-heading of 'Quiz' by midnight on 31st March, giving your name and address and stating which branch of the Fellowship you belong to. All the correct answers will be entered into a draw which will take place at the Central Fellowship meeting on Wed. 10th April. The names of the three winners will be published in the next edition of LP and on the Fellowship website. Members of the Executive Committee of the Fellowship are excluded from the competition. The result of the draw will be final and no correspondence will be entered into.

'You must make it more: you must make it a trifle more, you must indeed!' as Montague Tigg said to the pawnbroker (Martin Chuzzlewit). More contributions, please, to: Alison Gowans, "Danesdyke", 27A Ashcombe Road, Carshalton, Surrey SM5 3ET, or by email - aligowans@hotmail.co.uk