
London Particular

The Dickens Fellowship Newsletter

MEMBERSHIP RENEWAL

A renewal form for 2014 is enclosed with this newsletter. Subscriptions are unchanged. Please complete and return a.s.a.p. to the address shown on the form, and membership card/programme for 2014 will be sent to you.

A Transport of Delight Your Editor, travelling recently in Stroud, Glos, saw some more vehicles of the haulage company, Moreton Cullimore of Stroud, who print the names of Dickens characters on the sides of their lorries (see LP of July 2011). Vehicles noted were a bulldozer called Little Nell, a loading shovel called Inspector Bucket and Jarvis Lorry, an 8-wheeled tipper!

Faces of Dickens (5) *About 100 yards from West Norwood railway station, SE27, is a Victorian library built in 1887, with the stone heads of literary giants over the main entrance. CD is there, between Socrates (or should that be Plato?) and Shakespeare. There are other examples of similar figures over the entrances of Victorian libraries in London and elsewhere, e.g. Manor Park in the East End.*

Howzat? The sports writer in the Daily Telegraph, was reporting recently on cricket's Decision Review System, which decides when a batsman is out. He discussed the unexpected complications arising when technology is used in such matters, and described it as being as complex as the "interminable legal saga of Jarndyce v. Jarndyce parodied by CD in *Bleak House*".

Alas poor Dickens, I didn't know him very well..... A recent report in the national press of a survey by Opinion Research suggests that only one in five of us knows who wrote *Hamlet*. Further, many people struggle to name the author of *Great Expectations*, suggesting most people can't find the time to read classics, preferring to watch film and TV versions. (*They don't know what they're missing!* Ed.)

Murders most foul Dr Lucy Worsley, in a recent TV series, "A very British Murder", alluded to the links between the fiction of Dickens and real murders at the time which, she said, added to the fascination of the public. So how many of CD's books contain murders? Apart from the obvious victims such as Nancy (OT), Montague Tigg (MC) and lawyer Tulkinghorn (BH), we have Rogue Riderhood (OMF), Mrs Gargery (GE), Reuben Haredale (BR) and St Evremonde in TTC. The death of Lord Verisopht in a duel with Sir Mulberry Hawk (NN) is also technically a murder, and of course there is *The Mystery of Edwin Drood* - but then, do we really know if he was murdered? Let's not go into that again!

Literally Dickens A recent article in the Guardian described the word "literally" as the most misused word in the language. The OED now confirms, however, a modern usage of "literally", where it is permitted to use the word simply to indicate strong feeling or emphasis. A columnist in the Daily Telegraph says "literally" has been misused for years, even by CD, who described a character in *Nicholas Nickleby* whose limbs and body were "literally worn to the bone". (On investigation, this turned out to be the unpleasant Walter Bray.) I found another example of this in NN: poor Smike is brought back to Dotheboys Hall after his escape attempt and Squeers is looking forward to punishing him so much that, Dickens tells us, he "literally feasted his eyes on him".

The Stamp of Greatness We recently received correspondence from the North of Boston branch with US postage stamps depicting the Ghost of Christmas Present from *A Christmas Carol*, and the words "Dickens Fellowship". They used a special online link. How's that for enterprise, sending the Dickens name round the world?

Our Youngest Member? We are delighted to welcome as a member Leo Berenson, aged 11, from Los Angeles. It's great to know there are still some young people who love and appreciate Dickens. It sounds as if Leo will be an ideal member of the DF and we wish him all the best.

CHRISTMAS COMPETITION

Our Joint Hon Sec, Paul Graham, tells us that Fellowship member and author, Richard B. Adams, has published a work of fiction: *Eben Kruge: How A Christmas Carol Came to be Written...A Story About Charles Dickens*. Richard has generously donated a hardback copy of the book to be the prize. Simply answer the following questions about four of Dickens's Christmas books.

1. In *The Haunted Man*, Redlaw was a teacher of which academic subject?
2. In *The Battle of Life*, which profession does Jonathan Snitchey practise?
3. In *The Chimes*, what is the name of Sir Joseph Bowley's secretary?
4. In *The Cricket on the Hearth*, what products do Gruff and Tackleton manufacture?

Answers, complete with your name, address and name of Branch should be e-mailed to: postbox@dickensfellowship.org by midnight on 31 November. All the correct entries will be put into a hat and the winning entry will be drawn at the Christmas Supper on 7 December.

To prompt or not to prompt Prof Michael Slater has sent in the following: "You remember that wonderful bit in *GE* when Mr Wopsle is playing Hamlet at a very minor London theatre. Pip notices that the actor playing the Ghost carries "a ghostly truncheon to which it often had the appearance of referring and that, with an air of anxiety and a tendency to lose the place of reference that were suggestive of a state of mortality?" Well, in a book called "*Nine Years of an Actor's Life*" written by Robert Dyer, and published in 1833, Dyer remembers an actor who had to play the Ghost to a professional actor's Hamlet: 'He wrote his cues, and stuck them on the tip off his truncheon and it was whimsical to see the Royal Dane lift his baton to the line of sight, at the commencement of Hamlet's speeches, to be in readiness for their termination'."

The Pickwick Papers on Stage A stage adaptation of *PP* can be seen at the Ashcroft Theatre, Croydon, on Friday 22 and Saturday 23

November. The Fellowship have arranged for members to be able to obtain reduced price tickets (£10) for all performances. To obtain tickets, simply quote: 'Dickens Society Pickwick Offer' – we realise this is a misnomer – either in person at the box office or when making a phone booking. This offer is not available for internet bookings. A similar arrangement has been made for the production when it plays at the Haymarket Theatre, Basingstoke, on the evenings of Tuesday 10 and Wednesday 11 December, and for the matinee performance (2 pm) on Thursday 12 December. The ticket price here will be £11.

FORTHCOMING EVENTS:

Sat 7 Dec: Christmas Supper, The George Inn, Borough High Street. 18.30 for 19.00. Tickets £36.50. Booking form from Peter Duggan or the All The Year Round section of DF website.

Thur 16 Jan 2014: DF President, Professor Jenny Hartley, welcomes members and will talk on 'Dickens as a Public Speaker' (Lumen)

Mr Dick's Kite Central members and Branch Secretaries will recall that *Mr Dick's Kite* was a newsletter produced by Alan Watts, a former Hon Gen Sec and President of the Fellowship. After a hiatus, we are happy to report that the *Kite* flies again, with Alan's daughter, Fleur Hogarth, now pulling the strings. The latest edition is available online via the Fellowship website at: <http://www.dickensfellowship.org/publications>.

Any Branch Secretary who knows of members of his/her Branch who would like to receive the *Kite* but who have no access to a computer, can either print out hard copies for them or let the Hon Gen Sec have a list of such members so copies can be sent to them. Good luck to Fleur with future issues.

The Election of Fellowship Officers The AGM of the Dickens Fellowship will take place at the Conference in Chicago in July 2014. All the officer positions – both Hon Gen Secs, Hon Treasurer and Hon Editor of *The Dickensian* – together with that of Chair of Council, will be open for election. Members are invited to consider whether they may wish to stand for any of these positions. More information from: postbox@dickensfellowship.org.

Are you willin', like Barkis - not to marry me, but to send in more contributions, please? Send items to: Alison Gowans, "Danedyke", 27A Ashcombe Road, Carshalton, Surrey SM5 3ET, or by email – aligowans@hotmail.co.uk