
London Particular

The Dickens Fellowship Newsletter

2021 CENTRAL PROGRAMME It seems highly unlikely that physical meetings will be possible any time soon. Social distancing seems to be here to stay for the foreseeable future. We have therefore planned the programme on the basis of holding virtual meetings. Members who provided their e-addresses will continue to receive the link that will enable them to join the meetings via Zoom. If you have not yet provided us with your e-address, but wish to join these meetings, please send it to postbox@dickensfellowship.org and we will send regular invitations.

CHRISTMAS IS CANCELLED (Very un-Dickensian but, sadly, unavoidable in present circumstances.) Members will understand that we are unable to stage the traditional DF Christmas Supper this year. Instead, we will organise a Dickens Quiz for members which will be hosted via Zoom on **Sat 5 December**. Further details in due course for those whose e-addresses we have.

MEMBERSHIP RENEWALS A renewal form for 2021 is enclosed. Members are invited to complete and return it asap, with subscription fee, to: The Membership Secretary, Dickens Fellowship, 48 Doughty Street, London WC1N 2LX. Fees are unchanged. Those who have already elected to pay by Standing Order need not complete a form unless details have changed.

2021 GRESHAM COLLEGE LECTURES Gresham College are more optimistic about the possibility of holding physical meetings in the coming year. Their latest brochure lists two lectures that will be of particular interest to DF members. On **Wed 14 April** Professor Michael Slater is to lecture on *Dickens: The Last Decade* at 1 pm at the Museum of London. The lecture will be free and no booking is necessary. On **Thurs**

22 April Professor Malcolm Andrews will lecture on *Dickens's Public Readings: A Tale of Two Desks* at 1 pm at Barnard's Inn Hall. Reservations are required – <https://www.gresham.ac.uk/attend/>.

FREE BOOKS ON DICKENS We are very grateful to Mr David Williams who has donated Dickens-related books to the Fellowship from the collection of his late wife, Sandra, who was a DF member. Anyone who would like one or more of the following books should notify us via postbox@dickensfellowship.org and we will arrange a mutually convenient time to hand them over in the London area. First come, first served.

The books are:- CD – G K Chesterton (1913); CD – U Pope-Hennessy (1947); The Life and Characters of CD – H C Dent (undated); CD: A Critical Judgement – K J Fielding (1958); The Mystery in the Drood Family – Montagu Saunders (1914); The Humour of Dickens – R J Cruikshank (1952); The Dickens Companion – J A Hammerton (undated); My Father As I Recall Him – Mamie Dickens (undated); A Week's Tramp in Dickens-Land – W R Hughes (1891); Dickens and Popular Entertainment – P Schlicke (1988); Life of CD – J Forster (1907); In the Steps of CD – W Addison (1955); Dickens and His Readers – G H Ford (1965); The Dickens World - H House (1942); CD: Hard Times, Great Expectations and Our Mutual Friend – N Page (1979); The Love Lives of CD – CGL Du Cann (1961); A Christmas Carol – signed by Cedric Dickens (Dickens House edition – 1965); A Christmas Carol – illustrated with pictures from 1951 film starring Alastair Sim; CD – L Du Garde Peach (Ladybird Book 1965); Dickens's England – M & M Hardwick (1970); Dickens in His Time – I Brown (1963); CD – A Pictorial Biography – J B Priestley (1961); Dickens of London – W Mankowitz (1976); CD – Life and Characters – C Clair (1963); An Illustrated Map of CD's London – K W Baxendale (1984).

The Search for Edwin Drood (Grosvenor House Publishing) Congratulations to DF member **James Warden** on the above, his completion of Dickens's final novel. It's six months after the disappearance of Drood and features the investigations into the mystery by a member of the Detective Police Force from Great Scotland Yard. Two other CD novels – *Our Mutual Friend* and *Nicholas Nickleby* – influenced the story.

A distinguished speaker at the Fellowship Membership Secretary **Allan Clack** found the following quote by George Orwell from "Ministry of Truth" by Dorian Lynskey (pub 2019): "*I doubt whether anyone who has actually read Dickens can go a week without remembering him in one context or other*". In a talk to the Dickens Fellowship in London in May 1940, Orwell went further: "*To be a lover of Dickens, it was not necessary to know his work perfectly, as he was one of the very few writers who have a tradition that moves outside the realm of literature*". Orwell mentioned working alongside hop-pickers in Kent in 1931 who knew all about *Oliver Twist* without having read the novel, and felt that Dickens was on their side.

A luckier Miss Havisham DF member **Maria Michael** sent in an article from the *Sunday Dispatch*, June 23 1940. "*A wedding breakfast was laid in the dining room of Mansfield House, Rochetown, County Cork. The daughter of the house was at the church, being married to a suitor whom the family approved. The servants remarked how pleased the parents were, but noted also that the bride seemed anything but pleased. The wedding party came home. The bride retired to her room. The groom chatted easily with the assembled guests while they waited.... and waited, for the bride, forced into a loveless marriage, had slipped out of the house. On the road nearby she was met by her true love. They drove away – perhaps to happiness. The guests were turned away. The dining room was locked with the feast and the finery still on the table, by the broken-hearted parents. In that eerie mausoleum the grim and poignant story was locked away.*" In 1857, Charles Dickens, lecturing in Cork, heard the story of Mansfield House. It gave him the idea for a novel. He called it *Great Expectations*. {A good story, but of course other possible originals for Miss Havisham do exist. Ed.}

Wise advice A letter to the Times (5.9.20) from Alex Rae notes that "**the Duchess of Sussex has launched yet another legal action, thereby drawing attention to matters she presumably wishes to remain private. When I advised clients who wished to start legal proceedings, I used the warning that Charles Dickens in**

Bleak House said should be given to every potential litigant: 'Suffer any wrong that can be done you rather than come here!'"

Dickens - A Daemon! DF member **Roberta Berryman** says: 'Always on the lookout for any mention of Dickens in my reading, I was pleased to discover the following excerpt in *The Ordeal of Gilbert Pinfold* by Evelyn Waugh. "Pinfold regarded his books as objects which he had made, things quite external to himself He had no wish to obliterate anything he had written, but he would dearly have liked to revise it, envying painters, who are allowed to return to the same theme ... clarifying and enriching until they have done all they can with it. A novelist is condemned to produce a succession of novelties, new names for characters, new incidents for his plots, new scenery; but, Mr Pinfold maintained, most men harbour the germs of one or two books only; all else is professional trickery, of which the most daemonic of the masters – Dickens and Balzac even – were flagrantly guilty".

Overshadowed Thomas Keneally (former Booker Prize winner with "*Schindler's Ark*" in 1982) has published a novel – *The Dickens Boy* - about CD's youngest child, Edward Bulwer Lytton Dickens, known by his family as 'Plorn'. Showing little academic ability, at the age of 15 he was sent to Australia to make something of his life. In this novel we follow an imagined version of Plorn's first years growing up in the outback. Every time someone new appears, he has to put up with their veneration of his father. Plorn despairs. "'Please,' I called out. 'I'm just me.'" *The Dickens Boy* is the enjoyable, novel-length version of that plaintive cry. The Times Sat Review (12.9.20).

Congratulations! We at *London Particular* would like to offer our warmest congratulations to our Hon Gen Sec, Paul Graham, on his recent marriage to Marzia Dati (Hon Sec of the Carrara, Italy, branch).

Christmas at Dingley Dell – Sam Weller and the fat boy have been laying out some mince pies: 'Wery good,' said Sam, 'stick a bit o' Christmas in 'em. T'other dish opposite. There; now we look compact and comfortable, as the father said ven he cut his little boy's head off, to cure him o' squintin'.' To make the next LP compact and comfortable, contributions please to: Alison Gowans, "Danesdyke", 27A Ashcombe Road, Carshalton, Surrey SM5 3ET, or by email – aligowans17@outlook.com