

London Particular

The Newsletter for the Headquarters Group of the Dickens Fellowship

DICKENS AT HOME

The re-opening of Charles Dickens's refurbished Morning Room at 48 Doughty Street was celebrated with special events, readings and a formal opening by a member of the Dickens family on 27th November.

A new highlight on display at the Museum is Daniel Maclise's famous portrait of Dickens's four eldest children, owned by Dickens's great grandson Cedric Dickens. This was unveiled by Lucinder Hawksley, a great-great-great granddaughter of Dickens.

The day was hosted by the Friends of the Charles Dickens Museum and the Dickens Fellowship, who provided free refreshments and information about their international activities. Readings were given from *The Pickwick Papers*, *Oliver Twist* and *Nicholas Nickleby*, works associated with 48 Doughty Street.

The Morning Room was redecorated and partially refurbished so as to evoke the domestic setting which was a theme in Dickens's works. This room would have been the special domain of Catherine Dickens, the author's wife, from whom he later separated in scandalous circumstances.

FELLOWSHIP AT CHRISTMAS

The special relationship between Dickens and Christmas means that this time of year is always a busy and sociable one for members of the Fellowship.

The festive season began in style on Saturday 4th December with the Fellowship's annual Christmas Supper. Friday 10th December sees the final Gad's Hill Evening of the year, when Professor Malcolm Andrews will be reading from *A Christmas Carol*.

The Charles Dickens Museum will be open on Christmas Eve, Christmas Day and Boxing Day 2004 from 11am to 6pm, decorated in appropriate period Christmas style. Refreshments including mulled wine and mince pies will be on offer all day, and visitors will receive Christmas gifts. Special activities will be provided for children. Advance booking for admission is advised, but tickets may be bought on the day, price £12 (£6 concessions).

The Museum's Christmas Exhibition (running until 6th January) explores Dickens's relationship with Christmas, and what 19th-century Christmases were like. There will be presentations of film adaptations of *A Christmas Carol* and readings from this and other of Dickens's writings.

The Special Christmas Programme at the House also includes: Drop-in sessions for children on Saturday 11th and 18th December, from 11am-4pm, and readings from Dickens and others at 11.30am and 2.30pm on Sunday 12th and 19th December.

There is also a walk through Dickens's London between the Transport Museum in Covent Garden and the Charles Dickens Museum, taking about one hour, on Sunday 12th December.

For further details, confirmation of dates and times, and to make advance bookings, contact the Museum by telephone 020 7405 2127 and check the Museum website: www.dickensmuseum.com.

Finally, The London Particular would like to wish a very Merry Christmas to all members of the Fellowship at this most Dickensian time of year.

Fellowship Programme 2005

Monday 24 January

Social Evening, with refreshments and with readings to mark the centenary of *The Dickensian*, first published in January 1905. All welcome, but especially new members.

Monday 7 February

Birthday Dinner at the National Liberal Club to celebrate the 193rd anniversary of Dickens's birth. Principal Guest: the Right Reverend **Tom Butler, Bishop of Southwark**.

Further details of the programme are provided on the Fellowship website as arrangements are confirmed and will, as usual, be given on the membership cards issued in January.

'GONG DONKEYS'

A new play by Richard Cameron is running at the Bush Theatre in London until 11th December 2004.

Called *Gong Donkeys*, after a quote from *The Lazy Tour of Two Idle Apprentices*, it is a contemporary story set in Doncaster, but is informed by the visit of Dickens and Wilkie Collins to the St Leger races mentioned in their autobiographical account, published in *Household Words* in 1857. For further information, please contact Alexandra Gammie on 020 7833 2627, 07803 248230 or alex@gammie.demon.co.uk www.bushtheatre.co.uk.

DICKENS IN THE NEWS

Many thanks to all those who sent in Dickens-related articles spotted in the press. Scarcely a week goes by without a mention of Dickens in the newspapers. If you see something you would like to share with other members, please use the address at the end of this newsletter.

Cedric Dickens – while preparing a speech he was to deliver in Philadelphia on the great number of references there are in the media to his great grandfather – came across an article from the *Christian Science Monitor* from earlier in the year, focusing on London's many Dickensian sites.

"London is as much a character in Charles Dickens's novels as Nicholas Nickleby or David Copperfield is," said the *Monitor*. "The ghosts of *Oliver Twist*, *Miss Flite* and *Jo the crossing sweeper* still linger in its alleyways."

Several people – including Allan Clack - wrote to alert members to a rather startling headline from the *Daily Telegraph's* book section, "Was Dickens a pimp?" In a review of the book, 'The Great Pretenders', by Jan Bondeson, the author suggests that between writing books, Charles Dickens acted as a pimp for the reclusive and weird 5th Duke of Portland.

Alan writes that it "seems incredible and unlikely to say the least" but asks whether any members have heard of a connection between Charles Dickens and the Duke?

Meanwhile, a report from New Delhi, again in the *Telegraph*, said Indian Police had uncovered a "Fagin's academy" schooling young boys in the art of pick-pocketing. A student would start by stealing fruit and vegetables from shops and handcart vendors, before graduating to snatching mobile telephones, handbags and gold chains from women. Police arrested the two teachers and were trying to track down about 50 "alumni" still at work in the city.

ANNUAL CONFERENCE 2005

The 2005 Conference in Canterbury will take place a week later than originally planned. This was decided early in 2004, but the new dates have not till now appeared in the Particular.

The Annual Conference has an important role to play in the organisation of the Fellowship. However, the official business of any conference is usually disposed of in half a day and the rest of the time is devoted to lectures, outings and entertainment.

A report on the 2004 Conference, held in Melbourne, will appear in the Winter 2004 issue of *The Dickensian*. The 2005 Conference runs from 28th July to 2nd August and is hosted by the Canterbury Branch. For programme details and a booking form, please get in touch with Mr John Ingram, 1C Westgate Court Avenue, Canterbury, Kent CT2 8DN.

The 2006 Conference will take place in Amsterdam (27-31st July) and in 2007 it will be in Philadelphia, USA.

HOUSEPLANTS?

Dr Catherine Horwood, Honorary Research Fellow at Royal Holloway, University of London, would like to hear of any mention of houseplants in Dickens's works, other than in relation to those of Mrs Pipchin (*Dombey & Son*).

Her correspondence address is: 6 Emerald House, 1c King Henry's Road, London NW3 3QP. Email: c.horwood@rhul.ac.uk.

SUBSCRIPTION RENEWALS

Subscription renewal forms will be posted with the Winter issue of *The Dickensian*.

There will be a special mailing of forms for members who are not subscribers to the journal.

HAVE YOUR SAY

Any feedback on the contents of this newsletter, or suggestions for future items to be included should be sent to: Matthew Davis, Flat 3, 3 Lime Grove, Shepherd's Bush, London, W12 8EE (07932 632 099).

Those members with internet access will find the Fellowship's website an invaluable source of up-to-date information on the organisation's activities, links to other sites and information on Charles Dickens. Use the website address at the bottom of this page.