

LONDON IVY

The Dickens Fellowship Branches' Newsletter

Welcome to the inaugural issue of *London Ivy*, the e-publication for branch members of the Dickens Fellowship!

But first: Why is it called *London Ivy*?

For some years now, the Central Branch of the Fellowship, based in London, has published its own newsletter called *The London Particular* (back issues are available on the Fellowship's website) which takes its name from the following passage in *Bleak House*:

"He was very obliging, and as he handed me into a fly after superintending the removal of my boxes, I asked him whether there was a great fire anywhere? For the streets were so full of dense brown smoke that scarcely anything was to be seen.

'Oh dear no, miss,' he said. 'This is a London particular.'

I had never heard of such a thing.

'A fog, miss,' said the young gentleman."

In launching a sister-publication, it seemed appropriate to choose a name which, like *London Particular*, had connotations of fog, mist or smoke, but which was suggestive of the Fellowship's membership branching out across the world. On searching in Dickens's works for a suitable name, one obvious candidate emerged. For, in another passage of *Bleak House*, the nameplate of Peffer and Snagsby is described as being wreathed around with smoke, "which is the London ivy". And ivy not only branches out, it is especially associated with Dickens because of his poem *The Ivy Green*, first published in *Pickwick* (with its green wrappers!) though actually

written some years before, in slightly altered form, in the notebook of Dickens's early love, Georgina Ross.

WHAT WILL BE IN *LONDON IVY*?

Each issue will be a miscellany of material submitted by branch members from all around the world. However, the emphasis should be very firmly placed on **material which is informative, entertaining and interesting to people beyond the branch where the material originated**. So, for instance, *London Ivy* would probably NOT want to publish an item headed "One hundred dollars raised at the cake stall for branch funds!" but *would* be interested in an account of some funny incident which happened while serving cake, or perhaps some comparison between a cake sold and Miss Havisham's wedding cake. When newspaper cuttings are submitted, the rule must again be that **they should have some interest beyond the local branch** – a cutting about a branch members in Victorian dress would not in general be interesting enough, but if it included a "nugget" which related the dress to Dickens's works, or if someone split their tights while dressed as Mr Pickwick, it might well be worth a mention.

CAN YOU DESIGN A MASTHEAD?

Is there an artistic member who could design the newsletter's masthead, to appear on all future issues? The masthead should include the name *London Ivy*, in a font of your choice, accompanied by appropriate Dickensian imagery, such as characters from the novels, or a picture of Boz himself. Please email designs to the Editor:

stephenjarvis@hotmail.com

THE "ZEROTH" ISSUE

Because, as yet, no material has been submitted by branch members, this issue is atypical, and is therefore numbered "Issue Zero". The Editor has unashamedly filled its e-pages by resorting to the nineteenth-century journalistic practice of scissors-and-paste.

Thus, drawing upon material published in the magazines Dickens edited, Household Words (abbreviated here to HW) and All the Year Round (abbreviated to AYR), plus the Pilgrim edition of Dickens's letters and certain items found on the internet, the Editor ever so 'umbly submits for your information and entertainment items referring to the locations of all the branches and affiliated organisations of the International Dickens Fellowship...

"Southend... would be improved if its pier were a little shorter and its water a little saltier." (AYR May 7th 1864)

"The statistical accounts of the numbers of pins turned out annually at Birmingham and Sheffield would lead one to expect that the earth itself would present the appearance of a vast pincushion." (AYR, August 14th 1869)

"In York, St Luke's Day was known as whip-dog-day from the custom of boys going about the city and whipping every dog they could meet with. The tradition was that a priest once celebrating Mass in the cathedral on St Luke's Day, accidentally dropped the pix, which a dog suddenly snapped up and swallowed. This profanation occasioned the immediate death of that unlucky dog and originated the practice of whipping the rest of his species in that town on that anniversary for centuries afterwards." (HW, August 6th 1853)

"The most wonderful thing of all (about the Japanese) is their Dosia powder. Dosia powder does everything. It is of excellent use in assisting poor tortured women with whom nature is a laggard, is a specific for various ailments, gives buoyancy and delightful gaiety to those who take it in good health, and, placed in the ears, nose and mouth of the dead, prevents the corpse from stiffening..." (HW, January 29th 1859)

"A Chinese named Ah Sam who kept the Lord Nelson Restaurant in Victoria, Vancouver Island, became bankrupt and was ordered to file a schedule of his assets. Not knowing the names of his customers, he had entered short descriptions of them in his ledger, and when he entered court he had nothing more than the following to show. It was given me by his solicitor as a legal curiosity:

	Dols.	Cents
A butcher owes.....	18	
Captain of a schooner.....	50	
Cook in a ship galley.....	8	
Red Shirt Man.....	27	
Man comes later (a printer?).....	10	
Cap Man.....	8	50
Lean Man, White Man.....	20	
Fat Frenchman.....	30	62 ½
Captain, tall man.....	20	
French old man.....	8	
Whiskers Man.....	18	37 ½
Blacksmith.....	49	
Barkeeper.....	5	
Workman.....	5	
Whiskers man's friend.....	6	25
Double Blanket man.....	6	50
Lame leg man.....	40	
Fat man.....	9	25
Old workman.....	8	
Red whiskers.....	7	50
Steamboat man.....	18	
Indian Ya.....	4	62 ½
Dick make coal shoveller.....	28	
Yea Yap Earrings.....	25	
Flower pantaloon man.....	16	
Shoemaker gone to California.....	15	62 ½
A man – butcher's friend.....	30	
Stable man.....	16	
Get tight man.....	7	

The last entry the Commissioner decided was of much too general a character to allow of the slightest hope of fixing the debt upon any one in particular." (AYR, March 20th 1869)

“Before and during the earthquake (in Lisbon, Portugal, in 1755) many curious phenomena had occurred in England and northern Germany, and the intervals between these phenomena seemed to clearly mark the velocity of the earthquake’s advance. One of the most remarkable of these was the sudden reddening and muddying of the waters of the hot spring at **Clifton**.” (AYR, November 30th, 1867)

*“Some of the ceremonies connected with perambulation or beating of bounds have more of oddity than solemnity about them. It is said that some time ago, at Newcastle-on-Tyne (Ed: a city covered by **North-East England** branch) once every three years the chief commissioner of the Tyne was wont to catch hold of the first pretty maiden he encountered on the banks of the Tyne, and give her a kiss, a guinea and a glass of wine – which, it is alleged, induced some of the maidens to put themselves in the way of being so captured.”* (AYR September 21st, 1867)

“The temperature of **Southwold** is so mild that it is always honoured by the earliest arrival and latest departure of that distinguished visitor of ours – the swallow.” (AYR, June 26th, 1869)

“Though the number of persons killed by a single flash of lightning may have been greater, there are probably not many instances on record of its having covered so great an area as in a family at **Eastbourne**. The coachman and butler were outside the house. The former was struck dead, and the latter was so much affected by the shock, that, without being hardly conscious of what he was doing, he went into the house. Here, he found his master insensible, and, as it turned out, very much hurt on the left side. In the pantry, he found the footman lying dead on the floor; and a further examination of the house showed that lightning had been through all parts of it. Everywhere the windows were broken, looking-glasses shattered, articles of furniture torn to splinters, cornices and ceilings cracked, bell-wires

melted, and so forth. The owner’s daughter had a wonderful escape. The electric stream entered the room where she was dressing, and splintered the bed she had just left....” (AYR, July 29th, 1865.)

*On crossing the English Channel in a steamboat: ”In a greater or less degree the **Boulogne** and **Folkestone** passage is representative of all, with one strong point in its favour. It is the shortest.”* (AYR, July 24th, 1869)

“Years ago, a brigade of irregular cavalry lay at a station not very remote from **Poona**...The brigadier in command was a dare-devil old officer named Daintry, a grim soldier who loved a tussle, sword in hand, as dearly as Coeur-de-Lion himself and who, with his long, white moustachios and scarred face, looked superb when in the saddle. One of the best horsemen and hog-hunters in India, he performed such wonders with the boar-spear as are still spoken of in the hunting-camp...” (HW, August 15th 1857)

“An **Algonquin** wizard (Ed: *The Algonquins were the original inhabitants of **Rockland County***) makes a grass or cloth image of any animal he wishes to kill, hangs it up in his wigwam, and shoots arrows at it, repeating an incantation; if his arrows stick, he will kill his game; if they fall out, he will miss.” (AYR, May 27th 1865)

From *Wrecked in Port*, by Edmund Hodgson Yates, serialised in AYR:

“‘Charmin’ scene,’ said Lord Hetherington, surveying the lake in a birdlike fashion, with his head on one side, ‘charmin’ quite! Whenever I see ice and that kind of thing, always reminds me of some humorous adventures I once read in a book, ‘bout some man on the ice, Pickwinkle or some such name. ‘Commonly humorous book, to be sure!’ and his lordship laughed very heartily at his reminiscences. ‘You mean **Pickwick**, my lord!’ said the Colonel.” (AYR, May 6th, 1869)

“On a bright night, twenty minutes rarely pass at any part of the earth’s surface without the appearance of at least one meteor. Twice a year (on the 12th of August and the 14th of November) they appear in enormous numbers. During nine hours in **Boston**, when they were described as falling as thick as snow-flakes, two hundred and forty thousand meteors were observed.” (AYR, July 1st, 1865)

“I burst into a torrent of words which I could no more control than I could the Falls of **Niagara**.” (HW, August 26th 1858)

“The embarkation of Nelson at **Portsmouth was a scene worthy of Grecian history. Although he tried to steal secretly to his ship, crowds collected, eager to see the face of the hero they venerated. Many of the rugged sailors were in tears; old men-of-wars knelt and prayed God to bless him as he passed to the boat. They knew he was the sailor’s friend and father; they knew him to be as humane as he was fearless; unselfish and eager to pour out his blood for England. No basely-earned money had defiled his hands; his heart was pure crystal; it had no flaw...That one-eyed, one-armed shrunk invalid officer was still the tower and bulwark of his native land.”** (AYR, July 27th 1867)

“...patients pronounced dead of cholera have been repeatedly seen to move one or more of their limbs after death. While M. Trachez (who had been sent to **Poland** to study the cholera) was in the deadhouse of the Bagatelle Hospital in Warsaw, he saw a body which visibly moved its left foot ten or twelve times in the course of an hour. Afterwards, the right foot participated in the same movement, but very feebly. M Tranchez sent for Mr Searle, an English surgeon, to direct his attention to the phenomenon. *Mr Searle had often remarked it.* The body nevertheless, was left in the dissecting-room, and thence taken to the cemetery. From which M. Trachez draws the inference: “It is allowable to think that many cholera patients have been buried alive.” (AYR, July 3rd, 1869)

“In **San Francisco...(the Chinese) support a curious little theatre where the music is a demoniacal band of gongs.”** (AYR, March 20th, 1869)

“A student in the Northern languages ventures to suggest that the term Hoveller, by which the **Broadstairs** Life-Boatman is locally known, may be a corruption of the **Danish** word *Overlever*, signifying deliverer.” (HW, March 7th, 1857)

(Ed: A play about slavery, performed in America just prior to the civil war, about the pitiful sale of slave called Zoe, generated high emotions.)

“Suddenly there was a bustle among the actors – the cue was not given – the tragedian who was just then speaking stopped. Through the lane the frightened troupe made rushed an excited bald-headed man in evening dress; one hand worked like a pump-handle, the other flung circulars into the pit. The actors thought he must be some madman broken loose. The orchestra drew back and made as if to fly.

“Don’t sell her,” cried the odd man – it was (an) abolitionist, “don’t sell her; but send her to Canada by the underground railway.” (AYR, July 6th 1861) (Ed: *The underground railway was an informal network of secret routes and safe houses used by nineteenth century black slaves to escape to free states and Canada. **Chatham, Kent** was part of this route.*)

“Why not try Texas at once? (Ed: **Denton branch is in Texas**.) Capital place. Just over the frontier, and just beyond the law.” (AYR, September 25th, 1869.)

“Before there were any facilities for watering the streets in **Melbourne the dust nuisance was awful. In a main street the townsman suddenly found himself enveloped in a gritty cloud, which put his eyes to a sharp torture. Beset by the shouting of unseen bullock-drivers and the angry cries of horsemen who had just**

escaped from riding over him, he might rush away to the first place of shelter, and there labour in vain to clean his eyes out and allay their smarting. The new arrival – or, in colonial language, the new chum – after his first dusting generally wears a veil; and veiled men abound in Melbourne streets on a dry windy day. This year an excellent supply of water, from a source high above the site of the city, enables us to fight our enemy. By screwing a hose to the pipes that pass along the streets a jet of water can be made to play upon the road and conquer him.” (HW December 11th, 1858.)

“Going for seventeen hundred dollars! A shameful aggravating sacrifice! No advance on seventeen hundred dollars? Gentlemen, gentlemen, be spry with your biddings and don’t let such valuable property be sweepered out of the U-nited states for a fractional splinter of its worth! The splendid yacht *Constellation*, with all her new stores and fixings, cabins panelled with maple and mahogany, mirrors, pictures, new sails as white as the President’s best table-napkins, masts as tough as a hickory fishing-rod, going to be knocked down to a foreign bidder for the ridiculous rate of seventeen hundred dollars!’

This fervid burst of oratory was uttered in the auction mart of **Buffalo City**, on a broiling August day; and the auctioneer stopped to take breath, wiped his forehead and kept the ivory hammer still suspended in mid-air.

There was a hum among the spectators – a hum and a smothered laugh, but no effort to avert the ‘sacrifice’ so much deplored by the man of sales. One Quaker flour-dealer remarked that, had the craft possessed more stowage, he might have made an offer; but that such tawdry gimcracks were useless to a sober citizen.

‘Don’t libel the property, Brother Broadbrim,’ exclaimed the flushed

auctioneer...(He) made one more appeal. He begged the audience not to ‘give the Britisher a triumph,’ not to ‘let this gorgeous yacht, comparable to the gilded galley of Princess Cleopatra the Great to go out of the country,’ but finally he rapped down the hammer of fate.

‘Cap, she’s yours.’

I was the Captain.” (AYR, May 3rd, 1862)

(Ed: A convicted pickpocket, who had been transported to **New South Wales**, demonstrates his talents to a lady in the colony.)

“Had you not a pair of very small pearl-drops in your ears this morning, Madam?”

I placed my hands to my ears and discovered that the drops were gone....I said, ‘How dared you, sir, place your fingers on my face?’

‘Upon my sacred word and honour, madam,’ he replied, placing his hand over his left breast and bowing. ‘I did nothing of the kind! The ear is the most sensitive part of the human body to the touch of another person. Had I touched your ear my hope of having these drops in my waistcoat pocket would have been gone. It was the springs only that I touched, and the drops fell into the palm of my left hand.’ He placed the earrings on the table and made me another very low bow.” (HW, April 9th, 1859)

(Ed: The city of **Palo Alto** took its name from a stand of tall redwood trees called *El Palo Alto*.)

“The redwood bark is commonly found perforated in every direction by a kind of starling, called for his pains the carpentaro – carpenter. The carpentaros labour indefatigably to form cells in the trees, which they fit tightly with acorns for their winter provender. They work chiefly upon the tops of the redwoods and are always at work when they are not fighting. There is a grey squirrel who profits by their labour. When he ascends a redwood he is immediately surrounded by

the birds, who know what he wants, and attack him with an angry chatter. Taking no heed of them, he extracts whichever acorn is most tempting in his eyes, pops it in his mouth, and turns his head from side to side, looking at the indignant birds with comical composure. Then down he comes, whisking his silvery tail, and the carpenters assemble round the pillaged hole, to scream at the whole rascally business and rate the robber in his absence. Often it happens that while they are in the midst of their vituperation, the grey squirrel again appears among them, having found the first acorn so ripe and good that he thinks he will take another.“ (HW, February 24th, 1855)

*“The great organ of **Haarlem** and the tulip-roots of Haarlem are the only things connected with the place that most of us have heard of...With the extraordinary history of the tulip mania a great deal of fiction is, no doubt, mixed up, but it is still amazing after a liberal deduction. In one case it is related that a landed proprietor gave a furnished country-house, a well-stocked garden, and couple of cows for an especially rare root; in another, a carriage, a pair of fine horses (and perhaps the coachman and the footman into the bargain) were exchanged for a similar treasure. One rich merchant gave his pretty daughter to a penniless man whom he detested – and whom, as a necessary consequence, she dearly loved – to acquire a tulip which no other man had. In another, a cook, having mistaken a precious tulip root for an onion and cooked it accordingly, was seized with such remorse on discovering the mistake, that he instantly committed suicide. “ (AYR, August 18th 1866)*

“Mrs E.T. French...clairvoyant physician, **New York**, advertises in good bold type (miraculous as her powers are, and yearning as her heart continually is to effect the permanent cure of the whole

suffering human family) that it is useless ‘sending a lock of your hair, and at least one of your prominent symptoms’ of your complaint to her, without an accompaniment of five dollars.” (HW, June 5th, 1858)

“**New Zealand** has great capabilities. The inversion of the seasons in Antipodean countries is strange to us. What can we say to a Christmas in Midsummer, with roses for mistletoe, and strawberries for the red beads of the shining holly?” (AYR, Nov 2nd 1861)

“Master and Miss Dickens will be pleased to have the company of Master and Miss Tribe to spend the evening.” (CD’s first recorded letter, written circa 1820-1821 to the children of John Tribe, landlord of the Mitre Inn, **Chatham**. The Mitre featured in The Holly-Tree Inn and again in Edwin Drood, disguised as *The Crozier*)

General Taylor, when stationed at **Monterey**: “Sir...so long as we have thirty muskets, we can never be conquered!” (HW August 24th 1850)

“One day, a young man, known in the neighbourhood, purchased some arsenic of a chemist at Eastwood, near **Nottingham**, on a Sunday morning. It was about the beginning of the month. On the 13th he purchased a similar quantity of another chemist. On the 20th of the next month, a man named John Barber, who had been unwell six or seven weeks, suddenly died. The young man who purchased the arsenic was the brother of Mrs Barber. Suspicion was excited; and, to Mrs Barber’s great surprise, she was arrested, together with a man named Ingram, a paramour, and they were both committed for wilful murder.

She had fancied that by sending her brother for the arsenic, nobody would think of her in the matter.” (HW, December 13th, 1851)

*“I had no swag, not even a blanket to carry,” said he, “for I had parted with these long before. When I started out of **Adelaide**, a few pence, a plug of tobacco, an old clay pipe, a sharp knife and a clear conscience were all my possessions.” (HW, May 8, 1858)*

A stanza by the **Connecticut**-born poet Fitz-Greene Halleck on the people of his home state:

*“Theirs is a pure republic, wild yet strong
A “fierce democracie” where all are true
To what themselves have voted – right or wrong –
And to their laws denominated blue.”
(AYR May 2nd 1868)*

*“Good heavens, Sir”, the great **Philadelphian** authority (GW Childs) said to me this morning, “if you don’t read in **Chicago**, the people will go into fits.” In reference to fatigue, I answered: “Well, I would rather they went into fits than I did.” (Letter from CD to Mary Dickens, January 23rd 1868)*

OVER TO YOU, BRANCH MEMBERS....

Here are a few suggestions, if you are stuck for ideas for material to submit to **London Ivy**:

- Is there an artistic event in your area, inspired by the works of Dickens? The **Los Angeles** County Museum recently displayed a work by the artist Glenn Ligon which was inspired by *A Tale of Two Cities*. Why not interview the artist?
- Is there a plaque or some other permanent tribute to Dickens in your area, such as the one unveiled in **Canterbury** recently? Why not tell us about it?
- Did Dickens visit your area? Why not give a detailed account of his visit to **Worcester**, **Cleveland**, **Pittsburgh** or **Lebanon**? Can members of **Madison** or **Marinette** tell us the full story of the shooting of John Arndt, as mentioned in *American Notes*? What is the background to CD’s statement, in his letter of 12th May 1842 that “The wild and rabid Toryism of **Toronto**...is appalling.”
- Has a member of your branch made a distinguished contribution to Dickensian research? For instance, your Editor would like

to mention, and personally thank, Dr Elliot Engel, of **Raleigh** branch, whose *Bibliography of Pickwick* is the starting-point for all serious modern research on CD’s first novel. Why not tell us about the research of your members?

- Perhaps a travel itinerary could be created using material in *Household Words* or *All the Year Round*. Why not describe the Chesil Bank area of Dorset (HW April 17th 1858), an area which includes **Sidmouth**, and where “a fisherman will assure us that, land him where we please upon the Bank, in a pitch-dark night he will know his whereabouts by the size of the pebbles.”
- Could you use your local area as the starting-point for an article about a book which influenced Dickens? For example, could a member of **Rockland** write an article about their area being mentioned in Washington Irving’s *History of New York*, and then talk about the influence of that work on Dickens?
- Could you use a local Dickensian event to give new insights into Dickens’s novels? For instance, Victorian games such as marbles are played at the **Riverside** Dickens Festival – can you tell us about the marbles known as “Alley Tors” mentioned in *Pickwick*?

PLEASE SEND ALL ARTICLES, NEWSPAPER CUTTINGS, COMMENTS etc to the editorial address:

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