
London Particular

The Dickens Fellowship Newsletter

NEW DIRECTOR AT CD MUSEUM Since our last newsletter, Robert Moye has been appointed Director of the CD Museum. He has over 20 years' experience in the museum and heritage sector and has held posts at various museums, most recently at the V & A Museum of Childhood in east London. Robert has a wide range of interests, including photography, architecture, football, literature and the visual arts. He is a trustee of the Ragged School Museum in Copperfield Road, London E3.

MEMBERSHIP RENEWAL - REMINDER

Members should have received a renewal form for 2015 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've 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 2015.

A Book To Get Your Teeth Into Prof Michael Slater tells me: "The Guardian recently featured an interview with the best-selling American writer, Annie Rice, author of the cult series '*The Vampire Chronicles*'. Asked 'What book changed your life?', she answered, '*Great Expectations*'. One can see how reading about Miss Havisham and Estella might get one going on vampire stories!"

David Copperfield – A German View DF member Dr Joanne Eysell from Freiburg in Germany writes to say that she received some time ago a copy of *David Copperfield* with an interesting letter enclosed, which says (Joanne's translation): "To: Helmut Drese. We are taking the liberty of presenting you with Charles Dickens's "*David Copperfield*" as an outward sign of gratitude and esteem for our teacher, who was not only our Schoolmaster but also a comrade. Heil Hitler! Dresden 9 March 1935. Signed: Kern." Later Kern joined the army – voluntarily? - and

wrote to Mr Drese, who replied, "*It pleased me greatly to think that, despite heavy fighting, you thought of me. I followed the news avidly and would like to have been there. I often leaf happily through the copy of David Copperfield and think of you gratefully. Take care of yourself! Heil Hitler! H. Drese.*"

ROBERT LOUIS STEVENSON CLUB OF EDINBURGH TO VISIT THE MUSEUM

Members of the Robert Louis Stevenson Club of Edinburgh are to visit the Charles Dickens Museum in Doughty Street on the afternoon of Tuesday 30 June. After they have toured the Museum, the Fellowship will take them on a brief guided tour of the area – which will last about an hour. We will then return to the Museum and the Fellowship will host a reception for them (drinks and nibbles) in the Museum café. Any DF member who wishes to join the tour or the reception (or both) should be at the Museum for a 4.30 start for the walk or 5.30 for the reception.

Another First for CD? DF Hon Gen Sec Paul Graham reports that the TV "Food Programme" recently featured eastern food. CD is credited with being the first western writer to mention Turkish Delight in his fiction. In *Edwin Drood*, Rosa wants to go to the 'Lumps-of-Delight shop' and explains to Eddy that this is 'a Turkish sweetmeat'.

The Perfect Housewife... 2015 marks the sesquicentenary of the publication of *Our Mutual Friend* in volume form in 1865. This year's Central programme focuses on the novel. Members will recall that Bella Wilfer after her marriage consults a book entitled *The Complete British Family Housewife*. *The Dickens Index* notes that 'no book of that title existed, but several such manuals were available, notably of course, *Mrs Beeton's Book of Household Management* (1859-61)'. The Guildhall Library in the City will be the venue for an exhibition – *Celebrity Cooks: Mrs Beeton and Her Contemporaries*, from 21 January to 17 April.

Our Mutual Friend – Unremitting Rubbish? As noted above, to celebrate the 150th anniversary of the publication of *Our Mutual Friend*, the 2015

Central programme has Dickens's last completed novel as its general theme. We hope this meets with the approval of members, and that they won't share the sentiments of Anthony Powell (1905 – 2000), best known as the author of the novel sequence *A Dance to the Music of Time*, who revealed in his *Journal* entry for 16 August 1992: *'...reread Our Mutual Friend. After the splendid beginning of the Thames at night, Gaffer Hexam being "in luck again" dredging up a dead body, the novel becomes unremitting rubbish. One is prepared to accept a certain degree of Dickens's unreality, but this passes all reason, also many loose ends are never tied together. It is difficult to see why the book is one of Dickens's best-known.'* Thanks to Paul Graham for this.

Dickens's Contribution to the War Effort [WW1]

A further quote from the article by well-known author and DF member, Jerry White, in the TLS of August 2014: *"It was the Dickens of Pickwick, The Old Curiosity Shop, Martin Chuzzlewit in particular, with their mix of comedy, almost slapstick, and pathos, that resonated most with readers during the war. And it is the characters of Sam Weller and particularly Mark Tapley who time and again were brought forward as an ideal of the British fighting man. Tapley, of course, was the irrepressible ostler in the Blue Dragon inn at Salisbury, convinced there was never such a man as he to "come out strong" in adverse circumstances. Mark was thought by some to be "Charles Dickens's richest legacy to humanity", as one writer put it in the Dickensian in mid-1918, resonant "of real life Mark Tapleys – bless them – revealed amid the mud and blood and devastation of the trenches" and many others who had "died with inexhaustible gaiety". Mark Tapley in khaki became a favourite image, with apt phrases being attributed to him, as here in the Saturday Westminster Gazette in March 1914: "Any man can be in good spirits when he's wearing the King's uniform and serving his country. There ain't much credit in that you know".*

A Murderer's Choice The first railway murderer in England, Franz Müller, sought to escape to America in 1864. He was arrested on landing in New York and was returned to England under guard, reading *The Pickwick Papers* and *David Copperfield*.

A Danish View DF member Kurt Hollesen recently gave a talk on Dickens in a library in a remote island called Langeland in southern Denmark. More than 20 people attended and Kurt *"was truly surprised and glad to see with what interest these people with shining and living eyes followed my talk about one of our common great heroes. Afterwards some of them came quietly*

around the coffee-table and asked intelligent questions: 'When was the first translation in Danish?' 'How long did Andersen stay at Gad's Hill?' and so on." (I fear CD himself would have answered "too long" to the last question! Ed.) A fascinating insight into Dickensian studies in another country, thank you Kurt.

Central Fellowship Now on Twitter Members may be interested to learn they can now follow Central on Twitter@DickensFellowHQ. Some branches – notably Rochester & Chatham and Toronto – were there already, but Central have now caught up. Many thanks to Lucinda Hawksley for her expert advice and guidance in setting up the account.

IT Skills Sought The Fellowship would like to hear from any member with IT skills who might like to assist with, for example, producing printed documents such as application leaflets. Anyone prepared to help, please contact the Hon Gen Sec via e-address: postbox@dickensfellowship.org

NOTICE OF AGM Notice is hereby given that the AGM of the Dickens Fellowship will be held on Saturday 25 July 2015 at 11.00 am at Bristol University's Wills Hall, Parry's Lane, Stoke Bishop, Bristol, to transact the following business:

- a) to receive and consider the report of the Council on the activities of the Fellowship;
- b) to receive and consider the annual accounts and balance sheet of the Fellowship;
- c) to elect the Honorary Officers;
- d) to transact such other business as Council may decide is appropriate for a General Meeting.

The agenda for the meeting will be published on the Fellowship website in due course. All the Honorary Officer positions: Joint Honorary General Secretaries, Honorary Treasurer and Honorary Editor are elected annually. Anyone wishing to stand for any of these positions should inform the Fellowship **by Friday 27 March** at: postbox@dickensfellowship.org

'When are you going to send something more to H.W.? Are you lazy?? Low-spirited??? Pining for Paris????' (Letter from CD to Rev James White, 8 February 1857.) **So, contributions (to LP please, not Household Words!) to: Alison Gowans, "Danesdyke", 27A Ashcombe Road, Carshalton, Surrey SM5 3ET, or by email – aligowans@hotmail.co.uk**