

FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS

1. **Who runs the Dickens Fellowship?**

The Dickens Fellowship is a non-profit-making voluntary organisation and is run by volunteers who work from home. Its constitution specifies that it has its central organisation in London, and it currently uses the address of the Charles Dickens Museum for postal communication only. There is no Dickens Fellowship office at 48 Doughty Street and no member of staff paid to deal with Fellowship communications.

Individual Branches of the Dickens Fellowship are run by local volunteers. Branches are self-determining and financially autonomous.

The Central organisation - Who does the work? Who makes decisions?

There are currently 5 'officers' of the Fellowship (Chairman, two Joint Hon Gen Secretaries, Treasurer, and Editor of *The Dickensian*) who have their own responsibilities. Officers meet regularly with members of the Management Committee to oversee the everyday functioning of the Fellowship and to discuss wider issues of strategy relating to the Fellowship as a whole. The Management Committee arranges meetings of the Dickens Fellowship Council twice a year, to report on developments and seek approval for significant proposals or expenditure.

The Dickens Fellowship Council consists of representatives from every branch of the worldwide Fellowship. UK Branch Secretaries usually attend in person; the views of overseas branches can be communicated directly to the General Secretaries or passed on through communication with Branch representatives who attend the Council meetings on behalf of the Branch they represent. Every Branch of the Fellowship can participate in the central decision-making process if they so wish.

2. **Does the Dickens Fellowship own the Charles Dickens Museum?**

No. The Dickens Fellowship organised the purchase of the buildings at 48 and 49 Doughty Street when they came on to the market in the 1920s, and were responsible for the acquisition of the core collections, which were often donated by well-wishers. Individual members and Branches of the Dickens Fellowship have made many generous donations to the Museum over the years, and all members currently enjoy free admission to the house on production of a current membership card (Central or Branch membership.)

The Museum buildings and its contents are owned by a charitable trust (for further information see The Charity Commission website: The Dickens House and The Dickens House Fund No 212172). Under the terms of the original Trust Deed, the Dickens Fellowship appoints 7 out of the 13 Trustees of the Dickens House Trust, and maintains a very close relationship with the Museum. Until 2004 the Museum and the Dickens Fellowship shared the same bank account and the same Treasurer, but they are now financially independent.

3. **Why doesn't the Dickens Fellowship buy Gad's Hill Place?**

Dickens's home in Kent, Gad's Hill Place, belongs to Gad's Hill School. As part of the recent planning application to extend the school buildings, the school is legally committed to turning the house into a heritage site with public access. It is hoped this will be achieved by 2016.

4. **Why is the badge of the Dickens Fellowship a red flower?**

The red badge of the Fellowship represents Dickens's favourite flower, the red geranium. Dickens often wore a geranium in his button hole during his public readings.

5. Is the Dickens Fellowship a charity?

Although a non-profit-making institution, the Dickens Fellowship cannot qualify for charitable status because it has autonomous branches, over which the central administration has no direct influence.

6. How is the location of the annual conference chosen?

Annual conferences of the Dickens Fellowship used to be held in the UK as one-day events, then became weekend events, and have developed into 5-day international conferences, held in the UK and overseas in alternate years. Branches offer to host the conference on this basis, and to make all the arrangements for the event. Applications to host each conference are considered by the Management Committee and approved by the Dickens Fellowship Council.

7. Why does the Central Fellowship have two newsletters?

This is essentially – like so much in the Dickens Fellowship - a matter of history! Alan Watts, then Hon Gen Secretary of the Fellowship, founded *Mr Dick's Kite* in 1982, so that his words on Dickens 'might be flown about the world.' The *Kite* continues as a thrice-yearly newsletter 'for all Dickens Fellowship members' and is a medley of news items and observations about matters Dickensian. The *London Particular* was inaugurated in 2002 as a newsletter specifically for members of the London-based Fellowship (then known as Headquarters), and contains more administrative information and details of London events. Both newsletters are circulated to all members of the Central Fellowship and to Branch Secretaries worldwide. Issues of the *London Particular* are archived on this website, and it is hoped that in the near future this will also be the case for the *Kite*.