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# London Particular

The Dickens Fellowship Newsletter

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## CHANGE OF VENUE FOR LONDON MEETINGS TO BARNARD'S INN HALL

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After many years at the Swedenborg Hall, the venue for the monthly meetings of the Central Fellowship is changing. Gresham College has offered the Fellowship generous rates for the use of **BARNARD'S INN HALL** near Holborn Circus. (Nearest tube: Chancery Lane.) The hall dates from the late 14<sup>th</sup> century, with early 16<sup>th</sup>-century panelling. (Members who recall Barnard's portrayal in *Great Expectations* will be relieved to learn that, nowadays, the Inn offers very pleasant facilities, and no longer resembles at all Dickens's description of "the dingiest collection of shabby buildings ever squeezed together in a rank corner as a club for tomcats"!!!)

We look forward to welcoming members there from Autumn 2007. (**First meeting: Monday 10 September.**)

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## SOUTH AFRICAN FILM VERSION OF OLIVER TWIST – CHARITY SCREENING

*"Growing up in the dusty wastes of the Swartland, sold from an orphanage into child labour on the farms, and later to a rural undertaker, Twist finally takes his fate into his own hands and escapes to Cape Town..."*

On Sunday 4 February at 12 noon there is a unique opportunity to see **A Boy Called Twist**, directed by Tim Greene, at the Renoir Cinema in the Brunswick Centre, Bloomsbury (close to Russell Square tube). This award-winning film (not on present release in this country) transfers Dickens's familiar story to present-day South Africa, where the AIDS epidemic creates many orphans and undertakers and where street urchins roam the streets of Cape Town, stealing handbags and mobile phones instead of silk handkerchiefs. Film versions of Dickens are usually locked in their Victorian context, but it is

*fascinating to see how closely Dickens's story adapts to the modern world.*

*Tim Greene has given permission to the Charles Dickens Museum to screen this film to help raise money for the charity MylifE which helps the street kids of Cape Town, some of whom joined in the making of the film.*

*This event is part of a programme of events organised by the Museum to coincide with the exhibition Ignorance and Want: The Social Conscience of Charles Dickens. A guest speaker will introduce the film. Tickets £6.50, available from the cinema, tel: 08708 506927, [www.curzoncinemas.com](http://www.curzoncinemas.com).*

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## DICKENS IN THE NEWS

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Please send any Dickens-related newspaper clippings and other items you would like to see in the *London Particular* to the editorial address: Stephen Jarvis, 1 Riverine, Grosvenor Drive, Maidenhead, Berks, SL6 8PF, UK. Email: [stephenjarvis@hotmail.com](mailto:stephenjarvis@hotmail.com)

**Contributions have slowed over the last few months – but I welcome any contributions, including those from websites or blogs.**

On 9 October 2006, The Daily Telegraph carried a lengthy feature on the sex appeal of male literary characters. In the chart rundown entitled "**TOP 10 LITERARY CRUMPET**", Dickensians will be reasonably satisfied by the performance of Sidney Carton at Number 2. He was unfortunately beaten to the No 1 slot by Mr Rochester, but at least managed to see off the challenge of Mr Darcy at No. 3.

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The opening line of *A Tale of Two Cities* is perhaps the most over-used of all quotations from the Dickens canon. However, on 8 January 2007,

The Atlanta Journal-Constitution, a newspaper which serves the greater Atlanta area in the USA, commented: "Even the hoariest of clichés can be fitting in the right circumstances." Their report on the recent election of Glenn Richardson as Speaker of the Georgia House of Representatives, stated: "When Glenn Richardson began his speech with the familiar Dickens words after being re-elected Speaker on Monday morning they seemed well chosen. With a scandal ripping at his heels, at the very moment when his party is consolidating its hold on power under the Golden Dome, this indeed seemed like the best and worst of times for the Speaker."

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**Journalists inevitably compare a lengthy court case to Jarndyce and Jarndyce – but The Daily Telegraph of 26 October 2006 carried a report of a case which was so lengthy that even the judge felt compelled to make the comparison.**

**For 43 years, the families of three brothers fought in court over their shares of a sign-writing business in Stoke-on-Trent, bequeathed by their father. All but one of the original parties are now dead – including the original judge. The current judge, Lord Justice Ward, in making the comparison with Bleak House, berated the families for having "mucked about for forty years" and concluded the saga with the words: "The costs will lie where they fall." The one surviving member of the original party – who first went to court aged 27, and who recently celebrated his 70<sup>th</sup> birthday – commented: "The judge said it was sad and pathetic and I agree. I've got a huge box of legal papers and I'm tempted to throw them away, but I think I'll put them in the attic. They represent so much work."**

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BBC Radio 2 over the Christmas period featured Bob Dylan reading from *The Pickwick Papers* on his *Theme Time Radio* show. Choosing an excerpt from the jolly Christmas scene at Dingley Dell, His Bobness commented: "Makes a change from 'Bah, humbug!'"

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The *Sunday Times* of 24 December carried an unusual explanation for Scrooge's behaviour. Robert Chance Algar, a Californian neurologist, and his aunt Lisa Saunders, a medical writer and physician, believe that Scrooge suffered from the little-known disorder Lewy Body Dementia (LBD), a disease so complex that doctors did not include

it in the medical lexicon until 1996. "All the events in the story fit a person suffering from the early stages of LBD," said Algar. "LBD is similar to both Alzheimer's and Parkinson's. Dickens says 'The cold within Scrooge froze his old features and stiffened his gait' and he also suffers from tremors. But for me the most telling feature is the ghosts. In the early stage of the illness, people undergo vivid hallucinations, often involving old friends or family members. And such experiences can cause a dramatic shift in perspectives."

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The *Seattle Times* of 3 January reviewed a new restaurant in the city called *Oliver's Twist*, which serves cocktails named after characters in Dickens's novel. According to the review, the *Charley Bates* cocktail is "well worth picking a pocket or two to have some more". The piece continues: "The mix of gin, punt e mes (a style of vermouth) and sweet vermouth is a delight. The cocktail, served in a lowball glass and called bittersweet on the menu, is balanced and approachable. And the hints of bitterness and sweetness add to the cocktail's rounded, layered flavour." Here, then, is the recipe for *Charley Bates*:

1 ¼ ounce gin

½ ounce punt e mes

½ ounce sweet vermouth

Combine ingredients in pint glass with ice. Shake. Strain into lowball glass with ice.

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**MOST IMPORTANT!!!**

**ALL MEMBERS SHOULD HAVE RECEIVED THEIR SUBSCRIPTION RENEWAL FORMS BY NOW. PLEASE REMEMBER TO SUBMIT THE COMPLETED FORM AND PAYMENT AS SOON AS POSSIBLE. MANY THANKS.**

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A Final Thought...  
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"It's the finest idea that was ever started. 'United Metropolitan Improved Hot Muffin and Crumpet Baking and Punctual Delivery Company. Capital, five millions, in five hundred thousand shares of ten pounds each'. Why the very name will get the shares up to a premium in ten days."

- Charles Dickens, Nicholas Nickleby