
London Particular

The Dickens Fellowship Newsletter

July Pub Meeting This year's Saturday meeting will take place on **13 July**. The venue will again be the Rugby Tavern in Great James Street which runs parallel with Doughty Street. The question for debate this year will be: *'Which is the greatest Victorian novel (including foreign novels) that Dickens didn't write?'* If you have a favourite novel that you would like to champion for 10 minutes on the day, please let the LP editor know the title and come along and participate. There will be a vote at the end to determine the result, not necessarily definitive....

PROF MICHAEL SLATER'S BOOKS, NEW HOMES REQUIRED (cont'd from last edition). Michael has decided to find new homes for some of his books and DVDs. If you would like to choose from any of the following, please contact Michael by phone (07982 770 193) or by email (michael.slater6@virgin.net) to arrange collection, either at a meeting at Lumen or at the Charles Dickens Museum. If you would like an item sent, Michael would be grateful if you could refund him the postage/packing costs.

S Connor, *Dickens ('Re-reading Literature' series, 1985)*

T Cook (ed.) *Nicholas Nickleby (Wordsworth Classics, 1995)*

***Dickens, Our English Watering-place* (i.e. Broadstairs; reprinted as booklet)**

***Dickens, Sikes and Nancy and Other Public Readings*, introduced by Philip Collins, World's Classics, 1993**

Greaves John, *Dickens at Doughty Street*, foreword by Monica Dickens (1975). Presentation copy

Hawes Donald, *Who's Who in Dickens* (1998). Presentation copy

Hawes Donald, *Charles Dickens* (2008). Presentation copy

Jackson T A, *Dickens. The Progress of a Radical* (1937)

Marcus Steven, *Dickens. From Pickwick to Dombey* (1965)

Miller, J Hillis, *Charles Dickens. The World of His Novels* (1959)

David Parker, *The Doughty Street Novels* (2006)

Rossi-Wilcox S, *Dinner for Dickens* (2005; fine copy with original dust cover)

Slater M and Drew J (eds), *The Uncommercial Traveller and Other Papers 1859-70 (vol 4 of the Dent Uniform Edition of Dickens's Journalism, 2000). Presentation, from Michael Slater to Philip Collins*

***Chesterton on Dickens* (vol 15 of Chesterton's Collected Works, Ignatius Press, 1989)**

Forster J, *Life of Charles Dickens*, hardback Everyman edition, 2 vols, ed A J Hoppe, revised ed, 1969

DVDs:-

***Great Expectations* (Discovery Channel, Great Books Series)**

***Dickens of London, Part One*. Featuring Roy Dotrice, written by Wolf Mankowitz**

***A Christmas Carol*. Featuring Michael Hordern and John le Mesurier.**

Another Influential Victorian Two Temple Place (near Temple tube station) is a marvellous neo-Gothic mansion built by William Waldorf Astor in 1895. It is currently hosting an excellent exhibition (ends 22 April) to celebrate the bicentenary of the birth of aesthete, critic and philanthropist, John Ruskin. Like CD, he cared intensely about the plight of the poor; he much admired *Oliver Twist*. The booklet accompanying the exhibition notes that Ruskin was 'a true polymath....debating with notables from Darwin to Dickens'. (Ed.)

Dombey: What's in a name? Professor Angus Easson writes: "Looking through Peter Parker's *A Little Book of Latin for Gardeners* (Little, Brown, 2018), I chanced, in a section on eponyms (names of plants derived from individuals), upon Joseph Dombey (1742-94), French botanist and explorer. If this Dombey's experiences as explorer were published, Dickens, a great reader of travel

literature, might have come across the name - 'when found, make a note of' – and used it in due course. So perhaps the novel should be retitled *Dombey et Fils!*"

WAS DICKENS MAD? Our Hon Gen Sec Paul Graham reports on the first meeting of the year. DF President John Bowen gave a talk on '*Madness and the Dickens Marriage: some new evidence*'. This evidence was a letter written by a neighbour of the elderly, dying, Catherine in Gloucester Crescent (where she lived after the separation) to a friend. In the letter, the neighbour says Catherine had told him her husband had '*tried to shut her up in an asylum*'. An abridged version of John's talk appeared in the TLS on 22 Feb and caused much comment on social media.

Paul comments that the letter is interesting but doesn't prove anything. CD's friend Edward Bulwer-Lytton had recently put his wife Rosina in an asylum – but she was released after a few weeks following a public outcry. Paul says CD would have had to be mad himself to contemplate such an action and jeopardize his relationship with his public.

{Perhaps, however, he really was 'mad' to some degree at the time. After all, his own daughter, Katey, did say: 'My father was like a madman when my mother left home'... and Thackeray wrote of CD to his daughters: 'He is ½ mad about his domestic affairs, and tother ½ mad with arrogance and vanity'. Ed.}

Paul notes a further version of John's findings is to appear in the Spring issue of *The Dickensian*, so readers can make up their own minds on this disturbing new 'evidence'.

Dickens and Victor Hugo Further to the recent BBC dramatization of *Les Misérables*, it's interesting to note that CD met Hugo in Paris in 1847, visiting his splendid apartment on the Place Royale. CD described it as full of '*old armour and old tapestry, and old coffers, and grim old chairs and tables, and old canopies of state from old palaces...*' '*It looked like an old curiosity shop, or the property-room of some gloomy vast, old theatre*'. He described Hugo himself, talking of his childhood in Spain, laughing at the actors who had murdered his tragedy at the Odéon, and paying compliments to Dickens, all the while looking "*like a genius as he is, every inch of him*".

The Venerable George Austin An obituary appeared in the Daily Telegraph (12.2.19) of this highly reactionary man, Archdeacon of York, who has just died aged 87. He was very much against

the ordination of women and considered Prince Charles unfit to be king because he had broken his wedding vows. In 1991 he delivered from the pulpit of York Minster what was described as the fiercest attack in living memory on the Church's liberals. The sermon attracted widespread publicity and an unusual rebuke from the Archbishop of York, Dr John Habgood, who said the Archdeacon reminded him of the Fat Boy in *The Pickwick Papers* who wanted to make people's flesh creep. It was a telling analogy, as Austin was a fat man with a boyish face...!

Jacob's Island and the Dickens Estate Our Membership Secretary, Allan Clack, tells us about the Dickens Estate, which lies a 10-minute walk east of Tower Bridge on the south side of the Thames, between Jamaica Road and the river. Southwark Council gave the names of Dickens characters to blocks of flats on the Bermondsey Estate. On the walk from Tower Bridge, you pass a maze of cafés, restaurants, apartments and business premises, but the narrow streets, with their gantries and overhead walk-ways, make it easy to imagine that Bill Sikes or Fagin might appear at any minute! There are still a few warehouses remaining from the Victorian period and there is a plaque on the New Concordia warehouse, which says:

"Jacob's Island. Folly Ditch, a loop of the river Neckinger, encircled this area, which was originally called Jacob's Island. Described by Charles Dickens as 'surrounded by a muddy ditch, six to eight feet deep', the island contained many mills, warehouses and wharves. Most of the early buildings were demolished by 1860 and replaced by Victorian buildings, many of which have now also gone; New Concordia Wharf is one survivor. In the early 19th century, this area was a notorious rookery or slum. Dickens used it in his novel Oliver Twist. He set Fagin's den in one of the warehouses and the evil Bill Sykes (sic) met his grisly end in the ooze bed of Folly Ditch." (to be cont'd)

'Oh, you know, deuce take it,' said the simpering fellow with weak legs, looking round the board with an imbecile smile, 'we can't forego Blood, you know. We must have Blood, you know'. (A discussion on noble birth at the Waterbrooks', David Copperfield.) What your Editor can't forego, and must have, is contributions - so please send one to: Alison Gowans, "Danesdyke", 27A Ashcombe Road, Carshalton, Surrey SM5 3ET, or by email – aligowans17@outlook.com