
London Particular

The Dickens Fellowship Newsletter

Annual General Meeting of the Dickens Fellowship

All members are invited to attend the AGM of the Fellowship which will be held on **Saturday 22 July** at 2pm in the boardroom of the Charles Dickens Museum, 48 Doughty Street, WC1N 2LX. Alternatively, members can attend via Zoom: <https://us02web.zoom.us/j/81209801983?pwd=M2NsdTFMU005TmQ1ZG9YY1N0VGJwZz09>

There will be reports from the Honorary Editor, Dr Emily Bell, and the Honorary Treasurer, Eddie Jones, both of whom will be standing for re-election. The report from the Honorary General Secretary, Paul Graham, will be his final one to members as he will stand down at the meeting. Dr Jackie Stamp and Dr Sati McKenzie, both currently members of the Management Committee, have agreed to stand as Joint Honorary General Secretaries.

More on *Great Expectations* DF member **Sue Gedge** writes: 'It seems very apposite that you referred to the 1967 TV version of GE in the last London Particular. I remember how much I enjoyed it and loved the fact that Hugh Leonard, the screen writer, had chosen to depict the more elegiac ending that Dickens had intended to write. (I was in the 6th form at school, a dedicated Dickensian even then, working my way through all the novels, and having very much admired the David Lean film version.)

'Right now, I'm reeling in shock at the recent BBC version, scripted by Steven Knight, and have expressed my views forthrightly on Twitter. It wasn't so much the changes to the plot that appalled me, as the fact that they made no logical sense, and I'd rather like to meet Mr Knight and ask him to explain his reasoning. There are many aspects I'd like to challenge, not least, his absurd choice to give Pip the surname of Gargery - I wondered if Mr Knight had never read the book and somehow was assuming Joe was Pip's stepfather? I'm very interested to hear what other members of the Fellowship have to say on this subject'. [Like Sue, I'd be keen to hear if anyone had any comments on this. Ed.]

Oh dear ... The Duke and Duchess of Sussex, having been sacked by the digital music service, Spotify, are said to be developing a show for Netflix called *Bad Manners*, based on Miss Havisham in *Great Expectations*, the Charles Dickens novel... (*Times* 26 June)

Hungerford Stairs Congratulations to DF member **Thomas Braun** on the publication at the end of July of his latest novel, *Hungerford Stairs: An Untold Tale of Charles Dickens*, a fictionalised account of a year in the life of the young CD. The book, published by Matador Books, costs £14.99.

Possible activities for the summer *"The long vacation saunters on towards term-time, like an idle river very leisurely strolling down a flat country to the sea. Mr Guppy [a lawyer's clerk] saunters along with it congenially. He has blunted the blade of his penknife, and broken the point off, by sticking that instrument into his desk in every direction. Not that he bears the desk any ill will, but he must do something of an unexciting nature, which will lay neither his physical nor his intellectual energies under too heavy contribution. He finds that nothing agrees with him so well, as to make little gyrations on one leg of his stool, and stab his desk, and gape."* (*Bleak House*)

Dickens, Censorship and Cancel Culture DF member **Chris Davies** writes: 'Following the re-editing (censorship) of books by Enid Blyton, Agatha Christie, Roald Dahl and others, I was pleased to find a piece in "Household Words" in the 1850s on the same subject entitled "Frauds on the Fairies". In this article Dickens turns his ire towards his friend, the artist, George Cruikshank, who had used an old fairy story and imposed upon it a morality tale on the theme of Total Abstinence Prohibition. Dickens is aghast that such traditional stories should be hijacked in this way: **"Now it makes not the least difference whether we agree or disagree with our worthy friend, Mr Cruikshank, in the opinions he interpolated upon an old fairy story. Whether good or bad in themselves they are, in that relation, like the famous definition of a weed; a thing growing up in the wrong place. If such a**

precedent were followed, we must soon become disgusted with the old stories into which modern personages so intruded themselves, and the stories themselves must soon be lost... We have lately observed with pain the intrusion of a Whole Hog of unwieldy dimensions into the fairy flower-garden." Plus ça change!

'Dickens then goes on to offer a version of Cinderella, based on "enlightened, liberal, and free principles". The story concludes with Cinderella becoming Queen and applying herself to govern the country in the following way: **"All the people who ate anything she did not eat, or drank anything she did not drink, were imprisoned for life. All the newspaper offices from which any doctrine proceeded that was not her doctrine, were burnt down. All the public speakers proved to demonstration that if there were any individual on the face of the earth who differed from them in anything, that individual was a designing ruffian and an abandoned monster.....and they all lived happily ever afterwards.."** A good description of cancel culture, I think.'

Lord Leverhulme and Dickens DF member and author **Robert Butterworth** tells me that, according to the biography written by his son, Harold Lever, [later Lord Leverhulme, founder of the soap company Lever Brothers (now Unilever)] loved Dickens, along with Shakespeare, "above all other authors". *David Copperfield* was his particular favourite. When young, he saw Dickens give a public reading in Bolton, and remembered it featuring the Trial Scene from *Pickwick*. Later in life he had a collection of editions and books about Dickens and his illustrators which was "one of the strongest features of his library". *A Christmas Carol* was a book "he knew almost by heart and considered the finest sermon in the English language", and at Christmas parties he would read out the abridged version of it that Dickens had used for public readings. In due course he bought Millais's "The Black Brunswicker", for which Dickens's daughter Kate had been a model, and after she had asked if she might visit his house on Hampstead Heath to have another look at the painting, there sprang up between them "a valued friendship, kept alive by frequent visits and correspondence".

Notes from CDM Many thanks to **Cindy Sughrue**, Director of CDM, for the following information: "The Charles Dickens Museum is looking forward to welcoming the Dickens Fellowship conference delegates to the opening reception on the evening of **Wednesday 26 July**. There will be a chance to see the current special

exhibition, *A Great and Dirty City: Dickens and the London Fog*, which peers through the London fog (the 'London Particular' in fact!) to explore the circumstances that created it and how Dickens was inspired by the phenomenon. The exhibition chimes with current public awareness and debate about air pollution in London and coincides with the progress through the UK Parliament of the Clean Air (Human Rights) Bill, which is currently in its 2nd reading in the House of Commons. If you are unable to attend the conference, you can still enjoy the exhibition until 22 October

.... There will be a number of special events over the summer. The first, linked to the current exhibition, is **The Night Soil Man's Tour**, to be presented on the evening of **19 July**; it explores the domestic context of the 'great and dirty city'. On this guided tour of the historic London home of Charles Dickens, you'll learn the filthy secrets of the Victorian home, with 'scent blocks' bringing you the history you hear about. For further information/tickets please see CDM website

.... **Myths and Mermaids** "I have been reading Tennyson all this morning on the seashore. Among other trifling effects, the waters have dried up as they did of old, and shown me all the mermen and mermaids, at the bottom of the ocean; together with millions of queer creatures, half-fish and half-fungus, looking down into all manner of coral caves and seaweed conservatories" – Charles Dickens letter to John Forster, 7 August 1842. A number of Dickens's stories and letters contain fantastical creatures, from goblins and spirits to the mention of mermaids and fairies. Many of his contemporaries had an interest in the supernatural too, including Hans Christian Andersen, the prolific Danish author. In 1837, Dickens moved into 48 Doughty Street and was well on his way to completing his first novel, *The Pickwick Papers*. In the same year, Andersen published *The Little Mermaid*. In this workshop for ages 5+, (at various times from **2 - 4 August**), families will have the chance to bring some of the mythical creatures from Dickens's and Andersen's work to life! Kids can make their own mini aquariums for Merpeople, collage a mermaid tail and more. Further information/tickets are available on CDM website".

"Oh, Sairey, Sairey, little do we know wot lays afore us!" (Mrs Gamp, Martin Chuzzlewit). I hope one or two contributions or comments will lay afore me, please, to be sent to: Alison Gowans, Danesdyke, 27A Ashcombe Road, Carshalton, Surrey SM5 3ET, or by email – aligowans17@outlook.com