

London Particular

The Newsletter for the Headquarters Group of the Dickens Fellowship

MERRY CHRISTMAS

A very merry Christmas to members one and all, at this most Dickensian time of year.

What better time than now is there to get together with friends old and new who share a common interest and to celebrate Christmas in a spirit of Fellowship?

At the Charles Dickens Museum this year there is a packed programme of events - more of which overleaf - and many members will have already enjoyed the Fellowship's Christmas Supper that took place at the Civil Service Club on Saturday 6 December.

On Friday 19 December, Gad's Hill Place is the setting for the final event of the 2003 programme. Henry Dickens Hawksley CBE will give a talk entitled 'Charles Dickens 1812-70: A Family View'.

But casting ahead to the New Year (see right), conviviality remains the object in January with the ever-popular social evening in which we extend a special welcome to the Fellowship's new members.

NEW SUBSCRIPTION RATES

Two decisions were taken at this year's Conference in Bristol that affect the running of the Fellowship, and have emerged from the review of the Fellowship's operations being undertaken by the Officers.

There will be increases in subscription rates for 2004. Headquarters members' subscriptions will be £12, with second members at the same address being £8, and new members in their first year £6. The affiliation fee for Branches will be £30. Subscriptions to *The Dickensian* will increase by £2 for each category of subscriber.

Charges have not been increased for some years, whilst the costs involved in running the organisation (postage, telephone, travel, for example) have not stood still. Subscribers to both Fellowship and journal will, we hope, still feel that the charges represent value for money.

For example, a Headquarters member who subscribes to *The Dickensian* will be paying £22

rather than the current charge of £16.50. This represents an increase of £5.50 for the year - or less than 11 pence per week.

The other change agreed by Conference was the establishment of a Management Committee to handle the day-to-day business of running the Fellowship's affairs. This task had formerly been devolved to the committee elected by Headquarters members. The Management Committee will report to Council, and will comprise the Joint Secretaries, the Treasurer, the Editor of *The Dickensian*, the Chairman of Headquarters and two other members elected by Council.

The Committee will be chaired by the Chairman of Council, and the President will have the right to attend meetings. Future proposals and changes will continue to be reported back to all members.

2004 DIARY TAKES SHAPE

22 January: Social Evening with refreshments and readings. New members especially welcome.

6 February: Celebrate Charles Dickens's 192nd Birthday at the National Liberal Club. The President will be there, and our guest of honour will be BBC broadcaster James Naughtie.

16th February: "150 years of 'Hard Times'", a talk by Dr Tony Williams.

4 March: Visit to the Library and Museum of Freemasonry, for an exhibition and to hear a talk on Douglas Jerrold by Michael Slater. Cost of £10 includes a glass of wine. Please contact Tony Williams if you wish to go.

12 March: Gad's Hill Evening: 'Crummles': a one-man dramatic presentation by Mansel David.

17 March: Editing "Sketches by Boz": Fellowship President Paul Schlicke is currently working on an edition of the 'Sketches' for the Clarendon Dickens series, and will give us a preview of work in progress.

20 April: Members' Evening: details to follow

AN UNQUALIFIED SUCCESS

The 2003 annual outing to Henley-on-Thames was a resounding success, according to social secretary Peter Duggan.

While the usual take-up for these events is just 20 or so, such was members' enthusiasm that this year a larger coach had to be laid on.

Peter says he is "completely mystified" as to what sparked the interest, but perhaps it had something to do with the fish and chip lunch? Plans are already well under way for the 2004 trip – to Hatfield House – and Peter is already seeking suggestions for the 2005 outing.

DICKENS IN THE NEWS

Dickens's name crops up with surprising regularity in the newspapers, and members may be interested in some of the articles that have appeared in recent weeks.

The *Independent* gave Doughty Street a welcome name-check in November, describing the Charles Dickens Museum as "a more imaginative nod to the season" at a time when Christmas festivities are in danger of being reduced to "an office party, some last-minute shopping and a glimpse of the lights on Oxford Street".

The *Sunday Express* highlighted the 1946 David Lean adaptation of *Great Expectations* as one of the films to watch over Christmas, and the paper was even giving away the novel in its series of "great reads". "The sensational story of a young orphan called Pip... reads like a modern soap opera," it said.

But the *Guardian* carried a more disturbing Dickensian tale in late November, reporting on the case of "A young gang of 21st Century 'Oliver Twists' who used new technology to pick the public's electronic pockets". Armed with a carefully disguised "skimmer" and special video cameras, they spied on cash machine customers withdrawing their money and stole thousands from their accounts.

Passing sentence, Judge Christopher Elwen said references by defence counsel to disappointed down-and-out clients turning to crime after discovering London's streets were not "paved with gold" after all, had a distinct Oliver Twist ring.

"Charles Dickens's hero was also down on his luck and became embroiled in a thieves' kitchen run by, among others, a much older man known as Fagin," he said. "But while I understand the problems of immigrants, legal and illegal, and of asylum seekers, they are, however, no excuse for drifting into crime."

CHARLES DICKENS MUSEUM

The celebration of Christmas at the Charles Dickens Museum – as recommended by the *Independent* – runs from 1 December 2003 to 13 January 2004, and comprises a packed programme of events that offers something for everyone.

The events are free for those who have paid admission to the museum. All the events take place in the library. The museum is closed on 24, 25 and 26 December and 1 January.

13 December: *Creating A Christmas Carol*. Talk and readings by Dr Tony Williams. 11.30-12.00 and 14.30-15.00

16 December: Story-telling for children. Stories that Dickens read as a child or wrote for children, presented by Sally Sanderson. 11.30-12.00 and 14.30-15.00

17 December: Story-telling for children, 11.30-12.00 and 14.30-15.00, AND Victorian Ghost Stories, presented by the Theatre group Whirligig of Time, 18.45 and 20.30. Book this event by phoning 01732 741386. £10 per person

18 December: Art workshop for children with Carol Baker. Drop in between 12.00 and 15.00

20 December: The Poor at Christmas. Readings from Dickens and others by Anthony Burton. 11.30-12.00 and 14.30-15.00

22 December: Art workshop for children. Drop in between 12.00 and 15.00

27 December: Dickens's Ghost Stories. Readings by Michael Slater. 11.30-12.00 and 14.30-15.00

3 January: The Christmas Tree, viewed by Dickens, Hans Christian Andersen and others. Readings by Florian Schweizer. 11.30-12.00 and 14.30-15.00

10 January: Twelfth Night: publications on Twelfth Night customs on display, attended by Anthony Burton. From 11.00-16.00

*** Extra event ***

On Tuesday 9 December, from 18.30 to 20.00, Professor Michael Slater will be lecturing on "Dickens and Christmas" as part of the Museum's autumn "Explorer Course". Some tickets for this single lecture available at £12.

HAVE YOUR SAY

Any feedback on the contents of this newsletter, or suggestions for future items to be included should be sent to: Matthew Davis, Flat 3, 3 Lime Grove, Shepherd's Bush, London, W12 8EE (07932 632 099).

HQ committee member Honor Vine alerts members to the RSC's nine-hour production of *Nicholas Nickleby*, now available on DVD from Metrodome Distribution. Honor says she has hankered after a recording of the production for years, after her own version, videotaped from the television, was lost. Perhaps other members may like this in their Christmas stockings.