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# London Particular

The Newsletter for the Headquarters Group of the Dickens Fellowship

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## MARJORIE WATTS (1925-2005)

Members of the Dickens Fellowship were deeply shocked and saddened to learn of the death of Marjorie Watts on 1<sup>st</sup> February 2005. Messages of condolence and sympathy for Alan and his family have arrived from all parts of the world, where they were such wonderful ambassadors for the organisation and in many ways embodied the spirit of Fellowship.

Marjorie's funeral took place on 14<sup>th</sup> February and was followed by a service of celebration for her life and achievements held at Christ Church, Beckenham, which had figured so largely in her life. The Dickens Fellowship was fully represented at both services.

A fuller obituary will appear in the Spring Issue of *The Dickensian*.

Alan Watts has asked that the donations made in Marjorie's memory should be allocated to charities chosen by the Fellowship through the Oliver Fund of which Marjorie was a great supporter. It was proposed at Council that the bulk of the fund should be given to Great Ormond Street Children's Hospital in London, one of Dickens's great philanthropic interests, for allocation to a specific project which could be identified in Marjorie's memory. Please write to the Joint Secretaries of the Fellowship if you have any other suggestions.

*(Alan Watts has now moved into a residential nursing home and his address is: Room 28, Glebe Court Nursing Home, Glebe Way, West Wickham Kent, BR4 0RZ, United Kingdom. Tel: 0208 462 0868)*

## PROGRAMME CHANGE

As a result of the delay in starting major refurbishment works at St George the Martyr, Borough High Street, the annual Dickens Commemoration Service **will** be held there on Sunday 8<sup>th</sup> May 2005, and not in the Chapel of Guy's Hospital, as stated on the membership card.

## Dickens Fellowship Council Constitution

At the Council Meeting held on 9<sup>th</sup> April 2005, the new Constitution, which has been going through a long process of draft and consultation, was accepted and will be recommended for acceptance at Conference in Canterbury this coming July. Before then, however, members of the Fellowship will receive a copy and a covering letter drawing attention to the changes embodied in it.

## LONDON PARTICULAR: Change in Editor

Special thanks are due to Matthew Davis for his sterling work as editor of the *London Particular*. Matthew has now taken up a position in the USA and as a result has passed over his editorial responsibilities. Members wishing to submit material for inclusion in future issues should send it to: Stephen Jarvis, 116 Riverbank Point, High Street, Uxbridge, Middlesex, UB8 1JL, United Kingdom.

Email: [stephenjarvis@hotmail.com](mailto:stephenjarvis@hotmail.com)

## DICKENS IN THE NEWS

**Many thanks to all those who sent in Dickens-related articles spotted in the press. Scarcely a week goes by without a mention of Dickens in the newspapers. If you see something you would like to share with other members, please send it to the above address.**

The 1861 UK census returns for London became available online in March and *The Times* noted: "Among the returns is that of Charles Dickens, who lived at 3 Hanover Terrace in Marylebone, London, and had four servants, including his wife's sister, who was his housekeeper. He had separated from his wife. Well hidden was his

mistress, Ellen Ternan, who lived at 2 Houghton Place, St Pancras, London, with her mother and sister. What the census does not show is that Dickens had bought the house as a gift for his lover, allowing her to escape penury and give up acting.”

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The recent appearance of Simon Callow as Dickens in BBC TV's *Dr Who* attracted a great deal of press attention. However, in a report on *The Times* of April 4<sup>th</sup>, it was noted that the donkey-hating Betsy Trotwood “is one of the characters in *The Pickwick Papers*”. An angry letter by Peter Davalle to the editor soon disabused the report's author: “Exactly how that formidable lady managed to find her way into *Pickwick* when all we know about her is that she was born and bred in the pages of *David Copperfield* is a time-and-space riddle worthy of the Doctor.”

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Still on David Copperfield: A recent issue of *The Sunday Times Magazine* devoted its etymology column “Rootfinder” to the expression “Eating humble pie.” This phrase was not invented by Dickens – its origins lie in the Middle Ages when the lower classes would eat the entrails and offal of a deer (the “umbles”) baked into a pie, while their masters ate fine cuts of venison – but the column did note that the phrase was popularised by *David Copperfield*. Uriah Heep was quoted: “I got to know what umbleness did and I took to it. I ate umble pie with an appetite.”

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There was substantial press coverage on April 4<sup>th</sup> relating to the closure of Bleak House – Dickens's former residence high on the cliffs at Broadstairs - as a museum and its sale as a private residence. It was noted in *The Times* that when Dickens lived there, he entertained friends such as Wilkie Collins, John Forster and Hans Christian Anderson. “At his desk in the study he could work and enjoy the panoramic views across Viking Bay. In the town below the house is the Tartar Frigate pub, thought to be the establishment referred to by Dickens as ‘the cosiest little sailor's inn.’” The house was originally called Fort House but was renamed after Dickens's death by the owner who mistakenly believed that the author had used it as a model for the property in the novel of the same name.

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### Google Alerts

Members might be interested in subscribing to the free “Google Alerts” service, to keep track on news stories on the web which relate to Dickens. To subscribe, simply go to the normal google website [www.google.com](http://www.google.com) then click on ‘more’ for the alert service - this will send items relating to a particular keyword straight to your email address, on a daily basis. Apart from using “Charles Dickens” as the alert, members might find it useful - or amusing - to put in alerts for particular novels, or Dickensian themes. Using ‘Pickwick’ as an alert, for instance, will bring in references to Pickwick teabags, Pickwick pubs, Pickwick fish and chip shops and even to the town of Pickwick in the USA (which was itself named after the novel.)

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“Mears”  
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If any members wish to insert a small item relating to research interests please contact me at the editorial address. To begin, an appeal of my own: Has anyone in the fellowship heard of the name of ‘Mears’ in an early twentieth-century Dickensian context? He might well have been a collector, perhaps of Dickensiana or of illustrations by the artists in the novels. His name appears on a 1919 Sotheby's catalogue as a purchaser of an item of interest to me, which I am trying to trace. If anyone can help on this, please contact me (Stephen Jarvis) at the editorial address.

### Subscriptions

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**If you still have to pay your subscription for 2005, please remember it is not too late! Please send subscription forms and payments to:**  
**Subscriptions, The Dickens Fellowship, 48 Doughty Street, London WC1N 2LX, UK**

**We look forward to hearing from you!**

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A final thought....  
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“My faith in the people governing is, on the whole, infinitesimal; my faith in The People governed is, on the whole, illimitable.”

- Charles Dickens, speech at the Birmingham and Midland Institute, 27<sup>th</sup> September 1869