

London Particular

The Dickens Fellowship Newsletter

CONSIDER YOURSELF...PART OF THE MANAGEMENT COMMITTEE?

Nominations are invited for members to serve on the Dickens Fellowship Management Committee, which meets in London four times a year. If you would like to make a contribution to the everyday running of the Dickens Fellowship and have a say in its long-term development, please consider joining our friendly team.

Nominations, supported by the names of a proposer and a seconder from within the Fellowship, should be sent to The Hon. Gen. Secretaries, The Charles Dickens Museum, 48 Doughty Street, London, WC1N 2LX. The closing date for applications will be 3rd December 2007

To learn more about this opportunity, please ring Joan Dicks on 020 7242 8575 or email joan@dickshg.freemove.co.uk

DROOD, GLORIOUS DROOD

The Warehouse Theatre Company in East Croydon will be staging the musical **The Mystery of Edwin Drood** - in which the audience votes on key questions to determine the outcome of the story - from Friday 14th December 2007 to Sunday 24th February 2008.

Furthermore, the performance on Wednesday 20th February is likely to be of particular interest to Dickensians because there will be an informal post-show discussion in the auditorium with the director, cast and crew. Fellowship members Jan Recknal-Turner and her husband Paul have booked tickets for that night and hope that other members will join them. For further information about performances and prices call the Box Office on 020 8680 4060 or visit the website www.warehousetheatre.co.uk

And while on the subject of Drood...As Mr Honeythunder says in Chapter 6: "...pay up your subscription, get your card of membership..." Central members should note the inclusion of the

membership renewal form with this issue of the *London Particular*...

FRIENDS of THE DICKENS MUSEUM: Forthcoming events

"Shuffling the cards, cutting, dealing, playing, counting, pegging..." Like the Marchioness, you can explore all the mysteries of cribbage at the next Friends event, the Victorian Games Evening, plus game casserole! 6.30 pm, at CDM, Friday 16th November.

Other scheduled events:

Saturday 17th November: (Eurostar Arrival Event) "The Arrival of Railways in Dickens's Back Garden": walk led by Anthony Burton. Departs CDM at 2pm. Cream tea/croissants for Friends afterwards at CDM.

Thursday 22nd November (Eurostar Arrival Event) "Dickens and the Moving Age". Talk by Tony Williams with French wine and cheese for Friends afterwards. NB 6pm at CDM

Monday 3rd December: Combined Friends and Fellowship social event, to include a short talk on The Gad's Hill Gazette by Christine Alexander (University of New South Wales), reminiscences of early days at the CDM and other entertaining items. 6.30pm at **Barnard's Inn Hall**

Wednesday 12th December: Christmas Carol readings at CDM. 6.30pm.

Saturday 15th December: Dickens Family Day at CDM

Note that Eurostar Arrival Events are open to the public and free. There will be a charge for refreshments afterwards.

For further information call 020 7405 2127 ext 214 or email info@dickensmuseum.com

The next London meeting of the Fellowship at Barnard's Inn Hall will be at 6.30pm on Wednesday 14th November, featuring a talk by John Edmondson, on the subject of his book Dickens on France: Fiction, Journalism and Travel Writing. The book brings together Dickens's letters, journals, short stories, extracts from the novels and extensive travel writing about France. Highlights of the book are accounts of a train journey from London to Paris, a rough Channel crossing, the pleasures of Boulogne, and Parisian life in the 1850s.

Dickens in the News

The Times of 10th September ran an article on the revival of scientific interest in physiognomy and phrenology – noting that, whilst the notion of assessing character from the shape of the face or the bumps on the skull have long been discredited by researchers, such features can be of great importance in the diagnosis of inherited disease. It was remarked that Dickens had an interest in physiognomy and that Scrooge sported a “nipped pointed nose”, “shrivelled cheeks” and a “wiry chin” that betrayed his miserly qualities.

On 7th September, The Times devoted a page to nineteenth-century obituaries which had appeared in that newspaper. Sandwiched between Abraham Lincoln and John Stuart Mill, came an extract from its obituary for Dickens (1870): “Of late years he had frequently appeared before the public as a ‘reader’ of the most popular portions of his own works, of which he showed himself to be the most vivid and dramatic interpreter. He retired from this work in March last, when his reputation stood at its highest. His renderings of his best creations, both humorous and pathetic, of his most stirring scenes and warmest pictures of life, will not readily be forgotten. Men and women, persons and places, we all knew before in the pages of his novels; but the characters lived with a new life, and the scenes took the shape of reality in the readings of the master.”

Several of the obituaries for Marcel Marceau, who died on 22nd September, noted that the mime artist had been strongly influenced by Dickens. *The Independent* stated that his famous character “Bip”, was a tribute to Pip of *Great Expectations*, and continued: “...indeed Bip resembled the wan-

facéd waifs of Dotheboys Hall in *Nicholas Nickleby*.” *The Times* said: “Like the characters of Chaplin and Dickens, Bip was a small figure in an enormous world that was simultaneously wonderful and terrifying” and recalled that, for the BBC, Marceau had created a mime version of *A Christmas Carol*, filmed in a disused music hall in East London, reflecting his love of both Dickens and Chaplin. (The Editor of the *London Particular* cannot resist adding, however, that upon seeing one of these obituaries, and remarking to his wife Elaine “Have you heard the news? Marcel Marceau is dead” that she immediately replied, “You don’t say...”)

www.liberalengland.blogspot.com is a blog dealing with culture and politics, which, from time to time, features a “trivial connection of the day”. On 7th October, it linked Charles Dickens with Chief Sitting Bull: Dickens’s fifth child was Francis Jeffrey Dickens, who served with the Bengal Lancers, and who finally took a commission in the North West Mounted Police. This meant he spent much time patrolling what is now Manitoba, in the aftermath of the Battle of the Little Big Horn. Sitting Bull and his people were in Canada for three years (1877-80) and so the Chief was kept under close observation by Sub-Inspector Dickens while they were both at Fort Walsh.

On 17th September, Dickens became associated with a record-breaking “achievement”. On that day, *The Mail on Sunday* distributed 2.5 million free DVDs of Vinnie Jones’s previously unreleased movie *The Riddle*. The plot features the discovery of an unpublished Dickens manuscript. The newspaper now believes that it is justified in claiming that *The Riddle* has the highest-ever opening day viewing figures of any British film.

Please send any clippings or other submissions to the *London Particular* editorial address:

Stephen Jarvis, 1 Riverine, Grosvenor Drive, Maidenhead, Berks SL6 8PF, UK. Email: stephenjarvis@hotmail.com

A Final Thought...

“But what I always says to them as has the management of matters...be they gents or be they ladies, is, don’t ask me whether I won’t take none, or whether I will, but leave the bottle on the chimley-piece, and let me put my lips to it when I am so disposed.” - Mrs Gamp, Chapter 19, Martin Chuzzlewit