

London Particular

The Dickens Fellowship Newsletter

Our Annual Conference and AGM takes place in the beautiful city of Copenhagen, in Denmark, on **4-6 August**. This year's theme is 'Dickens, Fairytales and Fantasy'. A few last-minute places are available. This is a great opportunity to share in fellowship with Dickensians from around the world, and to hear a range of interesting and informative talks. If you'd like to attend, but have not already booked, please contact Hon Gen Sec, Jacquie Stamp on +44 [0] 78129 95736 or dickensfellowshiptalks@gmail.com. Details, including the full programme of events, can be found on our website via a link on the home page.

Our **Summer Ramble** this year takes place on **Sat 22 August** in Hatfield, Hertfordshire, where DF member David Edwards will lead us round the Old Town's many sites of Dickensian interest. There's no need to book; we will meet at the main entrance of Hatfield Station at 1.45 pm for a 2 pm start. The route is on a hill but is fully accessible, with no steps, stiles or stairs, and there are several places en route to stop for toilets/refreshments. We will see Hatfield House during our ramble, but if you want to visit while you're in the area, it will be best to go in the morning as last admission is 4 pm.

Monthly meetings recommence at The Charterhouse on Tues 22 September, 6 pm for a 6.30 start, and continue as listed on your membership card. If you can't join in person, a recording is usually available on our website from the following morning for about 3 weeks.

The Annual Wreath-laying Ceremony at Dickens's graveside in Westminster Abbey took place on 9 June. DF President, Lucinda Dickens Hawksley, gave the oration and laid a wreath on behalf of the Fellowship. A second wreath was laid by pupils from Gad's Hill School. Approximately 45 people attended the ceremony, which was led by the Revd Canon Mark Birch MVO, Canon in Residence at the Abbey....

....not where CD wanted to be, however Ann Treneman wrote in The Times 20.6.26: "*To Rochester Cathedral for a meeting of the Rose Society. The big event of the day was the christening of a new rose, but I was fascinated by something else. Inside the cathedral, in a grand position, is a large tomb for its former dean and rose fanatic Samuel Reynolds Hole (1819-1904). (The newly christened rose, Always in My Heart, is in his honour.) The grave was meant for Charles Dickens, who was working on Edwin Drood in nearby Gad's Hill Place when he died in 1870. Instead, his body was whisked (against his stated wishes) to Westminster Abbey. When Hole died, it seemed only right to give him the spot: his engaging style meant he was known as the "Dickens of the Pulpit". His reclining figure has roses round his feet. The only snag? He's not there either, but buried at his family home in Cauntton, Nottinghamshire*".

Professor Michael Slater MBE Hon Gen Sec Jacquie Stamp writes: 'The death of Professor Michael Slater MBE last November was a huge loss to the Dickens Fellowship and the wider Dickens community. His warmth, generosity and knowledge are greatly missed by us all. On 8 May we were able to celebrate, together with his family, friends and colleagues, his life and literary legacy. The Celebration took place at Lumen URC in Tavistock Place, London, and was live-streamed on Zoom. Speakers included David Parker (Michael's nephew), Paul Graham, Lucinda Dickens Hawksley, Dr Frankie Kubicki and Professors Malcolm Andrews, Cathy Waters, John Drew, Andrew Sanders, Bob Patten and Toru Sasaki. A superb reading of 'The Trial from *Pickwick Papers*' was presented by Mark Dickens, Gerald Dickens, Miriam Margolyes and Malcolm Andrews, and this was followed by a pre-recorded eulogy from Simon Callow and many other fond memories of Michael shared by those present in the room. A recording of this celebration can be found on our website at <https://www.dickensfellowship.org/index.php/news-household-words/442-celebrating-the-life-of-professor-michael-slater-mbe>'

Dickens House Party on the Isle of Wight DF member Jan Turner writes: *"On February 27 we arrived at The Royal Hotel, Ventnor, Isle of Wight, to join others for the 'party' organised by Dickens's two great great grandsons, Ian and Gerald. Charles and his wife Catherine stayed at The Royal in 1838 and were captivated by the charm of The Island. The hotel is in a lovely spot and very elegant; staying there is like stepping back in time. We were surprised, however, to see so many non-members of the Dickens Fellowship there, though we did spot Jacquie Stamp, our Hon Gen Sec, and Cathy Waters, President from 2022-24. There were a few members of Ian's Pickwick Club, some local Islanders, a lady from Edinburgh and a couple from Wales but most of us were from Southern England. The event was pitched just right for such a mixed audience (77 altogether). Ian and Gerald were an amazing double act that afternoon, introducing the Dickens Family Tree which was both informative and amusing. In The Albert Room there were many books and items of Dickensian interest to peruse as well as the framed Family Tree.*

"The following sunny and warm morning, one of the local Isle of Wight Ramblers led many of us on part of the Charles Dickens Trail devised by Ian, among others, last year. This took in Bonchurch where Dickens and his family stayed and where he got a local carpenter to organise his famous shower by diverting a local stream. On our return, Gerald read excerpts from letters detailing Dickens's views on meeting with Queen Victoria. After a rest, we all got ready for the excellent 5-course Evening Banquet in the Geranium restaurant, followed yet again by Gerald and his one-hour long adaptation of Nicholas Nickleby in which he played all parts ... hilariously entertaining. After another excellent breakfast, fond farewells, hoping there is another House Party next year, when maybe more Dickens Fellowship members will attend. PLEASE!"...

...NB I notice from the magazine *The Week*, 27 June, that Winterbourne House, Bonchurch, Isle of Wight is for sale for £1.6 million. It is described as "A handsome Victorian villa, close to the beach, in which Charles Dickens wrote part of *David Copperfield*. 6 beds, 7 baths, kitchen, 8 receps, garden, parking". Some villa! (Ed.)

URGENT NOTICE - On Friday 10 July our members can view Dickens's original manuscripts of *The Chimes*, *Bleak*

House and *The Mystery of Edwin Drood* at the National Art Library at London's Victoria & Albert Museum, where other Dickensian items will also be on display specially for us. A few places remain, so, if you've not already registered for this visit, but would like to attend, please contact our HGS, Jacquie Stamp, at jacqueline.stamp99@gmail.com or on 07812 995736.

Heat! Things are cooling down now, but recent days have been a bit much for many. A N Wilson (*The Times* 26.6.26) speaks of: *'...those who dread the red or amber weather alerts...and will feel like the characters in that novel of miserably hot summers, Little Dorrit. The story starts in the scarcely tolerable sweltering furnace of Marseille, where 'blinds, shutters, curtains, awnings, were all closed and drawn to keep out the stare' and where, back in London in the debtors' gaol, it is as hot as the south of France. Little Dorrit herself is born in a room 'baking between the high walls. Mrs Bangham, charwoman and messenger ... and popular medium of communication with the outer world, had volunteered her services as fly-catcher and general attendant. The walls and ceiling were blackened with flies. Mrs Bangham, expert in sudden device, with one hand fanned the patient with a cabbage leaf and with the other set traps of vinegar and sugar in gallipots.'* **A useful tip for dealing with the heat ...** Wilson continues, *'The mention of cabbage leaves reminds me that for most Victorians there was no special summer wardrobe. You just wore the same clothes all year round, and very smelly they must have been. If the weather became hot, you cooled yourself by putting a cabbage leaf in your hat'.*

Dickensian names DF member Allan Clack has always been fascinated by weird names in CD novels. Surely none is more weird than Snittle Timberry, a member of Vincent Crummles's troupe of actors (*Nicholas Nickleby*), who arrives late in the story in the company of an "African sword swallower" and proposes a toast to Mr Crummles before his departure to America.

At length Mr Snittle Timberry rose in the most approved attitude, with one hand in the breast of his waistcoat and the other on the nearest snuff-box and ... proposed, with abundance of quotations, his friend Mr Vincent Crummles: ending a pretty long speech ... surely by adding - "Send in contributions/comments, please, to 'Danesdyke', 27A Ashcombe Road, Carshalton, Surrey SM5 3ET or by email: aligowans17@outlook.com".