

London Particular

The Newsletter for the Headquarters Group of the Dickens Fellowship

YOUR NEW NEWSLETTER

There are over 670 members of the Headquarters Dickens Fellowship, many of whom live outside London, and only a tenth of these members regularly attend meetings in London.

As a pilot project, Headquarters' Committee has decided to produce this Newsletter, so that all members have as much information as possible about the Fellowship, even those unable to attend meetings. The hope is that everyone will feel more included in the life of the Fellowship.

Although *The Dickensian* and *Mr Dick's Kite* publish a great deal of information about Fellowship business, there are items of day to day interest which are perhaps best provided via a newsletter. These could be about any changes at HQ, such as the election of a new President; what is happening at the House; major events; promotion of meetings/visits; and also letters or comments from members far and wide.

The content and format of the newsletter may change as we learn from readers what is useful and interesting to them. It will not be easy to match the content to the variety of members that make up the Headquarters group, but we hope that even our most distant members, unable to attend London meetings, will find something of interest in what we offer.

It would be nice to hear from our members. If you would like to make a contribution to the next newsletter, please write to The HQ Newsletter, The Dickens Fellowship, 48 Doughty Street, London WC1N 2LX.

HQ Membership Distribution

London:	.....	25%
SE England, outside London	.....	25%
Rest of England	.....	25%
Rest of UK	.....	5%
Rest of the world	.....	20%

YOUR 2002 COMMITTEE

If you have not served on, or had any dealings with, the Headquarters Committee, you may wonder what it gets up to on your behalf.

This year's committee met for the first time in January and will, as usual, meet on another five occasions. It is responsible not only for HQ business, but serves also as the Executive Committee of the Fellowship as a whole. Details of its constitution and the names of its members are to be found on your membership card.

It is not customary for the President to become involved in committee business and that remains the situation, but Henry Dickens Hawksley has taken a very active role in the Fellowship since his election last year. He is a great great grandson of Charles Dickens, descended from the Henry Fielding Dickens branch of the family, and has had a distinguished business career.

The onus for taking action lies primarily with the other elected officers - Thelma Grove, Tony Williams, David Wells and Malcolm Andrews. However, for many years, Peter Duggan has shouldered the burden of organising social events, including the annual outing and the trips to Gad's Hill Evenings. He is well known to those who attend Swedenborg Hall meetings, as the provider of refreshments. Derek Mortimer, who chairs the committee this year, set up and runs the HQ website and looks after HQ membership business.

MEMBERSHIP RENEWALS

The Committee would like to thank all those who responded so promptly to the delayed renewal notices. Over 200 members had re-registered by the end of January. Another 220 or so had re-registered by the end of February.

If you have not yet renewed your membership, please do so now. Any enquiries should be addressed to the membership Secretary at the Dickens House, or by e-mail to: dickens.fellowship@btinternet.com.

LONDON PROGRAMME NEWS

Gad's Hill Evenings are now known as 'Cedric Dickens Evenings', in honour of the Past President who has contributed so much to Fellowship life, over a period longer than most members care to remember, especially in regard to Gad's Hill Place. If you are not familiar with these events, you will find background details in the box on the right.

The next Cedric Dickens Evening is on **Friday, 22 March**. There will be a talk by Keith Ferris, a retired medical consultant, about the railway accident at Staplehurst on 9 June, 1865, entitled 'An afternoon in the life of Charles Dickens.'

Do apply early if you want to secure a place in the party organised by Peter Duggan. Contact details are given on your membership card.

The talk by John Bowen of the University of Keele, on **Wednesday, 27th March**, would **not** have faced cancellation had it been confirmed that the London Underground strikes, due to take place in March, were to go ahead as planned. Should it be necessary to make changes to the London programme, details will be given, if there is sufficient notice, in this newsletter and always on the Headquarters website

Cedric Dickens Evenings

Gad's Hill Place was the home of Charles Dickens from 1857 till his death in 1870. As a boy he used to walk past the house with his father, and came to dream then that he would own it one day. It lies on the A226 at Higham, some 2 miles from Rochester.

Although it is now a school, it retains something of the character of the time when Dickens lived there. He called it his "little Kentish freehold". The conservatory that he added just before he died was restored to its former glory in 1996, and is the setting for Victorian refreshments, served at the beginning of a Cedric Dickens Evening, before a talk or entertainment.

Peter Duggan arranges for a party to travel by minibus from central London, but there is a limit on the number of places he can offer.

Information and tickets can also be obtained direct from Gad's Hill School, Higham, Kent ME3 7PA. Tel: 01474 822366, or e-mail: info@gadshill.org

The Gad's Hill Place restoration fund, recently used to restore the hall floor, is the beneficiary of the Cedric Dickens Evenings.

The Impact of Great Expectations

BBC Radio 4 is preparing a series of programmes on books which have touched people's lives. One of the books they hope to include is *Great Expectations*. If you live in the UK, a letter from a BBC researcher, Rachel White, accompanies this newsletter and she would love to hear from you.

Silent British Film Festival

Silent film adaptations of Dickens will be the centre of attention on the final day of this year's Silent British Film Festival at the Broadway Media Centre in Nottingham, 4th to 7th April. Information provided by **Michael Eaton**, a member of the HQ group, is to be found on the Headquarters website. For further details ring 0115 952 6600 / 952 6611. Broadway Media Centre website: <http://www.broadway.org.uk>.

London Walks

Sue Gane, another member of the HQ group, has created some 'Guides to walks in Charles Dickens London'. A leaflet on the guides is enclosed with this newsletter.

Website: <http://www.Dickens-and-London.com>

THE CATHERINE DICKENS GRAVE APPEAL

As reported in the Summer and Winter issues of *The Dickensian*, the grave in Highgate Western Cemetery in which Dickens's wife, Catherine, and their daughter Dora Annie lie, is being restored at a cost of £2,230. Two stones added to provide family details are being removed to a new and more visible site, the original stone is being restored and the railings are being repaired. An appeal for funds has so far raised about £1000. Any enquiries or donations should be addressed to Thelma Grove, Joint Secretary, The Dickens Fellowship, 48 Doughty Street, London WC1N 2LX. Cheques should be made payable to The Dickens Fellowship (Grave Appeal).

John and Elizabeth Dickens are also buried at Highgate. The graves in the Western Cemetery can be visited only by special arrangement or in the course of a guided tour. Tours start at noon on weekdays from April. At weekends, there are tours on the hour from 11am to 4pm, most of the year. If you plan a visit, it is wise to phone Highgate Cemetery first to ascertain opening time (020 8340 1834).

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TOGETHER IN FELLOWSHIP

At the conference in July, we shall be celebrating our centenary in company with fellow members from around the world. Once again the draw of Dickens's life and works will bring together a great diversity of people from all walks of life. If previous conferences are anything to go by, many a lasting friendship will be forged during the week.

Playing their part in the furtherance of fellowship will be the walks and visits arranged for the Monday, Tuesday and Wednesday afternoons. These are likely to include:

Guided walks

- Dickens's Southwark
- In the footsteps of Scrooge (City of London)
- The South Bank
- Doughty Street and beyond
- Covent Garden
- Fleet Street and Temple
- Highgate Cemetery and Village
- Bleak House (the Inns of Court)
- Chelsea

Visits

- The Dickens House (with an introduction to the new exhibition about Katey Dickens - see details overleaf)
- The Museum of London
- In the Realm of White Waistcoats (St. James's)
- Coram Museum
- Forster Collection, V & A Museum
- Great Ormond Street Hospital (includes visit to the chapel and to the archives)

Further details will be provided in due course for members who have registered for the conference. Those wishing to take part will be asked to add their names to lists displayed at the conference. Since there will be a limit to how many people can join any particular walk or visit, those who sign up first will inevitably have the best choice!

AN OPPORTUNITY TO LEARN

The conference will offer the usual feast of knowledge and insights into the life and works of Dickens. For the talks, the Fellowship is fortunately able to call upon a good many speakers who are both authorities in their field and entertaining.

Sadly, Professor Chris Brooks, who was to give a talk on the Tuesday morning of the conference, has died. Dr Leon Litvack, who was also to speak on Tuesday morning, has had to withdraw.

AN OPPORTUNITY TO HAVE ONE'S SAY

Conferences have an important role to play in the running of the Fellowship. The Annual General Meeting held during the conference has the ultimate authority in the governing of the Fellowship as a whole. Members have a right to attend it, whether or not they take part in other events. This year it will be held on Saturday morning, 20th July, at University College London.

Decisions made at the AGM can be far reaching. An important statement regarding an issue that may be addressed at this year's AGM - the relationship between the Fellowship and the Dickens House Museum - is to be found overleaf.

AN OPPORTUNITY TO HELP

Agood many members are already involved in preparations for the conference, but more help will be needed, especially during the event. In particular, we shall need volunteers to help register delegates arriving at the conference and provide information; to act as stewards in the lecture room and perhaps elsewhere; and to fill liaison roles.

If you would be willing to help in any way, please get in touch with Derek Mortimer, 8 Bishops Walk, High Street, Rochester ME1 1JF. Telephone: 01634 815077. E-mail: derek.mortimer@btinternet.com.

LONDON PROGRAMME NEWS

At the next **Cedric Dickens Evening** at Gad's Hill Place, on **Friday 21st June**, there will be a talk on "Shakespeare and Dickens: Deep Allusion." See details below.

At the **Members Evening on Monday 24th June**, Patrick McSweeney, a member of the HQ group, will tell us about his experience of being interviewed for a Radio 4 programme on *Great Expectations* (see below). Another member, Lucinda Hawksley, will tell us about the new exhibition to be opened at the Dickens House in July (see below). One or two other members may also contribute and there will be an opportunity for those present to express their views about what the Fellowship has to offer its members.

BBC Radio 4 Series

Great Expectations will be the subject of one of the programmes in a series called *Cover Stories* on BBC Radio 4. The possibility was mentioned in the last *London Particular*, and at least one member was invited to take part. The programmes are being broadcast on Thursday mornings at 11.30:

- 6 June: *Pride and Prejudice*
- 13 June: *The Lion, the Witch and the Wardrobe*
- 20 June: *Great Expectations*
- 27 June: *Wuthering Heights*

Shakespeare and Dickens Deep Allusion

This will be the subject of a talk at the next Cedric Dickens Evening at Gad's Hill Place on Friday, 21st June. Dickens's use of Shakespeare has been much discussed but this talk will deal with allusions which have either not been noticed or have not been analysed. The talk will be given by Professor **Barbara Hardy**, who has been writing and lecturing on Dickens and Shakespeare for many years. As well as many critical books she has published a memoir, a novel and a volume of poems.

Phantom Fellowship Staff!

Given that the HQ of the Fellowship is at the Dickens House, 48 Doughty Street, it is not surprising that some members believe that we have staff there. In fact, the officers and other volunteers who carry out the business of the Fellowship generally work at home, visiting the House only to pick up post or to take part in meetings. The staff of the Museum very kindly answer basic questions about the Fellowship but can't be expected to do more than that.

In the circumstances, and given that volunteers often have other pressing commitments, it is not always possible to respond promptly to enquiries, but every effort is made to reduce delays to a minimum.

My Lucifer-box Katey, Dickens's artistic daughter

This is the title of a new exhibition which will be opened on 22nd July at the Dickens House Museum. Dickens's fiery daughter Katey became a successful painter, exhibiting at the Royal Academy. She was twice married to artists: to Charles, brother of Wilkie Collins, and after his death to Charles Perugini. The exhibition will include biographical material and a selection of her graceful pictures.

The Dickens House Museum and the Fellowship

A major change has occurred in the relationship between the Fellowship and the Dickens House Museum. On the recommendation of the Charities Commission, the banking arrangements of the Trust which manages the House have been separated from those of the Fellowship. As a result, it has been established that formally the Trust owes the Fellowship £54,172.

At the Council meeting on 20th April this year, Fellowship Officers recommended, as part of a set of proposals, that the Trust should recognise the debt and accept that 'the amount owed to the Fellowship may be called on at the discretion of the Fellowship'. They made clear, however, that they did not expect the sum to be repaid immediately.

Professor Michael Slater, Chairman of the Trustees, presenting an alternative set of proposals, argued that the debt would seriously jeopardise the Trust's plans for the House and its attempts to raise funding from outside bodies. He proposed at the Council meeting that 'the House's existing debt to the Fellowship be written off'.

When put to the vote, the Officers' recommendations taken as a whole were rejected by 23 votes to 6 (2 abstentions). Professor Slater's were accepted by 23 votes to 3 (2 abstentions). It was therefore agreed that Professor Slater's recommendations should be circulated for discussion among members of the Fellowship prior to the Annual General Meeting at Conference on Saturday, 20th July.

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STRENGTHENING THE HQ TEAM

To help ensure that the Fellowship continues to thrive in its second century of existence, changes are being made to strengthen our team of volunteers.

Many of those who attended the AGM at the Centenary Conference will have been surprised to learn that the two volunteers who oversee the work of the Fellowship, namely our joint honorary general secretaries, Thelma Grove and Tony Williams, were not prepared to stand for re-election unless arrangements were made for their workloads to be reduced. This has since been done and it was confirmed at the Council meeting on 5th October that they would continue in office.

The new arrangements will enable Thelma and Tony to concentrate on their primary tasks, but not necessarily reduce the amount of time they spend on Fellowship business. The remainder of their work and much of that currently undertaken by Derek Mortimer will be distributed as widely as possible among other volunteers. Allan Clack, who was elected chairman of Council at the October meeting, will play a key role in co-ordinating support for the general secretaries.

Peter Duggan will continue to arrange social events, but would like help with the provision of refreshments at meetings. John Haviland handles the printing and distribution of Alan Watts's *Mr Dick's Kite*.

Further help is required with:

- overseeing membership work
- setting up and editing the newsletter on screen
- taking minutes.

Several members have already volunteered to join the team. If you would like to help, or to be given further information, please contact: Doughty Volunteers, The Dickens Fellowship, 48 Doughty Street, London WC1N 2LX, England

THE NEW ARRANGEMENTS

Details have still to be worked out, but the tasks of the honorary secretaries are being shared out broadly as follows:

Tony and Thelma, jointly

- Contributing to policy-making and planning
- Supporting and promoting DF activities, through talks, readings, visits, etc
- Reporting to Council and Conference

Thelma, primarily

- Dealing with branch issues
- Preparing the agenda and supervising the preparation of papers for Council and Conference meetings
- Providing support for the branch running the Conference

Tony, primarily

- Organising the HQ programme
- Serving *ex officio* as a trustee of the Dickens House
- Editing and contributing to the DF section of *The Dickensian*

Derek Mortimer

- Maintaining the HQ membership and *Dickensian* databases
- Maintaining and developing the HQ website

Allan Clack

- Producing and circulating papers for meetings, including branch mailings
- Arranging for *The Dickensian* to be printed and distributed

LONDON PROGRAMME NEWS

Despite the London Underground strike, which began at 8pm on the 1st October, there was a reasonable turnout for the AGM that evening. Business was concluded soon after 7pm and arrangements for the remainder of the meeting were cancelled. An unwelcome piece of news was that the charge for hiring Swedenborg Hall had been increased by £40 an evening.

The next two talks to be given there have intriguing titles: '**Mr Dickens takes a Sabbatical**' given by Jean Carroll on 6th November, and "**Tung Chih, Dionysiac Revels and Christmas**", given by Dr David Parker on 2nd December. It will be worth coming just to find out what they refer to.

The last **Cedric Dickens Evening** this year at Gad's Hill Place on 20th December will be a musical evening, led by Clare Graydon-James and Danny Kingshill, a singer and a pianist who are able to generate a wonderful atmosphere of goodwill and fun. Arrangements to attend this and for the **Christmas Supper** on 7th December are made by Peter Duggan, whose address and telephone number are to be found on your membership card.

NEWS FROM VERMONT

We were delighted to hear from one of our US members, Justine O'Keefe, a teacher who lives in Waterbury, Vermont. As part of an exercise with her third and fourth grade classes in the spring, she modelled the head of Dickens, an experience which delighted her, and the product of which continues to delight her, as it sits on a bookshelf at home.

The Old Curiosity Shop on BBC Radio 4

Trevor Peacock, Julia McKenzie, Lindsey Coulson, Alex Jennings and Anna Massey will star in a dramatisation of *The Old Curiosity Shop* which starts on the 30th December 2002 on BBC Radio 4. It will be broadcast in the *Woman's Hour* drama slot (10.45am, repeated 7.45pm) on weekdays, through to the 31st January 2003. The production can be heard via the internet with audio on demand at www.bbc.co.uk/radio4.

London and Rochester Walks

Jean Haynes, a highly qualified London guide and a member of the Fellowship, conducts in costume a "Dickens London" walk every Friday, starting at 2.30pm from Temple Underground Station. She also conducts walks in Rochester and is willing to tailor her repertoire to meet specific needs, as she did for the Centenary Conference in July. She is associated with London Walks: Tel. 020 7624 3978.
E-mail: london@walks.com
Website: www.walks.com

Loving Home Sought

"Loving home wanted for 17 books (modern) and pamphlets (I think all copies) on Dickens' life and love life. Collected 1970s. + 25 novels 1890 hardback, Chapman & Hall, library stamped, imperfect. + 50 pages of my Mum's non-academic research notes re Dickens' love life." Ring Niki Holland on 01483-275799. Or e-mail: [nikiholland@partnershipsinchange.com](mailto:nikholland@partnershipsinchange.com)

NO INCREASE IN SUBSCRIPTIONS

While consideration is being given to the future structure and funding of the Fellowship, subscriptions are to remain unchanged. Renewal notices for 2003 will be mailed in December. Do please renew early.

SPECIAL CHRISTMAS EVENTS

Carol Chapman, who has been extremely active in arranging fund-raising events to support the Dickens House, has provided the following details of activities planned for the forthcoming Christmas Season.

Wednesday 27th November

An evening of classical music with readings of *A Christmas Carol* to celebrate the 1867 'Farewell to Dickens'. Special guests will be Henry Dickens Hawksley, President of the Dickens Fellowship, and Lord Lytton Cobbold. This event will take place in Lodge Room Number 1 of the Freemasons Hall, Great Queen Street, London, at 7.30pm. Tickets cost £18, to include a glass of wine and canapés, and may be obtained from Carol Chapman, c/o Dickens House, 48 Doughty Street, London WC1N 2LX.

Help with the catering arrangements for this event would be much appreciated.

Thursday 5th December

A Banquet with a Dickensian Menu, and entertainment consisting of a costumed reading of *A Christmas Carol*, will take place at the Woodlands Park Hotel, Cobham, Surrey, at 7.30pm. Tickets cost £45 per person. Please book directly with the hotel (tel. 01372 843993; fax 01372 842704).

Tuesday 17th December

Christmas Readings from Dickens and Hans Christian Andersen at the Danish Church, 4 St Katherine's Precinct, Regents Park, London NW1 4HH. Tickets cost £12 per person for adults, and £8 per person for those under 21 or over 60. Reservations should be made directly with the Danish Church (tel. 0207 935 7584) and cheques made payable to them.

2003 Annual Conference: *Dickens - An Author in an Age of Change*, Bristol University, 24th to 29th July.
See Bristol branch website at: <http://www.dickens-society.org.uk/>.

Headquarters website: <http://www.dickens.fellowship.btinternet.co.uk>