
London Particular

The Dickens Fellowship Newsletter

FELLOWSHIP OPEN DAY AT THE CHARLES DICKENS MUSEUM

Fellowship members are invited to an Open Day at the Charles Dickens Museum on **Saturday, 21 October 2006, between 10am and 5pm**. This Open Day coincides with the Bloomsbury Festival weekend – a variety of lively activities are planned, taking place in and around the newly-developed Brunswick Centre. (Don't be surprised if you bump into someone there who looks remarkably like Virginia Woolf, G F Handel, Vera Brittain, Edwin Lutyens, Thomas Coram...or even Charles Dickens!) The Museum will be offering free public admission and there will be readings relating to the new exhibition "*Ignorance and Want: The Social Conscience of Charles Dickens*" at 11.30am and 3.30pm. There will be a guided walk led by Dr Tony Williams at 2pm: numbers for the walk are limited and are on a first-come-first-served basis. Help with refreshments would be welcome. Please contact Joan Dicks on 02030158316 or joan@dickshg.freemove.co.uk.

THE DICKENS FELLOWSHIP COUNCIL

The twice-yearly meetings of the Dickens Fellowship Council play a vital role in communications between Executive Officers of the Fellowship and representatives of individual branches. The central Fellowship, which has nearly 600 members, needs to be represented at these Council Meetings. If you are a central Fellowship member and feel you can contribute to this constructive dialogue, you might consider putting your name forward for membership of Council. Please note the following:

A resolution was agreed at the Dickens Fellowship Annual General Meeting on 29th July 2006 that, "with effect from October 2006, members of the central Fellowship would be asked to submit nominations, with a proposer and seconder, for the six Council places representing them, as stated in the Constitution Part A section

VII. Those elected would serve for three years. Those currently fulfilling this role will be eligible for re-election if they wish."

Nominations are therefore invited of individuals willing to represent the central membership at Council meetings, which take place in April and October. Nominees must have expressed **in writing** their willingness to stand. Nominations, proposed and seconded by Fellowship members, must be received by 1 February 2007. Please send nominations to: The Joint Honorary General Secretaries, The Charles Dickens Museum, 48 Doughty Street, London WC1N 2LX.

THE LOQUACIOUS CABMAN

*Allan Clack sent in the following account of a recent cab journey he took: "On my way to the Dickens Museum, I took a cab from Charing Cross station. I told the driver (a classic London cabbie) my destination and he said 'OK, guv'nor, it was the best of times, it was the worst of times'. He then proceeded to regale me with praise of Charles Dickens – his novels, reforming zeal etc – and even fired quiz questions at me about the books. He never stopped talking during the whole ten minutes journey and even produced a book of CD quotes he carries in his cab. On arrival at the Museum, I suggested he ought to be on the quiz programme *Mastermind*, just as a London taxi-driver had done some years ago. He said: 'Oh yes, guv'nor, you mean Fred Housego. Lovely man, but he can't half talk, never stops – rabbit, rabbit, rabbit!!'*

DICKENS IN THE NEWS

There was an interview with Dickensian biographer Peter Ackroyd in the Sunday Telegraph "Seven" Magazine on 20th August, in which Ackroyd was asked about his book's

famous (or infamous) account of a conversation between Boz and himself.

"I regret that now," said Ackroyd. "It was a bad mistake. I only did it to try to spice things up. Sometimes one's motives can be very shallow, you know."

"But did you believe," inquired the interviewer, "you were actually talking to Dickens when you wrote it?"

"I don't claim any mediumistic powers," he said, "although I do have this facility that I use in my biographies. It's rather like being a ventriloquist for other people, people whose voice you express. It's hard to explain, but it certainly feels real when I am doing it."

The Times of 4th August carried a piece about smoking bans and other restrictions which were coming into force in British pubs. It contrasted this with Dickens's description of The Three Cripples pub in Oliver Twist: "The place was so full of dense tobacco smoke that at first it was scarcely possible to discern anything more"; by degrees there appeared a "numerous company, male and female, crowded round a long table", exhibiting "cunning, ferocity and drunkenness in all its stages."

The internet-based Animation Magazine noted on August 23rd that Warner Home Video will release *Bah, Humduck! A Looney Tunes Christmas* straight to DVD on November 14th. In this first-ever made-for-video Looney Tunes, Daffy Duck, taking on the Scrooge role, is the proprietor of the Lucky Duck megamart, "who demands that his long-suffering manager, Porky Pig, and the other employees, work on Christmas Day rather than spending time with their families. It's up to Bugs Bunny and the ghosts of Christmas Past (Tweety and Granny), Present (Yosemite Sam) and Future (Taz) to make sure that Daffy realises the error of his ways."

And while on the subject of *A Christmas Carol*... the *Sunday Telegraph* of August 13th noted the new technology of "I-Cue" in which novels can be downloaded on to a mobile phone and viewed in three formats – 'page', 'ticker' and 'flicker' (where the words are flashed up one at a time, at adjustable speed). The first work to be processed this way was *A Christmas Carol*, "now available in

spasms on a phone near you for around two pounds".

And while on the subject of advances in technology...*The Guardian* of September 1st reported on a gathering of The British Association for the Advancement of Science and noted Dickens's early comments on the Association in *The Mudfog Papers*, which even included Boz's version of *Robocop*: "An entirely new police force, composed exclusively of automaton figures," that could be knocked down and assaulted like any real man. "The great advantage," submitted its inventor, Mr Coppernose, "would be that a policeman's limbs might be all knocked off, and yet he would be in a condition to do duty next day. He might even give his evidence next morning with his head in his hand, and give it equally well."

A. N. Wilson's column in *The Daily Telegraph* of August 31st was devoted to Edwin Drood, and its opening carried an allusion which cleverly linked Boz's famous but uninformative explanation for the creation of his first novel – "I thought of Mr Pickwick" – with the last: "Rochester is a splendid sight from the train. One evening recently, it was almost perfect, I saw the evening light on the Medway and thought of Mr Pickwick, who began his adventures there. I saw the cathedral, and the old Georgian houses and the castle. Dickens has possessed the place – my eye caught a hairdressing salon called Twist's - and I could not wait to get home and reread *The Mystery of Edwin Drood*."

London Particular: Change of Editor's Address

I have moved! Please send any Dickens-related newspaper clippings and other items you would like to see in the *London Particular* to my new address: Stephen Jarvis, 1 Riverine, Grosvenor Drive, Maidenhead, Berks, SL6 8PF, UK. Email: stephenjarvis@hotmail.com

A Final Thought...

Advice on getting out of a cab: "If you make the driver alight first, and then throw yourself upon him, you will find that he breaks your fall materially."

- Charles Dickens, 'The Last Cabman', in *Sketches by Boz (1836)*