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# London Particular

The Dickens Fellowship Newsletter

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## DICKENS WORLD OPENS!

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*"Just as Dickens travelled the world for the enjoyment of others, now the world travels to pay their respects to him..."*

**Those are the closing words of an animated film shown in Peggotty's Boathouse, one of the attractions at the glorious new Dickens World, now open at Chatham, Kent. Huge thanks are surely due to the Fellowship's Thelma Grove for all her hard work in ensuring the authenticity of the project. As Thelma says: "There are, inevitably with such a large and complex project, a few teething troubles still to be put right, but on the whole I would claim that Dickens World has increased 'the harmless gaiety of nations!'"**

Members will undoubtedly be aware of the extensive media coverage given to the opening of Dickens World - much of it favourable though, tiresomely, comparisons have been drawn with the likes of Disneyland. In response, it is worth remembering an analysis of Dickens's rise to fame made over twenty years ago by the academic Juliet McMaster in her paper *Visual Design in the Pickwick Papers* (published in *Studies in English Literature*, Autumn 1983.) McMaster argued that one of the reasons for Dickens's success was a certain childlike innocence at the heart of *The Pickwick Papers*, which gave it universal appeal: just as Mickey Mouse was composed of three circles (a large round head, and two round ears), so Mr Pickwick was also composed of three circles (a large round bald head and two round spectacle lenses.)

So if you hear anyone making remarks about Dickens World leading to the 'Disneyfication' of Dickens, then make certain you comment on the academic respectability and historical importance of that very process!

For further information about Dickens World, visit the website: [www.dickensworld.co.uk](http://www.dickensworld.co.uk)

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## NOTICE OF AGM

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NOTICE IS HEREBY GIVEN that the Annual General Meeting of The Dickens Fellowship will be held at the University of Pennsylvania in Philadelphia at 9.00 am on Saturday 21<sup>st</sup> July 2007, during the 101<sup>st</sup> Annual Conference to transact the following business:

- (a) to receive and to consider the report of Council on the activities of the Fellowship;
- (b) to receive and to consider the annual accounts and balance sheet of the Fellowship;
- (c) to elect the Honorary Officers;
- (d) to confirm the recommendations of Council in respect of membership subscriptions and affiliation fees;
- (e) to transact such other business as Council may decide is appropriate for a General Meeting.

The **Agenda** for the meeting accompanies this edition of *The London Particular* and will be published on the Fellowship website in due course.

**To simplify current regulations, one resolution is proposed by Council. "Officers of the Fellowship attending conferences outside the UK will be permitted to claim expenses up to a maximum of £200."**

Every member of the Dickens Fellowship is entitled to vote at an Annual General Meeting, or to inform the Honorary General Secretary (or in the case of Branch members, the Branch Secretary, who will then notify the Honorary General Secretary) in writing seven days before the meeting, of the way they wish to vote, on any specific resolution before it.

Every resolution put to an Annual General Meeting shall be decided on a show of hands

together with any votes lodged with the Honorary General Secretary 7 days beforehand. The chairman of the meeting shall be the sole and absolute judge of the validity of every vote. Each member shall have one vote and the chairman of the meeting shall have an additional, casting, vote.

This notice of the Annual General Meeting has been sent by the Honorary General Secretary to the Honorary Secretary of each branch, and to individual members who are not associated with any branch, at least thirty days before the meeting, stating the agenda and giving members the opportunity to register a proxy vote. **It is the responsibility of Branch Honorary Secretaries to inform Branch members and to notify the Honorary General Secretary of any matters arising therefrom, including the identity of proxy votes.**

Lee Ault  
Joan Dicks  
Joint General Secretaries, May 2007.

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#### Canvassing Opinion...

**Vincent Shaw-Morton, an artist living on the south-east coast of England, has contacted the Fellowship about a painting project based on scenes and characters from the more well-known Dickens novels. "I am writing to ask if your members have any particular scenes and characters that they would like to see portrayed. I am strictly an amateur in this endeavour (although I feel that I am a reasonably competent artist) and that if there is sufficient interest in this project, then I will consider reproducing them as posters and prints." For further information about the artist, or to submit suggestions, visit [www.shaw-morton.co.uk](http://www.shaw-morton.co.uk)**

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#### Dickens in the News

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Dickensian news has been dominated, and rightly so, by the opening of Dickens World. One interesting perspective came from a journalist on *Le Journal du Dimanche*, who was mentioned by Christopher Hart in *The Sunday Times* of 20<sup>th</sup> May: "She wrinkled her Gallic nose and said 'In France, we would not 'ave zis. A Zola's World or a Flaubert's World.' The idea of a Flaubert World made me laugh so much it was a moment of epiphany, A huge aluminium hangar in a retail park on the outskirts of Le Havre, perhaps. Visit

Homais's chemist's shop! Buy Emma Bovary's arsenic as a souvenir!"

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**Joan Dicks submitted a fascinating article about Dickens's brother Frederick, which appeared in *The Northern Echo*. It would not be too unjust to summarise Frederick's life as that of an inveterate sponger; indeed, the article suggests that Charles paid for his younger brother's headstone in Darlington's West Cemetery...and the question is posed: "Was this one last scrounge from beyond the grave?"**

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The *Islington Times* of 25<sup>th</sup> May carried a piece about another relative of Dickens, namely his great-great granddaughter Sophie Dickens, a sculptor whose work is currently on display at the Sladmore Gallery, Bruton Place, Mayfair. One of her works, in black steel, is on the theme of ravens...though not, as Dickensians might suppose, inspired by Grip, but rather by the tales of the Brothers Grimm.

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On April 8<sup>th</sup>, *The Sunday Telegraph* published a short feature about *Whitstable*, and quoted from an 1859 edition of *All the Year Round*: "It is a town that may be called small, that may be considered well-to-do, that is thoroughly independent...but its best thoughts are devoted to oysters." The piece noted that *Wheeler's Oyster Bar* in the town dates back to 1856, and is still going strong.

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If there is one word overused in book reviews it is the adjective "Dickensian". The Isak website [www.isak.typepad.com/isak/](http://www.isak.typepad.com/isak/) which is "dedicated to tales and truths", made the perceptive comment in May: "If I didn't know any better, I'd think 'Dickensian' meant a long book written by a man."

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

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***BOAT TRIP REMINDER: Places are still available for the "Boz to Boswell" Thames trip on 30<sup>th</sup> June. Contact the Museum on 0207 405 2127 Ext 202 for information and bookings.***

*A Final Thought...*

**"Beginning the World"**

*Heading to Chapter LXV, Bleak House*