
London Particular

The Dickens Fellowship Newsletter

Cleveland Street Plaque

The house at 22 Cleveland Street, Fitzrovia, London W1 (formerly 10 Norfolk Street) has long been known as Dickens's first London home – he lived there in 1815/16 and again from 1828/31 - but it was not until last month that it finally gained a plaque identifying it publicly. On Saturday, 8 June, about 100 people gathered to see the plaque unveiled by CD's great-great-great-granddaughter, Lucinda Dickens Hawksley. Also present was Fellowship member Dan Calinescu from Toronto, sponsor of the plaque.

Dr Ruth Richardson, who attended the ceremony, recently became involved in a campaign which saved the old Strand Union Workhouse (also in Cleveland Street) from demolition. Dr Richardson argues that the former workhouse was a model for the one where *Oliver Twist* was born (see items in *London Particular*, March and July 2011).

A Precocious Child

Prof Michael Slater has sent in a quote from Lady Emily Lutyens's 'A Blessed Girl: Memoirs of a Victorian Childhood Chronicled in an Exchange of Letters 1887 – 1896 (Lady Emily to the Rev. Whitwell, 11th Sept. 1891'. *'When Aunt T was here yesterday, they were talking about Dickens and saying how impossible he is to read now, and I said I thought some of his books were delightful. Aunt T said, "Oh yes, that's quite the right feeling at your age, just what you ought to think". This is a stupid thing to tell me. Of all things in the world, I do hate being told that I do things because of my age. It seems to imply that you like reading Dickens because it is the right thing to do. For one thing, I have no idea of reading him because he is supposed to be a good writer, but because I enjoy his books, and then if I did what everybody else did, I should abuse Dickens and read Rudyard Kipling. It seems absurd to notice it, but I hate being told my reasons for doing things, especially when they are quite wrong.'*

Michael comments: 'A very spirited young lady obviously, but with her heart in the right place!'

Not everyone's heart's in the right place with regard to CD, however

.....**Hilary Mantel** The author of *Wolf Hall* and *Bringing up the Bodies* said recently that she had been "enthralled" as a child by Robert Louis Stevenson and loved Jane Austen because she was so 'shrewdly practical'. She added "I have a block about Dickens. I know I'm missing something great – everybody says so. But I can't stand his moralising and crass sentimentality and the galumphing humour." Ouch.

Author and Fellowship member Claire Tomalin goes some way to restoring the balance. In The London Library Annual Lecture, delivered at the Hay Festival last year, she read part of a letter CD wrote to his sister Fanny about a fund-raising trip to Birmingham in 1844. A huge reception had been laid on for him, including the words "Welcome Dick" in artificial flowers. He'd spent the previous night in Liverpool, where he'd '*danced a Sir Roger {de Coverley} of forty couple until Three o'Clock in the morning, so was rendered rather nervous by these splendid preparations. But I took a pint of Champagne and a pint of Sherry – dressed in the Magpie waistcoat – and was as hard as iron and as cool as a cucumber again.'* People began to cheer '*in the most terrific manner I ever heard... When at last they left off, Dick dashed in, and I must say that he delivered the best speech I ever heard him make.'*

As Ms Tomalin says: "You can't help loving a man who writes letters like this."

Faces of Dickens (4) This time, the Face is in central London near the Houses of Parliament. In Parliament Street, the continuation of Whitehall, at its junction with Derby Gate, look up at the medallion bust of CD above the second-floor window of the Red Lion public house. The pub was rebuilt in 1900, but Dickens, according to an uncompleted autobiographical fragment, came to the premises at the age of 12, whilst employed at Warren's Blacking warehouse, and ordered a glass of "the very best ale... with a good head on it". He was rewarded with a kiss from the landlady that was "half admiring, and half compassionate, but all womanly and good". CD introduced the episode into *David Copperfield*, where his

autobiographical hero asks for a glass of the "Genuine Stunning" ale.

MEMBERS' BOOK OFFER In 2012, Bodleian Library Publishing brought out "The Curious World of Charles Dickens" to coincide with an exhibition at the Bodleian Library. It comprises 112 pages with 95 colour illustrations, and retails at £15.99. It was reviewed by Professor Michael Slater in the winter edition of *The Dickensian*, and was described as: 'a most attractive hardback book containing vivid illustrations, many in colour, of a lavish selection of the exhibits. These are matched with apposite quotations from Dickens's novels, journalism and letters, as well as from other contemporary sources... It is a must for all Dickensian bookshelves'. The publishers have agreed that members of the DF can purchase the book at the special price of £8 (+ £2.50 posting & package). To order: quote OFFER LP13 and send orders to Turpin Distribution Ltd, tel 01767 604 968, email custserv@turpin-distribution.com Cheques payable to Turpin Distribution should be sent to Turpin Distribution, Pegasus Drive, Stratton Business Park, Biggleswade, SG18 8TQ. Please ensure you give the offer code and your delivery address. This offer is available only to members resident in the UK. Offer ends 31 July 2013.

Dickens Quiz Paul Graham thanks all those Fellowship members who took the time and trouble to answer the quiz posed in the last edition. Most of the questions proved straightforward and all respondents got them right; the question on *Bleak House* proved a teaser. The answers are:-

1. In *Hard Times*, Merrylegs died in Chester.
2. In *Great Expectations*, Wemmick's castle was situated in Walworth.
3. In *Oliver Twist*, Oliver was shot in Chertsey.
4. In *A Tale of Two Cities*, Roger Cly was supposedly buried in St Pancras churchyard.
5. In *Little Dorrit*, according to Mr F's Aunt, Barnes's gander was 'stole' in Henley.

The 6th question asked the place of abode of Mr Vholes's father and three daughters in *Bleak House*. Most respondents answered 'The Vale of Taunton', whilst some answered 'Kennington'. The correct answer is 'The Vale of Taunton and Kennington'.

Chapter 39 of *Bleak House* records that Vholes's 'father is dependent on him in the Vale of Taunton', while his daughters: 'three raw-visaged, lank, and buttoned-up maidens... dwell with the

parent Vholes in an earthy cottage situated in a damp garden at Kennington'.

Congratulations to our winners: Geoffrey Christopher of the Birthplace Branch, John Wilton of Adelaide and Rose-Marie Morrison, also of Adelaide. Each will receive the classic radio box set containing 6 Dickens audio books, courtesy of our generous sponsors, AudioGO, to whom we extend our grateful thanks.

FORTHCOMING EVENTS:

Wed 24 July: Great Expectations and All the Year Round – What did Dickens learn from Wilkie?; talk by John Sutherland (Lumen)

Sat 27 July: Dickens and Victorian Barnet: Walk with City of London Guide, Paul Barker. Meet 2.30 High Barnet Underground Station (Northern Line)

Sat 10 August: Following The Uncommercial Traveller: Dickens and the East End – Walk with Dr Tony Williams. Meet at 2 pm, Liverpool Street Station (Bishopsgate entrance)

AN EXTRA EVENT – Tues 3 Sept: Mike Newell will speak on the making of his recent film version of Great Expectations (Lumen)

Thurs 19 September: The Dickens Journalism Online Project: talk by Professor John Drew (Lumen)

Wed 9 October: The Day Parliament Burned Down – 16th October 1834: talk by Caroline Shenton (Lumen).

Management Committee

Following the meeting of Council in April, the new Committee is made up as follows: Officers: Paul Graham and Lee Ault (Hon Gen Secs), Professor Malcolm Andrews (Hon Editor of the *Dickensian*), John Humphreys (Hon Treasurer), Committee Chairman, James Murray, Sandra Faulkner, Peter Duggan, Brian Johnson, Maggie de Vos (Eastbourne), Steve Martin (Chatham & Rochester) and Derek Hyde.

Don't be 'umble like Uriah Heep! More contributions, please! Send items to: Alison Gowans, "Danesdyke", 27A Ashcombe Road, Carshalton, Surrey SM5 3ET, or by email – aligowans@hotmail.co.uk