

The Dickens Fellowship

The Dickens Fellowship is an international organisation which has many branches in the UK. and all over the world. The Portsmouth Branch is well-established and thriving in this city, having many connections with Charles Dickens, not least the house in which he was born, which has been a museum open to the public for over one hundred years. The annual subscription for becoming a member of the Birthplace Branch is £10, and becomes due each 1st January.

If you are interested in the novels and other works of the author, and would like to find out more about his fascinating background and life, there is no better way than joining your local branch of the Fellowship.

Mission Statement

To knit together in a common bond of friendship all lovers of Charles Dickens's writings, and to spread the love of humanity, which is the keynote of all his works.

Portsmouth – the Birth Town of Charles Dickens

Charles Dickens was born on 7 February, 1812 in a small terraced house, number 1 Mile End Terrace, Landport, and lived there for the first four months of his life, before the family moved on to 16 Hawke Street, Portsea. When the house came up for sale in 1903 Portsmouth Corporation bought it, and opened it on 22 July 1904 as a museum dedicated to the great author. It was administered in the earlier years by the Libraries & Museums Committee. In 1967 the Birthplace needed to be renovated, and its large collection of Dickens-related books, largely supplied by its first curator, Mr Alfred Seale, was transferred to the Central Library, which at that time was the one behind the Guildhall, and which is now Park Building, owned by the University.

What does the Portsmouth Branch do?

We hold regular meetings on the second Tuesday of each month, with the exception of February, July and August. These are held mainly in St. Swithun's Church Hall, Waverley Road, Southsea, and run from 2.30pm to 4.30pm. The meetings are well-organised, and sometimes include talks, which are usually on a Dickens-related theme. We also have regular discussion and/or readings concerning our book of the year. We give talks and performances for interested groups.

What else do we have to offer?

In addition to the meetings we run a number of other events, including:-

- An Annual Birthday Lecture at John Pound's Church, High Street, Old Portsmouth, on the Saturday before 7th February (Charles Dickens's birthday).
- A wreath-laying ceremony at the Birthplace Museum on the 7th February in celebration of the birth of Charles Dickens, followed by the placing of a garland around the neck of the Charles Dickens statue in Guildhall Square at approximately 12.00pm.
- A Birthday Lunch on the first Tuesday in February, to which our President, the Lord Mayor of Portsmouth, and the Lady Mayoress are invited.
- A church service at St. Alban's Church on a Sunday, when it falls on the 4th of March, to celebrate the Baptism of Charles Dickens.
- An annual outing by coach during the month of May or June.
- An Evensong Service in St. Mary's Church, followed by refreshments and readings from the works of Dickens in the church hall to commemorate the death of Charles Dickens. This takes place on the Sunday nearest to 9th June.

Forthcoming meetings and events:

Tuesday, 20th July

Bring and Buy Sale

Review, readings and discussion, and a game based on *Bleak House*,
Led by Tim Suffolk

Tuesday, 10th August

A talk by Ian Dickens

“A Dickens Family Voyage”

Presentations/Discussion of Pictures from Italy

Tuesday, 14th September

A talk by Dr Tony Williams

The English Traveller's Luggage: What Dickens took to Italy
and the Pictures he Brought Back

Tuesday 12th October

A talk by Maggie de Vos

“Marginal women in Dickens”

Presentations/discussion of Pictures from Italy

Tuesday 9th November

Annual General Meeting with Bring & Buy
Presentations/Discussion of Pictures from Italy

Tuesday, 14th December

A Dickens Christmas Occasion