

NEWSLETTER

ISSUE 04/07

SEPTEMBER 2008

INTERNATIONAL CONFERENCE 2008

Nine members of the Bristol and Clifton Dickens Society attended the 102nd International Dickens Fellowship Conference at St Chad's College, Durham, this summer. Michael and Ann Darling, Susan Ham's brother and sister-in-law, were there too, so we were well represented. At the AGM, always held on the Conference Saturday, there is a roll-call of branches, when members of each branch stand up (and for some strange reason, are applauded), so it was good to have so many of us standing for Bristol.

The North-East branch, which organised this Conference, is the newest in the UK. It's good to see how quickly it has developed, and become confident enough to take on the undoubtedly daunting task of organising a conference.



I first met Herbert Savory, the Honorary Secretary of the North-East branch, in 1995, at the Conference in Nottingham. Herbert was delighted at how friendly he found people then. He didn't know what to expect and was a little apprehensive that he might find people too erudite and himself out of his depth. But he thoroughly enjoyed himself and went back to Northumberland determined to set up a North-East of England branch of the Fellowship. The branch was granted its Charter in 2002. Herbert's enthusiasm knows no bounds: he has become a member of numerous branches - and at the roll-call of branches at the AGM he was almost more often on his feet than on his seat. He has also named his house in Kibblesworth "Dickens House". The Conference may never have happened but for the efforts and organising skills of the Rev. Ruth Crofton of Stanley Crook, Co. Durham. Ruth has attended other conferences - I think at Canterbury and Amsterdam - and the group as a whole seems to have worked wonderfully together. Congratulations to them for a superb Conference.

FS

CONFERENCE 2008 - GETTING THERE

It was with high hopes that we set off to Durham, rather early on a Wednesday in late July. We were going to the Dickens Fellowship Conference and what easier way to travel than by air? It would save all the driving on those busy roads. It would only be an hour on the aeroplane.

Six o'clock on Wednesday morning - a telephone call; panic stations; and then we were off to the airport in our Swift Line taxi. Crowds waited patiently for easyJet to check in with passports - we were only going to Newcastle, but we had

to be frisked for terrorist activity. A long wait and a dreadful cup of coffee in a cardboard cup and then we were trekking down the corridors onto a bus, and finally, to our seats on the plane. "At last", we thought! We shall soon be there!

After landing at Newcastle Airport we were thrilled to see our luggage arriving immediately. 'This is good'.



Now for the Metro to Newcastle Central, the run up and over the bridge to - just - miss the train to Durham. Back over the bridge to wait at platform 11 for the next train. Never mind, it is all an adventure!

At last we were in Durham, waiting for the Cathedral bus to Palace Green. Then a walk over the cobbles dragging our reluctant suitcases to St Chad's College - it was 2.30 pm.

Was it all worth it? Of course. It was the beginning of a fantastic conference where we were able to meet friends who have a love of the works of Dickens.

Sally Fry



Gerald Dickens "in character" for his reading of A Christmas Carol

CONFERENCE 2008 - ENTERTAINMENTS.

On our first evening in Durham we made our way to a Civic reception in the newly refurbished Town Hall. This was followed by a performance by Gerald Dickens of "A Christmas Carol". Charles Dickens had given a dramatised reading of this 150 years ago, in the then newly built Town Hall. We sat, spellbound as with only the aid of a chair, a hat and a stick, Gerald Dickens recreated Scrooge, Bob Cratchit, Tiny Tim and all the ghosts - a real tour de force.

SNUG (Special Needs Unity Group)

On Thursday evening SNUG gave us a well rehearsed programme of songs from a number of musicals. The surprise event was an amazing display of tumbling and gymnastics by one young man. These talented performers gave us a delightful evening.

Film evening - a Night at the Silent Movies

On Friday David Williams, with George Hetherington on the piano, provided excerpts from black and white films of Christmas Carol, Nicholas Nickleby, Little Dorrit and The Old Curiosity Shop. It was interesting to compare different versions of the same story; although perhaps we were seeing rather too much of Scrooge's door-knocker!

North East Branch

On our last evening we were entertained by the North East Branch: a varied programme, starting with a film, which took a light-hearted look at the problems of setting up a new branch, and preparing for a conference. Then followed a spirited defence of 'Geordie' speech as portrayed by the Dickens character John Browdie. A short passage in broad dialect was read by one member of the cast and translated by another - not easy to reconcile the two versions! Music by the Dunelm Ensemble gave us a delightful selection of local folk songs including "The Keel Row" and "Bobby Shafto", and music played on the flute and Northumbrian pipes. Two sketches introduced our old friends Pickwick and Bardell, Sarah Gamp and Betsey Prigg, and the evening ended with a reading of "Boots at the Hollybush Inn". In all, a varied and amusing evening.

Pat Cemlyn-Jones

CONFERENCE 2008 - THE AGM

The A.G.M. was interesting for one attending their first Conference. It was really helpful to see people one had only heard about, and get them into focus. It was useful to see the Dickens Fellowship at work and see the range of countries and branches involved.

We heard about the planned Coffee Shop at the Dickens Museum - extending into the adjacent property and adding greatly to the attractions of the museum in the form of exhibitions, meetings and entertaining - and of the battle over the sale of Dickens' desk overseas - proceeds to go to Great Ormond Street Hospital. An export ban has been placed on the sale, and it is hoped to find funds to recover the desk.

Morys Cemlyn-Jones



CONFERENCE 2008 - TRIPS

The first trip was to the Beamish open-air museum, divided into areas - town, manor, farm, mine and school - linked by period buses and trains. The houses, furnished in 1913 style, were moved from their original sites and rebuilt brick-by-brick at Beamish. The dentist's surgery made one wince. The solicitor's office was straight out of a Dickens novel. The shops were so convincingly stocked one wanted to buy things.



The second visit was to nearby Newcastle. We followed a trail to see where Dickens performed while there, finishing up at the Guildhall.

Finally we visited Bowes Museum and Bowes village. As well as having an unusual collection of Second Empire furniture and artwork, the Museum has an accounts book from Bowes Academy kept by William Shaw, the Yorkshire headmaster Charles Dickens visited while collecting material for Nicholas Nickleby. Ted Shaw, the amiable great-great grandson of William Shaw, showed us the house that was once Bowes Academy - the model for Dotheboys Hall. It looked very pleasant in summer sunshine surrounded, by a colourful flowers.

EF

DICKENS HOUSE MUSEUM

Good news for people thinking of visiting the Dickens House Museum. Until now it has been a bit of a problem to find refreshment in the region of Doughty Street. At the AGM it was agreed that the Fellowship should make a sum of £15000 available for loan to the Charles Dickens Museum to assist towards developing a café facility.

The Museum receives more than 25000 visitors a year, and it is felt by the Trustees that people's visits will be enhanced by being able to take some refreshment before, during, or after their visit. It is hoped to have the café in place before Dickens' bi-centenary in 2012.

SPECIAL VISIT CHARLES DICKENS MUSEUM AND DOUGHTY STREET CLOSED

During the visit of US President George W Bush and his wife to Britain earlier this year, Laura Bush especially requested to visit the Charles Dickens Museum. For the few days beforehand, both the British and American security services were inspecting the Museum; and on the day of the visit, the Museum and Doughty Street were closed to other visitors. The Presidential party were welcomed by Lucinda Dickens-Hawkesley (Dickens' great great grand-daughter and biographer of Katie, Charles Dickens' daughter), Andrew Xavier (Director of the Museum), Claire Tomalin (Patron of the Museum), and Mark Dickens (great great grandson).

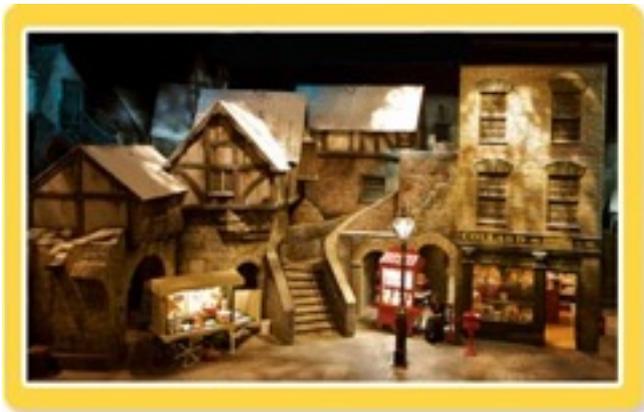


THE DICKENS EXPERIENCE DICKENS WORLD - CHATHAM MARITIME - KENT

Last May my friend Margaret and I intended to watch a medieval jousting event at Leeds Castle. The weather being cold and rainy, we decided, somewhat apprehensively, to visit Chatham instead. There is plenty of room to park and just inside the main building there is a small but pleasant shop. Apart from the usual toys and chocolates, there is a good collection of classics. I saw most of the Dickens books and bought two biographies.

Next we entered the Victorian world of Charles Dickens. Walking through dark passages, we felt that we had come into an older London. The corridor opened out onto a large courtyard. Here the buildings and balconies above gave a good view of the scene. There were stalls selling Victorian food and other items. We saw a façade of an old shop selling humbugs and many other long-forgotten sweets. There were young actors dressed in Victorian costumes who answered the children's questions in raucous cockney voices. In fact, the whole experience is very much geared to junior children and above. We joined in the boat ride and water splash. This took us past dark, gloomy (even smelly) tenements. Two prisoners in the Fleet Prison were discussing their "hard times" as we glided along. This ride was great fun as we loved being with the children, who were excited and knew quite a lot about the novels and characters. Of course many of the families were local to Rochester. We climbed the stairs to a second balcony where there was a Dickens pub. The drinks and food didn't impress us.

At the end of our visit we saw a play in the Britannia Theatre. Here adults and children sat enthralled as from the darkness of the Circle came the voices of Fagin and the Artful Dodger. Then boxes on either side of the stage were lit up. On one side Mr Pickwick spoke to Sam Weller on the opposite side. These figures were life-size puppets with realistic movements of faces and arms. After this scene, a large book opened on stage and out stepped Mr Winkle and Mrs Gamp. Actors had recorded their voices. Then Charles Dickens himself appeared to explain his characters as brought to life in his readings.



The Dickens Experience was a good mixture of education and entertainment. If you go, don't expect an intellectual afternoon, but enjoy it anyway. The organisers have gone a good way to keep the memory of Dickens alive for the younger generation.

If you are looking for a family day out with a Dickens theme, visit www.dickensworld.co.uk.

Pat Forrest-Taylor

From Pickwick Papers - Chapter 39

Accordingly, next morning, Sam Weller issued forth upon his quest, in no way daunted by the very discouraging prospect before him; and away he walked, up one street and down another - we were going to say, up one hill and down another, only it's all uphill at Clifton.

Sam struggled across the Downs against a good high wind, wondering whether it was always necessary to hold your hat on with both hands in that part of the country, and came to a shady by-place about which were sprinkled several little villas of quiet and secluded appearance. Outside a stable door at the bottom of a long back lane without a thoroughfare, a groom in undress was idling about, apparently persuading himself that he was doing something with a spade and a wheelbarrow.

In the lane where he sat, there opened three or four garden gates, belonging to as many houses, which though detached from each other, were only separated by their gardens. As these were large and long, and well planted with trees, the houses were not only at some distance off, but the greater part of them were nearly concealed from view. Sam was sitting with his eyes fixed upon the dust heap outside when the gate opened, and a female servant came out into the lane to shake some bed-side carpets.



From the Clifton Chronicle, Thursday, September 1 1927

Mr Winkle's Quest and the Astronomical Gentleman.

INFORMATION WANTED

Many holidaymakers visiting local scenes come into contact with interesting literary associations that help to add to the pleasure of their future reading.

How many holiday-makers whose homes are at Westbury-on-Trym realise that their own neighbourhood has interesting associations with the events of Charles Dickens' "Pickwick Papers"?

Several years ago The Dickens Fellowship, the party including Percy Fitzgerald, Dickens' friend, with members of the Bristol and Clifton Society, and a party of Americans, visited the lane at Westbury that is associated with Mr Winkle's

romance and Sam Weller's voyage of discovery.

THE SURLY GROOM

It was during this quest that Sam Weller had an altercation with the surly groom on the Downs. "I'll knock your head off for half-a-crown," said he, "Couldn't afford to have it done on those terms," rejoined Sam. "It 'ud be worth a life's board wages, at least, to you; and 'ud be cheap at that. Make my compliments indoors. Tell 'em not to wait dinner for me, and say they needn't mind puttin' any by, for it will be cold afore I come in."

ALL UPHILL AT CLIFTON

This is the portion of Pickwick in which Charles Dickens remarks "it's all uphill at Clifton" and describes a journey across the Downs.

Many people with a considerable knowledge of

Dickensian matters point to the home of Sir Sydney Humphries, Eastfield Lodge, as the one from which Arabella set forth into the garden on the occasion of the "clandestine" meeting at which Mr Pickwick himself insisted on being present. It has been suggested that Arbutus Cottage, nearby, the home of Miss Peters, is the house in which the "astronomical gentleman" discovered marvellous signs from the heavens, whenever the romantic parties' lantern was opened as they journeyed along the lane.

We have been unable to obtain much reliable confirmation of this story, in spite of several enquiries among circles of Dickensian enthusiasts both here and in London; but no doubt there are a number of Dickensian students in Clifton or Bristol who could throw interesting light on the matter.

FUTURE CONFERENCES



Beth Bliss shows off her Pickwick tattoo. She has some more. Where and what are they? Attend the 2009 conference to find out.



Dickens found us. So can you.

The Cleveland Fellowship enthusiastically invites you to visit our town for the 101st Annual Dickens Fellowship Conference, Thursday, July 30 through Wednesday, August 5, 2001

2009 - Thursday July 30th to Wednesday August 5th - Cleveland, Ohio, USA; *Dickens Fellowship International Conference*. This Conference will celebrate the 25th anniversary of the founding of the Cleveland Ohio branch. Cleveland, for those whose geography is shaky, is on the southern shore of Lake Eerie. By plane it is within easy reach of Chicago, Cincinnati, the Niagara Falls, and Washington DC and New York. It has a Museum of Art, a World-Famous symphony orchestra,

a Rock-and-Roll Hall of Fame, and other attractions. The Conference will take place at Case Western Reserve University and many of the city attractions are within walking distance. Some of us have virtually promised the Clevelanders to be there. More information can be found at their website, www.clevelanddickensfellowship.org.



We're working to make this conference fun and fascinating, comfortable and convenient. The Cleveland Fellowship awaits you.

2009 - Friday September 11th to Monday September 14th - Nottingham University Park Campus; *Dickens and Tourism - A Conference*. Sponsored by the Dickens Fellowship Nottingham Branch and the Christel DeHaan Tourism and Travel Research Institute, Nottingham University Business School. More information by e-mail from anita.fernandez-young@nottingham.ac.uk.



Come visit our city on Lake Erie. The Rock and Roll Hall of Fame (center), designed by I. M. Pei, pulsates in our skyline. Cleveland rocks! (Photo compliments of positivelycleveland.com)

2010 - Wednesday July 21st to Monday July 26th - Eastbourne, Sussex; *Dickens Fellowship International Conference*. The Eastbourne group will be 90 years old next year. Arrangements for their 2010 Conference are, at the moment, fluid. Eastbourne doesn't have a university, so the Conference will be in a hotel. For anyone who was daunted by the hills of Durham, it may be worth bearing in mind that Eastbourne is flat so it should be reasonably easy to get around.

2011 - Thursday April 14th to Tuesday April 19th - Christchurch, New Zealand; *Dickens Fellowship International Conference*. The important thing to notice for anyone considering the trip of a lifetime to New Zealand is that, in order to make the most of their southern hemisphere climate, the Conference will take place in April - the week before Easter - rather than in the usual July/August slot.

Accommodation, meals, and lectures will be in Canterbury University's College House. Canterbury is flat, with the Southern Alps on one side and the sea on the other. More information from Mrs Esmé Richards, 39 Hartley Avenue, Christchurch 8005 - e-mail: chrisandesme@xtra.co.nz.

2012 - Thursday August 9th to Monday August 13th - Portsmouth, UK - *Dickens Fellowship International Conference*. Not much detailed news yet. It will probably be held in Rees Hall, familiar to those who have attended mini-conferences there. The 2012 Conference will take place in mid-August to avoid clashing with The London Olympic Games - and will, of course, be held in Dickens' birthplace on the bicentenary of his birth! Visit www.dickens2012.org to keep in touch with all that is planned for this momentous year.

Never has so much Conference information been made available so early!

FUTURE BRISTOL 2008-09 EVENTS

Sunday October 4th 2008 - proposed trip to the Black Country Museum - following Sybil's recognition of the Black Country (where she grew up) in 'The Old Curiosity Shop'. More details at the September meeting, or from Eve Fitt on 0117 924 6873.

Sunday December 14th - Maureen Foley has 20 tickets for "**A Christmas Carol**" at The Tobacco Factory, for 14th DECEMBER at 2.30 pm. Tickets are £8 - first-come-first-served. Contact Maureen on 01454 773011.

GETTING TO KNOW YOU

Pat & Morys Cemlyn-Jones



Morys - born the day after a Zeppelin raid on London - had a *fairly* traditional early life: public school, Cambridge for a science degree, the army, and *then* a medical degree.

He practised in North Wales for ten years, working single-handed as a GP in Conway. Pat was doing her first job after qualifying at the local hospital in Bangor. They met, and married, in 1958.

They continued to live in Conway until 1962, by which time they had two children; and then moved to Clevedon. Here Morys went into what was to become a highly respected practice with a Dr McLeod, who had been with him at Cambridge.

The family lived in Walton-St-Mary for nearly 20 years, Pat doing school and community health work, as well as helping with the Practice and looking after the now four children. Morys took early retirement but continued to do locum work.

In 1984 Pat and Morys moved to Kensington Place, Clifton. Pat taught Sunday School and

became a lay-preacher, so as the medical work she was getting was not very stimulating, she took up the idea that was suggested to her of becoming a non-stipendiary Minister. This involved a two year non-residential course at Exeter. Once she was ordained, Pat became the Minister of New Brunswick URC Church in Southmead. A number of adventures occurred during that time - including the Church being burnt down and miraculously the Bible and its lectern saved. They used an Anglican Church for a year while a more flexible, suitable building was erected to replace the old one.

The Cemlyn-Jones children all finished their degrees in the same year and left home. It felt sudden. Pat and Morys moved from Kensington Place and after various unsatisfactory flats, they settled in one in Rodney Place for eleven years. They now have eleven grandchildren between the ages of five and twenty. And they have a Golden Wedding anniversary coming up.

Pat has more or less retired from the Ministry. She did some locums (religious ones) in Brislington, Portishead, Horfield and Whitchurch. When Morys retired, he did a diploma in geology - definitely a mature student, he received his diploma at the age of seventy.

In 2003 Pat and Morys found a flyer about the Bristol and Clifton Dickens Society, in the Central Library. They contacted Lionel, and since then have been wonderfully active members of our group. They both enjoyed Dickens from a young age - Morys remembers that his older brother would be given a Dickens book every Christmas, and after his brother had read it, Morys was allowed to.

Favourite Books

Morys: Barnaby Rudge;
Pat: Nicholas Nickleby.

FOR SALE

A Mrs Rita Hain wishes to sell 12 pewter spoons with Dickens characters mounted on red plush with a wooden frame. She is open to offers and is happy for anyone to ring her (on 01275 544272) if they would like to look at the spoons with a view to buying them.

SUBSCRIPTION RATES

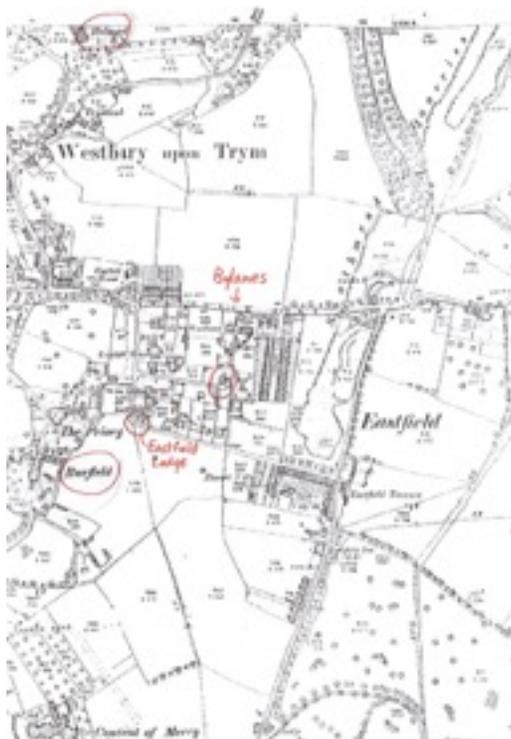
It was decided at the last AGM to raise the annual subscription rate to the Society to £15.

A TENUOUS CONNECTION

In compiling a list of famous people of Henleaze for our presentation at the newly refurbished Henleaze Library we thought it appropriate to look for authors; imagine our delight in discovering that Amelia Edwards - eminent Egyptologist with best sellers on Egypt - lived on the Henleaze side of Eastfield; and furthermore that she knew Dickens and collaborated with him on the ghost stories that were so popular in the mid 19th century.

Research by the Dickens Fellowship (see the article in the Clifton Chronicle for September 1927 below) suggested that the description of a house visited by Sam Weller was based on one in the same road as Amelia's - either Eastfield Lodge or Bylanes. We knew Dickens was familiar with Bristol through his job as reporter for the London Morning Chronicle and it seemed likely that he would have visited Amelia: however, the Pickwick Papers were first published in serial form long before this so this connection is very tenuous.

I had the map of 1886 and that of 1903 and tried to imagine the route of a pedestrian from Clifton to Amelia's. He had to climb ("it's all uphill at Clifton") Whiteladies Road to the Downs where he "struggled against a good high wind, wondering whether it was always necessary to hold your hat on with both hands" and where



footpads, pickpockets and "surly grooms" abound. Two roads are marked "from Bristol" but my feeling is that he would go from the Glen along what is now Westbury Road past the Guide Post and icehouse and continue towards Westbury. Eastfield lies beyond the estates of Burghfield (now Redmaids School) and the Priory (now Priory Court Road etc) into which Sam could not trespass so he would skirt them thus passing three schools and a public house (the Post Office Tavern). Off Eastfield is the "long back lane without a thoroughfare" where romantic assignments took place. This is clearly marked as a blind lane on the map of 1903 but is also visible with a lens on the map of 1886. The house at the end is also considered to be part of this story.

Nowadays the gardens opening into the lane are still "large and long and well planted with trees". The house Sam sat near now has very large modern gates but the pillars by its small side gate bear the name Bylanes and the distant garage was once a stable block. Sadly no maid came out to shake a carpet when I photographed the lane.

Sylvia Kelly

"DICKENS ON THE STRAND"
one of America's favourite festivals



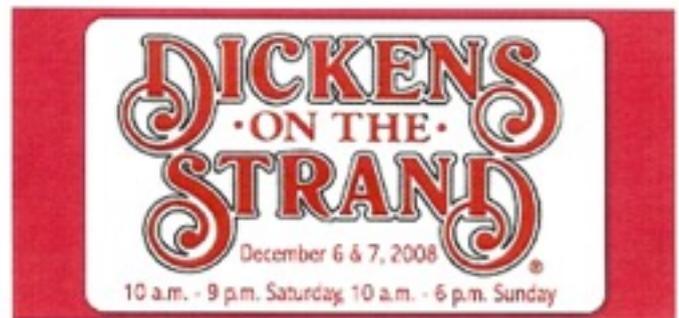
Galveston celebrates its 35th Annual 'Dickens on The Strand' in early December 2008.

'Dickens on The Strand' commemorates the works of Dickens, offering its visitors to Galveston (Texas) an enchanting journey through history, as a bustling 19th century cityscape comes to life.

The Galveston Historical Foundation (GHF) started this event in 1974 as the 'Old English Christmas and Hanukkah Party', a costumed evening of Victorian food along with period readings and re-enactments for GHF members. The activities were so popular that the following year the event was opened to the public, as 'Dickens's Evening on The Strand'. Basically, it remained a one-

evening event until 1983, when the festival was expanded to a full weekend of activities. In 1984 the event was renamed 'Dickens on The Strand'. The festival is always held in the first full weekend in December.

Although Charles Dickens did not visit Galveston (or Texas) during his American travels, the theme was chosen to evoke the spirit of Dickens's 'A Christmas Carol', and not intended to show a connection between Galveston and London. However, 'The Strand' was named after London's important once waterside street.



Five of Dickens' descendants, including Cedric Charles Dickens, a great grandson, and Gerald Charles Dickens, a great-great grandson, have visited Galveston, as special guests of the GHF.

On 6th to 7th December 2008 'Dickens on The Strand' will again assume Centre Stage - food and entertainment will fill the area with the sights and smells of an era long past. Magicians, musicians, hypnotists, acrobats and performers of all types, will take to the festival stages for non-stop entertainment throughout the festival site.

Galveston Historical Foundation invites everyone to visit this port city to participate in these festivities.

Further information is available on the GHF Website, www.galvestonhistory.org.

Leila Gilmore

Bristol & Clifton Dickens Society

Applications for membership (only £15 per year) should be sent to Frankie Sahni

**COPY DATE FOR THE NEXT NEWSLETTER
25TH FEBRUARY 2009**

Contact Frankie of Eve with your news

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