

NEWSLETTER

APRIL 2010

THE 104TH INTERNATIONAL DICKENS FELLOWSHIP CONFERENCE EASTBOURNE - 21ST-26TH July 2010



Panorama by David Iliff

The conference will be based at the Chatsworth Hotel and Maison Lyons Hotels, where en-suite rooms mostly have sea views. For those attending the whole conference, you will need to arrive on Wednesday 21st July and check out on Monday 26th July. The working days - Thursday - Sunday - include optional visits to Dickens World, Gad's Hill Place, Bloomsbury Group Haunts, The Royal Pavilion, and coastal jaunts by horse drawn carriage or open bus. Lectures by Tony Pointon, Dr Joanne Eysell, Professor Jacky Bratton, Professor John Bowen, Dr Tony Williams and Professor Jenny Hartley. Evening entertainments include Gerald Dickens, a Victorian Slide Show, a Banquet and a Victorian Old Time Music Hall. Programmes and booking forms are available on www.dickensfellowship.org/Conference2010.htm or via Maggie de Vos at dickens2010@googlemail.com. If you don't have access to a computer contact Frankie's brother Don Hill, on 01275 371597, who will happily print off and post you the information.

Play-acting or Reality?

Earlier in the year, during the GREAT FREEZE, I was reading 'The Cricket on the hearth', when I found this delightful and apposite description of Caleb Plummer, the Toymaker:

"I am not at all prepared to say, myself, that if Caleb had been a Lord Chamberlain or a Member of Parliament, or a lawyer, or even a great speculator, he would have dealt in toys one whit less whimsical, while I have a very great doubt whether they would have been as harmless."

Food for thought, perhaps, in view of our current political situation. FS

FUTURE EVENTS

April 8th at 7.30 pm at Westmoreland Hall

"Captain Cuttle and Major Bagstock"
presented by Professor Michael Slater

May 13th at 7.30 pm at Westmoreland Hall

"Dombey and Son - A Costumed Reading"
Directed by Eve Fitt

June 10th at 7.30 pm at Westmoreland Hall

Annual General Meeting
"The Tuggses at Ramsgate - A Costumed Reading"
Directed by Charmian Howard

July 13th 6.30 pm - 9.30 pm

Garden Party at 71 Maple Road
Please come, with food and non-alcoholic drink if you insist, but if it is not convenient for any reason, just come. And let's pray for fine weather like we had last time.

GETTING TO KNOW YOU

Nicholas Green



After a visit to what was then known as 'Dickens House' (now the 'Charles Dickens Museum') in London, in 1977, Nicholas decided to follow through his interest by joining the Bristol and Clifton Dickens Society.

He went to visit Charles Darling (Susan Ham's father) who was then Hon. Secretary of the society, and never looked back. Soon after he joined, Stella Wilson (Sally Fry's mother) invited him to be in a play she was directing 'The Course of True Love', based on 'Bleak House', by Edward Purchase. Nicholas played Prince Turveydrop. Nicholas played in a number of Stella's productions after that, as well as some of Sally's. And he has taken part in a number of readings: he says he certainly knows a great deal more about Dickens than he did when he first joined, and that is one of the pleasures of the Society, that you are learning all the time. The only thing that sometimes keeps Nicholas away from meetings is his other interest, Bridge. He enjoys the mental challenge of the game.

Nicholas enjoys the fact that there are so many activities going on in our society now - the reading group, the videos on Thursdays, and the various social activities - many more, he says, than when he first joined.

Nicholas was born in Nottingham, but after his birth his parents moved first to Birmingham, then to Chelmsford, and then to Bristol where the family has lived since Nicholas was seven. He was educated at Henleaze Junior School, and then at the now non-existent Clark's Grammar School, in Clifton.

After he left school, Nicholas knew he wanted to make gardening his career, and took an apprenticeship in the grounds at St. Monica's. Then he did a course at Cannington College in Somerset; followed by work in the gardens at Southmead Hospital, where he still works. If you are ever visiting Southmead, look out for Nicholas working in the grounds. I have come across him a number of times on such occasions, and always feel the better for meeting him.

FS

Sally's Lodger, Gustavo Infanta, pointed out this nice item:



NEW YORK - A dog collar that belonged to Charles Dickens has fetched \$11,590 at a New York City auction. Inscribed with the famed author's name, the leather and brass collar had been estimated to sell for \$4,000 to \$6,000. The buyer's name was not immediately disclosed. The collar was auctioned Tuesday at Bonhams New York's sale of dog art. Like many Victorians, the author of "David Copperfield" and "A Tale of Two Cities" was fond of dogs. Last year, an ivory and gold toothpick that belonged to Dickens sold for \$9,150 at auction.

PARTY TIME

Sally's Christmas Party

You know the festive season is underway when you walk into Sally and Trevor's house and are greeted by the warm smell of spice punch, a lavish, sparkling Christmas tree and tasteful trimmings. The Dickens Society Christmas Party has come round again.

Despite the threat of snowy weather, some of the more intrepid members turned up in force with a good selection of party food and drinks. As usual an excellent time was had by all. We thank Sally and Trevor for their usual warm hospitality, and look forward to next year.

Dickens' s Birthday Party

The weather this February, though very cold and snowy at times, fortunately did not hold up the celebration of Dickens's birthday. A smaller, but enthusiastic number of Dickensians turned up at Lionel's house, bearing gifts of food and wine and prepared to justice to the jollities this occasion produces. We were not disappointed. Liz and Lionel's quizzes taxed the knowledge and brains of all, and everyone had a jolly time working out the answers. Liz's cake was large and magnificent as usual, and lasted until the next Book Group meeting. A big thank-you to Lionel and Michael for throwing their house open to us, and to Liz for her wonderful cakes and imaginative quizzes.

EF

OUT-READINGS

1. The snow in the week before Christmas sadly caused the Dickens Society's annual visit to the 'Neighbours' social group in Pill to be postponed. happily it has now taken place. We were welcomed warmly by the group, who enjoyed our presentation of 'Hatches, Matches and Dispatches', a different programme from the usual Christmas fare. Liz produced her extremely tasty vegetable soup for lunch, which we all shared with the group after the programme. Thanks to Liz for organising this, and reading in it, and to Pat Cemlyn-Jones, Marion Winstone, Don Brown and Lionel Reeves for their spirited and imaginative presentations.

2. A longer version of 'Hatches, Matches and Dispatches' was presented recently to an appreciative audience in the United Reform Church in Henleaze. The occasion was organised by Pat Cemlyn-Jones, ably assisted by Lionel Reeves and Liz Croucher, as a fund raiser for the new church hall, and for a charitable donation to the Julian Trust. The evening went very well, with some old favourites from 'David Copperfield' and 'Oliver Twist' together with some less familiar readings such as 'The Couple who dote on their Children' and 'Mr Meek'. Victorian refreshments were served during the interval, and the evening finished off with the unexpected and unpleasant reappearance of Quilp, who bade everyone 'Good-Night'. Pat has had some very positive feedback, and it is good to know that in a small way the Dickens Society has contributed to the new hall in Henleaze. Thanks to Pat, Lionel, Liz, Marion, don, Peter and Eve for their talented performances.

EF



!! PARTY TIME STOP PRESS !!

Our Dinner finally happened on March 30th, and what an enjoyable event it was! The merrier as it was also John and Cynthia Palser's wedding anniversary - they were presented with flowers in honour of the occasion.

Dr Tony Williams, with his usual aplomb, talked about "160 Years of Household Words" - good, as many of us are less well informed about Dickens's journalism than perhaps we ought to be. After the talk we moved into the splendid dining room for good fare and good fellowship.

FS

Nicholas Nickleby

The dinner was as remarkable for the splendour and completeness of its appointments as the mansion itself, and the company were remarkable for doing it ample justice, in which respect Messrs Pyke and Pluck particularly signalled themselves; these two gentlemen eating of every dish, and drinking of every bottle, with a capacity and perseverance truly astonishing. They were remarkably fresh, too, notwithstanding their great exertions: for, on the appearance of the dessert, they broke out again, as if nothing serious had taken place since breakfast.

MARY SAGE

We have, sadly, to report the death of Mary Sage, a long-time member of the society, who has kindly left us a generous donation in her will. Mary served on the Committee for many years and was a keen member of Out-Reading groups. She took part in many plays and readings, memorably Mrs Quilp in 'The Quilps of Tower Hill' and Mrs Richards in 'Concerning Captain Cuttle'. She once gave a talk on the work of Monica Dickens, a novelist and descendant of Charles.

Mary will be remembered for her kindness to both people and animals. She was always willing to help others, had a wonderful sense of humour and was very generous - a truly Dickensian lady.

SF

May We Ask?

It is noticeable that most of the copy for this edition of the Newsletter has come from the Editors. It is *your* Newsletter - please do keep the contributions flowing!... *Please?*

Bits and Pieces

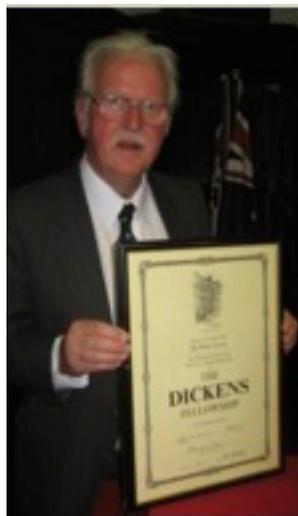
Despite the fact that the inclement weather caused a number of things not to happen this winter, happily not too many of them were Dickensian events. Indeed, even our Dinner, which should have been in January, had only to be postponed, not cancelled. More about that in the next Newsletter.

In October we were treated to a feast. Gerald Dickens has quite a fan-club here in Bristol, and this time he treated us to passages from 'Pickwick', together with something most of us were not familiar with - 'Dr Marigold' - a wonderful performance, which left many of us in tears of both sadness and laughter. Aren't we lucky?

I'll use this opportunity to tell you about one of the things I didn't get to do because of the weather - getting up to London to see Simon Callow perform both 'Dr Marigold' and 'Mr Chops' (Christmas Stories - Going into Society). I had hoped to see this at the Riverside Studios - but no such luck.

November brought us not 'The Dark Forest' - it wasn't possible to find enough MEN willing and able to play the parts on the night. So Liz, Pat and Eve put together 'Hatches, Matches and Dispatches', which entertained us superbly.

The December meeting took a new form, with some scenes from 'A Christmas Carol' followed by members' own contributions. A collection was held as usual to raise money for our Charity, The Julian Trust.



Dr Alan Dilnot was sorry to miss our Dinner. He was to have been our Speaker. We thank him for his willingness to perform for us, and hope he may be able to use the material for us another year.

Peter Michael's evening in March was different again - and fascinating. I loved Peter's Professor Huxley - and the idea of speaking to the BCDS seven years before it existed! Nor did I know that 'barmy' came from Barming in Kent. One lives and learns.

FS

Bristol & Clifton Dickens Society

(www.dickens-society.org)

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

COPY DATE FOR THE NEXT NEWSLETTER - 25TH JULY 2010

Contact Frankie or Eve with your news

Frankie Sahni, 71 Maple Road, Horfield, BRISTOL BS7 8RE

Eve Fitt: 19 Berkeley Road, Bishopston, Bristol BS7 8HF