

NEWSLETTER

DECEMBER 2014

DICKENS COUNCIL MEETINGS



Some members may not know about the Dickens Council and its bi-annual meetings. The council meets twice a year, usually on a Saturday in April and October, to deal with Fellowship matters. Each branch has the right to send a Representative to Council, usually, in the case of UK branches, the Secretary or the President of the Branch. Overseas Branches have representatives in the UK who are expected to try to keep in touch with whichever branch they represent and to speak or vote on behalf of that Branch. I am a representative for both Boulogne and Cleveland, Ohio. At the last Council meeting there was an important vote at which I was able to cast votes not only for Boulogne and Cleveland but for Bristol, too, as Liz was unable to attend because of her recent surgery.

At one time the meetings were held in the basement of 48, Doughty Street, but these premises became extremely crowded, and, frankly, unsuitable; so other accommodation had to be found.

What was exciting this time was that the meeting was held in the crypt of the Little Dorrit Church, the real Church of St. George the Martyr in Borough High Street, where the fictional Little Dorrit was christened and married. A surviving part of the wall of the Marshalsea Prison can be seen nearby, as can Lant Street where Dickens lodged during the latter part of his father's imprisonment and where Bob Sawyer lodged in "Pickwick". There is a Charles Dickens Primary School in Toulmin Street nearby.



PROFESSOR MICHAEL SLATER, M.B.E

Many congratulations to Professor Michael Slater, OUR Professor Michael Slater, the erudite and invariably entertaining Emeritus Professor of Victorian Literature at Birkbeck College, who was awarded an M.B.E. in this year's Queen's Birthday Honours for 'services to literary scholarship'.

It is worth noting that you can hear Michael Slater talking on YOUTUBE, if you so wish. There is an interview called "Chasing Charles Dickens" in which Michael tells how he came to Charles Dickens at the age of 11, by stealing his sister's books which he had been instructed not to touch. He became hooked on first 'Oliver Twist' and then 'Nicholas Nickleby'. The extraordinary thing is that Michael did not have any academic instruction on Dickens either at school or in his undergraduate studies at Oxford University. However his early reading led him to choose Dickens for his post-graduate work. You can also hear his views on 'The Chimes', our Christmas presentation this year.

There is also a Blackwell Podcast in which Michael talks in some detail about his 2009 biography of Dickens. FS



FIRST LOVE



As the Cabbie said, 'Portsmouth is a flat city', and so we found it to be in the course of our walks around this interesting place.

Dickens and Brunel were both born here. It is a Naval City, noticeable by the number of memorials to disasters at sea going back to the Mary Rose and beyond.

Its more recent history places it as one of the principal Ports for the invasion of Europe on D-Day. In our short stay here, we visited the Highland Road Cemetery and, with the help of Dierdre's research, located the graves of Ellen Ternan and Maria Beadnell. Strangely enough, the graves are barely 50 yards apart. We were most impressed by the upkeep of the graves - they are obviously looked after with tender loving care. Our final visit was to Guildhall Square to see the new Dickens statue. It seemed small compared to Queen Victoria's statue at the other end of the square. We left the City with its parks, its trees, its memorials, its echoes of times long past. A few days well spent.



Walter Browning

The 2015 Conference - An Update



DICKENS FELLOWSHIP 109TH INTERNATIONAL CONFERENCE BRISTOL : Thursday 23rd - Tuesday 29th July 2015

Our Conference preparations, thanks to our hard-working Conference committee (Sally Fry, Peter Michael, Charmian Howard, Eve Fitt, Roma Hussey and Lorraine Cox) are well under way. The Conference will be held in Wills Hall, Stoke Bishop, BS9 1AE, a Hall of Residence of the University of Bristol. The bedrooms are all ensuite; and all the Conference facilities are on site.

The Committee has arranged a splendid programme of lectures, outings and entertainment. Non-Residential charges are £520 for the whole Conference or there is a day rate for anyone wanting to attend perhaps one or two days, but not the whole Conference. Day rates are £35 for Thursday evening; £120 each for Friday, Sunday and Monday; £135 for Saturday.



FANNY TROLLOPE



Frances Milton Trollope, painted by Auguste Hervieu

In mid-November I attended a meeting of the South West Branch of the Gaskell Society in Bath. As you will know, Elizabeth Gaskell wrote for Dickens' magazines 'Household Words' and 'All the Year Round'. This time the talk, by Elizabeth Williams, for six years President of the Gaskell Society, was not about Elizabeth Gaskell herself, but about Frances Trollope, mother of the better-known Anthony.

Frances Milton Trollope was born on 10th March, 1779, in Stapleton, Bristol. No longer in fashion, perhaps because of her polemical style, she was an extremely prolific writer, and popular in her day.

It was financial distress that led her to take up writing for the market at the age of 52. Between that time and her death in 1863, she wrote 40 books - novels and travel books - as well as articles and poems.

Like Dickens, she travelled to America where she was appalled by the lives women were expected to live - 'bound in by the iron chains of a most tyrannical fanaticism'. Women, it seemed to her, were denied access to public life except through religion. Like Dickens, she was concerned with social and moral issues. Like Dickens, she hated the American habit of spitting. 'I hardly know any annoyance so deeply repugnant to English feelings, as the incessant, remorseless spitting of the Americans'.

She was, posthumously, the mother-in-law of Frances Eleanor Ternan (nee Ternan, sister of Ellen) who married her son, Thomas, in 1866. FS



Ellen Ternan with her sister Frances Eleanor Ternan, who was to marry Fanny Trollope's son Tom Trollope

Bristol & Clifton Dickens Society

www.dickens-society.org.uk

Membership (£15 per year), via Liz Croucher at 38 Church Road, Easton-in-Gordano, Bristol BS20 0NB

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