

# Bristol and Clifton Dickens Society

Founded in 1902 and affiliated to The Dickens Fellowship : [www.dickens-society.org.uk](http://www.dickens-society.org.uk) [www.dickensfellowship.org](http://www.dickensfellowship.org)

President Mrs Sally Draper Fry

## NEWSLETTER

Autumn 2019

### Scenes from BCDS Life



*At the AGM Sally presents a cheque for £1000 to member Richard Drake, in his capacity as Hon. Treasurer of The Julian Trust, the Bristol homeless charity which we support. That makes £5200 over the past 5 years. Dickens approves in the foreground.*



*Guest actor Sue Bampfylde, members Peter Michael and Don Brown in a costumed reading of 'A Tale of Two Cities' directed by Charmian Howard in May.*

### Dates For Your Diary

#### Dickens Day 19<sup>th</sup> October 2019

A Dickens Study Day is held annually by The University of London. Fascinating talks and lectures about Dickens. This years' title is 'Dickens and Bodies', and it will be held at Mary Ward House, University of London. See [www.ies.sas.ac.uk/events/conferences/dickens-day-2019](http://www.ies.sas.ac.uk/events/conferences/dickens-day-2019), for more details. Enquiries: Events Officer, Institute of English Studies, Senate House, Malet Street, London WC1E 7HU Email: [IESEvents@sas.ac.uk](mailto:IESEvents@sas.ac.uk), tel. 020 7862 8683.

#### Dickens Fellowship Annual Conference 2020 15<sup>th</sup>-20<sup>th</sup> July 2020

Organised jointly by The Dickens Fellowship, The Dickens Museum and The University of London, and to be held at Goodenough College, London. 2020 will be the 150<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the death of Charles Dickens and the Conference is entitled ' "Lord keep my memory green"- Dickens in 1870 and after.' Full details will appear in due course at [www.dickensfellowship.org/annual-conference](http://www.dickensfellowship.org/annual-conference)

Bookings are not open at time of writing but book as early as you can! Arrange your own accommodation. Some will be available onsite for early bookers.

#### Dickens Fellowship Annual Conference 2021

Provisional dates 28<sup>th</sup> July to 1<sup>st</sup> August 2021. To be held in The Netherlands, venue to be confirmed. Arrange your own accommodation.

*Dickens walks into a bar and orders a Martini. Bartender - 'Olive or twist?'*

### Dickens Productions to Watch Out For

#### On Film

'The personal History of David Copperfield' Directed by Armando Iannucci. Starring Dev Patel, Tilda Swinton and Hugh Laurie. Premieres in London in October 2019 .

#### On Stage

'A Christmas Carol' returns to Bristol Old Vic, 28<sup>th</sup> November 2019 to 12<sup>th</sup> January 2020.

'Steamed, A Dickensian Improvised Christmas Tale' – at SS Great Britain, 8, 9, 21,22 December

#### On TV

'A Christmas Carol' BBC, December 2019. In 3 parts, starring Guy Pearce, Joe Alwyn and Vnette Robinson. (The cast list features Scrooge's wife. Hmmm.)

FROM THE BCDS ARCHIVES

## Edward Purchase Remembered

Bristol born Edward Purchase (1909) was educated at Clifton College and lived at 33 Cavendish Road, Henleaze throughout his life apart from his military service in India. He was a benign Jekyll and Hyde character running a small business by day (the off-licence in Coldharbour Rd) but became a local literary hero and thespian by night being associated with the Little Theatre, the Westbury Park Players and most significantly our own local Dickens Society, the BCDS. He never married; his playwriting and Dickens were his passions.



As a young man in 1930, aged 21, his acting was praised by our local newspapers followed in 1933 by his first one-act play 'The Playmakers'. Quickly his writing skills developed with 'The White Flame' in 1935. This one-act play focused on Branwell Bronte, the drunken wastrel brother of the three sisters. This was his most noteworthy play, winning the 1937 Broughton Chatwin Memorial Trophy.

Edward edited the Akbar Times during his military service in India during WW II which he used to entertain the Bristol Writers' Circle, and then to write 'The Blue Horizon' highlighting the tension in the lead up to the final partition of India (in 1948). But little of that real violence reached the eyes and ears of his audience, for Edward Purchase was a gentle jolly man with strong religious beliefs who played the piano and wrote the narration for several post-war charity concerts.

Our Bristol & Clifton Dickens Society was suspended during the war but straight after de-mob Edward Purchase helped its revival in November 1946 with his dramatisation of Dickens's 'Hard Times'. This was followed in 1948 by the 'Battle of Life' and 'Cricket on the Hearth', two of Dickens's short stories.

That is the man, what about the face?

We meet Edward (on the right in the picture) as Quilp, with Robert Wilson as Sampson Brass on the left, in his own 1951 dramatisation of 'The Quilps of Tower Hill'. Sally Wilson directed the production (mother of our BCDS president)

*"But what added most to the grotesque expression of his face, was a ghastly smile, which appearing to be the mere result of habit and to have no connection with any mirthful or complacent feeling, constantly revealed the few discoloured fangs that were yet scattered in his mouth, and gave him the aspect of a panting dog."*

It is hardly surprising that the critics were unimpressed – Edward a gentle man by nature was not nasty enough to play Quilp!

The BCDS still perform Edward Purchase's plays today with only minor adaptations. The 'Grand City', a dramatisation of Dickens's first meeting with Washington Irvine in 1840's New York still seemed relevant in 2018 dealing with copyright issues and slavery.

Edward Purchase sadly fell on hard times himself and ended his days, entertaining the Bristol homeless. He passed away in the 1990's almost a forgotten man by his relations. But he lives on in the minds of BCDS members by his plays that we still appreciate today, with just the odd 'tweak' to bring them into the 21st century. He enjoyed his life entertaining others right to the very end playing the piano in the Salvation Army hostel to his co-residents –The Bristol homeless.

Peter Michael  
May 2019

**Wanted – a catchy title for the newsletter. Reward for successful submission!**

Information and photos for next newsletter should be given to Roma or sent to

[romahussey@hotmail.com](mailto:romahussey@hotmail.com)

**How to Join Us**

Annual subscription is £20. Apply online at [www.dickens-society.org.uk](http://www.dickens-society.org.uk) or contact Hon Sec Mrs Roma Hussey on [romahussey@hotmail.com](mailto:romahussey@hotmail.com), or phone her on 0117 9279875.

**Editor RH**