

# The Dickens Fellowship, North East England

Branch no: 198

# NEWSLETTER

Volume 11

December 2006

## Contents

- PART I: *In the manner of Our Mutual Friend, our Secretary reveal himself to adopt a different seasonal identity and recommends the tireless pleasures of a small book, now 163 years old..*
- PART II: *Wherein the editor shows his pleasure in an embarrassment of riches and seeks to evoke the spirit of the long-departed to justify a dalliance with temptations.*
- PART III: *In which that most enduring of works is considered in the light of its progeny, both literal and otherwise.*
- PART IV: *Once again. we extend the hand of fellowship to one of our members, and question them on their lasting interest in the life and works of Mr D.*
- PART V: *On a sea of Dickens discovery we alight on a Botany Bay (!), and consider the connections between a flower and the man.*
- PART VI: *Whereupon we venture into the strange world of the random association that connects Mr Dickens to the odd and the unlikely.*
- PART VII: *Preparations continue for a gathering sometime hence and the scale of the planning is shown to be well in hand*
- PART VIII: *Unable to finish without a titbit or two, we end these efforts with some salacious reflections on the conduct and manners of our colleagues.*

PART I: *In the manner of Our Mutual Friend, our Secretary reveals himself to adopt a different seasonal identity and recommends the tireless pleasures of a small book, now 163 years old..*

Dear Fellow Dickensians.

To open this December issue of our new-look newsletter, I thought I would take this opportunity to thank our Editor, Chris Robson, on his efforts for volume 10. I am sure that our previous editors, Ron Teasdale and Gordon Stridiron, will join me, with the rest of you, in saying a big thank you to Chris for all of his efforts.

I am sure that Ron and Gordon will fully understand how much time and effort go into putting together such a newsletter. The humour it holds adds a sparkle to what is in every way a very well presented Dickensian paper. Thank you to Chris - please keep up the good work.

Friends - that time of year is upon us once more. I love the atmosphere that surrounds Christmas time. The feeling of friendship and goodwill to our fellow man. It also gives me the opportunity to don another hat - that of Santa Claus. I have had the honour and delight to play this role for several years now and never tire of it. Perhaps it is my beard, which I deliberately allow to grow long for the Christmas period - or perhaps it also my advancing years that allow me to play the part so convincingly ! My 'fame' - if that is the right term to use - has spread so much so, that as I write, I have 15 appearances in my diary. I am thrilled to bits at the prospect.

As you all know, our book of the year for 2007 is to be Great Expectations, but nevertheless I shall certainly be reading A Christmas Carol once more. I read this little story several times a year, but always at Christmas time. I personally think it should be a must to read for everyone, whether they are Dickensians or not. My personal collection of editions of this wonderful story now stands at 69 different publications, and I hope that by the time Santa visits 'Dickens House' here in Kibblesworth, Gateshead, it will have grown even more ! (I hope you're reading this, Mrs S...!).

From myself, and on behalf of the North-East Branch, can I take this opportunity to wish each and every one of you, and your loved ones, a very Merry Christmas and a Happy, Healthy and Prosperous New Year!

Yours in fellowship,  
Mr Herbert Savory

## PART II:

*Wherein the editor shows his pleasure in an embarrassment of riches and seeks to evoke the spirit of the long-departed to justify a dalliance with temptations.*



FROM THE EDITOR: It is a commonly heard lament on the part of newsletter editors, the world over, to complain that they are struggling to find adequate material for the latest edition. Well, I would like to offer a different approach and begin by saying how grateful I am to fellow Branch members for their unstinting support in my efforts to produce this newsletter. The number - and quality - of contributions to this volume have surpassed all expectations. My apologies to those contributors who may be disappointed to find that their efforts are absent. Rest assured, it will appear at some point. What a lovely position to be in! Please keep the material flooding in - all, and I mean all, contributions are welcome!

Christmas and Mr Dickens go together like ham and pease pudding (and 'foreign' readers who need to have 'pease pudding' explained are clearly missing out on one of life's great pleasures). In this edition, we have sought to explore some of the links between Mr Dickens and our concept of Christmas, as well as offering the usual, marvellous, mixture of news, views and gossip.

By the time many of you read this, our Branch will have enjoyed a Christmas night out at one of the city centre casinos in Newcastle upon Tyne - a slap-up meal, good company and the temptations afforded by such an establishment, all on offer. With luck (and some creative imagination!) there will be some salacious gossip to report in volume 12! Keep reading! Casinos, as we now know them, were almost unheard of in Mr Dickens' time - although there are some warning reflections on the corrupting effects of greed and gambling in *Nicholas Nickleby*. Despite his stern injunctions, there is little doubt that Mr Dickens would have been one of the first to join in such a visit as we have planned, such was his unending fascination with all aspects of human life and his great joy with the company of friends.

So, in that spirit that is so typical of Mr Dickens - the joyfulness of life and the pleasures of friendship - can we offer best wishes to all of readers; Happy Christmas and many to come!!

### PART III:

*In which that most enduring of works is considered in the light of its progeny, both literal and otherwise.*

### **CHRISTMAS IS COMING!**

**It must be, as here comes A *CHRISTMAS CAROL*.**

**by Ruth Crofton**

Of the many programmes that appear on television each Christmas, you may be sure that at least one version of Dickens' *A Christmas Carol* will get an airing – and surely there are enough from which to choose! Brian Sibley in *A Christmas Carol, the Unsung Story* (Lion 1994) gives a good account of the many adaptations on stage and screen, and I suspect that everyone will have their own favourites. Here, to mark this festive time of year, is not a catalogue of all many and varied versions, but one or two of my own personal preferences.

I have seen several versions on stage, of variable quality! One suffered from a Ghost of Christmas Present who had clearly focused on the word “ghost,” and played it with a spooky voice and spell-casting gestures, while a Ghost of Christmas Yet to Come was played with little more than some heavy breathing spoken wheezily from behind a dark mask. The effect was less *Christmas Carol*, and more a strange mixture of *The Wicked Witch of the West* meeting *Darth Vader*!

By far the best stage version that I have seen is the RSC's production for the *Carol's* 150th birthday. I had a happy Dickensian day out in London in 1993, visiting the Dickens House Museum on Doughty Street in the morning, then going on to the Barbican theatre for a matinee performance.

It was simply tremendous; with minimal scenery, the story (adapted by John Mortimer) was very faithful to the text, and of an excellent cast Clive Francis was exceptional as Scrooge. We laughed, and came close to tears by turn, and at the close a whole audience was on the edge of their seats, applauding wildly. Sitting highly content in the train going home to the north-east, I reflected on the power of Dickens' work to touch people so strongly over 150 years.

Of film versions, I have to confess a lingering affection for *A Muppet Christmas Carol*, which is actually very true to the story - allowing for a few adjustments to accommodate Muppet characters. I have not come across a better introduction to Scrooge, and have often used this section in “Christmas Carol” Quiet Days and talks I have given.

At the start of this film, we follow the walk of a stranger through the streets of a city, back to his office as the people sing about his meanness, but we see only a pair of black-clothed human legs to represent Scrooge, with swirling cloak and walking-stick, the silent anonymity contrasting with the lively muppet-folk around him, whom he coldly ignores. We only see his face as he reaches his office to the accompaniment, “Every day and every way, Scrooge is getting WORSE!” and as he turns to mutter, “Humbug!” we see, revealed, none other than Michael Caine!

Although there is lots of fun in this version, there is also depth, and it is one of the few to deal sensitively and honestly with the rather harrowing section with the Ghost of Christmas Yet to Come, where Scrooge is faced with the terrible loneliness of his death, as compared to the warmth that surrounds the death of Tiny Tim. This is a powerful part of the book, often neglected by other interpreters, and crucial to Scrooge’s rebirth – it is not so much death itself that Scrooge fears (Victorians did not need to be reminded of their own mortality; death was always around them) but rather dying alone and unmourned. Another good adaptation in this regard is the made-for-television version with Patrick Stewart as Scrooge, which stays very true throughout to Dickens’ subtle and carefully drawn character.

Stage, Film – and finally ballet. Northern Ballet Theatre brought a wonderful version of *A Christmas Carol* to the stage in 1992, and has taken it on tours in subsequent years. A version is also on video. The music, by Carl Davis, is beautiful, utilising familiar Christmas songs and carols, some of the latter sung by the dancers themselves, and the choreography absolutely suited to the characters. Sets are very cleverly constructed, and the ghosts of Christmas past, present and to come are quite spectacular.

One of the great strengths of this ballet version is the way in which the characters show their inner selves through dance; thus we see Bob Cratchitt break from the drudgery of his copying to dance, joyfully about the stage, until Scrooge shuffles across to force him back to the limited space of the office. Scrooge, of course, does not dance – until the ghosts have visited him, and then, oh, he dances – and his struggle to dress as he dances, hopping from side to side of the stage, is wonderfully funny. Our hearts lift, as the people rejoice with him, to the ballet’s ending as Scrooge pauses, and looks up as the ghosts reappear high at the back of the stage, snow falls gently and the carol “A great and mighty wonder” is sung. Well worth seeing (I’ve seen it twice, and the video is in danger of wearing out) – and it is playing at Leeds Grand Theatre this year from 12th – 23rd December.

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### **Scrooge’s Reformation**

It’s a brand new world, and I’m alive in it;  
It’s a brand new world, and I will thrive in it.  
I will shower love and kindness on the least who come my way  
I will strive to bring in Christmas, and to keep it every day.  
I will fill each day with music, I will live each night with song,  
And I’ll find that dear young Cratchit and amend my every wrong.  
I will climb the highest steeple and I’ll ring the bells myself;  
I will slither down the roof tops like St Nick, that sweet old elf.  
I will kneel beside the manger of the Christ child dear and true  
I will try to be a Christian like I never used to do.  
So Noel and merry Christmas and a Hallelujah too  
I’m alive and filled with loving and God’s kindness though and through.

*By Jack Kerr: Greater Los Angeles Dickens Branch*

#### PART IV:

*Once again. we extend the hand of fellowship to one of our members, and question them on their lasting interest in the life and works of Mr D.*

Carolyn J. Walker is the Branch member who has kindly responded to the questionnaire for this newsletter. Carolyn, for those not personally acquainted, is the Minutes Secretary at Branch meetings, and generally keeps a firm hand on Mr Savory's (our Branch Secretary) occasional tendency to ignore or disregard 'proper' proceedings! Her skills at organisation are matched only by her latent acting talent - she was a hugely impressive *Miss Havisham* in our recent production - and she is, to many of us, the real 'brains of the outfit', as the detectives and gangsters of fiction may have put it!

**To be honest, have you actually read ALL of Dickens' works?**

A. I am just at the start of my Dickens' journey, so no, I've only read a few, but I can't wait to read more and learn more

**Of those that you have read, do you have a particular favourite?**

A. The first Dickens book that I read as a teenager was *A Tale of Two Cities*, and it has always been a firm favourite. I fell in love with Darney (well, Dirk Bogarde's cheekbones actually !!!), and to be a little bit serious, I was touched by the example of a love that will never be returned and can take a jaded, disillusioned and cynical man to the guillotine! I enjoyed re-reading this book as our branch's choice for 2005 (I think I was the only one to actually enjoy it!)

**Do those of your family and acquaintances who know of your affection for the works of Dickens think that you are ever so slightly barmy?**

A. Well, they either look blankly at me, (I think I'm the only one in my existing family, one brother, who has read a whole book!!!), or they think I must be mad to read something so old and boring!!

**What was it that first introduced you to a love of Dickens?**

A. I suppose that watching the old black & white films when I was a child (back to Dirk Bogarde's cheekbones again!!) influenced me.

Whether a film or a TV series, there have been many over the years that I would watch with my mam.

Recently, it was the branch's Christmas presentation in 2004 that really did it. I went with my friend Yvonne because Herbert pestered us. We went only on impulse, but both of us just loved it! The atmosphere was great, the presentation was marvellous, we just both loved the whole night and decided to join in the coming January and here we both are, and I'm loving every moment of it! I really enjoy the monthly synopsis and am gaining so much more from the books than if I was just reading them by myself.

**Do you only read Dickens, or do you have other writers of whom you are particularly fond? If so, who?**

A. Well, how long do you have? I've loved reading all of my life, so I have a very wide range of favourites.

As a child I read Enid Blyton's Secret Seven, Famous Five and Adventure books and loved them. I grew up with *The Bunty* and *School Friend* comics and read my brother's *Victor* and *Hotspur* comics before he did!

The wife of a local vicar, who did some temporary teaching at my secondary school introduced me to Anya Seaton's *Katherine* and that started a love of historical fiction that took in Jean Plaidy, Victoria Holt and, my favourite, Georgette Heyer's *Regency* books. I am now at an age when I can revisit books with great affection. reading these *Regency* books led me to read the 'original; and I read Jane Austen and loved them - still do (which out me in mind of Colin Firth's Darcy, but we'll not go down that road!!)

My mother's favourite books were Agatha Christie and the 'golden age' of detective fiction, so I have a great love of that genre.

A teacher at church read from a book that fascinated me, so I had to read it, and that was *The Hobbit*, which lead to the wonderful world of JRR Tolkien (and that put me in mind of Vigo Mortensen, but enough of this!!!)

Currently I'm reading *The Historian* by Elizabeth Kostova, which is very good and little bit scary!! Also a friend introduced me to Terry Pratchett's *Discworld* and that's weird!!

I do have a very 'magpie' taste, but feel as though I am learning from them all. Some books and authors are never read again, others become good friends that I can go back to again and again. I find that Dickens definitely comes into the latter category, great stories, great characters, fantastic descriptions and absolutely re-readable!

**Where do you do most of your reading of Dickens? Is it in a favourite armchair, at a desk, in bed etc?**

A. Anywhere I can, but usually in bed. I have a 20 minute Metro ride into work and that time is reading time and woe betide anyone I know sitting beside me to talk to me!!

## **Do you have a preference for paperbacks or hardbacks?**

A. A book is a book is a book!! Hardback for particular favourites, but paperbacks for anything else.

## **Tell us something about yourself and your background?**

A. I am a middle-aged spinster, work at Northumbria University (not academic, but admin - the ones who actually run the place!) Both of my parents are dead and I have one brother and a nephew and niece, whom I hardly see. But I have friends who are dearer to me than 'blood' family could ever be, and to the children of these friends I am 'Auntie Carolyn' and have, hopefully, been a good influence on their lives.

I worked abroad in Canada for a little while in my 20's. I've also worked in London and Birmingham. I love being a 'Geordie' and I feel a great sense of belonging to the North East and all that it stood for and now stands for.

I, as you may now have realised, love books. The first time you hold a new book in your hands and turn to the first page is always a wonderful adventure! I also enjoy films, the theatre and adore music.

## **In your opinion, what is it about Dickens that continues to make his books so relevant to the 21st Century?**

A. In my opinion, what makes Dickens relevant in this age is that he wrote about people.

Not perfect people, but very human people and how they handled differing circumstances, not always in a good way.

**Of the various and many attempts to render the books of Dickens in other ways - film, television, radio, readings, theatre - do you have any preferences?**

A. I would say that TV and films would be my preference, as they are the means that have brought Dickens to my notice. I can vaguely remember the TV adaptations that have been and the really good films over the years. David Lean's black and white *Great Expectations* is always a favourite.

Not being very 'intellectual' I love the musical *'Oliver'!* And again, not being very intellectual - *A Muppet Christmas Carol* is great!

**Which, if any, of his books are you currently reading?**

A. I've just finished *Nicholas Nickleby*, as our Branch 2006 book, and have thoroughly enjoyed it. I was familiar with the story from TV and films, but reading the book was much more enjoyable. I'm looking forward to starting our 2007 book, *Great Expectations* in January.

**If you were asked to 'sell' Dickens to those who've not yet read any of his works, how would you go about it?**

A. Bribery !! To be serious, I would try and share my excitement and growing love of the author and his works.

## PART V:

*On a sea of Dickens discovery we alight on a Botany Bay (!), and consider the connections between a flower and the man.*

### **What the Dickens...not geraniums!**

by SUSAN HUDSON

No-one, but no-one (except a child perhaps) gives geraniums as a gift. Perhaps as a small pot plant, but you rarely see them in a florist's bouquet delivered to the sick or to a new mother in hospital. In fact, some regard the geranium to be little short of a proliferating weed, to be dug out, mown down or discarded to the compost heap. In truth they aren't the most pleasant smelling of plants.

This being said, some find it surprising that the geranium was Charles Dickens' favourite flower. He often wore a red one in his button hole when speaking publicly or had a specimen in a vase by his desk while writing. Such was Dickens' love of the geranium that it is mentioned in *Little Dorrit*, *David Copperfield*, *Bleak House* and *Dombey and Son*.

Well, Dickens may have been smarter than the rest of us in this choice of flower. We know that at various times in his life, Dickens was depressed. Considering a childhood sometimes spent visiting his father in gaol, this is more than understandable. But later there were tragedies like the loss of his infant daughter, Dora, the death of his 17-year old sister-in-law, Mary Hogarth, and he almost always suffered bouts of melancholy at the close of some amateur dramatics in which he was involved, as if the play was an escape from persistent gloom. We also know he tried to 'quiet himself by undertaking night walks through the city, visiting the darker recesses of London – the prisons, the asylums, the workhouses and the hospitals'.(1)

It is true of life that we are often attracted, subconsciously or otherwise, to things that benefit us, and, Dickens might well have been drawn to the geranium for more than the fact that he simply liked its colourful petals. If we consult any reputable text on aromatherapy, we find that the geranium plant offers many benefits to health, one of which is to work on the mind.

The oil of geranium can effect the emotions most profoundly (for the betterment of same) – and as a nerve tonic. It also a sedative. This is in addition to it being good for chilblains, general skin care, diabetes, blood disorders and throat infections. (2)

When Charles Dickens died suddenly at 58 years of age, his horse was shot as he had wanted, and the carcass consigned to a casket in his home at Gad's Hill, festooned with scarlet geraniums. It was most undoubtedly his flower.

Authors note:: The geranium and pelargonium family is native to South Africa, and of the 700 varieties of cultivators, *P. graveolens* is the main one commercially cultivated for its oil. (3)

References:

1. Dickens – Public Life and Private Passion by Peter Ackroyd BBC Worldwide, London 2002 p102

2. The Fragrant Pharmacy by Valerie Worwood Macmillan, London, 1990 p.25

3. The Illustrated Encyclopedia of Essential Oils by Julia Lawless Element Books, Great Britain, 1995. P.198

*(Editors note: the Headquarters of the Dickens Fellowship, based at the Doughty St Dickens House museum, London, use the geranium as the official emblem of membership and small, metal, lapel-badges can be purchased at the museum or by post)*

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## PART VI:

*Whereupon we venture into the strange world of the random association that connects Mr Dickens to the odd and the unlikely.*

### Mr Dickens and....

**Many are the strange associations between Mr Dickens, his works, his characters and his era. In this occasional series we continue to explore some of the more bizarre of connections.**

#### NUMBER 6:

#### **Mr Dickens and.....Sex romps!**

The Daily Mirror of August 16th 2001, offered an unlikely tale of lust and Mr Dickens. In a piece cleverly entitled GREAT SEXPECTATIONS it wrote:

*A pair of randy pensioners were caught having sex at a busy tourist attraction. An astonished worker at a Charles Dickens Centre found the partially clothed couple sprawled across a tableau depicting Wackford Squeers beating Nicholas Nickleby with a cane. When other staff finally plucked up the courage to put a stop to the romp the couple had moved on. They were seen re-arranging themselves and looking 'dishevelled' as they continued their tour.*

*An insider at the museum in Rochester, Kent, said 'they were doing it quite openly and were totally oblivious to anyone else. What is even more astonishing is that they were hardly youthful. When they finished they got up and carried on looking around as if nothing had happened. Another member of staff who heard the noise went over to investigate but was so astonished at what she saw she rushed back to her manager blushing. By the time everyone had recovered from the shock and someone more senior got the courage to give them a dressing down, the pair had moved. Not surprisingly, this is the first time anything like this has happened at the centre.'*

The paper offered some alternative titles for books by Mr Dickens, in the spirit of their story: *Knickerless Nickleby*, *Pickwick Capers*, *David Copafeel*, *Oliver Tryst*.

#### NUMBER 7:

#### **Mr Dickens and.....the ban on smoking in public places**

In *The Times* of 4th August, an article appeared about smoking bans and other restrictions which were coming into force in British pubs. It contrasted this with Dickens's description of 'The Three Cripples' pub in *Oliver Twist*: "The place was so full of dense tobacco smoke that at first it was scarcely possible to discern anything more, by degrees there appeared a numerous company, male and female, crowded round a long table exhibiting cunning, ferocity and drunkenness in all its stages."

(From the 'London Particular' Oct '06, published by the Dickens Fellowship)

#### NUMBER 8:

#### **Mr Dickens and.....another Disney version of *Christmas Carol***

The internet-based *Animation Magazine* noted on August 23rd that Warner Home Video will release *Bah Humduck! A Looney Tunes Christmas* straight to DVD on November 14th. In this first-ever made-for-video Looney Tunes, Daffy Duck, taking on the Scrooge role, is the proprietor of the Lucky Duck megamart "who demands that his long-suffering manager, Porky Pig, and the other employees, work on Christmas Day rather than spending time with their families. It's up to Bugs Bunny and the ghosts of Christmas Past (Tweety and Granny), Present (Yosemite Sam) and Future (Taz) to make sure that Daffy realises the error of his ways."

(From the 'London Particular' Oct '06, published by the Dickens Fellowship)

PART VII:

*Preparations continue for a gathering sometime hence and the scale of the planning is shown to be well in hand.*

**Dickens Fellowship International Conference**  
**City of Durham 2008**

*A progress report by Ruth Crofton*

The International Dickens Fellowship holds a an annual conference, organised by Branches enthusiastic (or foolish enough!) to volunteer as hosts. This year, 2006, as you'd have read in our previous Newsletter, the Conference was held in Amsterdam, next year, 2007, it is in Philadelphia, USA, and the following year, 2008, our own, small and recently-formed North-East Branch are the hosts. At this point, I thought that readers of the Newsletter might like to follow the progress of the organisers, and to hear something of the North East as Dickens would have found it. By way of an introduction, I'll begin this month with some background comments about the nature of these conferences. (Regular attenders of conference can skip this part!)

The conferences are truly international, with Dickensians and families and friends travelling from all over the world. They are typically held in late July/early August, usually in a university hall of residence or similar. Generally, they are held in places with some connection, however tenuous, to Dickens himself. During the Conference there are talks, most with a Dickensian focus, but others perhaps shedding light on local places and events in Dickens' time. Most of these talks are given by excellent and entertaining speakers, many of whom are experts or scholars on the life and works of Dickens. Often, there are also visits to local places of interest; entertainment, and a banquet usually marks the gathering of friends. They are quite expensive, but many delegates make the conference part of their annual holidays!

The 2008 Conference will be held in the City of Durham, which Dickens visited in 1858 on one of his reading tours.

It will run from Wednesday 30th July to Monday 4th August 2008 - so please, fellow Branch members - keep these dates free in your calendar!. Delegates will stay in St. Chad's College, one of the oldest colleges in the University of Durham, and very centrally situated. From St. Chads it takes only minutes to walk to the Cathedral, into the city centre or to the attractive riverbanks.

At this stage, three outings are planned: to Beamish Open Air Museum; to Barnard Castle, Bowes and Bowes Museum, and to Newcastle, where Dickens also gave readings. In Newcastle, we also intend to offer a walking tour, passing the places where he stayed and spoke.

Progress to date? At the Amsterdam Conference, some of us from our Branch were able to chat with a number of the regular speakers at Conferences, and were thrilled when they readily agreed to speak at Durham in 2008. We have also, so far, arranged some excellent entertainment for two of the evenings.

And last but not least, the theme; for each conferences has its own theme. Those of you who know Durham will be aware of the famous Sanctuary knocker on the main door of the Cathedral: any fugitive grasping this was, it is said, allowed to stay for a time; a time that often allowed innocence to be proved.

Sanctuary therefore has a connection with justice, an important issue in Dickens' work, but it also has a sense (particularly today) of a safe place to rest, which can be a state of mind as well as an actual place. So, our theme for the 2008 Conference is "Sanctuary" - and we look forward to many folk finding a time of sanctuary - of rest, of enjoyment and of discovery - at Durham in two years time.

## PART VIII:

*Unable to finish without a titbit or two, we end these efforts with some salacious reflections on the conduct and manners of our colleagues.*

***Chatterbox**..... The risk of scandal and impropriety over the recent vote for the Fellowship's 2007 book was fortunately avoided at one of the recent Branch meetings, despite some decidedly underhand tactics from one or two members. One member who should, for the sake of decency, remain anonymous (a Mr **HS**...) claimed that the multiple voting slips he slid into the ballot bag were in fact 'votes of absent members.' Shocked reactions by other members at this blatant attempt to fix the vote were abated by the calm hand of the unelected returning officer (**CW**) who proceeded with the free and fair vote before pulling from her pocket the pre-prepared results sheet showing an overwhelming victory for Great Expectations.....*

*....On the subject of the choice of book for 2007, there were further suggestions of gross financial mismanagement and profiteering when the official supplier of reading material to the Branch (a certain Mr **HS**) unashamedly announced that he had no change from a fiver for one purchaser. As the books cost only £4.99, readers can do their own calculations of the huge profits disappearing, we believe, into some Swiss bank account...*

*....Another Branch member who deserves anonymity (a Mr **HH**) continues to entertain fellowship meetings with his cheerful tales of the opportunities to snaffle the free food of Newcastle. Publishers are rumoured to be considering a book offering advice on the best places to get a free drink or canapé, as long as people are willing to pay the price of attending yet another book launch, sparsely-attended lecture or corporate jamboree....*

*....Recent branch meetings have touched upon the use of dialect in the work of Mr Dickens, especially with reference to the speech patterns of the character John Browdie in Nicholas Nickleby. While this is interesting stuff, it may be appropriate to remind the elders among us that much of this is unintelligible to younger Branch members, who appear mystified at talk of 'poss-tubs', 'cracketts', 'cuddys', and 'plain waar wi the bairns'.*

# The Dickens Fellowship, North East England

Branch no: 198

The Branch officers are:

Hon. President:	Mr Edwin Shaw
Hon. Secretary:	Mr Herbert Savory
Hon Treasurer:	Revd Ruth Crofton
Public Relations Secretary:	Ms Lynn Hitchen

Membership subscriptions are:

Full membership:	£14.00 per annum
Associate membership:	£7.00 per annum

*The branch meets at Low Fell Library, Gateshead, at 7.00pm on the first Monday of the month. New and prospective members are most welcome.*

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*Next issue to be published March 2007. The editor would be grateful if any contributions for the next issue - and any material, however small, is welcome - could be received by January 31st 2007.*