

The Dickens Fellowship, North East England

NEWSLETTER

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~ The Conference 'Special Edition' !! ~

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PART I:

Wherein the Secretary 'Sketches' a welcome and offers a rhyme!

My Dear Branch members, Fellow Dickensians, Ladies and Gentlemen

It is with the happiest of hearts and the greatest of honour that we, the North East England Branch welcome our fellow Dickensians to this 102nd International Dickens Fellowship Conference, here in our beloved north east. Our Branch is one of the more recent additions to the international Fellowship – we were officially recognised as a branch in 2002 – but though we are small in number, we have a large heart and are all looking forward to offering a real Geordie welcome!

Whilst many members of our Branch have worked hard to prepare for this Conference, one member in particular has perhaps seen her life overwhelmed by this venture. Without the efforts of Ruth Crofton, I suspect little of this Conference would have come to fruition and I would like to express – on behalf of the Branch – my deepest gratitude for all of her work. It is a privilege to be holding the conference in Durham, within a world heritage site, and we owe much to the help we have received from St. Chad's College, and by James Randle in particular in the organisation of the conference, so thank you also to James! I would also like to acknowledge the support that Gateshead Council has offered our Branch in allowing us to meet in Low Fell Library for free each month, and in their grant help with regard to the initial set-up costs of the Conference.

I cannot let this occasion pass without paying tribute to one of our members whose absence will be greatly missed: Ute Harrington, who died on 3rd July, losing a long battle with cancer. Although living in South Africa, she retained membership of the North East England Branch for almost all of our existence. We offer our deepest condolences to her family and friends.

We sincerely hope that everyone has a Conference to remember. We ask that you all take heed of these words: if there is anything that any of our Branch can do to help make your stay here a perfect one, please do not hesitate to ask! The Conference is a time for fellowship and friendship, and I hope you all have a marvellous time. I remain, yours sincerely in fellowship,

*International Conference one hundred and two
And it brings honour to our fold
To play hosts to so many fellow Dickensians
Who hail from so many points of the world*

*For five short days we will be together enthralled
By our hero, CD
Nothing, but nothing will impede us
In our search for more knowledge and glee*

*It is without doubt, the greatest of honours
And pleasures to be
Hosts of this international Conference
Our north east Branch – and me!*

Herbert Savory, Branch Secretary.

PART II:

The Editor wallows in nostalgia and 'Picks' out a memory or two!



FROM THE EDITOR: As a child, some of my earliest readings were the marvellous and magical comics of the 1960's. As a young boy, hungry for adventure and thirsty for knowledge, I would devour the pages of the weekly editions of *The Victor*, *The Hotspur*, or *The Tiger* – among others - with their staple mixture of sport, science fiction, war stories and cowboys. I can still remember the delight of racing back from the newsagents to spend an hour or two lost in the magical world of these cheap weekly comics.

These pleasures were even further enhanced by the occasional delights of the 'Special Editions' – the Christmas, FA Cup Final or Summer Holiday editions that promised stories and features linked by a common theme. For Mr Dickens also, the notion and attraction of a special edition was not unknown – the Christmas publications of *Household Words* and *All the Year Round* were, for many readers, the highlight of the season, even if they were sometimes – for the Editor – an unwelcome trial of his creative endeavours.

So, in our own small way, do we come to this little newsletter. Our usual readership can be measured perhaps in double figures – we could say that we know the name (and where they live!) of each reader, and this earns us some indulgence as to our mistakes and our frailties. But with the 2008 Conference, and plans to distribute this little newsletter to our friends and visitors to Durham, we are suddenly faced with a more discerning audience, experts all in the common thread of our lives – the life and works of Mr Dickens!

We make no apologies, therefore, for devoting much of this issue to those connections between Mr Dickens and the north east part of England – on the sound principle, we believe, that if we steer clear of the grander scale then we may pass muster as not being too ignorant and naïve in our gentle musings!

Our own Branch members may be disappointed (or relieved) to discover that we have omitted our regular gossip column to make room for weightier issues – it is worth reminding them that this does not mean that the ever-vigilant eyes of the muck-raker are absent from this Conference. Just be careful when you say yes to that extra glass of wine at the Saturday banquet!

I hope that you enjoy reading our humble offerings and welcome all of you to our own little part of the world! Enjoy your visit to Durham!

PART III:

We meet our man in our locality, and offer some 'twists' to the tale!

Charles Dickens and the North East – the Dramatic Connection



*An engraving from the 'Illustrated London News'
showing Dickens giving a reading in 1870*

With his love of the theatre and his considerable abilities as an actor, Charles Dickens often organised amateur dramatics, and in 1852 he brought his little company of players, including Wilkie Collins, John Tenniel, Mark Lemon, Charles Knight and John Forster (himself originally from Newcastle) to Newcastle and Sunderland, as part of a tour in aid of the Guild of Literature and Art. Catherine Dickens and her sister Georgina Hogarth also came with him.

They played in the Assembly Rooms in Newcastle upon Tyne, putting on Edward Bulwer Lytton's *Not so Bad as we Seem*, and a farce by himself and Mark Lemon, *Mr Nightingale's Diary*, as well as a 'comic scene' *Two O'clock in the Morning* before an audience of 600 squeezed into a space into which 300 could reasonably fit!

The next day they walked to Sunderland, and Dickens was very troubled to discover that the theatre – the Lyceum - was so new that slates had been put on the roof overnight. When he saw the apparently insubstantial nature of the design, he feared that the roof would collapse and seriously considered cancelling the performance. Wilkie Collins proved a broken reed as far as advice was concerned – “he consolingly observed that his indigestion was so bad that death had no terrors for him!”

However, the local builder was discovered, and on hearing that the building had been tested the previous evening by thousands of working people who had sung and vigorously stamped their feet, Dickens was sufficiently reassured to decide that the performance should go ahead, though he suffered agonies of anxiety all evening. Perhaps it was the last straw; they had already suffered the near-loss of all their scenery when runaway horses had hit the cart on which it was travelling outside Newcastle railway station. But all was well, and the audience of 1200 very appreciative; interestingly, the advertisement for the evening states that a special train back to Newcastle had been laid on at 11pm; the need to finish the programme by 11pm meant that they omitted the ‘comic scene’ and closed with *Mr. Nightingale’s Diary*.

With an enthusiasm for acting, Dickens was naturally drawn to reading from his own works; he gave public readings, initially for charity, but later in life for the income they brought. In 1858, he began a nationwide reading tour that would take him west into Devon, to Ireland and back up to the North East of England.

The tours were very carefully planned: his manager, Arthur Smith, was particularly efficient in working out ways to double the seating capacity of the halls. Dickens wrote of him “Arthur is something between a Home Secretary and a furniture dealer in Rathbone Place. He is either always corresponding in the genteelest manner, or dragging our seats about without his coat.”

There were also men to handle the scenery: he had a set specially made of maroon cloth-covered screens for a background, lit by gas lights (so there were also gas men on tour with him) and a small table which is now in the Dickens House Museum and is shown on the illustration at the head of this article. He adapted the readings himself, and read holding his prompt copy, though he rarely used it, having learnt the reading by heart. While on these reading tours he stayed in hotels rather than with friends, remaining very much in seclusion.

On Tuesday 21st September 1858, he arrived in “Little Darlington” (Dickens’ phrase), reading *A Christmas Carol* at the Central Hall, and not too happy because the hall had been difficult to find. This was probably not mere pique; with his manager, he tested out the acoustics at every new venue, so that any necessary adjustments could be made and so in this instance the waste of time would be irksome.

The next day, the 22nd, brought him to Durham, where he read in what was then the New Town Hall. "At Durham," he wrote to W.H.Wills, "we had a capital audience too – led by Dean and Chapter, and humbly followed up by Mayor and local Bores – but the Hall not large enough and the City not large enough, for such a purpose as your friend's." Looking at photographs of the time, Durham has quite a rural look to it, and parts of the city were very shabby; something of a contrast to the large cities in which he was used to performing; perhaps he also found local attitudes a little parochial and had clearly picked up the dominance of the Cathedral! By contrast, the *Durham County Advertiser* of 24th September spoke of a "numerous and fashionable audience" that "crowded the New Town Hall on Wednesday evening to hear the prince of modern novelists read his well known *Christmas Carol*."

Following the reading, he then walked to Sunderland, a distance of some 13 miles, observing the numerous mining communities as he went along, for later use in his magazine *Household Words*. At Sunderland he read at the Theatre Royal, making not quite as much money as he had hoped, but one of the local banks had crashed, and money was tight in the town; however, he spoke very glowingly of the audience, which encouraged him to great heights in his reading – in a letter to Georgina Hogarth he said that the hotel had improved since the last visit, too! He then, in his indefatigable manner, walked to Newcastle, some 12 miles, where he stayed at the Station Hotel (still standing opposite the station entrance). The readings were in the New Town Hall (now demolished) and he read the *Carol*, as at the previous three venues, but stayed on the following day to read from *Dombey and Son* at a matinee and *The Poor Traveller* and *Sairy Gamp* in the evening. Then it was off to Edinburgh, although not, this time, on foot!

The *Newcastle Daily Chronicle*, reporting on the evening performance, states "The audience was a very large and fashionable one, and the warmth with which Mr. Dickens was received must have convinced him that his flame was as bright as ever in the North, and his reputation as unclouded." It is noted that "a slight nervousness was visible in the first action of Mr. Dickens," but that after the great applause, "when the first words fell from his lips, all intimation of a tremor had died away. To a voice of extraordinary flexibility Mr. Dickens unites uncommon dramatic power and expression, and his reading has all the interest of a well-acted play."

Dickens revisited Newcastle from 21st-23rd November 1861 during another tour, performing at the Music Hall in Nelson Street (again, no longer standing) although a plaque is now on the wall of the building to record this fact.

The first reading was quite poorly attended due to the then tour manager, Johnson, sending the advertising bills to the Music Hall rather than to the local agent, so they had been "lost" for days - the *Newcastle Daily Chronicle* of 22nd November describes the audience as "select rather than numerous."

However, the *Newcastle Courant* of the same date spoke of “a most respectable company; who were gratified with the exquisite treat of hearing *David Copperfield* read (as perhaps no other man living could read it) by its author.” The second night was hugely successful; however, the evening was not without incident, as he related by letter to his daughter.

“Suddenly, when (the audience) were all very still over Smike, my gas batten came down, and it looked as if the room was falling. There were three great galleries crammed to the roof, and a high steep flight of stairs, and a panic must have destroyed numbers of people. A lady in the front row of stalls screamed, and ran wildly towards me, and for one instant there was a terrible wave in the crowd.” Dickens calmly called on her to resume her seat, which she did, and then during the repair of the structure “I looked on with my hands in my pockets; for I think if I had turned my back for a moment there might still have been a move. My people were dreadfully alarmed, Boylett in particular, who I suppose had some notion that the whole place might have taken fire.” No doubt he was right!

Of the quality of the audience, Dickens wrote to Forster, “A finer audience there is not in England, and I suppose them to be a specially earnest people; for while they can laugh till they shake the roof, they have a very unusual sympathy with what is pathetic or passionate.” On this occasion he stayed at the Queens Head in Pilgrim Street, which establishment was reputed to have been built on the same site as the medieval Pilgrims’ Inn. It was taken over by the Liberal Club in 1884 and still remains in situ to this day.

His last visit to Newcastle, 4th – 5th March 1867, was to the same venue and he was again impressed with the audience, writing to Georgina Hogarth, “The readings have an immense effect in this place, and it is remarkable that although the people are individually rough, collectively they are an unusually tender and sympathetic audience; while their comic perception is quite up to the high London standard.” On this occasion, the weather being oppressive, he decided to visit the seaside with his tour manager and friends and took a walk along the front at Tynemouth, enjoying the sight of ships being towed out from the harbour, and the beauty of a heavy sea, when a very high wave knocked them over “and in a moment drenched us and filled even our pockets. We had nothing for it but to shake ourselves together (like Dr. Marigold) and dry ourselves as well as we could by hard walking in the wind and sunshine!”

The sea may have been cold, but the warmth that the people of the North East felt for Charles Dickens was deep and unfeigned: a special connection.

Tour information from Malcolm Andrews Charles Dickens and His Performing Selves: OUP 2006
Quotations from Dickens’ letters taken from the Pilgrim Edition.

PART IV:

In our search for connections we find a 'Nickel' of truth!

Some further connections between Dickens and the North-East

Two of Charles Dickens' brothers lived for a time in the north east of England. Alfred Lamert Dickens trained as an engineer at Tamworth, near Birmingham with Robert Stevenson's engineering company, then moved to Malton in North Yorkshire, living there from 1844 to 1854 and working on the Malton and Driffield Railway. The consulting engineer was a John Birkinshaw, who had been assistant engineer on Stephenson's London and Birmingham railway work. Alfred supervised the engineering of the Malton and Driffield Railway.

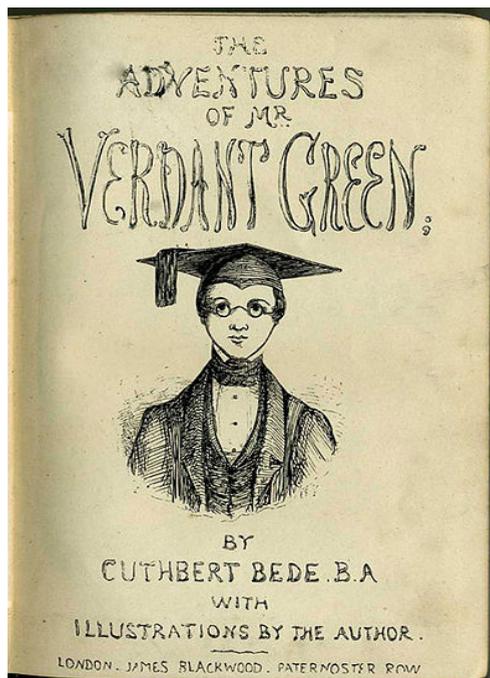
Another brother, Frederick Dickens, lived for a while and died in Darlington. Frederick had been a favourite brother of Charles and definitely a favourite uncle with Dickens' children, but his constant drift into the world of the debtor had strained the fraternal relationship to the point that Dickens had finally refused him any future help, after discovering that Frederick had used his, Charles, name in order to borrow from a third party. No-one is quite sure how Fred came to Darlington, except that he was lodging with a retired London innkeeper and apparently was a journalist in Darlington for a short time; given that Frederick, a colourful character, seems to have made gin a principle component of his diet, one assumes a friendship had been formed in the London inn! He died penniless, and Charles paid for both the funeral and headstone, but was unable to attend the funeral, his son, Charley, representing the family.

Charles wrote to thank the doctor who had attended his brother – Dr. Howison - a very gentle letter which concludes,

“How tenderly I write these words you can scarcely imagine,
unless you know that he was my favourite when he was a child,
and that I was his tutor when he was a boy.”

Frederick is buried in Darlington's West Cemetery, the headstone saying merely,
“In memory of Frederick William Dickens who died at Darlington
Oct. 20 1868 aged 48 years.”

A more tenuous connection between Dickens and the north east can be found in the work of one Edward Bradley. This writer, best known for his work written under the pseudonym of 'Cuthbert Bede' was the author of articles in Victorian magazines and the author and illustrator of one of the minor classics of the nineteenth century, "The Adventures of Mr. Verdant Green." First published in three parts in 1853, 1854 and 1857, this work has been republished many times, most recently by the Oxford University Press in 1982, with an introduction by Anthony Powell.



Edward Bradley was born in Kidderminster on March 25th 1827, the second son of Thomas Bradley, a surgeon. Even as a child he delighted in sketching and showed a keen sense of observation. Edward Bradley was educated at Kidderminster Grammar School, and University College, Durham where he graduated with a B.A. in 1848. The two patron saints of Durham are St. Cuthbert and the Venerable Bede. It must have been during his stay in Durham that Edward Bradley adopted the pseudonym "Cuthbert Bede" which he used for the rest of his life.

'Cuthbert Bede' appears to have known many of literary figures of his day and two of them, Albert Smith and George Cruikshank, had an influence on his work. Albert Smith (1816-1860) wrote a number of novels (of which "Christopher Tadpole" is perhaps the best known today), but in his day was famous for his interest in Mont Blanc about which he wrote and gave public performances.

Albert Smith's brother, Arthur Smith (1825-1861), was responsible for arranging Charles Dickens' readings in 1858 and 1861. The other main influence on Edward Bradley's work was George Cruikshank, himself famously associated with Dickens as an illustrator of *Sketches by Boz* and *Oliver Twist*. Bradley and Cruickshank first met in the autumn of 1853 and Bradley learnt his many of his wood engraving techniques from Cruikshank. From 1847 to 1855 Cuthbert Bede wrote and drew for *Punch*, whose editor was Mark Lemon, another close associate of Dickens.

PART V:

In a blatant display of ‘Curiosity’, we invite a member to tell all!

Ruth Crofton is our Branch Treasurer and the indefatigable principal behind this ‘2008 International Conference. It was felt only appropriate that she should be featured in our regular Q & A section for Branch members – not least that we should be reminded that she is, after all, only as human as the rest of us!

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

Er, sorry – no!

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

Generally speaking, I prefer the later novels, and *Our Mutual Friend* is perhaps my favourite. I also enjoy dipping into *The Uncommercial Traveller*, which I find contains some real treasures, but it's *A Christmas Carol* that has a special place in my life – it has such depth, and I've had the joy of watching the transforming nature of the piece at work during a retreat that I co-led, based around the *Carol*.

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?

Who says they don't think that anyway? But seriously – it falls well within their understanding of normality!

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

My mother had a book by Mary Angela Dickens (Charles' grand-daughter) called *Dickens Dream Children*, which consists of simplified stories of the child characters in Dickens' works, and she would read from this to me when I was a child. I got caught up in the characters and, over the years, it all just grew. *(Editors Note – see piece below on Mary Angela Dickens)*

And how did you become involved with the Dickens Fellowship?

My interest in Dickens' life led to me visiting Doughty Street over 30 years ago, where I found out about the Fellowship, but I didn't join the Headquarters Branch until I was living in Leeds in the 1990s. The then General Secretary, Edward Preston, tried to arrange a day on Dickens to raise interest in a Leeds branch, but the event had to be cancelled for lack of interest.

I went on a Dickens weekend based at Maidstone, where the leader was the then curator of the Dickens House Museum, and I think it was the following year that I tried my first Conference, at York in 2000, as a day visitor. Then I went to the Rochester conference the following year where I met Herbert Savory and Ronnie Teasdale, both of whom were from the north east and are now members of our little Branch. I knew then that I was going to move to Durham, so said to them that if they ever planned to try a North East branch, I would be interested. The rest followed.

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

I read pretty widely, but over the years some writers have become special. One is Elizabeth Taylor (not the actress!) who wrote excellent character-driven novels and short stories; much of her work was republished by Virago in the 90s and I have managed to hunt out the rest. Rather similar in style is Barbara Pym, another favourite. I have a fair collection of Terry Pratchett's books: he is just so clever and funny in the way he looks at the world and turns it about, rather after the manner of 18th century satirists. *The Hogfather* and *The Amazing Maurice and his Educated Rodents* are brilliant. Completely different is a French almost-contemporary of Dickens, Honoré de Balzac; like Dickens he takes some getting into, but the effort is worthwhile. (I read them in translation!). Recently I have discovered Laurence Sterne, and his life and works, and I find that there are a number of excellent modern authors, so enjoy trying new names, while my eldest niece keeps me up to date with teen/young adult fiction, some of which is very good.

My most recent purchase from Amazon says it all, really - a book *The Beauties of Sterne* and a DVD *Shaun the Sheep Off the Baa*. And yes, both were for me!

But the all-time comfort, would-have-hysterics-if-I-lost-them books are Sterne's *Sentimental Journey* and Betty Smith's *A Tree Grows in Brooklyn*. I bought a hardback version of the latter recently, when the paperback literally wore out!

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

I always read in bed before going to sleep; often at the dining table while I eat (and long after I've eaten . . .!), in the train, in the bus, in a plane or sitting on the floor in front of the fire, but rarely sitting in an armchair.

Do you have a preference for paperbacks or hardbacks?

Don't mind. I like decent quality paperbacks – light to carry and hold. If they would only bind the spines rather than sticking them, they'd be perfect!

Tell us something about yourself and your background.

I was born and brought up in Gateshead, going to York to train as a teacher then returning to teach in Gateshead for nine years before moving to Warkworth as Headteacher of the First school there. At Warkworth I married, was widowed and moved from being a long-time member of the Church of England to the United Reformed Church (a busy time!). In 1987 I moved to Manchester for three years to train for URC ministry: the inner city was quite a contrast after rural Northumberland, but I loved Manchester, and my first pastorate was in Salford & Eccles. A large Methodist/UR Church in Leeds followed, and then I came to Durham and Crook in 2001. I took early (for the URC!) retirement last year though continue to do some work for the wider church and some preaching. I also enjoy some writing, short stories being my preferred field.

I'm one of those odd people who enjoy moving house, though I may have settled this time in my 11th home! I enjoy travelling, but my favourite place is the Sinai Desert (Egypt) which honestly feels 'home' – my sixth visit is in October. For a great many years I was a bell-ringer (tower bells), something I had hoped to take up again in retirement (after the conference, perhaps?). And a 'different' thing I once did was to take part in a fire-walk (yes, over hot coals) in aid of the Durham Hospice. It was great!

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

His characters are recognizable, and sadly, many of the wrongs he highlighted in society still exist, while his humour has travelled though time quite unimpaired.

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?

In films, I love the 1987 version of *Little Dorrit*. *The Muppet Christmas Carol* is a big favourite, and I really love the ballet version. I think radio adaptations of Dickens are usually great, and good dramatic readings – well, can't be beaten.

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

Re-reading *Our Mutual Friend*, and remembering why it's a favourite.

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

I would encourage them to persist; because you have to really stick with Dickens to get into the characters and story, but when you do and find the humour and amazing insight into human life then you're carried along on a wonderful journey.

PART VI:

Of family and a 'G-Rudge' that lingered and lingered!

Mary Angela Dickens 1862 – 1946

By Beryl Teasdale

**Eldest daughter of Charles (Charley) Culliford Boz Dickens (1837-1896)
and Elizabeth (Bessie) Evans who married on 19th November 1861
Granddaughter of Charles Dickens.
Occupation – journalist and novelist.**

Bessie Evans – the mother of Mary Angela Dickens - was the daughter of Dickens's old publisher (of Bradley and Evans) and the adolescent love match between Bessie and Charley had been welcomed by both families in the days when they were on friendly terms. These friendly terms were broken during the break up of the marriage between Charles and Catherine Hogarth. Dickens had issued a public self-justifying statement about his personal affairs which was printed in *The Times* and other newspapers. With a touch of self-righteousness he also expected his publishers, Bradbury & Evans to reprint this long statement in *Punch*, which they also owned. They refused, and thereby provoked Dickens into terminating his partnership with them. Despite having been his printers since 1836 and his publishers since 1845, Bradbury & Evans were never to print anything else that Dickens wrote.

Charles Dickens did not tell any of his friends about the wedding between his son and the daughter of his now former friend and partner. His old friend Thomas Beard was among those invited to the wedding by Charley. Beard wrote to Dickens, explaining that he was going for Charley's sake and not out of lack of consideration for his old friend's feelings. Charles wrote back "Of course I perfectly understand your responding to any request on the part of Charley, or of his mother, to attend the dear fellow's marriage. But I must add the expression of my earnest hope that it is not your intention to enter Mr. Evans's house on that occasion".

Despite the animosity between the in-laws, the wedding of Mary Angela Dickens parents was a success, and reflected a long-term association between the two. As Mary wrote about her father, “It was a family joke – and also a fact – that he and my mother were engaged when he was seven years old! They were lovers all their lives” Contrary to Charles Dickens’s doom-laden prophecies, Charley and Bessie’s marriage was to prove a long and very happy one.

Despite Charles Dickens’s misgivings about his son-in-law Charles Collins and daughter-in-law Bessie Evans, he was as delighted with his grandchildren as he had been with his own babies. In particular, Charley’s eldest daughter, Mary Angela, remembered her grandfather with reverent affection. She recalled how she had been badly scalded after playing close to a pot of boiling water while staying at Gad’s Hill. She remembered her aunt Mamie being very gentle and kind, but her overwhelming memory was of her grandfather sitting beside her bed, holding her hand and promising he would make her well. From that night onwards, she fervently believed that as long as he was nearby, no harm could come to her. She wailed bitterly after he went away.

Charley Dickens took on the task of editing *All the Year Round*, after the death of his father, but the magazine never attained its earlier popularity. He had used much of his own money in an attempt to keep the magazine afloat, with disastrous results for his widow and daughters.

After the death of Charley, Bessie and her five grown-up daughters lived on an annual income of £100. This was not enough and their aunt Kate (Charley’s sister) tried to help the impoverished children find work. The most resourceful of Charley and Bessie’s children was Ethel, who set up a typewriting agency and Mary Angela, who made a name for herself, though sadly not much of an income, as a novelist and journalist.

Mary Angela Dickens published her early stories in her father’s inherited journal *All The Year Round*. She produced most of her novels in her thirties – her most notable was *Cross Currents* (1891) which traces the unhappy progress of the love life of a young actress. *A Mere Cypher* followed in 1893, *A Valiant Ignorance* in 1894, and *Prisoners of Silence* in 1895. Her style is sensational and sentimental, incorporating melodramatic revelations, murders and suicides. *Against the Tide* came out in 1897, and *On the Edge of a Precipice*, which deals with the exploitation of a young woman suffering from amnesia, in 1899. She stopped writing at the turn of the century. She also wrote *Dickens Dream Children* (1924) which consists of simplified stories of the child characters in Dickens’ works,

Ute Harrington, South Africa

The north east Branch were saddened to hear of the death of Ute Harrington on July 3rd 2008. Although living in South Africa, she retained membership of our Branch for many years. She lost a long battle with cancer and we offer our deepest condolences to her family

PART VII:

A colleague goes 'chuzzling' through the relics of the past!

'The Art of Collecting' By Ronald H Teasdale

Or 'Reminiscences on the sensibility or otherwise of the acquisition of various memorabilia relating to the history of collecting and in particular, Charles Dickens.

I have long suspected that collecting is either something of an anomaly in our character, a sign of deep insecurity with the need to surround ourselves with material items from which we can draw comfort, or, alternatively, a part of the human mind's unquenchable curiosity, and its love for the wonder of the world. I favour the latter; collecting books, paintings, objects, and curiosities is the embryo of science. In our small way we emulate the early collectors who brought the world's curiosities together so that they could be inspected and contemplated, counted among the first steps towards the modern framework of thought about nature. These early ventures and their subsequent collections turned, from The Enlightenment, onwards, into museums supporting the growth of science.

My wife, Beryl, and I have collected books, paintings and furniture from the George III period onwards for a number of years. In our care of these old (and not so old) items we have been rewarded in turn with the motivation to develop our knowledge of history and our horizons have widened as a result. Our collecting is a partnership with historical memorabilia; we have these items on loan for a short period of our lives and they in turn reward us with the foundation to develop our human need to come to terms with our place in history, our educational and spiritual development, our final destiny.

My first serious encounter with 'Charles Dickens' was to be enthralled by a lecture given by Professor Phillip Collins at Newcastle. His interpretation of Doctor Marigold was nothing short of brilliant. It was here that I met Edward Preston, secretary of The Dickens Fellowship, and our very own Herbert Savory. From that time onwards I have never looked back as they say. This is a pun of course as we are forever looking back; if we are not contemplating our own life experiences (where did we go wrong, why did we say what we did, and so forth) we are looking at the lives of others with incurable curiosity.

I am occasionally to be found searching for old 'Teasdale' documents on eBay and looking through bookshelves and records of book dealers at book fairs. I came across a letter signed by Mary Angela Dickens 'daughter of Charles Dickens'. I looked at the date of the letter and realised that there was something not quite right; I do not think there was a deliberate intention to misrepresent. The price was quite reasonable (even more so after some good natured haggling) so I made the purchase. The fun came later when I did some research. It is always a pleasure to discover and learn something new about one of your favourite authors (or his family) and write about it.

The Dickens Fellowship, North East England

The Branch officers are:

Hon. President:

Hon. Secretary:

Hon Treasurer:

Public Relations Secretary:

Mr Herbert Savory

Revd Ruth Crofton

Ms Lynn Hitchen

Membership subscriptions are: £12.00 per annum

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

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