NSW Dickens Society.
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Household Words

Issue 73 (February, 2019)
PO Box 3024, West Lindfield NSW 2070, Australia
Patron: Miriam Margolyes OBE
President: Louise Owens

NSW Dickens Society 2019 Books of the Year; *American Notes* and *Pictures from Italy*

Letter from the President

Welcome to 2019! What a wonderful year 2018 was for the NSW Dickens Society, not only did we enjoy a wonderful array of talks on Saturdays, we celebrated Dickens' birthday, enjoyed our wonderful 112th International Dickens Fellowship Conference in October with 150 delegates from around the world and then our beautiful Christmas Lunch and entertainment! Well, I hope you have had a lovely festive season and a good rest because 2019 is going to be another wonderful and exciting year for the NSW Dickens Society!

Our Saturday talks will include Susannah Fullerton OAM, FRSN speaking about Dickens and his Queen, celebrating 200 years since Queen Victoria's birth; rare book specialist Louella Kerr will speak about the fun of collecting Dickens; Walter Mason will speak about our Books of the Year, *American Notes* and *Pictures from Italy;* Dr. Vasudha Chandra will speak about what ailed Dickens and some of his characters; and Isabel Deeble will speak about Dickens' travels in America. Add to this our Dickens' birthday celebrations and our exciting weekend away in May where the NSW Dickens Society is sponsoring Dickens' great, great, great granddaughter Lucinda Hawksley to speak on each day. There are many other events to look forward to: fine antique and period jewellery specialist and speaker Anne Schofield; prolific author Kate Forsyth in conversation with Catherine du Peloux Menagé; wonderful talks by antiquarian book aficionado Professor Chris Browne; travel writer, speaker and lecturer Walter Mason; food historian Charmaine O'Brien and historical architecture and interiors authority Kaye Remington. Plus our Christmas Lunch! We have so much to look forward to.

Memberships run for calendar years (1st January until 31st December each year), so please send in your membership renewal form and payment as soon as possible so that you will be kept up to date with these wonderful events. Please email me: louiseo@bigpond.net.au if you would like another membership form or Weekend Away form emailed or posted to you. A special bonus for 2019 members is a complimentary copy of our annual publication, *Boz in Oz*, which will be a bumper edition filled with articles from speakers and photos from the wonderful 112th International Dickens Fellowship Conference we hosted in Sydney last October. Easy ways to pay 2019 membership renewal and payment for 2019 Weekend Away

are; cheque and completed form posted to Treasurer (see forms for postal address), cheque/cash and completed form given to Treasurer at 2/02 meeting or Dickens' birthday on 7/02, direct debit and completed form emailed to Treasurer (see direct debit and email details on forms) or tap and go and completed form with Treasurer at 2/02 meeting or Dickens' birthday on 7/02.

I encourage you to send in your forms for the Weekend Away very soon as numbers are limited and it would be a shame for you to miss out on this wonderful event. Held at the Novotel Sydney Manly Pacific, NSW on Saturday, 18th May and Sunday, 19th May, each day will have a wonderful array of spellbinding talk and sessions. You can choose to stay one or both days (Lucinda Hawksley is speaking on both days) and you can choose to stay overnight at The Novotel Sydney Manly Pacific or drive home on the Saturday evening. Dinner is not included to keep costs down.

First up, we have Susannah Fullerton AOM, FRSN coming to speak to us on Saturday, 2nd February. 2019 is the 200th anniversary of the birth of Queen Victoria. There's no better time to look at the relationship between the Queen Empress and the most famous writer of her realm. What did the Queen think of the novels of Mr Dickens? What did he think of her, and did they ever meet? Susannah Fullerton examines the relationship between the two notable Victorians. Before the talk, Valentine's Day cards which Dickens characters might have sent each other, written by Ron Withington, will be read by Geoffrey Usher and Catherine du Peloux Menagé. Sounds like a great way to start off the year! The AGM will also be held at this meeting.

Shortly after this meeting, we will be celebrating Charles Dickens' birthday on 7th February. Eat, drink and be merry to celebrate Charles Dickens' birthday at the foot of one of the few statues of him in the world. Geoffrey Usher will read the two Henry Lawson poems about Dickens in his inimitable voice. 10.30am: Corner of Dickens Drive and Loch Avenue, Centennial Parklands, Sydney. Free, but please RSVP by 1st February 2019 for catering purposes; louiseo@bigpond.net.au

A very warm welcome to our newest members **Robin Allardice, Brad Cairnduff, Doreen Giles, Victoria Hannah, Jennifer Ide, Mary Knights, Theo Papas, Lindy Payne, Michael Pyne, Leonie Turner, Mary Vlahakis** and **Louise Wells.** We are sure that you will enjoy the publications, talks and events at the NSW Dickens Society as much as we do!

So, please join in the fun that we have been busy arranging for you. Looking forward to seeing you and celebrating the works, life and times of Charles Dickens.

By Louise Owens

Dickens Christmas Lunch 2018 Report

Our Victorian themed Christmas lunch was attended by 70 Dickens Society and our friends, the Brontë Society members. The venue was the Cello Dining Room restaurant of the Castlereagh Boutique Hotel. We were well looked after by the attentive staff and served a lovely two-course meal, with coffee and tea to follow.

Before the lunch was served there was time to browse The Old Curiosity Shop for charming Christmas gifts and bargain books. TOCS did a roaring trade which benefits our society. Tempting raffle prizes were on show to encourage ticket purchases.

We sat down and had a welcome by President Louise Owens and a blessing given by Geoffrey Usher. Geoffrey also provided a reading from *A Christmas Carol* – the part where the Cratchit family sits down to their Christmas feast! Entertainment was provided by Michael Links on piano. After tea and coffee and the drawing of the raffle, happy conversations continued. Guests left reluctantly to do some Christmas shopping or return home. We hope to see more of you next year.

By Lynn Clayton

Limerick for Geoffrey Usher

Our Geoffrey's truly a remarkable man
Well able to rhyme and also to scan
He has a limerick tall
On any topic at all
And we wonder how the Dickens he can.

By Alan Hogan

News from The Charles Dickens Museum

On 21st November 2018, the 'lost portrait' of Charles Dickens by Margaret Gillies, was unveiled in London, the first time it had been seen by the public in 174 years.

When Philip Mould contacted the Charles Dickens Museum with news of the discovery of a possible portrait of Charles Dickens as a young man, our interest was naturally piqued. I recall saying to our Curator, 'let's not get too excited just yet', knowing that the trade in Dickens relics had occasionally brought forth some questionable material over the years. However, when we saw an image of the piece and were able to identify it as the source for a number of popular engravings from the 1840s, it was a thrilling moment.

Letters in our archive revealed details about Dickens sitting for the artist Margaret Gillies during the autumn of 1843, the period when Dickens was writing *A Christmas Carol*. The artist found Dickens to be "a most agreeable and pleasant talker".

This discovery would have been remarkable in any event, but it is even more so because the portrait itself – a large miniature – is exquisite. The skill of the artist is evident in the fineness of every brushstroke, in each strand of hair and the sparkling eyes that look right into yours. And in those eyes you see the complexity of the man - the confidence of success, the urgency, warmth and compassion, but also a hint of vulnerability.

The discovery

The portrait was found in a cardboard box of trinkets – which included a brass dish, a plastic recorder (child's instrument), and a metal lobster – purchased as a job lot in a house clearance sale in Pietermaritzburg, KwaZulu-Natal. The person who purchased it, a keen auction treasure hunter and fan of BBC's *Fake or Fortune* sent a photograph to one of the programme's presenters, the fine art expert Philip Mould, with an idea that it could be an eminent Victorian. Still in its original frame, although covered in yellow mould, Philip and his team spotted a likeness to an engraving of Dickens and contacted the Museum. We worked together to establish authenticity, authorship and the rather extraordinary backstory to the painting and its reappearance in South Africa, which is connected to the sons of George Henry Lewes (partner to George Eliot), two of whom emigrated to South Africa in the 1860s. Both Gillies and Dickens were close to the Lewes family. The portrait was exhibited at the Royal Academy in 1844, and by 1886 it was known to have been missing for many years.

The artist

Margaret Gillies (1803-1887) was a professional artist (highly unusual for a woman at the time), a campaigner for social reform, and one of the earliest supporters of the suffrage movement. She was unmarried by choice but cohabited with leading physician and sanitary reformer, Dr Thomas Southwood Smith. Smith was a member of several Royal Commissions investigating living and working conditions of the poor, including children working in mines and factories, and it was through this work that he met Dickens, taking him on tours of industrial sites and urban slums. In 1842, following three years of investigations across the country, the Commission published a report on child labour in mines and collieries. This 'blue paper' contained shocking illustrations now known to be by Gillies. After reading the report, Dickens wrote to Smith that he was 'perfectly stricken down' by it and resolved that he should act and that his response would be felt with 'Sledge hammer' force. This 'Sledge hammer' would eventually become *A Christmas Carol.*

The importance of the portrait

The portrait was commissioned in order for an engraving to be made for *A New Spirit of the Age*, a book profiling a new generation of writers and thinkers intended to inspire. Dickens was the first entry.

The poet Elizabeth Barrett Browning, when she saw the portrait shortly after it was completed, said that Dickens had "the dust and mud of humanity about him, notwithstanding those eagle eyes".

Dickens was 31 years old – he had written a number of novels and had become a household name in Britain and abroad. You can see this early success in his face. But you can also see something troubling, something haunting him, a glimpse of what Dickens himself had seen in what became known as the hungry '40s.

And looking into those 'eagle eyes', we are reminded of the key themes of that much-loved and enduring tale: that everyone has the capacity for kindness and compassion; that no one is beyond redemption; that each of us can do something to make a difference in this world to help those less fortunate.

That is why this portrait matters, and why we want to give it a permanent home at the Charles Dickens Museum where it can continue to inspire people now and for generations to come.
The Charles Dickens Museum holds the earliest portrait of Dickens, as a young man of 18, and the very last – a drawing of Dickens on his death bed by John Everett Millais. This piece fills an important gap in the portraiture of Dickens at a pivotal moment in his career – but it is also by far the most dynamic and engaging portrait of Dickens; it truly captures his spirit as if he is there in the room with you.

The appeal

We have raised £60,000 (as of 20th January 2019) and are appealing to Dickens fans worldwide to help us reach our target of £180,000. More information can be found here: https://dickensmuseum.com/blogs/news/the-lost-portrait. Thank you!

By Dr.Cindy Sughrue OBE

Member Interview with Charles Guillan

Which is the first Dickens novel you read? *Great Expectations*. I first read it many years ago but I vividly remember being totally enthralled by the characters and story. What reader can ever forget Miss Havisham?

Which is your favourite Dickens novel? *A Tale of Two Cities*: this one has it all. The French Revolution, thrilling escapes, suspense, unforgettable characters, a spellbinding plot, humour, romance, inspiring heroism and the implacable Madame Defarge knitting her scarf of death.

Which is one of your favourite Dickens characters? Dickens was a genius at creating unforgettable yet believable characters. Samuel Pickwick is marvellously depicted: good-humoured, naive, gallant and compassionate. Joe Gargery is another favourite of mine. His decency, stoicism and deep integrity are beautifully drawn. And Dickens even gives Joe the happy ending he deserves with his marriage to Biddy.

What is one of the best adaptations of a Dickens book? The 1935 film adaptation of *A Tale of Two Cities* is superb; with an excellent screenplay and magnificent performances. Both the human drama and the spectacle of Dickens story are brought to life in this epic MGM production.

What would you most like to ask Dickens? One of the many pleasures I enjoy when reading Dickens is the brilliantly evocative names he gives his characters. I would ask Dickens if the names were ever based on people he'd met or purely products of his prodigious imagination.

What would you buy Dickens for his birthday? I'd hand him two bunches of flowers. A freshly picked bunch of scarlet geraniums, his favourite flower. And in 2016 the Charles Dickens Rose was launched by Style Roses, a specialist nursery in Lincolnshire. So a bunch of these would also be a perfect gift.

What do you enjoy most about the NSW Dickens Society? The fascinating people I meet who share my passion for 19th century literature. The recent Boz in Oz Conference was a highlight. Members from across Australia and the world shared five days of excellent talks and outings; all filled with learning, fellowship and fun.

What are you reading at the moment? I'm rereading the novels of Jane Austen to prepare for a presentation I will be delivering to the Jane Austen Society of Australia, focussing on the male characters in her novels.

If Dickens could visit today's world what do you think he would be most surprised by? Despite his success and fame, Dickens had a deep humility. He directed that he wanted no "monument, memorial or testimonial whatsoever". He would be humbled by the fact that nearly 150 years after his death his works are still so widely enjoyed. He would be surprised to see how he lives on across the globe in so many different media. Imagine Dickens' reaction watching a screening of the musical film *Oliver!* on Netflix, or downloading *Oliver Twist* on audiobook!

What is something that people might be surprised to know about you? My current passion is studying drawing and painting. Last year I was delighted to have several of my paintings included in an exhibition at the Sydney Botanic Gardens.

Coordinated by Louise Owens

Quiz A; *American Notes* Chapters I – VIII

Answers shall be published in Issue 74 (April 2019).

1. In which year did Dickens make the tour about which he wrote these *Notes*?
2. What was the name of the steam-packet (bound to Halifax and Boston) on which he and Mrs Dickens travelled?
3. What kind of vessel was this steam-packet?
4. On the third morning, what was the steward's response to Dickens' question about the sailing conditions?
5. What was the name of the hotel in which the Dickenses stayed when they arrived in Boston?

6. Who was the distinguished and accomplished (Unitarian) preacher whom Dickens was reluctantly obliged to forego the delight of hearing in Boston?
7. To what was much of the intellectual refinement and superiority of Boston referable?
8. What was the name of the blind, deaf and dumb girl at the Perkins Institution and Massachusetts Asylum for the Blind, from whose history Dickens quoted "a few disjointed fragments"?
9. And what was the name of her great benefactor and friend?
10. What was the "great theme" of the desperately long-winded lawyer whom Dickens heard addressing the jury in the civil court action in Boston?
11. Always excepting the Unitarian ministry, what did Dickens consider to be the peculiar province of the Pulpit in New England?
12. What was the sect of philosophers to which Dickens thought he would belong if he were a Bostonian?
13. Before leaving Boston, to where did Dickens devote a day to making an excursion?
14. In July 1841, how many factory girls were depositors in that town's Savings Bank?
15. What was the name of the literary periodical which they had got up among themselves?
16. Which New England town was known also as the City of Elms?
17. Hell Gate, the Hog's Back and the Frying Pan were among the notorious localities attractive to the readers of which book by Washington Irving?
18. Which quarter of New York did Dickens consider might be safely backed, in respect of filth and wretchedness, against Seven Dials or St Giles?
19. What was the name of the famous prison, a dismal-fronted pile of bastard Egyptian, like an enchanter's palace in a melodrama?
20. What ugly brutes were the city scavengers in New York?
21. What was the name of the great prison where the system was rigid, strict, and hopeless solitary confinement?
22. What did Dickens regard as "an exaggeration of nastiness, which cannot be outdone"?
23. At Baltimore in Maryland, what experience did the Dickenses have for the first time?
24. Washington was sometimes called the City of Magnificent Distances. What did Dickens think it might with greater propriety be termed?
25. When the Dickenses went to dinner with the President, who acted as the lady of the mansion?

By Geoffrey R Usher

Contributions to NSW DS Publications

We welcome submissions for consideration for our publications: *Household Words* (published six times per year) and *Boz in Oz* (published once per year). For *Household Words,* please email articles maximum of one typed page to louiseo@bigpond.net.au Deadline for submissions is: 25/3/19, 20/5/19, 22/7/19, 16/9/19, and 11/11/19. For *Boz in Oz*, please email articles maximum of three typed pages (including photos) to; louiseo@bigpond.net.au Deadline for submissions for *Boz in Oz* is: 3/12/19. Please use Chicago-style referencing for footnotes in these articles.

Don't forget to follow NSW DS on our Social Media

Website:	https://dickenssydney.com/
Facebook page:	https://www.facebook.com/NSW.Dickens.Society/
Twitter:	https://twitter.com/NSWDS @NSWDS

Calendar of Dickens-Related Events:

Saturday, 2nd February: A talk by Susannah Fullerton OAM, FRSN; Queen Victoria and Charles Dickens

2019 is the 200th anniversary of the birth of Queen Victoria. There's no better time to look at the relationship between the Queen Empress and the most famous writer of her realm. What did the Queen think of the novels of Mr Dickens? What did he think of her, and did they ever meet? Susannah Fullerton examines the relationship between two notable Victorians. Before the talk, Valentine's Day cards which Dickens characters might have sent each other, written by Ron Withington, will be read by Geoffrey Usher and Catherine du Peloux Menagé. The AGM will also be held at this meeting.

10.30am – 12 noon in the Nangamay Room (formerly the Sydney Room), 2nd Floor, City Tattersalls Club, 194 – 204 Pitt Street (near the Market Street end), Sydney. No bookings required. $5 entry fee for NSW Dickens Society members. $10 for non-members.

Thursday, 7th February: Charles Dickens' Birthday Celebrations:

Eat (cake), drink (sparkling wine) and be merry to celebrate Charles Dickens' birthday at the foot of one of the few statues of him in the world. Geoffrey Usher will read the two Henry Lawson poems about Dickens in his inimitable voice.

10.30am: Corner of Dickens Drive and Loch Avenue, Centennial Parklands, Sydney. Free, but please RSVP by 1.02.19 for catering purposes; louiseo@bigpond.net.au

Saturday, 6th April: A talk by Louella Kerr; The Fun of Collecting Dickens

What kind of collector are you? Are you a completist or are you interested mainly in the highlights of Dickens? Are you motivated by pleasure or profit? Do you want to have fun or to collect with investment in mind? The field open to the would-be collector of Charles Dickens is enormous. *The New Cambridge Bibliography of English Literature* [1970] lists Dickens editions from 1833 to 1970 in over 70 columns. So the first consideration for the collector must be – what's my goal? Whilst this talk is geared towards the former, there is no reason why a Dickens collection should not be a sound investment. There is a wealth of treasure to be found by the adventurous collector – plays, speeches, magazine articles, Association copies, ephemera, sets, Australian editions, illustrated editions, fakes and forgeries, to name but a few directions a collection might take. Louella Kerr will discuss all these and more in her talk.

Before the talk Jane Fulton will show and speak about her collection of Edith Russell Dickens dolls.

10.30am – 12noon in the Nangamay Room, 2nd Floor, City Tattersalls Club, 194 – 204 Pitt Street (near the Market Street end), Sydney. No bookings required. $5 entry fee for NSW Dickens Society members. $10 for non-members.

Saturday, 18th May and Sunday, 19th May: *NSW Dickens Society Weekend by the Seaside. Theme; Dickens and the Family.*

A celebration of the works, life and times of Charles Dickens on the broad theme of Dickens and the Family. On offer are fascinating talks by Lucinda Hawksley, Charles and Catherine Dickens' great, great, great granddaughter, fine antique and period jewellery specialist and speaker Anne Schofield, prolific author Kate Forsyth in conversation with Catherine du Peloux Menagé, wonderful talks by antiquarian book aficionado Professor Chris Browne, travel writer, speaker and lecturer Walter Mason, food historian Charmaine O'Brien and historical architecture and interiors authority Kaye Remington.

Novotel Sydney Manly Pacific, 55 N Steyne, Manly NSW. Separate cost. For information, please email; louiseo@bigpond.net.au

Saturday, 1st June: ***A talk by Walter Mason; Nineteenth Century Journeys through America and Italy***

The NSW Dickens Society has chosen Dickens' two travel books, *American Notes* and *Pictures from Italy* as our Books of the Year for 2019. NSW Dickens Society Vice President and travel writer, Walter Mason, will examine what drove Dickens to travel, and the distinctively 19th century obsessions that shaped his itinerary while abroad. These books managed to infuriate and offend as much as they delighted readers, and we will spend some time looking at the assumptions and prejudices that Dickens took with him along with his wife, his family and his travel trunks. From phrenology and burning books to smouldering volcanoes and street carnivals, this will be a wonderful opportunity to visit two of Dickens' less well-known texts and look at what it means for a writer to travel, to observe and to record things seen. Walter's witty and informed talks are always a great favourite of Society members.

10.30am - 12noon in the Nangamay Room, 2nd Floor, City Tattersalls Club, 194 – 204 Pitt Street (near the Market Street end), Sydney. No bookings required. $5 entry fee for NSW Dickens Society members. $10 for non-members

Saturday, 3rd August: ***A talk by Dr. Vasudha Chandra; Prescription for Mr. Dickens***

What ailed Charles Dickens, the man? What about some of his sickly and invalid characters? What medical conditions did they suffer from? This talk delves into such diagnostic dilemmas and explores some of the treatments used in Dickens' time, including taking a holiday, which many Victorians believed to have health-giving benefits.

10.30am – 12noon in the Nangamay Room, 2nd Floor, City Tattersalls Club, 194 – 204 Pitt Street (near the Market Street end), Sydney. No bookings required. $5 entry fee for NSW Dickens Society members. $10 for non-members.

September: Italy in the Footsteps of Dickens trip to Italy;

http://renaissancetours.com.au/tours/literary/italy-footsteps-of-dickens/

Explore Italy in the footsteps of Charles Dickens, retracing his 19th century voyage from Venice in the north, through Genoa, Florence and Rome to Mt. Vesuvius in the south. Louise Owens will be leading this tour.

Saturday, 5th October: A talk by Isabel Deeble; Charles Dickens and his American Reading Tour

Social media creates celebrities overnight but Charles Dickens was arguably the first international celebrity over 150 years ago. He attracted fame particularly though his paid readings in the later part of his life, and especially during his second trip to America (1867/68). There was a rapturous public reception to the 'British lion'. His dramatic readings, their staging and scripting were highly praised. He made a 'multitude of new friends', some of them eminent figures like himself. On his second tour he noted illuminating observations and experiences. We will explore this triumphal reading tour and the responses it drew from his audiences.

10.30am – 12noon in the Nangamay Room, 2nd Floor, City Tattersalls Club, 194 – 204 Pitt Street (near the Market Street end), Sydney. No bookings required. $5 entry fee for NSW Dickens Society members. $10 for non-members.

Christmas Lunch: date and location to be confirmed. Please check our website closer to the date: https://dickenssydney.com/ Separate cost.

Information was correct at time of printing.