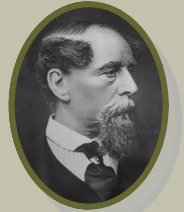




# Mudfog News



Newsletter Since 1927

## SEPTEMBER 2013

THE QUARTERLY NEWSLETTER OF THE DICKENS FELLOWSHIP TORONTO BRANCH NO.32  
INSTITUTED 1905

BLOG: [HTTP://DICKENSTORONTO.WORDPRESS.COM](http://dickenstoronto.wordpress.com)  
TWITTER FEED: [HTTP://WWW.TWITTER.COM/DICKENSTO](http://www.twitter.com/dickensto)

THE FELLOWSHIP IS CONDUCTED ON THE BROADEST SOCIAL LINES; IT IS OPEN TO ALL, WITHOUT DISTINCTION OF CLASS, CREED, OR NATIONALITY. THE FUNDS OF THE FELLOWSHIP, AFTER PAYMENT OF RUNNING EXPENSES, ARE TO BE DEVOTED BY THE COUNCIL TO PHILANTHROPIC WORK AMONGST CHILDREN. OUR OBJECTIVE IS TO PROMOTE THE KNOWLEDGE AND APPRECIATION OF DICKENS'S WORK.

### DICKENS FELLOWSHIP COUNCIL

2013–2014

- PRESIDENT/NEWSLETTER..... TERRY SLEIGHTHOLM
- VICE PRESIDENT..... DAN CALINESCU
- TREASURER..... NELLI AZIMI
- SECRETARY..... LYNNE HANSMAN
- MEMBERSHIP..... MARTHA MCKINNON
- PUBLICITY..... STEFAN SIERAKOWSKI
- BOZ READING GROUP..... DOUG PATON
- WEBSITE & BLOG..... SHARON KAWABATA
- U.K. LIAISON..... JEAN PATON
- MEMBERS AT LARGE..... LISE OLDS  
BRAD SAVAGE  
ANNE TANNER  
ERIN TANNER
- HONORARY MEMBERS..... WINIFRED BOURCHIER  
GEOFFREY CHICK  
CLARA LAHMER  
JOHN MORRIS

### COUNCIL MEETING SCHEDULE 2013 –14 (ROOM 224 @ 10:00 A.M.)

- SATURDAY 19 OCTOBER 2013
- SATURDAY 11 JANUARY 2014
- SATURDAY 12 APRIL 2014
- SATURDAY 18 OCTOBER 2014



### BOZ READING GROUP

#### LIBRARY SCHEDULE 2013–2014

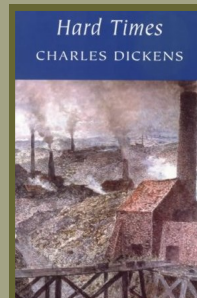
\* ALL BOZ MEETINGS ARE FROM 6:30 TO 9:30 P.M., ROOM 224.

#### 2013

- WED., SEPTEMBER 18
- WED., OCTOBER 16
- WED., NOVEMBER 20
- WED., DECEMBER 18

#### 2014

- WED., JANUARY 15
- WED., FEBRUARY 19
- WED., MARCH 19
- WED., APRIL 16
- WED., MAY 21
- WED., SEPTEMBER 17



- WED., OCTOBER 15
- WED., NOVEMBER 19
- WED., DECEMBER 17

\* THE ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING WILL BE HELD ON SATURDAY, MAY 10, 2014, 9:30 FOR 10:00 A.M.

## A Year of Great Expectations!

In the last 12 months or so, Dickensians have had the wonderful opportunity to see no less than three recent adaptations of the masterpiece *Great Expectations*. A new film starring Helen Bonham Carter, Ralph Fiennes, Sally Hawkins and Robbie Coltrane had its Canadian debut at last year's Toronto International Film Festival. It will be opening at cinemas in the GTA on October 11. I haven't seen it yet so I'll be organizing a group outing for it.

On CD's birthday last February, selected Cineplex movie theatres broadcasted opening night of the new stage adaptation at London's West End theatre. These Cineplex special broadcasts are a great opportunity. Each costs around \$20. Despite a terrible storm that night, a few of us who could get there without driving saw it at Yonge & Eglinton. It was staged in a fascinating manner. An older Pip acted as narrator often standing in his own scene watching himself and others. The set was designed in such a way that nothing was ever added or removed. They would simply darken one area and light another. Believe me, it worked so well you quickly forgot characters like Miss Havisham were sitting in the dark on another part of the stage until they lit that section again.

Soulpepper presented an equally creative *Great Expectations* this summer. It had a strong cast with many of the actors playing multiple parts. Soulpepper productions can be a bit pricy but rush seats are available for most presentations. A group of us went together and had a great time. It was wonderful to see Oliver Dennis, Deborah Drakeford and John Jarvis from Soulpepper's *A Christmas Carol* taking on more Dickens roles. Familiar television actor Kate Trotter was marvellous as Miss Havisham – and her wedding dress was delightful – grey and frayed, and dragging on the floor. She was mobile in this version, taking her doom and gloom around the room with her. Add C. David Johnson (familiar from *Street Legal* and *The Mysterious Island*) as Mr. Jaggers and you'll understand why those of us who went had such a good time. A nice dinner afterwards at the new *El Catrin* Mexican restaurant in The Distillery District completed our outing.

I look forward to more indulgence in this favourite story when I go to the film in October. Let me know if you'd like to join me. The more the merrier! You can reach me at [liseo27@hotmail.com](mailto:liseo27@hotmail.com) or 416-780-9231.

Lise Olds



## A Tour of Holland-Bloorview

Twelve Dickensians gathered on a warm June morning to tour Holland Bloorview Kids Rehabilitation facilities, and to get some understanding of how donations from the Dickens Fellowship are used.

It was a wonderful tour, arranged by Lise Olds, a member of the Fellowship and a regular reader at the Boz Reading Group, who is currently an employee at Holland Bloorview. ("We love Lise," Holland Bloorview Foundation President and CEO Tracey Bailey revealed to us. No surprise to us: we love Lise too! Lise chaired our Dickens Bicentennial committee in 2012, and put together a terrific series of events.)

Led by Shannon Boeckner of the Community Fundraising Department, we first visited the green and artistic garden; in summer the garden is full of excited children enjoying summer camp. Next, we went inside to the music room, where Andrea Lamont demonstrated the Virtual Music Instrument (VMI) and explained the specially designed computer program that allows children to express themselves in music.

Past the spectacular pool and up to the research floor of Holland Bloorview, where Foundation President Tracey Bailey welcomed our group with quotes from Shakespeare and Dickens, and thanked us for our longtime support. She explained that more and more funding agencies are adopting a matched funding philosophy for research grants. Considering the invaluable research being done here, this fundraising is extremely important.

Three researchers were kind enough to give us demonstrations of their work: Dr. Jan Andrysek, who is working on a low cost durable artificial knee; Dr. Nick Reed, who is doing research on concussion and brain injuries; and Leslie Mumford, who is looking at engineering innovations to help children with disabilities. Holland Bloorview's annual report for donors is titled "Thanks for helping to change the world." These researchers are making that change a reality.

We posed for a photo and a last peek at "our" name on the donor wall: "The Dickens Fellowship, Toronto Branch, \$10,000" – and counting! The Fellowship commitment to this cause goes back to 1902, when the founders decided to donate funds raised to help children at an early version of Holland Bloorview.

Thanks to our members, to all who attend our Dickens events and purchase raffle tickets, we can continue to add to our total every year. Charles Dickens would have been proud.

The Dickensians on the Holland Bloorview Tour were: Henrietta Johnson, Jim Larkin, Marta Esmailji, Brad Savage, Shirley Griffin, Lynne Hansman, Joyce Crook, Jennifer Smith, Barbara Rusch, Jean and Doug Paton, and Lise Olds in her dual role as member and Holland-Bloorview host.

Thanks very much to Holland Bloorview staff and researchers who participated in our wonderful tour: Shannon Boeckner, Alison Gittins, Tracey Bailey, Jennifer Millard (Holland Bloorview Kids Rehabilitation Hospital Foundation); Dr. Jan Andrysek; Dr. Nick Reed, Leslie Mumford and Andrea Lamont.

AND .. not forgetting Lise's boss, who allowed her to join the tour! (Jean Paton)

## Looking Back...Our Fellowship Entertains at the Empire Club, December 1945

MR. THOMPSON: Ladies and Gentlemen, on behalf of the Empire Club of Canada, I would like to welcome, to this our Christmas meeting, the wives and friends of our club members who have come here today. I need hardly say that it is very gratifying indeed, to the Club Executive, to see such a large attendance. We sincerely hope you will enjoy yourselves as much as we enjoy the privilege of having you with us.

During the past few years, it has become our custom to celebrate the Christmas Season by inviting the ladies to our meeting and at the same time to provide something different in the way of a programme from our regular meetings. This year we are to be entertained by two distinct groups: The Dickens Fellowship of Toronto and The Malvern Collegiate Mixed Choir.

Rev. J. B. M. Armour, M.A., D.D., President of The Dickens Fellowship will introduce to you their players and Mr. Roy, Wood, Director of the Malvern Choir will announce their musical numbers.

I will now turn the microphone over to Dr. Armour.

DR. ARMOUR: Mr. President, Ladies and Gentlemen and all unseen hearers, The Dickens Fellowship of Toronto appreciates very highly the privilege of presenting to the Empire Club two of its Charter Members, Mr. and Mrs. A. J. Rostance, as its representatives on this Festive occasion. Mr. and Mrs. Rostance are English-born, in Cheshire and Yorkshire respectively, a delightful combination of cheese and pudding! For forty-five years they have been worthy citizens of Toronto and have contributed to its amateur dramatics as Hart House players and in many Dickens plays and sketches.

The Dickens Fellowship has been in existence in Toronto for some forty-one years and still meets during the Winter Season in the Heliconian Club, Hazelton Avenue on the third Thursday of each month.

I am now asking Mr. Rostance to give, in his unique way, a recitation entitled "A Personal Experience". He first heard it given by the late Mr. Bell Smith, one of the former Presidents of the Dickens Fellowship, and I think without insulting the memory of the departed, I can say he has even bettered his example!

In a few minutes I shall have the honour of introducing Mr. Rostance in company with his better half, when he will take the part of Sairey Gamp, and Mrs. Rostance will take the part of Betsy Prig, "her frequent pardner".

The recitation "A Personal Experience" was then given by Mr. Rostance much to the enjoyment of the audience.

The Malvern Choir, under the direction of Mr. Roy Wood and through the kind permission of Dr. Roy Fenwick, took over and delightfully entertained the meeting with Christmas Carols and English Folk Songs.

The Chairman again called upon Dr. Armour who introduced the next number on the programme.

DR. ARMOUR: Whilst Mr. and Mrs. Rostance are preparing for the famous scene from Martin Chuzzlewit, taken from Chapter 49, "in which Mrs. Harris, assisted by a teapot, is the cause of division between friends," I have the opportunity of saying a few words of introduction as a kind of prose prologue.

Mr. Rostance in the role of Mrs. Gamp is the result of a conversation he had some years ago with his wife. He saw a representation of Mrs. Gamp and remarked to his wife as they left the gathering, "I did not think that portrayal did justice to Mrs. Gamp." "Well," said his wife, ever practical, "if you did not like it, why don't you attempt to do it yourself!"

Mrs. Harris is a life-long and imaginary companion of Mrs. Gamp, her confidante on every occasion, and her court of appeal in every argument. The scene is laid in Mrs. Gamp's famous room which is so intimately described by Charles Dickens. Mrs. Gamp is preparing to entertain her frequent "pardner", Betsy Prig. She has provided "two pounds of Newcastle salmon, intensely pickled, a delicate new loaf, a plate of fresh butter and a basin of white sugar". Mrs. Betsy Prig is late, and after the usual affectionate greetings she makes the sage remark: "I knowed she'd forget the cucumber." Thereupon she produces out of a capacious pocket a tuppenny salad, and the ladies sit down to tea. The conversation is hardly as cordial as usual and there is hostility in the air. Finally a teapot is produced from a shelf together with two wine glasses. The ladies drink while Mrs. Gamp discourses, but Mrs. Prig attempts to take two drinks for Mrs. Gamp's one. "No, Betsy. Drink fair wotever you do." This leads up to Betsy Prig's saying, "Bother Mrs. Harris," and uttering those memorable and tremendous words: "I don't believe there is no sich a person."

Now, Mr. President, Ladies and Gentlemen, this sketch will indeed amuse you all. There will be pauses when actions take place, which unfortunately the unseen audience cannot see. But beyond all the humour there was the tragedy and neglect of rich and poor in the early days of Queen Victoria when "Mrs. Gamp and Betsy Prig, her frequent "pardner", truly represented the nursing profession in those days. Dickens, as Chesterton said, has made Mrs. Gamp a sumptuous character and his gift of humour lightens up a really dark story of cruel neglect and unfeeling conduct. If today we have our splendidly equipped hospitals, our trained nurses, our clean wards, their possession is due in some measure at any rate to the pen of Charles Dickens. In his own inimitable way he drew the picture of nursing conditions as he did of Yorkshire schools, and thus made a contribution to the improved conditions in education and nursing which we enjoy today.

When you enter hospitals, either as a visitor or a patient, never forget the debt owed to Charles Dickens for the services, often sacrificially rendered, by nurses. In spite of the limitations and frailties of his character, Charles Dickens was deeply influenced by the great example of Him Who healed the sick and looked with compassion on the poor. "The healing of His seamless dress is by our beds of pain. We touch Him in life's throng and press, and we are whole again." So, as we realize that supreme fact at this season of the year, let us each and all make Scrooge's famous resolve: "I will honour Christmas in my heart and try to keep it all the year."

Mr. and Mrs. Rostance then put on their extremely amusing skit entitled "Sairey Gamp and Betsy Prig Take Tea Together" which was greatly enjoyed by everyone.

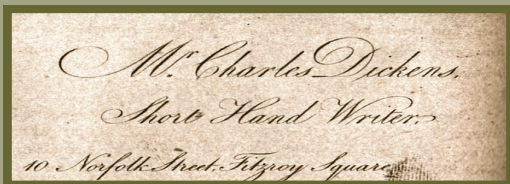
The Malvern Choir once more favoured the audience with Carols and Folk songs, and a very pleasant meeting was brought to close.

## CONGRATULATIONS, DAN!

Until recently, it was widely understood that the only one of Dickens' places of residence to have survived in London was in Doughy St, Bloomsbury, but Ruth Richardson uncovered the existence of his childhood home in Fitzrovia while she was researching the history of the Cleveland St Workhouse, as part of a campaign to save it from demolition. This discovery led her to compare the distinctive regime and circumstances at the Cleveland St Workhouse with that described in 'Oliver Twist' and she realised that Dickens had used this workhouse just a few doors from his childhood home as the template for the one in his novel. Richardson tells the compelling story of her detective work in [Dickens & the Workhouse](#) and the success of her research led to a Grade II listing for the building, thereby ensuring its survival.

"Living in lodgings here [10 Norfolk Street, London] above a grocer's shop, young Dickens learned to read and write, and suffered the domestic insecurity brought about by his father's gambling. Returning after his father's imprisonment, Dickens learnt shorthand here and sought to establish his independence, applying for a reader's ticket at the British Museum from this address. For the five years that he lived in this street, Dickens could not ignore the presence of the workhouse upon his doorstep – as the fate that he struggled to avoid – and the impression it made upon him inspired one of his greatest novels."

A key discovery for Richardson was the calling card that Dickens produced to gain employment as a shorthand writer while resident here. When she contacted the owner of the only-known copy of the card, Dan Calinescu of the Toronto branch of the Dickens Fellowship, he asked her why there was no plaque upon the building and, when she told him that there was no money for a plaque, he offered to pay for it. Thus I found myself shaking hands with Mr Calinescu yesterday, amidst a diverse crowd of fans – many in historic garb – that gathered to celebrate Dickens and consider the influence of this immediate environment upon the nascent writer.



Lucinda Dickens Hawksley, great-great granddaughter of Charles Dickens, unveils the blue plaque donated by Dan Calinescu. (8 June 2013)

### 22 CLEVELAND / 10 NORFOLK STREET

"The old house stands on the southern corner of Cleveland Street and Tottenham Street, and was Charles's Dickens's first home in London. It is now known as number 22 Cleveland Street, but in those days the southernmost part of Cleveland Street was known as Norfolk Street. You can still see the bulge in the pavement opposite what is now Riding House Street, which marks the top end of Norfolk Street. In those days when there were shops along both sides of the street, Number 10 – the corner house in which the Dickens family lived – was above a grocer's shop.

Those familiar with our campaign to save the Cleveland Street Workhouse will remember that the Dickens family first arrived in Cleveland Street in 1815 when Dickens was a child, and stayed two years, renting their rooms from the grocer, Mr Dodd, whose corner shop survives. Dickens himself was nearly three when the family first arrived and nearly five when they left, so it is likely that he learned to read there. The terrible period when Dickens's father was arrested for debt and the family was forced to live inside the Marshalsea Debtors' Prison in Southwark, occurred between their two stays in Norfolk Street. The family returned to the [Continued on page 6]

### MEMBERSHIP FORM: (Make cheques payable to Dickens Fellowship.)

**NAME(S):** \_\_\_\_\_

**ADDRESS:** \_\_\_\_\_

**PHONE:** \_\_\_\_\_ **E-MAIL** \_\_\_\_\_ **Send Mudfog by Email**

Membership(s) \_\_\_\_\_ @ \$15 per person \$ \_\_\_\_\_

Christmas Tea \_\_\_\_\_ @ \$15 per person \$ \_\_\_\_\_

Birthday Lunch \_\_\_\_\_ @ \$45 member; \$50\* non member \$ \_\_\_\_\_

Please photocopy or create a similar form and submit to:

Dickens Fellowship-  
C/O Doug Paton 801  
-77 Maitland Place,  
Toronto, M4Y 2V6

# Book Review

## A Charles Dickens Devotional

Compiled and written by Jean Fischer

Nashville, Tennessee. Thomas Nelson Inc., 2012

In all my long years of fanhood, no Dickens spinoff has ever been more dear to my heart than my copy of *A Christmas Carol*, illustrated by photos of clay figures—as lively as life itself—of all the important characters and places of the story. Until now. Now I have a new beloved Dickens spinoff. It's labelled a devotional, which usually means a small book consulted on a daily basis for religious inspiration and edification. Well, if you want those things from this book, which comes straight off the presses of Nashville, the Bible-publishing capital of the USA (and probably of history), you have it here. But you also have one of the best Dickens books I've ever owned.

*That punctual servant of all work, the sun, had just risen and begun to strike a light on the morning of the thirteenth of May, one thousand eight hundred and twenty-seven, when Mr. Samuel Pickwick burst like another sun from his slumbers...*

Thus begins the devotional with a page-long quote from this passage. On the opposite page is a series of Biblical quotes, *Psalms, Lamentations, Ecclesiastes*... The quotes are worked into a single statement that perfectly reflects the same sentiment as expressed in the Dickens' quote, the overall effect being a joyous address to the morn. "Truly the light is sweet, and it is pleasant for the eyes to behold the sun (*Ecclesiastes 11:7*)

The devotional provides over one hundred matched Dickens/Biblical quotes. Topics range from the serene and positive (On Peace, Hospitality, Rest, Joy, Patience in Hope, Real Love, Laughter...) to the difficult and challenging (About Grumbling, Anxiety, Facing Adversity, Managing Anger, Regret...)

You can read this little book from cover to cover. Or you can, as I did, read one two-page spread a day, feeling as you do so that you have both the wisdom of the Bible and the wisdom of the Inimitable at your fingertips! There are enough quotes to last three months, and each is very rich, so you can start over once you finish the first time—or the nth time.

There have been some days that I couldn't have faced without these two guides at my side. Read it for yourself and see... Rosemary Aubert



## CHRISTMAS TEA 2013

SATURDAY, NOVEMBER 30

WATCH FOR THE FLYER LATER THIS FALL.



## President's Message

Congratulations to our new Council members who were elected in May at the A.G.M. I look forward to working with you. I hope that your summer was a great one and that you are looking forward to the upcoming Fellowship activities. Congratulations to two of our most valued Council members in the Branch, Jean and Doug Paton, who celebrated their 50th Anniversary in September. There are several new books on Dickens now available. The new (2012) film, *Great Expectations*, should be a real treat for us. Best regards...Terry

"22 Cleveland" continued from page 5...

"...same house several years later, when Dickens was a late teenager, and remained this time for nearly three years.

The family's second stay began when Dickens was nearly seventeen, and lasted until he was almost twenty. During that time, he was out at work as a young legal clerk, and training himself to become a shorthand court reporter. He applied to become a Reader in the British Museum Reading Room from that address, and his first calling card – on which Dickens described himself as a Short Hand Writer - features the address: 10 Norfolk Street, Fitzroy Square.

There is good reason to believe that the street influenced Dickens's fiction, since local names and themes crop up in his sketches and novels, and it is even possible that the plot of *Oliver Twist* may derive from his knowledge of the locality and of the Cleveland Street Workhouse.

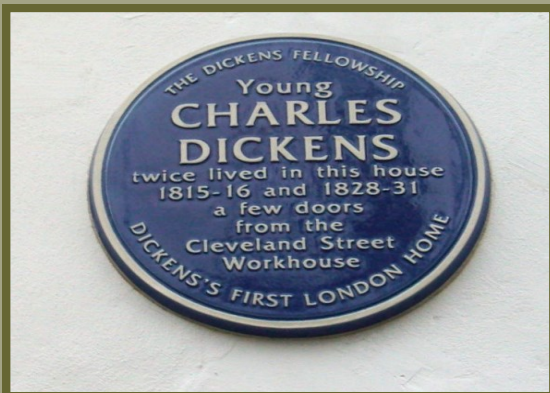
The cost of the plaque has been sponsored by Dan Calinescu, a Dickens enthusiast from Toronto. English Heritage declined funding a new blue plaque for Dickens on his old home partly from lack of funding (English Heritage has discontinued the blue plaque scheme), and partly because Dickens already has numerous plaques dotted about London. Mr Calinescu stepped into the breach."



Cleveland Street Workhouse



Dan Calinescu at 10 Norfolk Street on 8 June 2013. Lucinda Dickens Hawksley and Ruth Richardson are next to him.

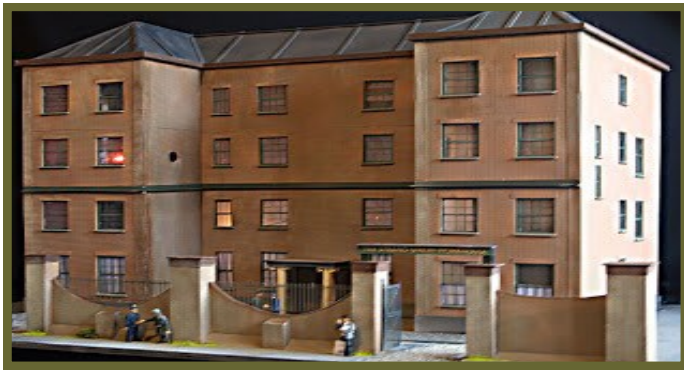


## WHO KNEW?

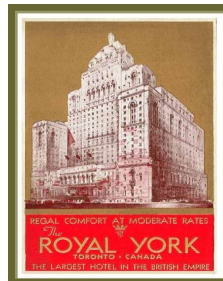
1. What was Dickens's favourite colour?
2. His favourite food?

1. yellow 2. cheese





A Model of the Cleveland Street Workhouse



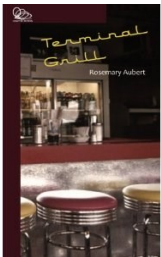
## DICKENS BIRTHDAY LUNCHEON

SATURDAY, FEBRUARY 15, 2014  
MORE INFORMATION TO FOLLOW

Happy 50th Anniversary, Jean and Doug!



## CONGRATULATIONS, ROSEMARY!



Member and author Rosemary Aubert has a new book that qualifies for the 2013 Giller Prize in the category of "Fiction by a Canadian Author".

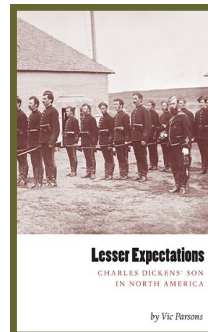
Her new book is entitled,  
***Terminal Grill.***

Well done, Rosemary. Congratulations!

## BOOKS ON DICKENS



Robert Elisberg has written a comic novella entitled, ***Christmas Carol 2: The Return of Scrooge.*** It is a tongue-in-cheek sequel to Dickens's work and can be found at Amazon on the internet.



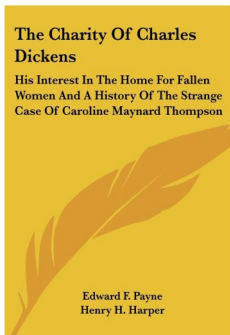
Canadian author Vic Parsons's ***Lesser Expectations*** is a newly published book of historical fiction based on the life of Francis Dickens, son of Charles. Francis served with the North West Mounted Police in the 1870s and 1880s, following similar service with the Bengal Mounted Police in India. Parsons has taken much of the historical record of Frank's life and explored the relationship between father and son.



George & Ruth Crawford  
Purdy & Beatrice Crawford  
Estate of William Caleb Douglas Crook  
Cyrene Preceptory K.T. No. 29  
De Boer Foundation  
Deloitte & Touche Foundation Canada  
Estate of Joseph Dennis  
Danny Dichio & Toronto FC  
The Dickens Fellowship, Toronto Branch  
Donner Canadian Foundation  
Dow Chemical Canada Inc.  
Mark & Joanne Downing  
Ted & Sheila Duncan  
The Duncan Family  
DundeeWealth Inc.  
EarlsCourt Rotary Golf Tournament  
Estate of Mabel M. Elliott

Members of the Toronto Branch during the tour of Bloorview, June 2013

## AN INTERESTING READ FROM 1929



### *The Charity of Charles Dickens*

*His Interest In The House For Fallen Women And A History Of The Strange Case Of Caroline Maynard Thompson*

“Ultimately, the book is perhaps best seen as a potent testament to the need to believe uncritically in our heroes, or rather in that which they represent. As Professor Slater suggests, Dickens is an ‘ideal of perfect, blissful, quintessentially English, domesticity’ (p. 191), but he is also ‘the benign face of [...] Victorian values’ (p. 3). It is the latter image which seems most cherished to the authors of this work, who find themselves in a society to which they react with horror. For example, they suggest that the life of a prostitute in 1929 ‘is less profitable than of old, largely due to the ruinous competition of so-called polite society,’ and resurrect the image of the Victorian ‘fallen woman’ to deplore that modern debutantes ‘freely offer what she, poor soul, must sell’ (pp. 12-13). Professor Slater wisely cautions his reader that the facts of Dickens’ alleged infidelity ‘are questions unlikely now ever to be resolved’ (p. 191); *The Charity of Charles Dickens* is a reminder that moral certainty, at least, is more easily achieved, especially in the lavishly produced pages of a privately printed volume.”

## THE REAL LITTLE DORRIT?

Had Charles Dickens told the true story of Little Dorrit - a pretty, gentle mother in her early 30s, who had been abandoned by her common-law husband and had turned to prostitution to provide for her two-year-old daughter - he would have scandalised his middle-class readers. But Dickens was so moved by Caroline Thompson's plight, not only did he base the lead character of his sombre, complex novel *Little Dorrit* on her, he also did everything in his power to help the young woman return to a life of respectability. Dickens was at the height of his career when he received a pleading letter from Caroline's younger brother, Frederick Maynard, a struggling architect's draughtsman. Renowned for his philanthropy and sharp sense of social justice, Dickens was deeply moved by the letter and arranged to meet up with Maynard. Dickens discovered that Caroline had been living as the common-law wife of a businessman, who had deserted her and, with no income, she had been reduced to prostitution to support her little girl.

There can never have been much evil in her, apart from the early circumstances, that directed her steps the wrong way.

“‘I cannot get the picture of her out of my head,’ he wrote, after their first encounter. Caroline had so captured his imagination that Dickens went out of his way to help her. In an attempt to provide her with a home for her child, he tried to set her up in business as a landlady for a lodging house, and even invited her into his family home. Although the facts of her life were too shocking to recount in his novel, which was published in 19 monthly instalments between 1855 and 1857, Caroline's touching nature, her unassailable innocence, her meek patience, stalwart support of her family in adversity, and even her childlike appearance, are all recognisable as the inspiration for Little Amy Dorrit. Indeed, the fictional character seems almost saintly, untouched by the wretched surroundings of Marshalsea debtors' prison where she was born. Unbeknown to his respectable readership, Dickens was privy to a phenomenal database of other real-life stories during the late 1840s and 1850s. In 1846, he had come up with the idea of founding a home that would turn around the lives of ‘fallen women’, and with the backing of Angela Burdett-Coutts, heiress to the Coutts bank fortune, he had set up a refuge called *Urania Cottage*, a comfortably-sized house in *Urania Cottage* and, inset, *Angela Burdett-Coutts London's Shepherd's Bush*, which was big enough to house a dozen girls and two matrons.”

[The story of *Urania House* needs to be told in a larger format. There are a number of books that deal with this topic.]

## THE PICKWICK BICYCLE CLUB

In 1870 the world's first bicycle club was established in England. When its founders were charged with selecting a club name, it chose “Pickwick” in honour of the late Charles Dickens. Unlike other groups that read and studied Dickens's works, the bicycle club members were concerned with riding their bicycles on tours around the countryside and organizing races. As a group they did not study or read Dickens but did use names from the novel for its officers and club name. The club is still operating today as the oldest bicycle club and oldest Dickens association.



PBC Members on a “Run” in 1879