

A Twist of Dickens



Newsletter of the Cleveland Branch, International Dickens Fellowship

www.clevelanddickensfellowship.org

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Meeting Schedule

2019-2020 Book of the Year:

The Old Curiosity Shop

Meetings, free and open to all admirers of Charles Dickens, usually begin at 7:00 pm on available weekdays at various Regional County Libraries. To use the County Library meeting rooms, our scheduler must be flexible. When in doubt, check the website calendar.

Thurs. Sep. 12. Beachwood County Library, Shaker and Richmond, Rm. A
Kathy Broz, Barbara Davis review the Eastbourne conference; Beth Bliss treats us to her conference talk on knitting in *Tale of Two Cities*.

Thurs. Oct. 10. Beachwood County Library, Rm. A
Kathleen Schuerger tries to unravel how *Master Humphrey's Clock*, the periodical, morphed into *Old Curiosity Shop*, the novel, and locked out Gabriel Varden.

Thurs. Nov. 14. Beachwood County Library, Rm. B
Paul Siedel takes us on a tramp through the English countryside with Grandfather Trent and Little Nell.

Thurs. Dec. 12. Beachwood County Library, Rm. A
We attempt a short playlet from OCS while enjoying holiday treats.

Bring a guest.

Your friends are always welcome.

September 2019

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Beth's knitting presentation

Cleveland's Beth Bliss (co-editor of this newsletter, branch treasurer, sole organizer of our annual Memorial Dinner) presented a brief survey of knitting at the Eastbourne conference this July, culminating in Mme Defarge (*Tale of Two Cities*), iconographic knitter.

She traced knitting from the 11th century through the Channel Islanders who invented family sweater patterns so they could identify their dead fishermen to the knitters' guild in 16th century France (men only) to the tricoteuses (women knitters), crude, unladylike political protesters at the beginning of the French Revolution.

Dickens's Mme. Defarge, knitter of codes damning her enemies to execution, sat with her colleagues beneath the guillotine, jeering and taunting the victims, cheering as heads rolled. Beth created blood-red versions of a Liberty Cap worn by French "citizens" and a knitted code devised by Wayne Batten of the Dickens Project. Beth's code reads "Dickens Conference, Eastbourne."



*Come to
September's
meeting to hear
Beth's
presentation and
see the knitted
code yourself.*

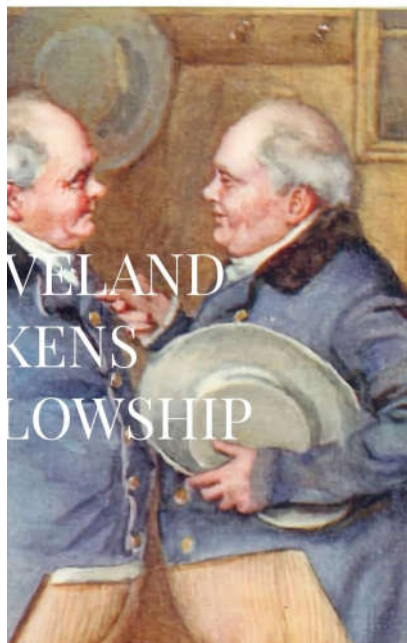


June 2019 Memorial Dinner

Mrs. James Garfield spoke of her courtship and marriage with Ohioan James Garfield, our 20th president, who was assassinated after only 6 1/2 months in office. Anita Benedetti (left), her impersonator, evoked the era (mid-19th century), the family and the man. Mindful of the anniversary of the D Day invasion of Normandy in 1944, **Cheryl Kleps** sparked pre-dinner conversation with a newspaper extra from the day. By the way, she found the comics in the same paper and reports that Mary Worth is working on the same plot line as 75 years ago. (Left to right: Cheryl, Paul Siedel, Mike Wells, Catherine Wells)



Home Who We Are



A Twist of Dickens is published three times yearly by the Cleveland Dickens Fellowship. Coeditors: Beth Bliss, Kathleen Schuerger.

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Recalled to life: clevelanddickensfellowship.org Webmaster Ed Moritz tells his story.

In my youth—well, late youth—the university gave every faculty member a web page. I dutifully took the recommended classes and set up my page. It was actually a lot of fun and I liked the result. My homepage, the only page, had everything for every class on it. Right around Y2K, the year the world ended, I learned my page was all wrong. According to the IT lady, the homepage should be basically a place for hiding everything under buttons. I hid.

Therefore, when Kathleen asked me to take over the website, I felt I could do it.

Our original but now frozen website program had morphed into a \$200 per year rental. So, I found WIX, widely praised and reasonably priced. Starting with a blank page, I tried a few things that worked and then I attempted to figure out the rest. Some aspects proved less than intuitive. I had done considerable work when suddenly everything disappeared, never to be seen again, even on the backup. My earlier acquired skills at hiding had resurfaced unexpectedly. I decided to try one of their templates. This turned out to be both a blessing and a curse. Blessing because the framework allowed me to just swap out existing items for Dickens stuff. Curse because it was often hard to get rid of already formatted material. Then further drama. The program stopped working. I contacted WIX and they were fast and friendly. The gentleman told me he had made the changes I had been unable to and he could not find any problem. I looked and nothing was changed. He said he would check everything out. For several days, I unsuccessfully tried to make changes. After a long weekend's hiatus, I logged on to find all my failed changes made as if by magic and everything I have tried thereafter continues to work as well. The page is up! The page is waving!

Kathy Broz reviews Eastbourne Conference.

Beth Bliss, Barbara Davis and I attended the annual conference of the Dickens Fellowship, July 26-July 28, 2019, in Eastbourne, England, a coastal town on the English Channel. The theme of the conference was *Charles Dickens: The Legacy of the Man and His Works*. The theme applied as well to the Eastbourne branch, celebrating its centenary. The two full days of the conference were scheduled with interesting and entertaining lectures from a wide cast of Dickensians. Outgoing president, Professor John Bowen; the illustrious Michael Slater; and editor of *The Dickensian*, Malcolm Andrews were some of the contributors.

Our own Beth Bliss expanded the talk she gave to our group in March of 2012, *Knitting in A Tale of Two Cities*, and was very well received.

The agenda for the Annual General Meeting provided details for the 2020 conference to be held in London: “*Lord, Keep My Memory Green*”, 1870 and After. The 2021 conference in the Netherlands will have as its theme *Wind, Water, and Ships*. The banquet on Saturday night included toasts to the immortal memory of Charles Dickens, the Dickens Fellowship, the Eastbourne branch, and to the new president of the fellowship, Ian Dickens (a great-great grandson).

One outing was scheduled to attend Evensong at the lovely Westham village church, reputedly the first church built by the Normans in 1080. The order of service and hymns would have been familiar to Dickens and included readings by conference attendees.



After the conference, Kathy Broz and Beth Bliss visited the café at the Dickens Museum in London.

This mini conference managed to pack a varied and enjoyable program into just three days while still allowing time for strolling along the beach promenade, pier, and gardens which are highlights of Eastbourne.



Lost portrait comes home to Doughty Street.

“This is the most extraordinary discovery around Charles Dickens in this century...”, according to Cindy Sughrue present Director of the Dickens Museum.

Now cleaned up and sold to the museum, the small portrait will be displayed from Oct. 19, 2019 through the Christmas season. Then the 176-year-old watercolor will be stored out of the light for a while.

The seasonal display is deliberate. During the six sittings CD gave the artist Margaret Gillies in late 1843, he was writing *A Christmas Carol*. Both artist and sitter were big on social reform. Coincidence?

Compare Gillies’s version to the Samuel Laurence portrait of 1838 (left, bottom) in which his eyes look to the side. Gillies painted him eye to eye. The version top left is cropped to emphasize the face, particularly the eyes. The framed painting perched next to a book (near left) gives you an idea of its size. Small, but powerful.

Dickensians all over the world sent contributions enabling the museum to afford the portrait. As did our fellowship branch in Cleveland. Learn more on the website:

dickensmuseum.com/blogs/news

—K.S.

If: The Untold Story of Kipling's American Years (2019)

Fifty years apart, two English Victorian writers visited America—Kipling in 1892 and Dickens in 1842. Both were prepared to like it. Rudyard Kipling married Carrie Balestier, an American, and built a house, Naulakha, near Brattleboro, Vermont, where he lived for four years. There he wrote *The Jungle Book*, *The Second Jungle Book*, *Captains Courageous*, and he made a start on *Kim*.

Recently published and available from Clevenet, Christopher Benfey's book tells an interesting story few know about Kipling. Benfey skillfully weaves events, the literature and the man's character into a good read. Kipling came here admiring America, especially Mark Twain, a writer he revered. Our great cultural diversity reminded him of his beloved India. But, after a few years, mortally offended by his American brother-in-law, he left in a huff.

Years before, Dickens had reversed the insult. After he returned to England, he left many Americans huffy when we read what he thought of us in *American Notes* and *Martin Chuzzlewit*.
—K. S.



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