

Westminster Abbey



A WREATHLAYING CEREMONY
TO COMMEMORATE THE BICENTENARY
OF THE BIRTH OF
CHARLES DICKENS

DICKENS 2012



Tuesday 7th February 2012
11.15 am



CHARLES DICKENS
1812–70

Born in Portsmouth on 7th February 1812 and living in or near London for the majority of his life, Charles Dickens was the most popular author of the Victorian era and is widely regarded as one of the finest novelists of all time. He was driven to achieve success from the days of his boyhood. With little formal education, he taught himself, worked furiously at everything he undertook and rocketed to fame as a writer in his mid-twenties. He continued to work assiduously to the end of his life. Besides making a prodigious contribution to English Literature as a writer of fiction, he edited a weekly journal for twenty years and became an accomplished performer of his own works.

Dickens first became famous in 1836 with the serial publication of *The Pickwick Papers*, quickly succeeded by *Oliver Twist* and *Nicholas Nickleby*. By the age of twenty-five he was the leading international star on the literary scene, famous for his sharp satire, rich humour, and peerless observation of the world. His book *A Christmas Carol* (1843) has become one of the most influential works of literature ever written: William Makepeace Thackeray called it a ‘national benefit’, and his admiration for Dickens’s ability to inspire, move, and influence his readers was shared by millions of devotees and by audiences around the world.

Known to his contemporaries as ‘The Inimitable’, his work as a philanthropist, campaigner, and journalist established his central role in Victorian society. Dickens championed causes such as public education, improvements in public health and safety, social housing, children’s rights, and literacy. Having undergone the ordeals of child-labour, poverty and poor schooling, he was tuned into the fears and challenges of the lower and middle classes in the Victorian era. He wrote fifteen novels as well as hundreds of pieces of short fiction and non-fiction, building a strong and powerful connection with his reading public—one that continues to this day.

DICKENS 2012

Dickens 2012, co-ordinated by the Charles Dickens Museum and Film London in association with the Dickens Fellowship, is an international celebration of the cultural and educational significance of the life and work of Charles Dickens to mark the bicentenary of his birth. Dickens-related activity will take place all over the world under the Dickens 2012 banner to celebrate one of the world's most inspiring authors and provide a legacy for future generations. www.dickens2012.org

CHARLES
DICKENS
MUSEUM
London

FILM
LONDON
LONDON

THE CHARLES DICKENS MUSEUM

The Charles Dickens Museum in London holds the world's most important collection of material relating to the great Victorian novelist and social commentator. The only surviving London home of Dickens (from 1837 until 1839) was opened as a Museum in 1925 and is still welcoming visitors from all over the world in an authentic and inspiring surrounding. In 2012 the Museum will deliver its £3.1m Great Expectations redevelopment project, supported by the Heritage Lottery Fund, to restore and refurbish the house where Dickens wrote *Oliver Twist* and *Nicholas Nickleby*. Great Expectations will establish the Charles Dickens Museum as Britain's most accessible and inspirational literary house museum. The project will increase space for the interpretation and housing of the collections, introducing state-of-the-art facilities to preserve these for the enjoyment of future generations. In the adjacent property a new visitor centre with study facilities and teaching rooms for the National Dickens Library and Archive will be created. The project also promotes Dickens's cultural and social legacy through a comprehensive activity programme to mark the bicentenary of the author's birth in 2012.

FILM LONDON

Film London is a co-ordinating partner of Dickens 2012, the international campaign to mark the bicentenary of Charles Dickens's birth. Film London is the capital's film and media agency and aims to ensure London has a thriving film sector that enriches the city's people and its businesses. The agency works with all the screen industries to sustain, promote, and develop London as a major international production and film cultural capital, and it supports the development of the city's new and emerging film-making talent. www.filmlondon.org.uk

Members of the congregation are kindly requested to refrain from using private cameras, video, or sound recording equipment. Please ensure that mobile phones, pagers, and other electronic devices are switched off.

The Abbey is served by a hearing loop. Users should turn their hearing aid to the setting marked T.

The ceremony is conducted by The Very Reverend Dr John Hall, Dean of Westminster.

The organ is played by Robert Quinney, Sub-Organist.

Music before the ceremony:

Sonata in B flat Op 65 no 4 *Felix Mendelssohn (1809–47)*
i. Allegro con brio
ii. Andante religioso
iii. Allegretto
iv. Allegro maestoso e vivace

Lento *from* A London Symphony *Ralph Vaughan Williams (1872–1958)*
arranged by Henry Ley (1887–1962)

The Lord Mayor of Westminster is received at the Great West Door by the Dean and Chapter of Westminster and conducted to her place. All stand, and then sit.

An organ fanfare is sounded. All stand.

His Royal Highness The Prince of Wales and Her Royal Highness The Duchess of Cornwall are received at the Great West Door by the Dean and Chapter of Westminster and conducted to their places.

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The Very Reverend Dr John Hall, Dean of Westminster, gives

THE WELCOME

All sit. Claire Tomalin, Dickens biographer, introduces a passage

from A LETTER FROM CHARLES TO HIS SISTER
FANNY, MRS HENRY BURNETT,
1ST MARCH 1844

Mark Charles Dickens, Great Great Grandson, Head of the Dickens Family, and President of the International Dickens Fellowship, introduces an extract

from THE LIFE OF OUR LORD

MY dear children, I am very anxious that you should know something about the History of Jesus Christ. For everybody ought to know about Him. No one ever lived, who was so good, so kind, so gentle, and so sorry for all people who did wrong, or were in anyway ill or miserable, as He was. And as He is now in Heaven, where we hope to go, and all to meet each other after we are dead, and there be happy always together, you never can think what a good place Heaven is without knowing who He was and what He did.

That there might be some good men to go about with Him, teaching the people, Jesus Christ chose twelve poor men to be his companions. These twelve are called the Apostles or Disciples, and he chose them from among Poor Men, in order that the Poor might know – always after that; in all years to come – that Heaven was made for them as well as for the rich, and that God makes no difference between those who wear good clothes and those who go barefoot and in rags. The most miserable, the most ugly, deformed, wretched creatures that live, will be bright Angels in Heaven if they are good here on earth. Never forget this, when you are grown up. Never be proud or unkind, my dears, to any poor man, woman, or child. If they are bad, think that they would have been better, if they had had kind friends, and good homes, and had been better taught. So, always try to make them better by kind persuading words; and always try to teach them

and relieve them if you can. And when people speak ill of the Poor and Miserable, think how Jesus Christ went among them and taught them, and thought them worthy of his care. And always pity them yourselves, and think as well of them as you can.

Remember! – It is Christianity to do good always – even to those who do evil to us. It is Christianity to love our neighbour as ourself, and to do to all men as we would have them do to us. It is Christianity to be gentle, merciful, and forgiving, and to keep those qualities quiet in our own hearts, and never make a boast of them, or of our prayers or of our love of God, but always to shew that we love Him by humbly trying to do right in everything. If we do this, and remember the life and lessons of Our Lord Jesus Christ, and try to act up to them, we may confidently hope that God will forgive us our sins and mistakes, and enable us to live and die in Peace.

Charles Dickens (1812–70)

The Right Reverend Michael Dickens Whinney, Great Great Grandson, reads

ST LUKE 14: 7–14

JESUS put forth a parable to those which were bidden, when he marked how they chose out the chief rooms; saying unto them, When thou art bidden of any man to a wedding, sit not down in the highest room; lest a more honourable man than thou be bidden of him; and he that bade thee and him come and say to thee, Give this man place; and thou begin with shame to take the lowest room. But when thou art bidden, go and sit down in the lowest room; that when he that bade thee cometh, he may say unto thee, Friend, go up higher: then shalt thou have worship in the presence of them that sit at meat with thee. For whosoever exalteth himself shall be abased; and he that humbleth himself shall be exalted. Then said he also to him that bade him, When thou makest a dinner or a supper, call not thy friends, nor thy brethren, neither thy kinsmen, nor thy rich neighbours; lest they also bid thee again, and a recompence be made thee. But when thou makest a feast, call the poor, the maimed, the lame, the blind: and thou shalt be blessed; for they cannot recompense thee: for thou shalt be recompensed at the resurrection of the just.

THE ADDRESS

by

The Most Reverend and Right Honourable Dr Rowan Williams
Archbishop of Canterbury, Primate of All England and Metropolitan

Ralph Fiennes reads

from BLEAK HOUSE

JO'S WILL

‘WELL, Jo! What is the matter? Don’t be frightened.’

‘I thought,’ says Jo, who has started, and is looking round, ‘I thought I was in Tom-all-Alone’s agin. Ain’t there nobody here but you, Mr Woodcot?’

‘Nobody.’

‘And I ain’t took back to Tom-all-Alone’s. Am I, sir?’

‘No.’ Jo closes his eyes, muttering, ‘I’m wery thankful.’

After watching him closely a little while, Allan puts his mouth very near his ear, and says to him in a low, distinct voice: ‘Jo! Did you ever know a prayer?’

‘Never know’d nothink, sir.’

‘Not so much as one short prayer?’

‘No, sir. Nothink at all. Mr Chadbands he was a prayin wunst at Mr Sangsby’s and I heerd him, but he sounded as if he was a speakin’ to hisself, and not to me. He prayed a lot, but I couldn’t make out nothink on it. Different times, there was other genlmen come down Tom-all-Alone’s a prayin, but they all mostly sed as the t’other wuns prayed wrong, and all mostly sounded to be a talking to theirselves, or a passing blame on the t’others, and not a talkin to us. We never knowd nothink. I never knowd what it was all about.’

It takes him a long time to say this; and few but an experienced and attentive listener could hear, or, hearing, understand him. After a short relapse into sleep or stupor, he makes, of a sudden, a strong effort to get out of bed.

‘Stay, Jo! What now?’

‘It’s time for me to go to that there berryin ground, sir,’ he returns with a wild look.

‘Lie down, and tell me. What burying ground, Jo?’

‘Where they laid him as wos very good to me, wery good to me indeed, he wos. It’s time fur me to go down to that there berryin ground, sir, and ask to be put along with him. I wants to go there and be berried. He used fur to say to me, ‘I am as poor as you today, Jo,’ he ses. I wants to tell him that I am as poor as him now, and have come there to be laid along with him.’

‘Bye and bye, Jo. Bye and bye.’

‘Ah! P’raps they wouldn’t do it if I wos to go myself. But will you promise to have me took there, sir, and laid along with him?’

‘I will, indeed.’

‘Thankee, sir. Thankee, sir. They’ll have to get the key of the gate afore they can take me in, for it’s allus locked. And there’s a step there, as I used for to clean with my broom. –It’s turned wery dark, sir. Is there any light a comin?’

‘It is coming fast, Jo.’

Fast. The cart is shaken all to pieces, and the rugged road is very near its end.

‘Jo, my poor fellow!’

‘I hear you, sir, in the dark, but I’m a gropin – a gropin – let me catch hold of your hand.’

‘Jo, can you say what I say?’

‘I’ll say anything as you say, sir, for I knows it’s good.’

‘OUR FATHER.’

‘Our Father! – Yes, that’s wery good, sir.’

‘WHICH ART IN HEAVEN.’

‘Art in Heaven – is the light a comin, sir?’

‘It is close at hand. HALLOWED BE THY NAME!’

‘Hallowed be – thy—’

The light is come upon the dark benighted way. Dead! Dead, your Majesty. Dead, my lords and gentlemen. Dead, Right Reverends and Wrong Reverends of every order. Dead, men and women, born with Heavenly compassion in your hearts. And dying thus around us, every day.

from Chapter 47

All stand for

THE WREATHLAYING

The Dean says:

HIS genius saw through our trappings, whether of want or wealth, and in life, as in death, his happiness was found in teaching us independence of such externals. He left directions that he should be carried to the grave as an ordinary man – nothing more and nothing less; and his career has received this fitting completion. But his true place among us none the less demanded acknowledgment, and we have now recognized it in the only public manner possible. The Abbey may be considered as the family grave of the nation. The mass of men play their part among a small circle of relatives and friends; they have their little time of influence, and they rest most appropriately among those who knew them best and where they will be longest remembered. But there are some few who hold kindred with successive generations, whose friends are found in the great of every age, and whose influence lives as long as there are Englishmen, or even men, to be influenced; and such as these are most fitly laid in that which is to the nation ‘The Sepulchre of our “Fathers”’.

*from a report of the burial
of Charles Dickens in Westminster Abbey,
carried in The Times 15th June 1870*

Your Royal Highness, I invite you to lay your wreath.

His Royal Highness The Prince of Wales lays the wreath.

All remain standing. The Reverend Dr James Hawkey, Minor Canon and Sacrist, leads

THE PRAYERS

Let us praise God, the source of all creativity and beauty, for the flair and genius of Charles Dickens; for his gifts of observation and imagination; for his writing and characterisation; for his humour and ability both to captivate, and to move:

LORD and Giver of life, from whose treasure-house of wisdom proceedeth imagination, reflection, and delight: we praise thee for Charles Dickens whose birth we commemorate today. Open our eyes, we beseech thee, to behold thy gracious hand in all thy works; that rejoicing in thy whole creation, we may learn to serve thee with gladness of heart; for the sake of him by whom all things were made, thy Wisdom and thy Word, Jesus Christ our Lord. **Amen.**

As we praise God for Dickens's close scrutiny of his own age; for his commentary on social issues; for his ability, within the fragility of his own humanity, to come alongside the poor, the marginalised, and the unloved, let us pray for those who in our own day are forgotten or despised:

O GOD of love, whose compassion faileth not; we hold before thee the troubles and perils of the poor and lonely, the sighing of prisoners and captives, the sorrows of the bereaved, the necessities of strangers, the helplessness of the weak, the despondency of the weary, the failing powers of the aged. O Lord, draw near to each and inspire thy people to greater love and compassion; for the sake of Jesus Christ our Lord. **Amen.**

Let us pray for those today who seek to express the truths of creation through the arts; for novelists and playwrights, for actors and directors, for poets and prophets, for commentators and columnists, and all those who record our own age:

ALMIGHTY God, who hast proclaimed thine eternal truth in the writings of prophets and evangelists: direct and bless, we beseech thee, those who in our generation speak where many listen, and write what many read; that they may play their part in making the heart of the people wise, its mind sound, and its will righteous, to the honour of Jesus Christ our Lord. **Amen.**

All these our prayers and praises let us now present before our heavenly Father in the prayer our Saviour Christ has taught us:

OUR Father, who art in heaven, hallowed be thy name; thy kingdom come; thy will be done; on earth as it is in heaven. Give us this day our daily bread. And forgive us our trespasses, as we forgive those who trespass against us. And lead us not into temptation; but deliver us from evil. For thine is the kingdom, the power, and the glory, for ever and ever. Amen.

The Dean pronounces

THE BLESSING

GO forth into the world in peace; be of good courage; hold fast that which is good; render to no-one evil for evil; strengthen the faint-hearted; support the weak; help the afflicted; honour all people; love and serve the Lord, rejoicing in the power of the Holy Spirit; and the blessing of God almighty, the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit, be amongst you and remain with you always. Amen.

THE NATIONAL ANTHEM

GOD save our gracious Queen.
Long live our noble Queen.
God save The Queen.
Send her victorious,
happy and glorious,
long to reign over us:
God save The Queen.

Music after the wreathlaying:

Fantasia and Fugue in G Op 188

*Charles Hubert Hastings Parry
(1848–1918)*

All remain standing as the Procession moves to the west end of the Abbey.

Members of the congregation are requested to remain in their places until invited to move by the Stewards.

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