

A Tale of One City

The Dickens Community Archive Project

NEWS

Issue 7, February 2013

The best of times, the worst of times.....

The best of times because in this, our final edition, there are so many achievements for us to celebrate and the worst of times because this is the last issue of A Tale of One City News!

2012 will be remembered as a momentous year, a year that saw Britain catch bunting-fever at street parties for the Queen's Silver Jubilee; and the year we all got inspired by the London Olympic and Paralympic Games.

These were thrilling events for the nation, but Portsmouth managed one better.

We brought home Dickens 200th birthday to his birthplace, laying on a year of events, exhibitions, activities and most of all, fun inspired by the work of one of the nation's best-loved writers.

The Dickens Community Archive Project was but one part of the year's celebrations. The project's aim was to encourage

people to share their own history and to engage with Portsmouth's city archive collection to explore some of the issues that Dickens addressed in his novels. The project culminated in an exhibition at the City Museum and a new community history website that would display the work created.

This edition brings together the people, events and achievements that made 2012 so exciting for us. We hope you took as much delight in Dickens' birthday celebrations as we did, for as Dickens wrote in Nicholas Nickleby:

"Happiness is a gift and the trick is not to expect it, but to delight in it when it comes."



Buckland Play Centre get into their Dickensian roles

A Dickens of a project

Here's a brief look back at some of our achievements of Dickens 200 - we hope that you enjoyed them as much as we did!

A Tale of One City Exhibition featured work created by local groups in this landmark exhibition at the City Museum exploring themes such as education, money, children and families. Items from local collections came on display for the first time and captured Portsmouth life in Dickens' time.

Preserving the past for the future - The Heritage Lottery Fund awarded

£36,000 for conservation, funding a paper conservator to repair some of the city's most fragile archives, including Portsmouth's Victorian police logs.

Local heritage goes online - A Tale of One City website invites local people to share their memories and photos of Portsmouth on a brand new website described by the BBC History Magazine as "an online gem" - the website will continue, so keep sharing at www.ATaleofOneCity.portsmouth.gov.uk

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Nicholas Nickleby visits Portsmouth – lent to the city by the British Library for the A Tale of One City exhibition, the only Dickens novel to mention Portsmouth was complete with the great author's scribbling, blots and crossings out and yielded unique insights into how Dickens worked.

Bringing the Birthplace to Life – community groups, school children and volunteers joined the cast recreating life in the time of Dickens at the Birthplace Museum, which was redecorated to look as fresh as the day when Dickens' parents started married life there.

Fratton Dickens Day was a community celebration of all things Dickens, including Victorian teas and games, a Dickensian story-teller and performances of work inspired by the great writer himself and enjoyed by the local community and Lord Mayor Frank Jonas.

History gets healthy – staff from the Health Improvement and Development Service (HIDS) received archive training and supported five local older people's groups to participate in the project, including helping a local resident to find records of an air raid in Portsmouth they lived through!

A cast of lively characters

Dickens' novels are jam-packed with exciting events, but just like the Dickens Community Archive Project, the best stories are all about people. This year's celebrations brought local residents to the city archives to explore the issues at the heart of Dickens' work and tell new stories of their own.

Charles Dickens School children experienced Dickensian life when they met a Victorian laundry maid at the Birthplace Museum, dressed up as Victorians and played historic games. The children put together a new DVD, featuring interviews with local people about their memories of Portsmouth, and created an exclusive Guidebook for Kids for the Birthplace Museum.

Charles Dickens Adult & Family Learning Group brought parents and children together with artist Chris Bennett to learn about the city's history and create craft projects, including models of the Spinnaker Tower, the Big Wheel, Southsea Castle and a 3D family tree.

Ogroshor Bengali Women's Group worked with City Eye film maker Antony Batchelor to make a DVD exploring life in Portsmouth and showcasing Bangladeshi food, culture, festivals and clothes.

Southsea Friends Group Investigated the harsh history of justice in the days where deportation was common for the theft of a potato, and the group created a Snakes & Ladders game based on real life crimes from the city archives, A Dickens of a Game!

John Pounds Centre Friday Club explored the archives to get to grips with life in Portsmouth at the time of Dickens, and found some similarities with their own experiences! The group went on to make a fantastic video about it, including memories of Albert Road, local trams and the infamous Portsea mudlarkers.

Landport Community Centre volunteers spent over 600 hours to make an intricately detailed embroidery featuring a portrait of Dickens himself; while the Centre's play scheme children worked with City Eye to make a short film, Landport in Victorian Times.

African Women's Forum met with oral historian Pat Carter, to capture a history of their group since its creation in 1995, telling the story of the AWF through exhibition displays.

Alderman Lacey Library Reminiscence Group brought history to life with their Baffins Ponderings – a history of a Copnor community, featuring personal photographs, memories, and maps from the archive, and created a display and sound shower about crime and education, including folk songs.

Eastney Art Group created a range of exclusive work for the ATooC exhibition, including striking watercolours of Dickens characters, inspired by local archives, a visit to Portsmouth History Centre and Victorian paintings from the city collections.

Paulsgrove Monday Club worked with 131 Design to create Paulsgrove's Own, an exclusive magazine packed with memories, articles and photos from local residents and exploring life in Paulsgrove from the 1940s to the present day.

John Pounds Centre Wednesday Club created a special calendar looking at leisure pursuits through the ages, with regular glimpses of Portsmouth pubs– and there were plenty to choose from!

Fratton Live at Home made a set of pop-up display boards documenting the history of FLAH in photographs. They also created the knitted mice that hid around the City Museum, before being awarded to 10 lucky local winners in a special ceremony with Lord Mayor Frank Jonas.

Buckland Play Centre took part in a unique photography project for 7-15 year olds, dressing up in Dickensian costumes to bring to life real people from the city's archives.

Bunny Warren Preschool, Fratton worked with Splodge Designs to design and make a series of kites depicting education, toys, entertainment, chimney sweeps and the Dockyard.

Family Fun Days Out – Victorian dressing-up, crafts and games were just some of the popular Dickensian activities for families at the City Museum.

Happy 200th Birthday Mr D! - over 300 people came to sing at the Birthplace on February 7th, where celebrations included street performers, musicians, food, crafts, readings from Dickens' novels and free entry to the Birthplace Museum. Over 3,150 people visited over the rest of the month.

And the award goes to...

Our project has worked with over 300 people in the last two years. We are presenting each of our participants with their own personalised A Tale of One City certificate to say thank you for taking part. We hope these certificates will be proudly displayed on walls across Portsmouth and beyond.

Here are just a few of the many memorable moments from the project.



And we couldn't have done any of it without....

...our willing band of volunteers. Throughout the birthday year, our volunteers undertook any task we requested of them with enthusiasm, and always delivered outstanding results. Here's just a brief glimpse at some of the hard work they undertook...

Our website, www.ATaleofOneCity.portsmouth.gov.uk would have been an empty shell without our volunteers. When you upload new

posts about your memories of Portsmouth, it's our volunteers who act as moderators, making sure your posts can be seen by everyone, writing brand new content and uploading articles and images.

Volunteers helped with the creation and installation of the A Tale of One City exhibition at the City Museum, displaying the work of local community groups and schools, as well as featuring the original manuscript of Nicholas Nickleby.

The Dickens Birthplace would have been a quieter place this year, too, without our fantastic team of volunteer guides, who entertained visitors with tales of life in the time of Dickens as they toured the house.

So here's to our team of volunteers, to whom we owe a big thank you for all your help this year.



More to explore with Portsmouth Museums

Portsmouth City Museum,
Museum Road
Portsmouth PO1 2LJ
Telephone: 02392827261
Open 10am - 5.00pm (5.30pm
April to September), Tuesday to
Sunday and Bank Holiday Mondays.
Entrance is free
www.portsmouthmuseums.co.uk

**Charles Dickens Birthplace
Museum,**
393 Old Commercial Road PO1 4QL
Telephone 02392827261
Open 29 March to 30 September
2013, Tuesday to Sunday and Bank
Holiday Mondays
www.charlesdickensbirthplace.co.uk

Portsmouth History Centre,
Central Library, Guildhall Square
Portsmouth PO1 2DX
Telephone 02392 688046
Email portsmouthhistorycentre@portsmouthcc.gov.uk