

Great expectations for Sydney's first Charles Dickens international conference

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Sydney will play host to over a hundred Dickensians and bibliophiles after winning the coveted bid to hold the International Dickens Fellowship Conference – now in its 112th year, NSW State Librarian John Vallance announced today.

The announcement coincided with the literary giant's 206th birthday celebrations at Centennial Parklands today, held beneath the famous life – size statue of Charles Dickens - one of only three of its kind in the world.

According to Dr Vallance: "The State Library is thrilled to be part of the International Dickens Fellowship 112th Conference in October where the NSW Dickens Society has organised a rich and wide-ranging program of speakers and special events."

"The State Library holds the original manuscript of an essay Dickens wrote in 1852 encouraging people to settle in NSW, together with a number of other unique works by him. He was so interested in the colony as a place where people could make a fresh start that he sent his two sons to live here. In return, his popularity in NSW was, and remains huge."

Louise Owens, President of the NSW Dickens Society, was part of the driving force behind Sydney's successful bid: "Dickens' statue, which has a fascinating and mysterious backstory, is a major drawcard for international and interstate visitors."

The statue was erected in Centennial Park around 1891 at the request of then Premier of NSW Sir Henry Parkes, but in 1972 it was placed in storage and subsequently lost for over 40 years! After years of sleuthing and appeals to the public for help, the statue was eventually found headless in Rozelle in NSW, was carefully restored and placed back in the park in 2012.

"Ill health and personal circumstances prevented Dickens from visiting Australia but his colonial connections can be seen through his sons, Alfred and Edward (Plorn), who immigrated to NSW in the 1850s, and both went on to lead politically active lives," says Ms Owens.

Dickens lover and Booker Prize winner Thomas Keneally AO will lead an impressive line-up of speakers at the 2018 conference, and share his fascination with Dickens' eldest sons and explore their lives and fate in Australia.

Media Release



Other conference highlights:

- Explore the Charles Dickens Museum with Director Dr Cindy Sughrue OBE, who will reveal the weird and wonderful curiosities in Dickens' home, including Dickens' links with Australia
- Test your Pumblechook from your Pecksniff at the State Library's Dickens Trivia Night
- View a display of Dickens-related items from the State Library's collection, including a rare set of the pirated Launceston editions of *The Pickwick Papers* (August – December, 1838).
- Enjoy a banquet at Vaucluse House with a menu inspired by *What Should We Have for Dinner?*, published in 1851 by Dickens' wife Catherine under the pseudonym Lady Maria Clutterbuck.

See the full program here: www.bozinoz.com

Louise Owens is available for interviews.

For more information, interviews and images, please contact:

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