**THE OTHER DICKENS: DISCOVERING CATHERINE**

Charles Dickens Museum, 48 Doughty Street, London

3 May - 20 November 2016

- New exhibition brings Catherine Dickens away from the shadow of her husband
- Rarely-seen exhibits displayed in the couple’s first family home
- New sound-art installations by Felicity Ford, supported by Arts Council England

A new exhibition will aim to debunk a series of myths surrounding the life of Catherine Dickens, wife of Charles Dickens. *The Other Dickens: Discovering Catherine*, guest curated by Prof. Lillian Nayder and based on her 2011 biography of Catherine, will use a combination of rarely-seen exhibits, including many personal items and letters, to present an accurate picture of a woman who met Charles Dickens in her teens and whose own character and achievements remain in his shadow.

*The Other Dickens: Discovering Catherine* takes place at Charles Dickens Museum at 48 Doughty Street, the London townhouse where Dickens completed *The Pickwick Papers* and wrote *Oliver Twist* and *Nicholas Nickleby*. The exhibition runs from 3 May - 20 November 2016.

As Charles Dickens’s fame grew quickly, following the successive publications of the three novels listed above, Catherine found herself existing increasingly in his shadow, her own identity defined by that of her husband. The exhibition will celebrate Catherine’s life at 48 Doughty Street, adding significant detail to a name only known through the achievements and actions of Charles Dickens.

Catherine Hogarth married Charles Dickens in 1836. They lived together for the next 22 years, Catherine having ten children (two of whom were born at Doughty Street) in the first sixteen of those years, as well as travelling to America and living abroad. When they separated, Catherine moved to 70 Gloucester Crescent near Regent’s Park, where she stayed for 21 years, outliving
Charles by nearly a decade. During this time, Charles Dickens painted a harshly negative portrait of his wife, suggesting that Catherine was constantly depressed and an uncaring, unfit mother.

Addressing this issue, the exhibition will help to build a more rounded picture of a Victorian woman devoted to her children and part of a lively social group, who enjoyed frequent visits to the theatre, concerts and late-night parties. Catherine was also a published writer; her popular cookbook, *What Shall We Have For Dinner*, ran into several editions. Her good friends included Victorian novelist Annie Hall-Cudlip, philanthropist Angela Burdett-Coutts, Punch magazine editor Mark Lemon and his wife Nelly, and concert pianist Christiana Weller, as well as Charles’s two sisters (which may not have enhanced their relationship with their brother).

Working its way through Catherine and Charles’s home, the exhibition will explore Catherine’s childhood in Scotland, her relationship with her sisters, the role she played in Charles’s success, her place in London’s literary scene, and her musical and needlework skills. It will reflect on her experience of motherhood, as well as the effect of the loss of three of her children.

With the support of a Grant for the Arts from Arts Council England, the Museum has commissioned sound artist Felicity Ford to make *Hearing Catherine*, a collection of six new works which will bring Catherine’s voice back to Doughty Street. Introduced throughout the exhibition, a subtle combination of spoken word, music and field recordings will use Catherine’s own words to give her a presence and build something of the atmosphere that she would have known in the family home. Among the music will be pieces by Catherine’s father, George Hogarth, while recordings will include sounds from around Catherine’s gravesite. Catherine’s words will be taken from her letters, her published cookbook, and lists and notes she kept at Doughty Street.

**Among the exhibits:**
- Catherine Dickens’s jewellery, including her engagement ring, snake design ring and bracelet, and chain design purse
- Individual portraits of Catherine and Charles by Samuel Lawrence
- Oil painting of Charles Dickens in the theatrical role of Sir Charles Coldstream in the play *Used Up*. The picture belonged to Catherine and she left it in her will to her eldest son, Charley
- A drawing of four of the Dickens children, by Daniel Maclise, which Catherine and Charles took on their travels to the USA and which stayed with Catherine (she wrote to Maclise: *'My beautiful sketch of our darlings is more admired than I can possibly describe. It is in great demand wherever we go and Willis the author actually asked me to give it to him. Imagine. Such impudence! And audacity!'*)
- A circular table bought by Charles for Catherine to celebrate the birth of their first child in 1837
Guest curator, Lillian Nayder, Professor of English at Bates College, Maine, USA, said, “When Charles and Catherine separated, he characterised her as an unnatural mother who shirked her maternal duties. But his claims are readily disproven by Catherine’s behaviour, by the evident affection between her and her children and by Dickens’s own statements to the contrary about his wife. Indeed, during most of their years together, parenthood strengthened their mutual attachment. When Dickens was away, Catherine wrote to him about the children and he answered in kind soon after their third child was born: ‘Their dear little voices...have sounds for you and me that we shall never forget.’”

Cindy Sughrue, Director of Charles Dickens Museum, said, “We are pleased to bring Catherine into the house in a significant way, in the process showing some of the character and qualities that were written out of history once the couple separated. The exhibition will show that, far from being Charles’s ‘plus one’, Catherine played a crucial role in his career and family life and it will illustrate the affection shown towards her by her children and her fascinating circle of friends.”

**VISITOR INFORMATION** Dates: 3 May - 20 November 2016.

Opening hours: Tuesday-Sunday, 10am-5pm (last admission 4pm). Closed on Mondays.

Museum admission prices: Adults £9; Concessions £6; Children (6-16) £4; Under 6 free.

Address: Charles Dickens Museum, 48 Doughty Street, London WC1N 2LX

More information: www.dickensmuseum.com 020 7405 2127  events@dickensmuseum.com

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**Notes to Editors:**

1. Lillian Nayder is Professor of English at Bates College, Maine, USA where she teaches courses on nineteenth-century British fiction. Her research interests centre on Charles and Catherine Dickens as well as Dickens’s friend, fellow author and All The Year Round contributor, Wilkie Collins. In 2011 Lillian published a biography of Catherine Dickens, *The Other Dickens: A Life of Catherine Hogarth*.

2. Dr Felicity Ford is an artist who works with sound and textiles. She has worked with TATE Modern, The Wellcome Library, The Museum of Domestic Design & Architecture and the Shetland Museum and Archives in projects that use sound to bring social issues to the fore. Whether exploring the dawn of the maternity movement, turning an ear to wallpaper rearing and recording silkworms, or recording the sounds of the hand-knitting industry, she is always using sound to emphasise the texture and feeling of different social realities.

3. When Dickens moved into 48 Doughty Street, he was a little-known writer, still using his pen-name, Boz. By the time he left, he was an international superstar. The rooms are still filled with the furniture he bought - most of the fireplaces, doors, locks, window shutters and fittings are still in place as they were when the family resided there.

4. The Charles Dickens Museum holds the world’s most comprehensive collection of Dickens-related objects. As visitors make their way through the house, they will spend time at the desk where he wrote *Great Expectations*; see the raised reading desk he designed and from which he made countless public readings; and pore over original manuscripts of his great works, letters, personal items and photographs.

Issued by The Press Office. For further information and images, please contact Michael Barrett on 020 8295 2424, 07813-558772 or mb@thepressoffice.uk.