

New blue plaque to celebrate Dickens

THE great-great-grandson of Charles Dickens will unveil a blue plaque today at the site of a former hotel where the famous author was a frequent guest.

Ian Dickens will be guest of honour at the Holiday Inn on Brighton seafront, which stands on the site of the former Bedford Hotel which the writer visited regularly on his many trips to the resort.

The five-storey Bedford – a magnet for royalty and celebrities in its heyday – had its own plaque fitted in 1925 to honour Dickens but it was destroyed when the hotel burned down in April 1964.

The Georgian building was referenced in Graham Greene's novel Brighton Rock, in which it was thinly-disguised as the "Cosmopolitan".

The unveiling of the blue plaque will come a day after celebrations, led by the Prince of Wales and the Duchess of Cornwall, marking the 200th anniversary of Dickens' birth.

Celebrating the life of Dickens

SUSSEX is to celebrate the 200th anniversary of Charles Dickens' birth with tributes and tales from across the county.

The author, who was born on February 7, 1812, found his muse in Brighton on several occasions.

David Copperfield, Dombey and Son and Barnaby Rudge owe creative inspiration to Brighton as they were worked on during his numerous visits to the city.

Paul Dombey in his book Dombey and Son was sent to Brighton for a rigorous education at Doctor and Mrs Blimber's School in Upper Rock Gardens.

Tipper ale

Brighton also features in Bleak House, Nicholas Nickleby and Sketches by Boz while the Brighton Tipper ale appears in The Life and Adventures of Martin Chuzzlewit.

Dickens gave a lecture at the Royal Pavilion in Brighton in 1861. New tours at the Pavilion explore this and the passion of Dickens for the Regency period.

The Pavilion's Charles Dickens Bicentenary Tour runs today between 11.30am and 12.30pm and on February 18 from 2pm to 3pm.

Staff at the Charles Dickens pub in Worthing will be toasting their namesake with a chilling storytelling session of the author's ghost story, The Signal Man, on tomorrow at 8pm.

by SARAH TROTTER
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Dickens notoriously visited his mistress, actress Helen Ternan, in Worthing and is also believed to have donated money to an alms house there.

Members of the Eastbourne Dickens Fellowship are hosting their annual birthday lunch for the novelist at the Albany Lions Hotel in the town on February 14 at 12.30pm.

Eastbourne Dickensians have a blue plaque dedicated to the writer on Pilgrim's House in Borough Lane.

Brighton will unveil its own plaque tomorrow at midday in honour of the area's influence on Dickens.

Dickens's great-great-grandson, Ian Dickens, will lead the ceremony at the Holiday Inn hotel on Brighton seafront.

Geoffrey Bowden, Brighton and Hove City Council's Cabinet member for culture, recreation and tourism, said: "Charles Dickens excites huge interest globally, and we are delighted to be able to mark his connection with and love of our city in this way."

To book tickets for the Pavilion's tour contact 03000 290902 or to join the Eastbourne Dickens Fellowship for lunch contact Maggie deVos on 01323 471615.