

CITY WALKS
Dickens



Dickens's 'Magic Lantern'

Discover the city
that was his home
and inspiration



This publication has been produced by the **City of London** – a uniquely diverse organisation with three main aims: to support and promote the City as the world leader in international finance and business services; to provide high quality local services and policing for the Square Mile; and to provide valued services to London and the nation as a whole. We are one of the most significant art sponsors in the UK and run the City Information Centre by St Paul's. We hope Dickens might look on us more favourably were he to see us at work today. We have produced this publication in association with The Charles Dickens Museum and Dr Tony Williams whose assistance is gratefully acknowledged. All archival images are copyright of the museum.
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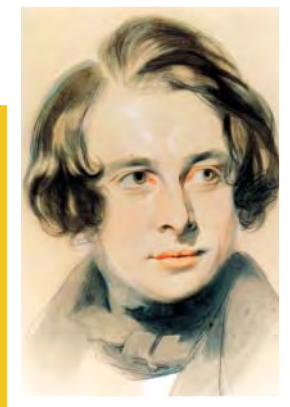


The **Charles Dickens Museum** in London is the world's most important collection of material relating to the great Victorian novelist and social commentator. The only surviving London home of Dickens (1837-39) was opened as a Museum in 1925 and is still welcoming visitors from all over the world in an authentic and inspiring surrounding. Visitors can see paintings, rare editions, manuscripts, original furniture and many items relating to the life of one of the most popular and beloved personalities of the Victorian age. The Museum is open daily 10.00-17.00. Last admission is 30 minutes before closing. Adults: £6.00, Concessions: £4.50, Children: £3.00, Families: £15.00
www.dickensmuseum.com

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Dr Tony Williams, author of this walk, read English at the University College of Swansea and did post-graduate research at Birkbeck, University of London. He was Joint General Secretary of the International Dickens Fellowship and a Trustee of The Charles Dickens Museum. He is Associate Editor of The Fellowship's journal and an Honorary Life Member of the Dickens Fellowship. He presented a series of programmes on Charles Dickens's London and was consultant for **Charles Dickens's England** on SkyArts2. He is a Research Fellow in the School of Humanities at the University of Buckingham, involved in a project to have all of Dickens's journalism online, edited and accessible to all users by 2012, the bicentenary of Dickens's birth.

Walking route Start



London, its streets and its people, provided an enormous inspiration for the writings of Charles Dickens. Indeed, when away from London he found it difficult to write 'in the absence of streets... A day in London sets me up again and starts me. But the toil and labour of writing, day after day, without that magic lantern, is IMMENSE!!' (Letter to John Forster, 30 August 1846)

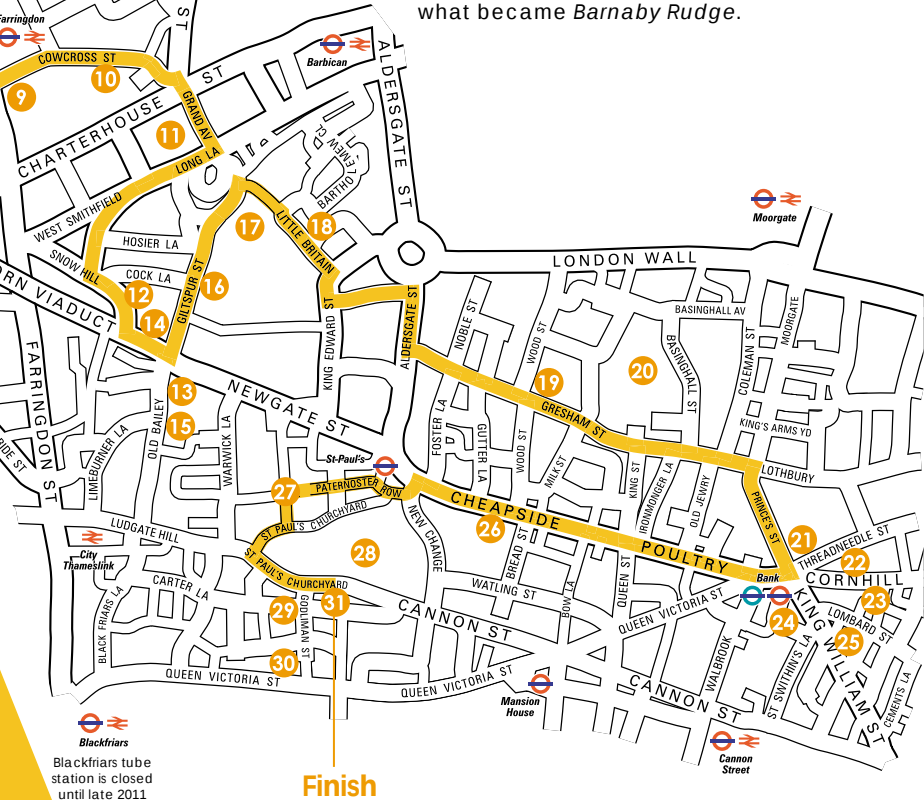
This route has been devised to bring together many of the places that inspired the works of Charles Dickens. From start to finish it will take about 90 minutes at an average walking pace. You can also dip in and out of sections of the route as most of the points of interest are grouped closely together.



The Charles Dickens Museum

Doughty Street to Clerkenwell

The Charles Dickens Museum ¹ at 48 Doughty Street was Dickens's home from April 1837 to December 1839. It opened as The Dickens House Museum in June 1925. Charles and Catherine Dickens had been married for one year when they moved here with their baby son Charley. During their residence two daughters were born: Mary in March 1838 and Katey in October 1839. Dickens's beloved sister-in-law Mary Hogarth died here in May 1837 aged 17. Here, Dickens completed *Pickwick Papers* and *Oliver Twist*, wrote *Nicholas Nickleby* and *Memoirs of Grimaldi* and began work on what became *Barnaby Rudge*.



Finish

He was within a short distance of essential images which helped form his fiction and his creation of a vision of London. Between 1837 and 1839, this rising star of the literary world of the new Victorian London lived, in his "frightfully first-class family mansion, involving awful responsibilities", and with his glittering social circle of admiring guests and friends, close to poverty, crime, the law, the



Mount Pleasant

abandoned and neglected child, and the prison. They were images from which he could never escape, and they constitute a powerful part of the world of contrasts and extremes that is so much Dickens's London.

Go south from outside the Museum and turn left into Roger Street. Cross over Gray's Inn Road into Elm Street. Ahead of you is the Mount Pleasant Post Office.

Mount Pleasant ² is used by Dickens for irony, as the home of the Smallweed family in *Bleak House*, "always solitary, shady and sad, closely bricked in on all sides like a tomb". Looking towards Farringdon Road you see the vast Post Office complex, established there in 1900.

If Dickens had stood in that spot, he would have seen the Middlesex House of Correction (or Coldbath Fields Prison) which was on that site from 1794. When it closed in 1877 it housed 1,500 prisoners. The site was transferred to the Post Office in 1889.

Dickens's friendship with the reformist prison governor George Chesterton, enabled him to see the treadmills, the "wheels" in operation, as he describes in "The Last Cab-driver" in *Sketches by Boz* (1836). Whilst Newgate, the Fleet, the Marshalsea and the King's Bench Prisons all figure strongly in Dickens's writing, it is this one, just around the corner from his home, with which he had early contact. That he did not make it the subject of a sketch but turned to Newgate as his subject is because, he says in a letter from December 1835, "the Treadmill will not take the hold on a man's interest that the Gallows does."

Walk to the junction of Mount Pleasant and Farringdon Road and turn right.

Farringdon Road ³ follows the course of the River Fleet, since 1766 one of London's underground rivers. The construction of Farringdon Road in 1845-6 cut through some of London's most infamous slums and in 1863 the Metropolitan Railway came into the area. The modern pub named after David Copperfield's aunt, *The Betsey Trotwood*, reminds visitors that the Dickensian associations are strong. On your left, on the other side of the road, is Pear Tree Court ⁴, thought to be the site Dickens has in mind for *Oliver Twist* where Oliver sees the Artful Dodger and Charley Bates pick Mr Brownlow's pocket.

The Betsey Trotwood



The Clerkenwell Sessions House

Cross Farringdon Road near to The Betsey Trotwood and go along Farringdon Lane towards Clerkenwell Green. ⁵

Originally a green space in a semi-rural village, very few vestiges remain of the 'green'. The cattle trough acts as a reminder that this area was en route to Smithfield Meat Market and cattle would be driven through the streets to sale and slaughter there. The Clerkenwell Sessions House (1779-82) features in *Oliver Twist* as the destination of Mr Bumble the Beadle's visit to the city.

From Clerkenwell Green walk to Clerkenwell Road and turn right, following it across Farringdon Road. Turn left into Saffron Hill and immediately right into Hatton Wall. Walk to the junction with Hatton Garden, turn left and continue to number 54.

Into the lower depths

Now well-known for expensive jewellery businesses, Dickens knew this area as one of poverty and crime. It is at number 54 Hatton Garden ⁶ that Dickens sets the police office and magistrate's court run by Mr Fang, in *Oliver Twist*, where Oliver is brought after being apprehended for allegedly picking Mr Brownlow's pocket. The location is chosen partly because one A S Laing had such a court in Hatton Garden. Laing's reputation for cruelty and harshness moved Dickens to visit his court in order to see him at work. In *Bleak House*, Mr Jellyby escapes from his wife's philanthropic obsessions to walk in Hatton Garden.

Great Saffron Hill

This area figures in the range of inspirations leading Dickens to write his minor masterpiece *A Christmas Carol*. In September 1843, he had visited a ragged school here and was powerfully struck by the horrors he witnessed. The children were already thieves and prostitutes, illiterate, diseased and unwashed. The smell was enough to send his companion, the artist Clarkson Stanfield, running from the room. Dickens, who was made of sterner stuff, remained and withstood their laughter at his smart clothes, polished boots and dandified hairstyle: "I can see you ain't a barber" one of them said. It spurred him on to want to "do something for The Poor Man's Child".



Bleeding Heart Yard ⁷, off Greville Street, is another important location, used in *Little Dorrit* (1855-7), as the site of Casby's rackrent properties and of Daniel Doyce's factory.

Continue ahead to the junction and turn left into St Cross Street and continue down to the junction and turn right into Saffron Hill.

If Hatton Garden was bad, then Saffron Hill ⁸ was a great deal worse. A path may be traced from the Angel Islington, further north, into Saffron Hill as the one traced by The Artful Dodger, leading *Oliver Twist* into Fagin's den. This is set in what used to be Field Lane ⁹, along with *The Three Cripples* public house claimed to be based on the *One Tun* which can be seen at the lower end of Saffron Hill. Field Lane was the last section of Saffron Hill leading into Holborn, and was cleared in the Holborn Viaduct development (1863-9), but the whole area in Dickens's time was one of great squalor, poverty, misery and crime, and most horrifying of all, child crime.

Squeers, Smithfield, Newgate and Barts

Turn left into Farringdon Road and cross it, continuing ahead to Cowcross Street, passing Farringdon Station. Follow Cowcross Street round, cross Charterhouse Street and pass through Smithfield Meat Market.

Cowcross Street ¹⁰ was originally Cow-Crofts street, where animals were kept awaiting transfer to Smithfield ¹¹. The current meat market building was opened in 1868 and has had a number of later additions. It replaced the previous open air cattle market which had stood here since the 12th century and closed in 1855. By the 1850s the market had become a scandal and Dickens contributed to the debate about its future. Despite strong

opposition to its closure, the Smithfield Market Removal Act was passed in 1852 and the sale and slaughter of beasts was moved out. Dickens describes the conditions in the old market in both *Oliver Twist* and *Great Expectations*.

Turn right onto Long Lane/West Smithfield past the market buildings and follow the left turn into Snow Hill.

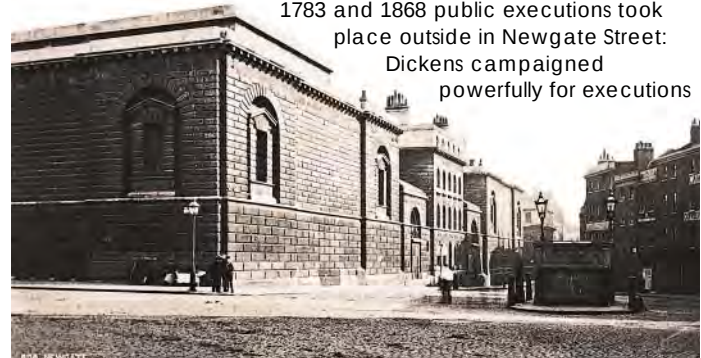
The Saracen's Head Inn.

The Police Station, situated close to the junction of Snow Hill and Holborn Viaduct, stands on the site of The Saracen's Head Inn. Dickens uses this coaching inn as the place where, in *Nicholas Nickleby*, the schoolmaster Wackford Squeers, stays on his periodic visits to London to collect pupils for Dotheboys Hall in Yorkshire. The Yorkshire Schools were another scandal against which Dickens successfully campaigned.



On Snow Hill you can see several points of interest – Snow Hill Police Station (The Saracen's Head Inn ¹²), St Sepulchre's Church ¹⁴ and diagonally opposite Old Bailey ¹⁵ and the Central Criminal Court ¹³.

Newgate Prison stood on the corner of Old Bailey and Newgate Street from 1188 to 1902. It was burnt down in the Gordon Riots in 1780, described by Dickens in *Barnaby Rudge*, and then rebuilt between 1780 and 1783. Between 1783 and 1868 public executions took place outside in Newgate Street: Dickens campaigned powerfully for executions



Newgate Prison

to be taken inside the prison walls and was still alive when the legislation requiring this was passed in 1868. The Central Criminal Court originally (1834) occupied buildings towards the south end of Old Bailey. Dickens sets several memorable trial scenes here: Fagin in *Oliver Twist*, Magwitch in *Great Expectations*, Charles Darnay in *A Tale of Two Cities*. The building erected in 1902 on the Newgate site used some of the stones from the demolished prison as building material at street level.



The One Tun

Smithfield Market





St Sepulchre's Church

Dickens was fascinated by prisons all through his life and career. One of his earliest essays in *Sketches by Boz* was 'A Visit to Newgate' and testifies to this fascination and in *Oliver Twist* he describes Fagin's last night alive in Newgate.

St Sepulchre's Church stands on Holborn Viaduct facing Old Bailey. It was the bell from this church which rang at eight o'clock in the morning to signal that executions were to take place, a fact Dickens observes in *Oliver Twist*. Before public hangings moved here in 1783 the route taken by condemned criminals to Tyburn went past the church.

From the junction of Holborn Viaduct and Old Bailey, turn left up Giltspur Street.

On your left is Cock Lane ¹⁶, site of *The Fortunes of War* public house, demolished in 1910 but marked with a memorial. It was in an upper room here that corpses, either executed criminals or the work of grave-robbers or 'Resurrection Men' like Jerry Cruncher in *A Tale of Two Cities*, were made available for surgeons from St Bartholomew's Hospital ¹⁷ for dissection.

Continue ahead along Giltspur Street following the road around to the right in front of the hospital and into Little Britain ¹⁸.

St Bartholomew's Hospital was founded in 1123 and is the oldest hospital in London still on its original site. The medical school opened in 1662. Dickens mentions it in *Pickwick Papers* and in *Martin Chuzzlewit*, in which novel it is where Betsey Prig, the nursing colleague of Sarah Gamp, is based.

Little Britain is a long and winding street by the hospital and is the location in *Great Expectations* for the offices of the lawyer, Mr Jaggers.



Guildhall to St Paul's

Follow the route of Little Britain: cross over King Edward Street and turn left into the continuation of Little Britain. At the end of the lane turn right onto Aldersgate St and then first left onto Gresham Street.

The story of Dickens and London really begins here. The Cross Keys Inn stood at 25 Wood Street ¹⁹ and it was here the 10 year-old Charles Dickens arrived in 1822 from Chatham in Kent, by coach 'packed in like game' in the damp straw of the coach's upholstery.

Guildhall



Continue ahead on Gresham Street to Guildhall

Guildhall ²⁰ is the setting for the trial for breach of promise in *Pickwick Papers*. The statues of Gog and Magog (replacements for originals destroyed in the Second World War) can be seen in Great Hall. They figure significantly in *Master Humphrey's Clock* and

recur in one of Dickens's finest essays, *Gone Astry* (in *Household Words* in 1853) where he imagines himself as a child wandering through the city 'like a child in a dream'. As the centre of the government of the City of London, Guildhall was often the target for Dickens's criticism of the activities of those to whom that responsibility was entrusted.

Guildhall, which still serves as the City of London's base today, is certainly worth a visit. A spectacular Grade I listed building, it has a magnificent Great Hall and is set in a large courtyard where you'll also find the Guildhall Art Gallery and London's only Roman Amphitheatre.

Continue on Gresham Street to the junction with Princes Street, turn right, pass the Bank of England ²¹ and head towards Mansion House. From here there are a number of additional attractions you may wish to visit before returning to Mansion House.



Mansion House

Mansion House ²⁴ is the home of the Lord Mayor of The City of London. Designed by George Dance it was begun in 1739. In *Gone Astry* Dickens imagines himself coming here when a dinner is being prepared and looks in through the kitchen window and 'my heart began to beat with hope that the Lord Mayor,



St Peter's Cornhill

Bob Cratchit 'went down a slide at the end of a lane of boys twenty times in honour of its being Christmas Eve' on Cornhill in *A Christmas Carol*. St Michael's Church is likely to be the one in *A Christmas Carol* 'whose gruff old bell was always peeping slyly down at Scrooge' and whose bell in the freezing winter weather struck 'with tremulous vibrations afterwards, as if its teeth were chattering in its frozen head up there'. On the opposite side of the street is Newman's Court which may be where Dickens sites Scrooge's counting house. Freeman's Court, where the offices of Dodson and Fogg are located in *Pickwick Papers*, was on the other side of Finch Lane but is now demolished.

Garraway's Coffee House



or the Lady Mayoress,... would look out of an upper apartment and direct me to be taken in. But nothing of the kind occurred.' Three notable streets radiate from Mansion House: Threadneedle Street, Cornhill and Lombard Street.

On Cornhill ²⁹ there are several Dickensian connections. St Peter's Cornhill is a Wren church (1677-87) with some 19th century restoration. The churchyard is the place Dickens has in mind when in *Our Mutual Friend* Lizzie Hexam has her memorable and terrifying meeting with Bradley Headstone, organised by her brother Charley. "The court brought them to a churchyard; a paved square court, with a raised bank of earth about breast high, in the middle, enclosed by iron rails. Here, conveniently and heathfully elevated above the level of the living, were the dead, and the tombstones; some of the latter droopingly inclined from the perpendicular, as if they were ashamed of the lies they told." The churchyard has been redesigned since Dickens knew it.

Also off Cornhill, in Change Alley, to the south, was Garraway's Coffee House, well-known and popular, founded in 1660 and closed in 1874. It earns many mentions in Dickens's work but most famously it is where Mr Pickwick wrote his 'chops and tomato sauce' message to Mrs Bardell. The Royal Exchange ²², also frequently referred to in the novels, stands at the top of Cornhill.



Lombard Street

Lombard Street ²⁵ was and still is a very significant financial area, home of many of the most famous national and international banks as well as being a residential area. In the 19th century Smith, Payne and Smith's Bank had its premises at 1 Lombard Street. Its manager was John Beadnell who was succeeded by his brother George. He lived next door at 2 Lombard Street and it was here in 1831 that Mr and Mrs Beadnell gave a dinner party for some of their friends and their daughters' friends. One of these was the 19 year-old Charles Dickens just at the start of his career as a Parliamentary reporter.

It is likely that he made contact with the Beadnells through a friend, Henry Kolle, who was engaged to their second daughter Anne. But it was the third daughter, Maria, who had captivated the young man's heart: he was devoted to her and describes his heart being pinned 'like a captured butterfly' to the black velvet trimming on one of her dresses. Maria was older than Dickens by 13 months, and his prospects were not at this time such as to impress the Beadnell parents that he could be a serious suitor for their daughter. Mrs Beadnell, for example, never learnt his name and always called him 'Mr Dickin', and they thought he was too flashy. Maria too was capricious and had several other admirers. Dickens remained devoted to her for four years but in 1833, when she returned from overseas, the relationship ended.

Maria is part of the inspiration for Dora Spenlow, later David's wife in *David Copperfield*, and she reappeared in real life in 1855 when as Mrs Winter she wrote to Dickens and asked if they might meet. His anticipation of such a meeting was very high, but he was deeply disappointed, finding her 'toothless, fat, old and ugly'. She makes another fictional appearance as Flora Finching in *Little Dorrit*, Arthur Clennam's former love.

The banking house of Smith, Payne and Smith was originally a Nottingham concern, but established itself in London in 1758 and moved to the Lombard Street premises in 1806. Dickens refers to them several times and once one knows the connection the reference carries some considerable force.

Proceed back along Poultry into Cheapside towards St Paul's Cathedral.

Cheapside





St Paul's Cathedral

Cheapside ²⁶ was, in the 19th century, an enormously important shopping area. It is still a busy thoroughfare and is set to become a major retail destination when One New Change shopping centre opens in late 2010. Cheapside figures throughout the history of English literature and makes numerous appearances in Dickens's writing.



Temple Bar

At the top of Cheapside continue into Paternoster Square, Temple Bar is to the left towards the Cathedral.

In St Paul's Churchyard stands the re-erected Temple Bar ²⁷, which formerly stood between Fleet Street and the Strand, marking the boundary of the City of London. It had become a great obstacle to the movement

of traffic and was demolished in 1878. In *Bleak House* Dickens described it as 'a leaden-headed old obstruction' and drew unfavourable comparisons between it and the activities of the Corporation of the City of London. Temple Bar was finally returned to the Square Mile in 2004, by the City of London Corporation, the Temple Bar Trust and several lively companies.



Doctors' Commons

St Paul's Cathedral ²⁸ also appears as a setting in many novels and it is in an area Dickens would have known well. In *Master Humphrey's Clock*, Dickens describes Master Humphrey going up to the top of St Paul's Cathedral, then the tallest building in London, and taking in a panoramic view across the whole of the city. He writes: 'Draw but a little circle above the clustering house-tops, and you shall have within its space, everything with its opposite extreme and contradiction, close beside'.

From the south side of St Paul's and close to the City Information Centre where this walk ends, one can walk along Godliman Street ²⁹ to the junction with Queen Victoria Street, turn right and soon locate a plaque indicating the former whereabouts of Doctors' Commons ³⁰, where five courts operated, dealing with ecclesiastical, admiralty and matrimonial matters.



Dickens describes the Divorce Court in *Sketches by Boz* and gives a full account of the operation of the system in *David Copperfield*, having given his hero employment there in the offices of Spewlow and Jorkins, through which means he meets Dora Spewlow who becomes David's 'child wife'. Dickens himself worked at Doctors' Commons from 1828 to 1832.

This walk ends at the City Information Centre ³¹. We hope it has enabled you to capture something of the variety that is to be found through Dickens's 'Magic Lantern'.