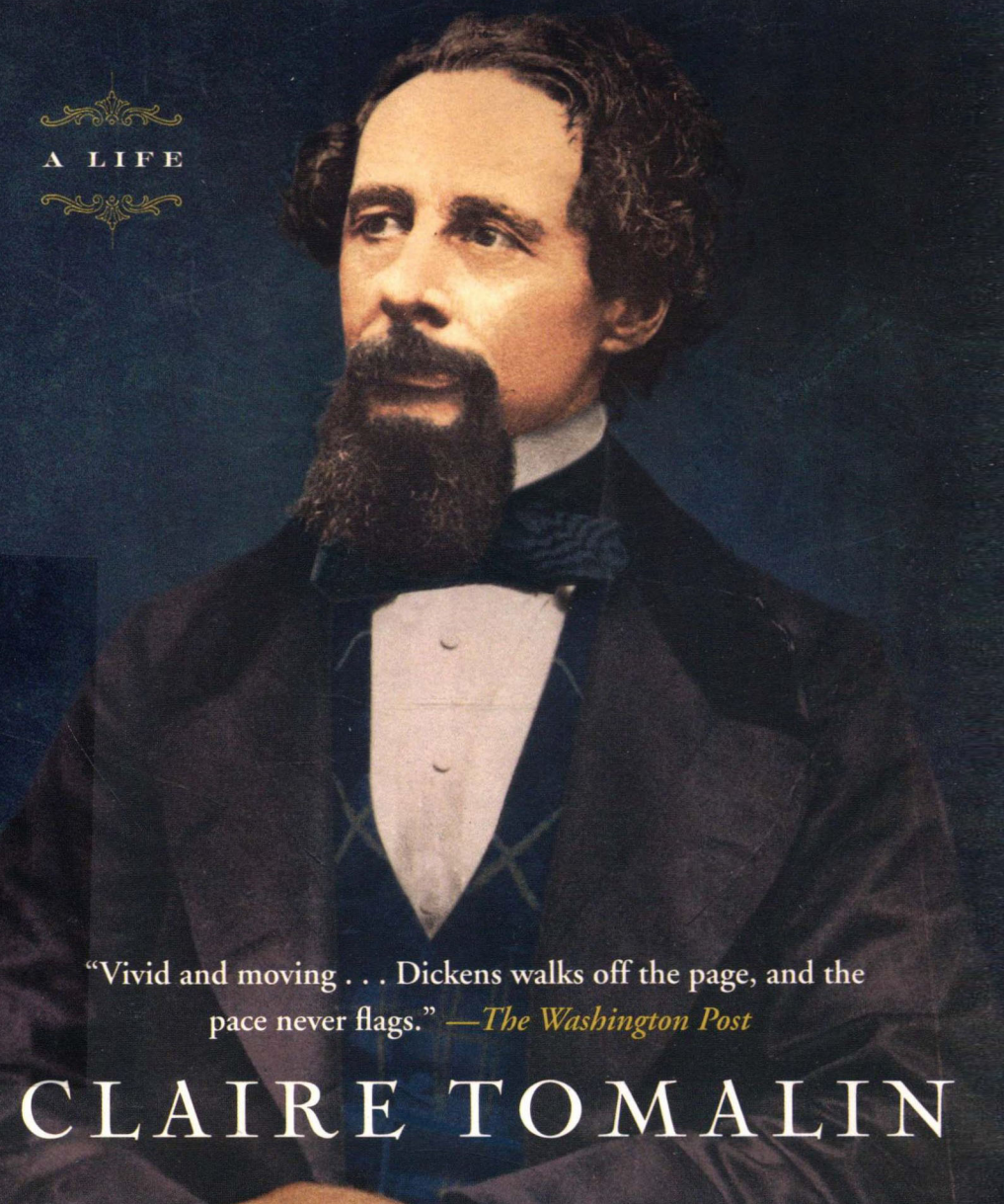
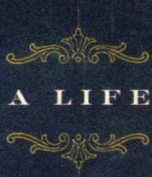




CHARLES DICKENS



"Vivid and moving . . . Dickens walks off the page, and the
pace never flags." —*The Washington Post*

CLAIRE TOMALIN

Charles Dickens

A Life

CLAIRE TOMALIN



PENGUIN BOOKS

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Praise for *Charles Dickens* by Claire Tomalin

"As Claire Tomalin demonstrates in her vivid and moving new biography, Dickens's own life was rich in the attributes we call 'Dickensian'—shameless melodrama, gargantuan appetites, reversals of fortune. . . . To encompass this frenzy, Tomalin keeps the story racing. She brings Dickens to life in all his maddening contradictions. . . . Dickens walks off the page, and the pace never flags. Tomalin accomplishes this resurrection in a mere 417 pages of text, supplemented by dozens of illustrations, several maps of Dickens's London, and a helpful *dramatis personae*. . . . If you plan to read only one biography of the most popular Victorian writer, it should be this one."

—*The Washington Post*

"Clear-eyed, sympathetic, and scholarly, she spreads the whole canvas, alive with incident and detail, with places and people. She writes of publishers, illustrators, collaborators, and all Dickens's intersecting circles of friends and family. It is wonderfully done."

—*The Economist*

"[A] splendid history . . . Tomalin skillfully presents the chief trauma of Dickens's young life—being sent to work in a factory at age twelve, after his father was imprisoned for debt—and suggests the ways it left a lasting mark, from his sympathy for the working class to his towering ambition and herculean work ethic."

—*The Seattle Times*

"Onward-driving, hypnotically vivid . . . the result of Claire Tomalin's unrivaled talent for telling a story and keeping a reader enthralled: long as the book is, I wanted more."

—*The Guardian* (London; a Best Book of the Year)

"Gripping, galloping . . . Tomalin has captured Dickens, in sun and shadow, with all the full-hearted exuberance, generosity, and keen wit that he merits."

—*The Independent* (London)

"[Dickens's] life was as eventful, dramatic, and character-filled as any of his novels. This rich new biography brilliantly captures his world. . . . Dickens certainly would have appreciated Tomalin's keen eye for scene, character, and narrative pace. . . . Tomalin also displays considerable detective work to bolster the possibility that Dickens and his other woman had a secret child who died in infancy. Superbly organized, comprehensive, and engrossing from start to finish—a strong contender for biography of the year."

—*Kirkus Reviews* (starred review; a Best Book of the Year)

ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Claire Tomalin worked in publishing and journalism for many years. She was literary editor first of the *New Statesman* and then the *Sunday Times* before devoting herself to writing full time. She is the author of eight highly acclaimed biographies, including *Thomas Hardy*, *The Invisible Woman: The Story of Nelly Ternan and Charles Dickens*, and *Samuel Pepys: The Unequalled Self*, which was the 2002 Whitbread Book of the Year. She lives in England with her husband, Michael Frayn.

I dedicate this book to the memory of two remarkable women:

my mother, the composer Muriel Emily Herbert, 1897–1984,
who shared with me her enjoyment of Dickens when I was a child;
and my French grandmother, a schoolteacher, Franceline Jennaton
Delavenay, 1873–1963, who in about 1888, when she was at boarding
school in Grenoble, read *David Copperfield* in its entirety in English,
and loved Dickens ever afterwards.

My sister and I first realised Mr Dickens himself . . . as a sort of brilliance in the room, mysteriously dominant and formless. I remember how everybody lighted up when he entered.

– Annie Thackeray writing in 1913

I suppose that for at least five-and-twenty years of his life, there was not an English-speaking household in the world . . . where his name was not as familiar as that of any personal acquaintance, and where an allusion to characters of his creating could fail to be understood.

– George Gissing in 1898

The life of almost any man possessing great gifts, would be a sad book to himself.

– Charles Dickens in 1869

It will not do to draw round any part of such a man too hard a line.

– John Forster, friend of Dickens, in his biography

Illustrations

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Crewe Hall, Cheshire, the country seat of the first Baron Crewe, where Dickens's grandmother worked as a housekeeper (Alan Crosby, *A History of Cheshire*)
John Crewe, first Baron Crewe (© National Portrait Gallery, London)
Frances, Lady Crewe (© National Portrait Gallery, London)
Charles James Fox, statesman (© National Portrait Gallery, London)
Richard Brinsley Sheridan, statesman and playwright (Collection Michael Burden/The Bridgeman Art Library)

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No. 387 Mile End Terrace, Charles Dickens's birthplace in Portsmouth (Mary Evans Picture Library)
No. 2 Ordinance Terrace, the Dickens family's first house in Chatham
No. 16 Bayham Street, Camden Town, where the Dickens family lived 1822 (*Bookman*, 1914)
The Marshalsea prison yard, where John Dickens was briefly imprisoned (The Print Collector/Heritage Images)

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John Dickens, Charles's father
Elizabeth Dickens, Charles's mother
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Hungerford Steps, site of the first blacking factory where the young Charles Dickens worked (City of London/Heritage Images)

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The Polygon, Somers Town (Mary Evans Picture Library)
Fanny Dickens, Charles's sister
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Wellington Academy, Dickens's school in Mornington Crescent (*Bookman*, 1914)

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Miniature of Dickens, aged eighteen, by his aunt Janet Barrow
The Adelphi Theatre, Strand (reproduced by permission of English Heritage NMR)

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Catherine Dickens (*née* Hogarth) in 1848 (© National Portrait Gallery, London)
John Forster, Dickens's closest friend and biographer (© National Portrait Gallery, London)
Mary Hogarth, Catherine's younger sister, from a painting by Hablot Browne
No. 48 Doughty Street, Dickens's first house

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William Macready, leading tragic actor of his day (© National Portrait Gallery, London)
Daniel Maclise, Irish artist. Self-portrait drawn for *Fraser's* magazine (Mary Evans Picture Library)
John Pritt Hartley, renowned comic actor (© National Portrait Gallery, London)
George Cruikshank, Dickens's first illustrator (*Bookman*, 1914)
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Engraving from lost miniature of Dickens by Margaret Gillies, exhibited in 1844

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No. 1 Devonshire Terrace, York Gate, Regent's Park, which Dickens leased from 1839 to 1851
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 Count D'Orsay, artist and dandy (© National Portrait Gallery, London)
 Lady Blessington, writer, editor, companion of D'Orsay (© National Portrait Gallery, London)
 Samuel Rogers hosting a breakfast (© National Portrait Gallery, London)
 Miss Coutts, philanthropist (© National Portrait Gallery, London)

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The *Britannia*, Cunard's first paddle-steamer (licensed by Open Agency Ltd – photograph from Liverpool University Archive)
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Birmingham Town Hall, where Dickens appeared from the 1840s (*Town Hall, Birmingham* by L. Tallis / Birmingham Museums and Art Gallery)
 Lord John Russell (© National Portrait Gallery, London)
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Dickens, photographed by Henri Claudet in 1850 (from an original daguerreotype, 1853)
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Mrs Ternan, drawn by her daughter Maria (courtesy of the Board of Trustees of the Victoria & Albert Museum)

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Nelly Ternan (courtesy of Mrs L. Fields)

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Front of Gad's Hill House (*Bookman*, 1914, photograph by Mason & Co., 1866)

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Eugène Scribe, playwright and librettist (private collection/Ken Welsh/The Bridgeman Art Library)

Alexandre Dumas père, novelist (private collection/The Stapleton Collection/The Bridgeman Art Library)

Céline Céleste, French dancer, actress and theatre manager (© National Portrait Gallery, London)

Charles Fechter, French actor (© National Portrait Gallery, London)

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Dickens at the Paris morgue, drawing by G. J. Pinwell, from *The Uncommercial Traveller*, 1860

Dickens reading the murder of Nancy by Sikes

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Katey Dickens, 'Lucifer Box', as her father called her

Nelly Ternan, described by Dickens as his 'magic circle of one'

Charley Dickens, the eldest son

Henry Dickens, the sixth and only successful son (© Lebrecht Authors)

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French cartoon of Dickens, by André Gill (*Bookman*, 1914)

American cartoon of Dickens, based on a photograph by Jeremiah Gurney, 1867

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Dickens at his desk, 1865 or later, photograph by Mason

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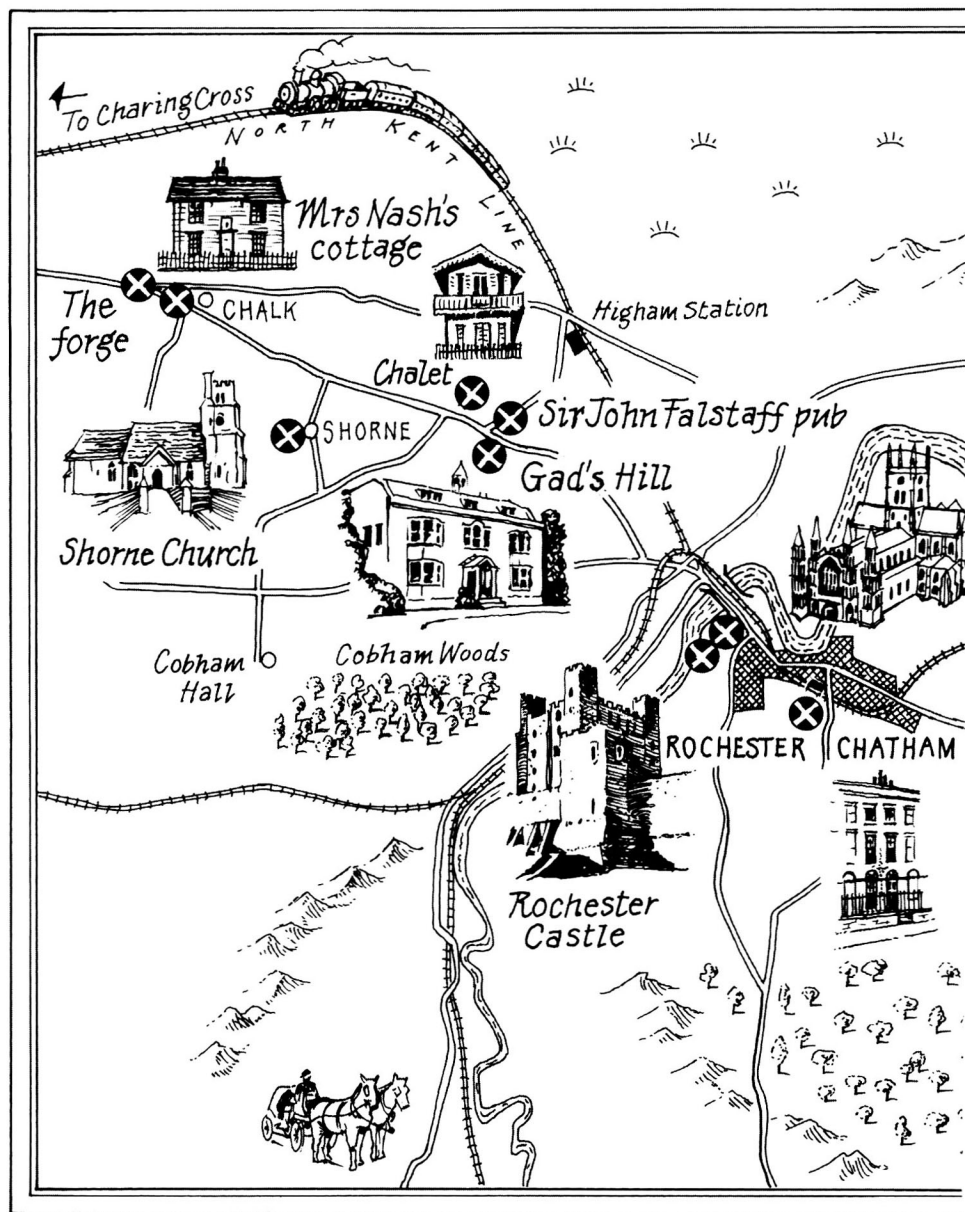
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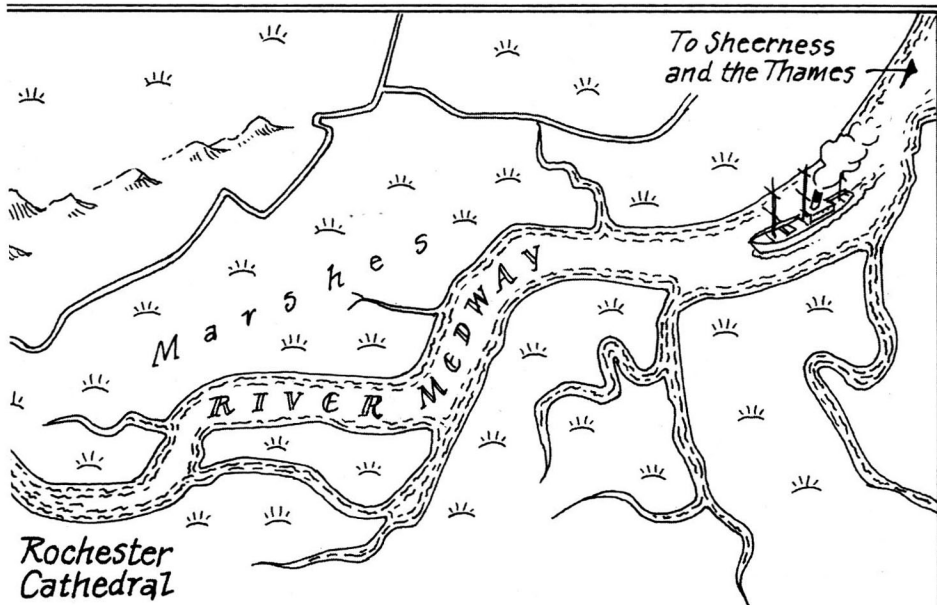
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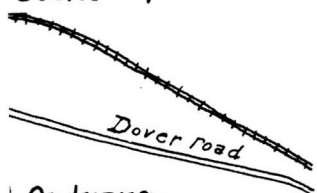
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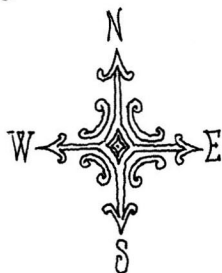




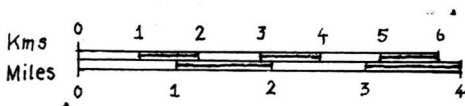
Rochester
Cathedral



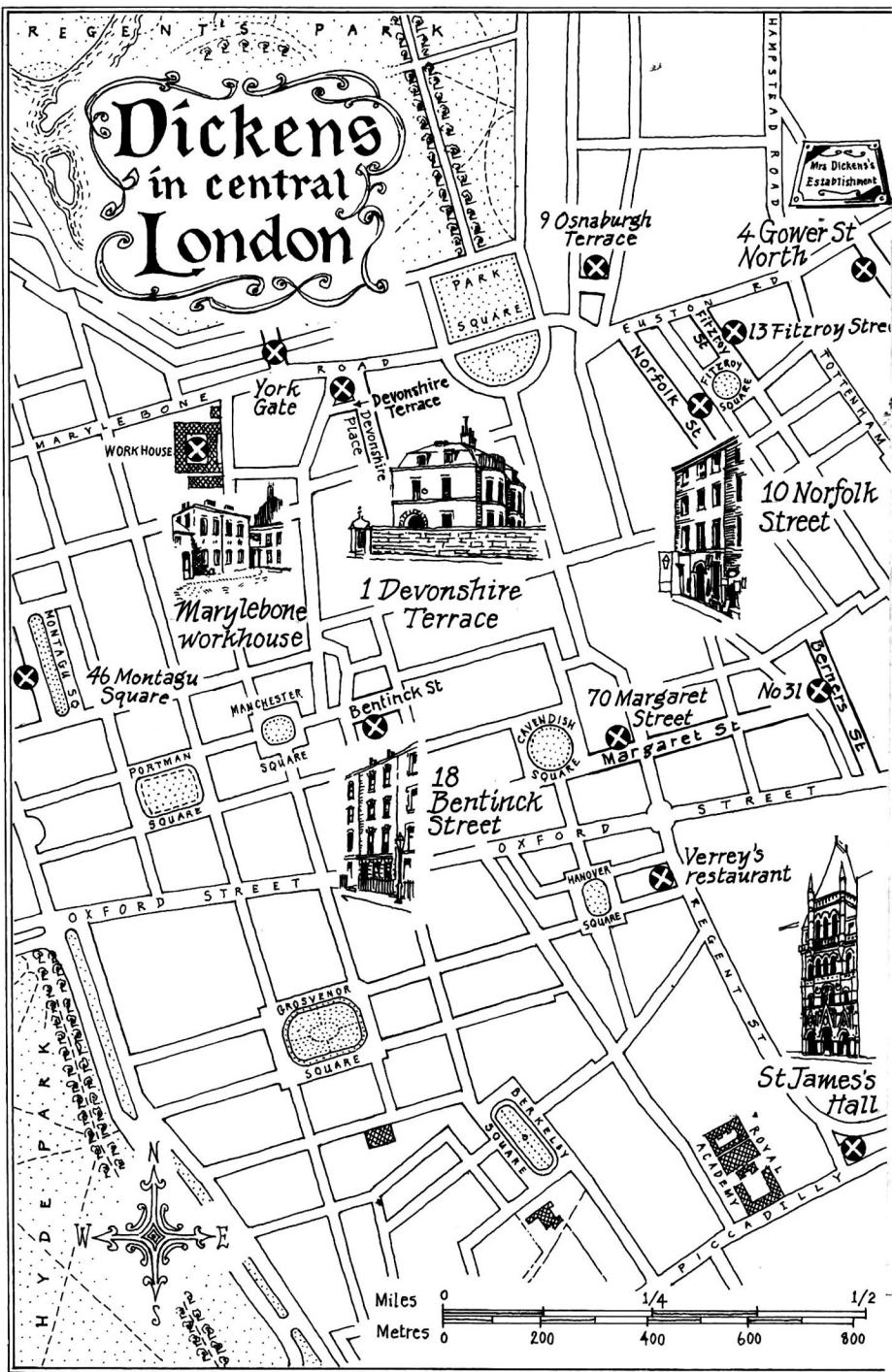
Ordnance
Terrace

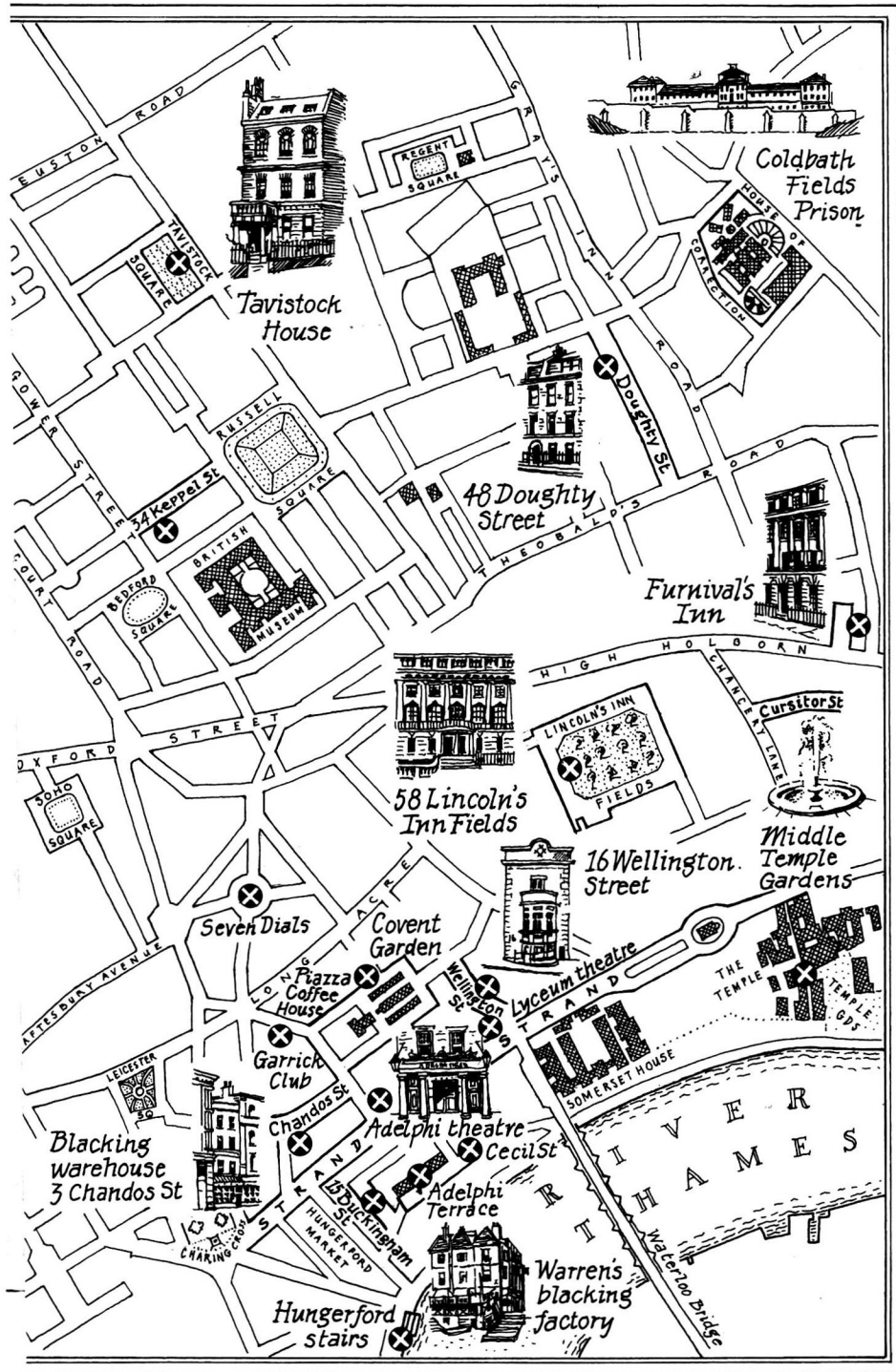


Gad's Hill and Rochester



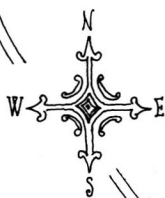
Dickens in central London





KENTISH TOWN

Dickens in north London



Miles 0 1/4 1/2
Metres 0 200 400 600 800

4 Grafton
Terrace

CAMDEN

KENTISH TOWN



70 Gloucester
Crescent

GLoucester
CRESCENT



16 Bayham St

2 Houghton
Place

ADMIRALTY
CRESCENT



27 Little
College
Street

LITTLE COLLEGE STREET

29 Johnson
Street



17 The
Polygon



Wellington House Academy
Hampstead Road

Granby St

JOHNSON ST



CLARENCE
SQUARE

SOMERSTOWN

To King's Cross

Regent's Canal

To Enston

Regent's Canal

CHALK FARM

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Key to Maps

Gad's Hill and Rochester

John Dickens and his young family lived in **Rochester** and **Chatham** from 1817 to 1822, first at **No. 2 Ordnance Terrace** above Rochester, then from 1821 at No. 18 St Mary's Place, near the dockyards. Dickens was sometimes taken by his father up the **Medway** in the naval yacht. He went to school here from the age of nine.

Chalk village: Dickens spent his honeymoon here in 1836 in **Mrs Nash's cottage**, working on *The Pickwick Papers*.

Gad's Hill: Dickens saw the house as a child, purchased it in 1856, made it his country home thereafter and died there. He loved walking in **Cobham Woods**, showing friends the beauties of the Kentish countryside and Rochester, and taking a boat on the Medway. He wished to be buried in the country, and the family first chose **Shorne Churchyard** and then **Rochester Cathedral**, but were persuaded that Westminster Abbey was the appropriate place. His body was taken on a special train from **Higham Station** to Charing Cross early in the morning of 14 June, accompanied by the family mourners.

Dickens in Central London

Adelphi Theatre, Strand: Dickens was inspired by the character acting of Charles Mathews, who was the star here in the 1820s and 1830s. Many dramatizations of Dickens's early novels and Christmas stories were played here from 1834 on.

No. 15 Buckingham Street: Dickens lodged here in 1834, and put David Copperfield into lodgings here.

No. 18 Bentinck Street: Dickens lodged here in 1833.

No. 31 Berners Street: Maria and Nelly Ternan lived in lodgings here autumn 1858 to spring 1859, when they moved to Houghton Place (see North London map).

Cecil Street: Dickens lodged here briefly in 1832. The street has disappeared under the Shell building.

No. 3 Chandos Street: Dickens was set to work in the window of the blacking warehouse here, where he was noticed by Charles Dilke, who gave him half-a-crown.

Coldbath Fields Prison: Dickens was an obsessive visitor of prisons and this was a favourite, the governor Augustus Tracey a close friend. It was built on Mount Pleasant, where the Post Office now has a sorting office.

No. 1 Devonshire Terrace: home of Dickens from December 1839 until December 1851, let out when he went abroad.

No. 48 Doughty Street: Dickens bought lease in 1837, lived here until December 1839. Now the Charles Dickens Museum.

No. 13 Fitzroy Street: Dickens lodged here occasionally with his parents in 1832.

Furnival's Inn: Dickens moved to chambers here in 1834, and to better rooms on his marriage in 1836. His first child, Charley, was born here January 1837. They moved out March 1837.

Garrick Club: Dickens a member from 1837, resigning and rejoining frequently.

No. 4 Gower Street North: Dickens lived here with parents in 1823, his mother hoping to establish a school.

Hungerford Stairs, Warren's blacking factory: the factory, set beside the river stairs before the Embankment was built, was reached through the old Hungerford Market, over which Charing Cross Station was built in 1864.

No. 34 Keppel Street: Dickens installed John Dickens in a doctor's house here, and was present at his father's death in 1851.

No. 58 Lincoln's Inn Fields: John Forster lodged here from