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## Charles Dickens: Life, Work and Legacy

Litvack, L. (Author). (2012). Charles Dickens: Life, Work and Legacy: An exhibition held in Carrickfergus to celebrate the Dickens bicentenary; curated by Leon Litvack. Exhibition

### Document Version:

Publisher's PDF, also known as Version of record

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# DICKENS TIMELINE PART I

- 1812 Charles John Huffam Dickens (CD) born at 13 Mile End Terrace, Portsmouth (7 February), the second child of John and Elizabeth Dickens.
- 1815 John Dickens (a clerk in the navy Pay Office recalled to London).
- 1817 John Dickens stationed at Sheerness, Kent, then at Chatham.
- 1820 CD receives instruction in the rudiments of English and Latin from his mother.
- 1821-22 CD and sister Fanny sent to small preparatory school, kept by the Rev. William Giles, in Chatham.
- 1822 John Dickens recalled to Somerset House and moves his family to London. CD withdrawn from school on account of family's limited resources.
- 1823 Mrs. Dickens opens a school for young ladies; the school fails.
- 1824 James Lamert, a relative, offers to employ CD in Warren's Blacking Warehouse. John Dickens arrested for debt and sent to the Marshalsea Debtors' Prison. Mrs. Dickens with children join John Dickens in prison. CD moves to an attic in Lant Street, Borough. John Dickens released from prison. CD enters Wellington House Academy school, Hampstead Road, London.
- 1825 John Dickens retires from the Navy Pay Office.
- 1827 CD begins work in the office of Messrs. Ellis & Blackmore, attorneys.
- 1828 CD leaves Ellis & Blackmore's and works for a solicitor, Lincoln's Inn.
- 1829 Resigns as a clerk and learns shorthand, finding work as a freelance shorthand reporter at Doctors' Commons (civil law court).
- 1830 Meets and falls in love with Maria Beadnell (courts her until 1833).
- 1831 CD joins staff of the Mirror of Parliament, edited by his uncle, J.M. Barrow.
- 1832 Joins the True Sun as a Parliamentary reporter. Granted an audition at Covent Garden Theatre, but falls ill.
- 1833 First literary composition, 'A Dinner at Poplar Walk' published.
- 1834 Meets Catherine Hogarth, his future wife. Adopts the pseudonym of 'Boz'. Works on the Morning Chronicle (to 1836). John Dickens arrested for debt again. CD secures his release.
- 1835 Continues to publish sketches of London life. Engaged to Catherine Hogarth.
- 1836 Selection of Dickens's published articles, with drawings by George Cruikshank, published as Sketches by Boz.  
First monthly number of Pickwick Papers appears (to 1837).  
Marriage of Charles Dickens to Catherine Thompson Hogarth, in Chelsea.  
Signs a contract to edit the magazine Bentley's Miscellany (to 1839).  
Introduced to John Forster (his life-long friend, literary executor & biographer).
- 1837 Oliver Twist begins in Bentley's Miscellany (to 1839).  
Moves to 48 Doughty Street (now the Charles Dickens Museum).  
Death of Mary Hogarth, CD's sister in law, in his arms.
- 1838 Visits Yorkshire with his illustrator, Phiz, to inspect the schools there, with a view to treatment in Nicholas Nickleby.  
First monthly part of Nicholas Nickleby appears (to 1839).
- 1839 Gives up editorship of Bentley's Miscellany. CD moves to 1 Devonshire Terrace, Regent's Park.
- 1840 Signs a contract with Chapman and Hall to edit Master Humphrey's Clock.  
First weekly number of The Old Curiosity Shop published in Master Humphrey's Clock (to 1841).
- 1841 First of 42 weekly parts of Barnaby Rudge appears in Master Humphrey's Clock.  
Invited to stand as a Liberal MP for Reading, but declines.  
Falls ill, and is operated on for fistula.
- 1842 Six-month tour of the United States & Canada, accompanied by Catherine.  
On his return to England becomes more active on social issues & political reform.  
Visits Field Lane Ragged School for the poor, and enters an informal philanthropic partnership with Angela Burdett Coutts, the richest woman in England (continues until 1858).  
Publishes American Notes.  
Sister-in-law Georgina Hogarth stays with the family and becomes a permanent member of CD's household.  
First monthly part of Martin Chuzzlewit appears (to 1844).
- 1843 Conceives plan to go abroad again, and spend a year on the Continent.  
Publishes A Christmas Carol (first of five Christmas books).
- 1844 Begins action against piracy on the part of printers and publishers.  
Breaks with the publishers Chapman and Hall.  
Publication agreement reached with Bradbury & Evans.  
Spends most of the year in Genoa, Italy, travelling via Paris and Marseilles.  
The Chimes (second Christmas book) published.
- 1845 Returns to England.  
Conceives of plan to edit a newspaper, The Daily News.  
Cricket on the Hearth (third Christmas Book) appears.
- 1846 Pictures from Italy published.  
Conceives a plan for a home for fallen women (Urania Cottage).  
Leaves England for Switzerland with his family.  
First monthly part of Dombey and Son appears (to 1846).  
Dickens first mentions the possibility of writing a sustained.  
Leaves for Paris with the family.  
Publishes The Battle of Life (fourth Christmas Book).
- 1847 Family returns from Paris.  
John Forster learns of CD's childhood and his experiences in the Blacking Warehouse.  
Urania Cottage (home for fallen women) opens in Shepherd's Bush; CD takes charge of many practical arrangements.
- 1848 CD takes part in amateur theatrical performances, to raise funds for preserving Shakespeare's house at Stratford.  
The Haunted Man (fifth Christmas Book) published.
- 1849 Writes essays for the Examiner about abuses to children at a juvenile asylum.  
Forster sees Dickens's 'Autobiographical Fragment' 'in its connected shape'.

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# DICKENS TIMELINE PART II

David Copperfield begins to appear, in 20 monthly instalments (to 1850).

Letters by CD opposing public hangings published in The Times and as a pamphlet.

1850 Speaks at the first dinner of the Metropolitan Sanitary Association .  
First number of CD's weekly journal Household Words appears (runs continuously until May 28 1859).

1851 CD's A Child's History of England begins in Household Words (to 1853).  
Death of John Dickens at Malvern.  
Sudden death of daughter Dora Dickens at Devonshire Terrace.  
Occupies new home, Tavistock House, in Bloomsbury, London.

1852 First monthly part of Bleak House appears (to 1853).

1853 At Boulogne with family.  
Tours Switzerland and Italy.

1854 First weekly instalment of Hard Times appears in Household Words.  
Gives reading of A Christmas Carol at Reading, Sherborne, and Bradford.

1855 CD's meets his old love, Mrs. Maria Winter (née Beadnell) and is disappointed.  
Takes up residence in Paris (until May 1856).  
First monthly part of Little Dorrit appears (to 1857).

1856 Concludes purchase of a country mansion, Gad's Hill Place, Rochester.  
Confides in Forster about his marital troubles.

1857 Produces the play The Frozen Deep (by Wilkie Collins) at Tavistock House. Employs Ellen Ternan (later his mistress) for the performances.  
Takes possession of Gad's Hill Place.  
Performance of The Frozen Deep before Queen Victoria at Gallery of Illustration.  
Falls in love with Ellen Ternan; begins to end his marriage.  
CD returns to Gad's Hill, avoiding Catherine at Tavistock House.

1858 Reads A Christmas Carol at St. Martin's Hall for Great Ormond St Hospital.  
First series of paid readings for his own benefit begin in St. Martin's Hall, London.  
Separates from Catherine, who leaves Tavistock House, and goes to live at Gloucester Crescent, Regent's Park (d. 22 Nov. 1879).  
Harsh separation negotiations. Rumours circulated by Mrs Hogarth and her daughter Helen, accusing Dickens of adultery with Ellen Ternan, and with his sister-in-law Georgina, upset the negotiations. Catherine agrees to CD's terms.  
CD publishes 'Personal' statement about his separation in The Times (reprinted in Household Words, 12 June).  
First provincial public reading tour. Gives 85 readings, taking in England, Ireland and Scotland. Walks to Carrickfergus from Belfast.  
CD reads in Belfast on 28 August.  
First series of eight Christmas readings in St. Martin's.

1859 Breaks with publishers Bradbury & Evans because they opposed Dickens's use of Household Words to air private matters.  
First number of CD's second weekly journal All the Year Round appears, containing the opening chapters of A Tale of Two Cities (continues weekly).  
CD's Second provincial reading tour.  
London Christmas readings.

1860 The Uncommercial Traveller begins in All the Year Round (irregular contributions continue until 5 June 1869).  
Gives up Tavistock House, and settles

permanently at Gad's Hill.

Destroys a great deal of correspondence, urging his friends to do the same.

First weekly instalment of Great Expectations appears in All the Year Round (to 1861).

1861 Readings in London, at St. James's Hall.

1862 Readings at St. James's Hall, London.  
Stays in Paris with sister-in-law Georgina and daughter Mamie.

1863 Gives readings for charity at the British Embassy, Paris.  
Death of his mother, Elizabeth Dickens.  
Death of son Walter in Calcutta, India.

1864 First monthly part of Our Mutual Friend appears (to 1865).  
Health increasingly troubled.

1865 Suffers from gout in the foot.  
Frequent holidays with Ellen Ternan in France.  
In railway accident at Staplehurst (travelling with Ellen Ternan & Mrs. Ternan, returning from France). Dickens rushes to help the injured (widely reported), but manages to keep the Ternans out of the public eye.

1866 CD takes a house in Slough for Ellen Ternan under the assumed name of Tringham.  
Gives series of readings in various towns.

1867 Series of provincial readings, including in Ireland (50 in total).  
CD reads in Belfast on 20 March.  
CD takes Windsor Lodge, Peckham, for Ellen Ternan and pays the rates under the assumed names of Turnham and Tringham.  
Begins reading tour in the United States.

1868 Leaves New York and returns to England.  
CD begins his farewell reading tour, including Sikes and Nancy (from Oliver Twist), which has a powerful effect.

1869 Readings in England, Scotland, and Ireland.  
CD reads in Belfast on 8 and 15 January.  
Public dinner given to CD at Liverpool, Lord Dufferin in the chair.  
CD's health breaks down at Preston. The remaining readings are cancelled.  
Begins writing Edwin Drood.

1870 Last twelve 'Farewell readings' in London.  
Interview with Queen Victoria.  
Publishes first monthly part of Edwin Drood (continues until September; only six of the planned twelve instalments are written before Dickens dies).  
Death of Charles Dickens on 9 June, at Gad's Hill, of a stroke.  
Burial in Westminster Abbey on 14 June. Private funeral attended by immediate family (though not Catherine Dickens), and close friends. Ellen Ternan not in attendance. Grave is then left open so that the public can pay their respects.

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