

# THE WORLD OF CHARLES DICKENS

Rediscovering the places & characters portrayed in his books

Stephen Browning

The principal aim of this book is to help the reader rediscover the places and characters associated with Charles Dickens, both in real life and in his novels, short stories and magazine articles. It will be especially enjoyed by those who, like the author, have held a life-long passion for Dickens' writings, but it will also encourage new readers to delve deeper into the extraordinary world and its characters created by one of our greatest writers.

While the would-be explorer need travel no further from their favourite armchair, the book can also be used as a walking tour in some cases, taking his readers through present-day streets to find the places Dickens himself would have known well.

In this way the reader is taken on a fascinating literary adventure through London, Kent, Yorkshire, the Midlands, the South of England, the West Country and East Anglia, their journey illuminated by over 200 photographs taken specially for the book, along with contemporary paintings and illustrations from Dickens' original works created by the likes of George Cruikshank, Robert Seymour and Hablot Knight Browne.

Stephen Browning, the ultimate enthusiast, takes his readers by the hand to explore the same streets through which Dickens walked in Victorian times. Throughout, he provides a running commentary on the most famous of Dickens' works, placing the stories and characters in their real-life locations, the houses, inns, streets, towns and cities that inspired the author's wonderful imagination.

## ABOUT THE AUTHOR

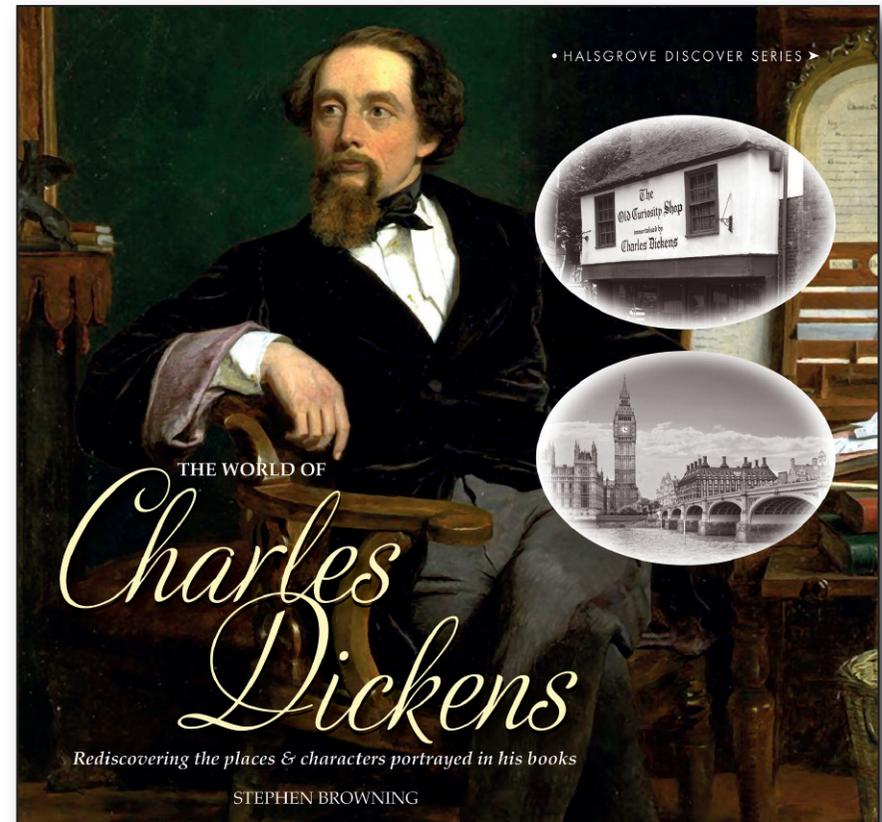
Stephen Browning was educated in Norfolk before gaining an honours degree in History from the University of Kent at Canterbury. After training as a teacher at the University of Birmingham School of Education, he spent much of his working life promoting teacher exchanges between the United Kingdom and the overseas Commonwealth. He also worked for the Council for Education in the Commonwealth. He has written extensively about best practice in education both in the UK and the 50-plus countries of the Commonwealth. He has written, or contributed to, a number of books about the English Language, mainly for the Asian market. He spends several months each year in Taiwan. His books for Halsgrove include: *Discover Norwich*; *Norfolk: Exploring the Land of Wide Skies*; *Spirit of Norwich Cathedral* (all with co-author Daniel Tink), and *When Schooldays Were Fun*.

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Above: *Tiny Tim* by Frederick Barnard, published as frontispiece to the 1870 edition of *A Christmas Carol*.

Right: *Satis House*. The home of Miss Havisham in *Great Expectations*. It is also across the road that Dickens was last seen alive three days before his death, leaning on a fence and gazing at the house.



One possible location for *The Old Curiosity Shop*, although some experts think it may have been nearer to Tottenham Court Road.



Covent Garden, where Dickens would sometimes rent rooms and where he had his encounter with the man with the large meat pie in his hat.



Left: The front room of *Bleak House* from which Dickens would look out across Viking Bay.

*Charles Dickens*

Minor Canon Row

View from Park, through which Pip walked to see Miss Havisham.

At the rear of the cathedral is a row of cottages, Minor Canon Row, which housed, in Dickens' day, some of the lesser clergy. They are referred to in *The Mystery of Edwin Drood*.

If you carry on walking, Vine Park hove into view. Pip takes this route on his way to see Miss Havisham for the last time in *Great Expectations*. He would probably have been thinking of all his past pain – the desperate, unrequited, love for Estella, who had been brought up by Miss Havisham to break men's hearts. Maybe he was thinking of her cruel words: "Methinks, and all sorts of ugly creatures, better about a lighted candle."

Surely, too, he could have been wondering how he managed to keep his youthful sanity on his most significant previous visit. The lady of the house, filled on her wedding day, had resolved to keep everything in one room exactly as it was at twenty to meet that fateful morning, at the precise moment she received the unhappy tidings of her lover's desertion and mockery. Pip, a young and innocent boy, in love with a girl who seems to despise him, is introduced to the riot and decay of the wedding room, in a scene of horror enough to send a sensitive nature ever the widge. Pip is talking.

ROCHESTER ON FOOT AND COOKING, CULINARY

"The most prominent object was a long table with a tablecloth spread upon it, as if a feast had been in preparation when the house and the clocks all stopped together. An orange or conference of some kind was in the middle of this cloth; it was so heavily overlaid with candles that its form was quite indistinguishable and as I looked along the glittering expanse of which I remember its seeming to grow, like a black fungus, I saw speck-legged spiders with fleshy bodies running here to it, as if some circumstance of the greatest public importance had just transpired in the quiet community."

"This," said she, pointing to the long table with her stick, "is where I will be laid when I am dead. They shall come and look at me here."

Pip's last visit does, in fact, end with Miss Havisham's death. She catches her dress in the fire and dies of burns a short while later. She realizes that she has merely broken Pip's

FROM MISS AVENUE'S 1847-1852, 1847-1852

At a time when there was no other media to seriously challenge the written word, a new monthly segment of a Dickens novel was a major event indeed. Apart from anything else he was a successful entertainment business and the public adored him.

"What have I done? What have I done?" Pip and Miss Havisham.

Below: *Smithfield* today – in past centuries, the place for hangings, torture, and markets of several sorts.



Example of a double-page spread.