**London Explorers Walk – 2nd April 2014**

A walk from Embankment, through Convent Garden and Lincoln’s Inn Field to the Dickens Museum and then back via Gray’s Inn and the Strand, looking at some of the places where he lived and worked or incorporated in his novels.

The itinerary is listed below and I’ll hand out a map and provide additional information on the day.

**Meeting Points:-**

1. **08:45** at Tunbridge Wells Train Station, Morrison’s side (to enable us to buy Group Tickets) for the 9:09 Train to Charing Cross.
2. **10:15** in The Crypt (basement of St Martin’s in the Field) in St Martin’s Place (NE corner of Trafalgar Square)

**The Walk**

1. 10:15. Meet downstairs in The Crypt, for a coffee and toilet stop
2. 10:45. Leave the Crypt and return to Charing Cross station. Walk down Villiers St, noticing no 43, which was Rudyard Kipling’s house. He wrote the partly autobiographical novel ‘The Light That Failed’ here, in which Dick Heldar takes some rooms overlooking the Thames near Charing Cross. Walk under the **Arches**, which was the site of the Hungerford Stairs and Warren’s Blacking Warehouse. Dickens’s father was in Marshalsea Prison, so to provide some income for the family, Dickens worked here age 12. To alleviate the boredom, he made up stories to entertain his work-mates, one of whom was called Bob Fagin.
3. Retrace our steps up Villiers St, turning right into John Adams St and then right into Buckingham St. A young Dickens lived at no 15 at the very top of the house in two attic rooms. The house has been demolished but it was identical to the one next door. At that time the Thames nearly came up to the steps at the front of this street.
4. Go back up Buckingham Street and cross The Strand, turning left into Bedford St and right into Maiden Lane, to no 35, **Rules Restaurant**. Dickens was a regular customer and there is a special Dickens room with memorabilia. It had many famous customers and Edward VII, when he was The Prince of Wales, and his mistress Lillie Langtrey, dined here so often that a secret door was made for the couple, so they could enter unobserved.
5. Corpus Christi Church is also in Maiden Lane and more details are in the accompanying notes.
6. Continue to the end of Maiden Lane, cross Southampton Street and go down Tavistock St by the side of **Covent Garden**. This was one of Dickens’ favourite childhood places. He refers to it in **Oliver Twist**, where Bill Sikes remarks that ‘50 boy-thieves could be found there every night’ and in **The Pickwick Papers**, Job Trotter spends the night in a vegetable basket. Turn left at the London Transport Museum and then right into Russell Street.
7. Turn left into **Bow Street**, to the Bow Street Magistrates Court, where the Artful Dodger was held after stealing a gentleman’s handkerchief. This was home to the Bow Street Runners, London’s first regular police force.
8. Return down Bow Street, which becomes Wellington St. At the corner of Tavistock Street is **Charles** **Dickens Coffee House**, which seems to be closed, but from 1859 to 1870, the house was the offices of Dickens magazine, **All the Year Round**. It was so popular that crowds would gather outside, waiting for the next edition. He lodged in the rooms above in his later years when he was visiting London for public readings.
9. Continue walking up Tavistock Street; turn left into Drury Lane, right into Kemble Rd up to **Kingsway**. Cross over, turn left and then right down Sardinia Street. Turn right into Portsmouth Street to **The Old Curiosity Shop**. This was built in 1567 and is thought to be one of the oldest shops in London. Dickens knew the owner at the time, Mr Tessyman, and had visited the shop, but it is not known if he based his novel of the same name on this shop.
10. Retrace our steps to **Lincoln Inn Fields**. No 58, on the left was the home of his great friend and biographer John Forster. Dickens used the house as the model for **Bleak House** and gave his first private reading of **The Chimes** in the front upstairs rooms.
11. Walk through the gardens to the red brick stone gatehouse and enter **Lincoln Inn**, one of the four surviving Inns of Court. The Chapel is of interest and the Old Hall, which dates from 1490, was originally used as a High Court of Chancery.
12. Walk along New Square, left into Old Buildings, then right into **Chancery Lane**. Turn left and walk up Southampton Buildings, to **Staple Inn Square**, one of his favourite places.
13. Exit at the front, to admire the buildings and turn left into High Holborn, cross over and turn right into Warwick Court, by the Cittie of Yorke Public House to **Gray’s Inn**. Another of the surviving Inns Of Court, it dates to the 14th C and he describes it **The Uncommercial Traveller** as ‘one of the most depressing institutions in brick and mortar known to the children of men’.
14. Walk up Jockey Fields to the left of Gray’s Inn, to Theobalds St, turn right and then left into Great James Street, aiming to arrive at **The Rugby Pub** for lunch by **12.30**.
15. We leave at 13.25 for the 5 minute walk up Milliman Street, left into Guildford Street and right into **Doughty Street** for the **Charles Dickens Musuem.**
16. At 14.30 we’ll leave the museum and walk down Doughty Street/John St to Theobalds Street. Turn left and then right to walk down Gray’s Inn Road. There is a large red-brick building, which is the site of **Furnival’s Inn**.
17. At the end of Gray’s Inn Rd, retrace our steps through Staples Inn, down Chancery Lane to **Fleet Street**. Notice **Prince Henry’s Room** and **Temple Bar** by the Royal Courts of Justice.
18. Carry on down to The Strand past **St Clement Dane’s church** to **St Mary-le-Strand**. Dickens parents were married here in 1809, as his father walked as a clerk in Somerset House.
19. Continue on to Charing Cross Station to get the **16.00** train or earlier.

**2. Warren’s Blacking Factory**

Dickens began writing an autobiography in the late 1840s which he shared with his friend and future biographer, John Forster. Dickens found the writing too painful and burned what he had written. He opted instead to work his story into the fictional account of David Copperfield.

In the novel Dickens' painful memories of being taken from school to work at Warren's Blacking Factory while his father is in prison for debt are told through David's account of Murdstone and Grinby's warehouse. The financial troubles of the [Micawbers](http://charlesdickenspage.com/characters.html#micawber), with whom David was boarding at the time, mirror Dickens' parents, John and Elizabeth Dickens, financial difficulties.

When David is asked by Mrs Micawber to take some of their treasured possessions to the pawn shop to help meet their obligations, Dickens is recalling painful memories of having to pawn off the very books he read and treasured as a child to ease his family's financial woes.

On Dickens' death Forster wrote *The Life of Charles Dickens*, which is still the definitive biography of Dickens, although many of the more negative aspects of Dickens life are glossed over or missing altogether. Forster's biography included the autobiographical fragment Dickens had given him. This was the first the public knew of Dickens' difficult childhood that had so heavily shaped his early work.

Much of the information contained in Dickens' autobiographical fragment is contained in the chapter opening chapter:

David Copperfield is born six months after his father's death. His mother has married Mr. Murdstone whom David dislikes. Murdstone beats David and David bites him, the furious Murdstone sends David away to school in London. While away at school David learns that his mother has died. David is removed from school and sent to work in Murdstone's wine warehouse: Murdstone and Grinby's.

“I know enough of the world now, to have almost lost the capacity of being much surprised by anything; but it is matter of some surprise to me, even now, that I can have been so easily thrown away at such an age. A child of excellent abilities, and with strong powers of observation, quick, eager, delicate, and soon hurt bodily or mentally, it seems wonderful to me that nobody should have made any sign in my behalf. But none was made; and I became, at ten years old, a little labouring hind in the service of Murdstone and Grinby.

Murdstone and Grinby's warehouse was at the waterside. It was down in Blackfriars. Modern improvements have altered the place; but it was the last house at the bottom of a narrow street, curving down hill to the river, with some stairs at the end, where people took boat. It was a crazy old house with a wharf of its own, abutting on the water when the tide was in, and on the mud when the tide was out, and literally overrun with rats. Its panelled rooms, discoloured with the dirt and smoke of a hundred years, I dare say; its decaying floors and staircase; the squeaking and scuffling of the old grey rats down in the cellars; and the dirt and rottenness of the place; are things, not of many years ago, in my mind, but of the present instant. They are all before me, just as they were in the evil hour when I went among them for the first time, with my trembling hand in Mr. Quinion's.”

**3. Buckingham Street**

In **David Copperfield**, he lodged with Mrs Crupp. **“they were at the top of the house....it consisted of a little blind entry where you could hardly see anything at all, a sitting room and a bedroom. The furniture was rather faded, but quite good enough for me, and sure enough the river was just outside the window.”** Other notable people lived in this street, including Samuel Pepys, the Earl of Oxford and the marine painter Clarkson Stanfield. He was resident scene painter at the Drury Lane theatre, until he concentrated on his painting although he continued to design scenery for Dickens’s amateur theatricals.

**5. Corpus Christi Church**

Situated between the Covent Garden Market and the Strand, Maiden Lane was originally a path running along the southern edge of the ‘Covent Garden’: that is, the Convent Garden, belonging to the Benedictine monks of Westminster Abbey, and providing produce for their table. The lane was blocked at the eastern end by a great statue of Our Lady (some say this is how the Lane got its name) but unblocked in 1857 by Royal Decree of Queen Victoria. Queen Victoria didn’t take kindly to her carriage having to negotiate a three-point turn on her way from a favourite haunt of the Adelphi Theatre.

A less pleasant explanation for the name of the Lane is that it is a corruption of the Middle-English word ‘Midden’, meaning a place where beasts of burden would relieve themselves. In the past, Maiden Lane had a bewitching quality which attracted the great and the good: Louis Napoleon, Benjamin Disraeli and Voltaire all lived here, the artist J.M.W. Turner was born here, Edward VII and Lily Langtry dined here, and the celebrated actor of his day, William Terriss was murdered here by a crazed understudy in 1897.

The foundation stone of Corpus Christi was laid on 5th August 1873. The architect, Frederick Hyde Pownall, had to struggle with a cramped and awkward-shaped site, and to mollify local concerns about the proposed height of the church, he sank it three feet below the level of the pavement.

The church was finally opened with a fanfare on 20th October 1874 by the Cardinal Archbishop. From the official opening in 1874 it took another 82 years before the original £8,000 debt could be paid off and, as a result, the church was consecrated on 18th October 1956.

**11. Lincolns Inn Chapel and Hall**

The first mention of a chapel dates from 1428, but the current building was built in 1623.

Destitute mothers would abandon their new-born babies in the Undercroft in the hope that the Law Society would take pity on them. If they were accepted, they were normally given the surname of Lincoln.

The church bell has tolled curfew (60 times very night) every evening at 9pm since 1596. It is also the custom to toll the bell when a “bencher” of the Inn dies. Barristers would send out their clerks to discover who had passed away. It is believed that John Donne, who founded the chapel and whose name is on the rolls inside the chapel for Divinity Reader, was inspired by this when he wrote in 1624 **“never send to know for whom the bell tolls; it tolls for thee”**

Dickens worked as a solicitor’s clerk in nearby New Square, and often mentioned how he disliked Lincolns Inn Old Hall. **Bleak House** open here and Dickens says “**This is the Court of the Chancery, which has its decaying and its blighted lands in every shire and which has its worn-out lunatics in every madhouse and its dead in every churchyard…suffer any wrong that can be done you, rather than come here**”.

**12. Staple Inn Square**

In the courtyard with a fountain, at the top of the stairs is no 10, where Mr Grewgious lived in **The Mystery of Edwin Drood**. He was fascinated by the inscription P.J.T. 1747 above the door. It stood for President John Thomas, the president of the Inn. In this novel Dickens wrote “**Behind the most ancient part of Holboen, where certain gabled houses some centuries of age still stand looking at the public way… ia a little nook called Staple Inn… it imparts on the relieved pedestrian the sensation of having put cotton in his ears and velvet soles on his feet**”.

Staple Inn is one of the few surviving pre-Great Fire of London facades, dating from 1576. It was a former legal Inn of Chancery and was originally a Wool Staple, where wool was weighed and taxed.

**South Square** (if we have time)

Dickens worked at no 1, as a solicitor’s clerk when he was 15. He was bored with the mundane duties and admitted that he used to drop cherry stones onto the heads of passing lawyers below. Gray's Inn provided a setting for parts of the action in several of his novels, including **Martin Chuzzlewit** and **David Copperfield**. The poet Shelley, who was severely in debt, used to meet his future wife Mary Godwin here in secret on Sundays, which was the only day of the week when debtors could not be arrested.

**16. Furnival’s Inn**

This was another Inn of Chancery. It was the first marital home and they moved there in 2nd April 1836. Their first child was born there on Twelfth Night and he said ‘I shall never be so happy again as in those chambers three stories high – never if I roll in wealth and fame’.

**17. Temple Bar**

Temple Bar is the point in London where Fleet Street, City of London, becomes the Strand, Westminster, and where the City of London traditionally erected a barrier to regulate trade into the city. Today, the Royal Courts of Justice are located next to it. As the most important entrance to London from Westminster, it has long been the custom that the monarch stops at Temple Bar before entering the City of London, so that the Lord Mayor may offer him or her the City's pearl-encrusted Sword of State as a token of loyalty.

**St Clement Dane’s church**

Mrs Lirriper was married here in **Christmas Stories** and the church is associated with the nursery rhyme Oranges and lemons.