

# Our Mutual Friend

by Charles Dickens

Souvenir Programme



## Our Mutual Friend

A major new drama serial  
from BBC Television  
in four weekly episodes

### Starring:

Pam Ferris, Anna Friel,  
Steven Mackintosh, Paul McGann,  
David Morrissey, Timothy Spall  
and Peter Vaughan

Written by . . . . . Sandy Welch  
Produced by . . . Catherine Wearing  
Directed by . . . . . Julian Jarrold

# Our Mutual Friend

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## Credits

<b>Editor</b>	<b>Paul Kriwaczek</b>
<b>Assistant Editor</b>	<b>Claudia Marciante</b>
<b>Designer</b>	<b>Nathan Barry</b>

Images from the television serial

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19th century illustrations by courtesy of

**The Dickens Project**

University of California at Santa Cruz

# The Cast

profiles by Mike Williams <sup>1</sup>

Dickens's novel is crammed with a huge cast of characters and types. Nearly fifty actors take part in the television serial, a real cross-section of the profession, from experienced elder statesmen and women of the stage to bright young neophytes.



## Lizzie Hexam

Lizzie Hexam, 'a dark girl of nineteen or twenty', is a stunningly beautiful young woman, but comes from the very lowest rung of the social ladder. Bella says of her: 'There is a shade of sadness upon her that is quite touching'.

Lizzie longs to escape her Thames-side home, but her duty to her father keeps her in Limehouse until his death. When Eugene Wrayburn accidentally comes into contact with her, he is immediately smitten by love, though his intentions towards her are unclear even to himself. Knowing full well that, for such as her, a liaison with a gentleman like Eugene is out of the question, she is torn apart by her love for him and her fear of Bradley Headstone.



## Keeley Hawes

Keeley Hawes, who stars as Lizzie Hexam, believes the Dickens story has a message for today. 'The relationships between the characters and their problems are very contemporary,' says Keeley. 'A story like this makes you realise that people don't change that much.'

Keeley's character is an illiterate working-class girl struggling to survive in the harsh world of Victorian London. She finds herself caught in a love triangle between Eugene Wrayburn (Paul McGann) and Bradley Headstone (David Morrissey).

Keeley, 22, says she was drawn to the strength of the character and the timeless message of Dickens's novel. 'It has all the elements of a modern soap, like Eastenders, except it's a period piece. But I don't think costume drama has a stuffy image any more. Having stars like Anna Friel and Paul McGann helps. They're younger and trendier, more fanciable.'

As part of her role as the daughter of a Thames boatman, Keeley had to learn to row and spent punishing long hours filming on the river. 'It wasn't like working nine to five in an office,' Keeley says. 'We all complain about what hard work it is, but it's great fun really. We were sliding around in the mud, laughing.'

Keeley is eager to point out, however, that she has little in common with her screen character: 'I can't associate myself with her because I'm not an angel,' she says.

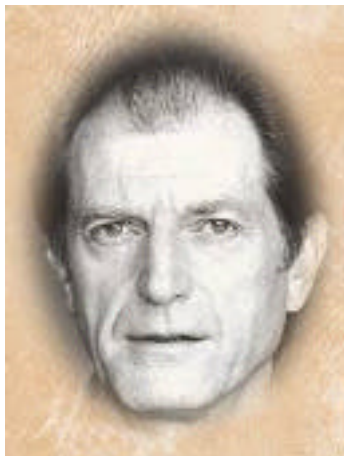
Keeley, a former model and daughter of a London taxi driver, found fame when she starred in Dennis Potter's *Karaoke* with Richard E Grant. She has played in major BBC dramas including *The Moonstone* and *The Beggar Bride*. Keeley appears with Sean Connery and Ralph Feinnes in the movie version of the TV series *The Avengers*.

<sup>1</sup> Mike Williams is a show-business writer and interviewer



## Rogue Riderhood

Roger, known as 'Rogue', Riderhood is one of Dickens's great villains. Describing himself as a 'waterside character', who 'gains an honest living with the sweat of his brow' he is in fact an evil opportunist who survives by scavenging from the river or by grabbing any other chance that comes his way. Before the novel opens, he has been in prison for stealing from a sailor. In the end, it is he who drives Bradley Headstone to his final fate.



## David Bradley

David Bradley is Rogue Riderhood, *Our Mutual Friend*'s ultimate low-life villain. 'When I first read the script I could see that Rogue was irredeemable,' David says, 'because the only way he knew to survive was by villainy. He has a criminal record, he is banned from all the pubs and he spends his life fishing bodies out of the Thames and going through their pockets. You start to wonder how many of them he put there.'

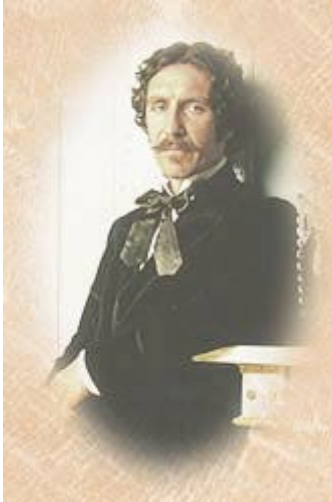
After a near death experience Rogue Riderhood reviews his life. 'But he is not redeemed even then,' says David. 'He just becomes more focused—as a blackmailer.'

David adds: 'The wonderful thing for me as an actor getting into character is that you have the book as well as the script. All the clues to the character are there—with Shakespeare, you have to look for them, Dickens puts all that imagery in your head and you're half-way there.'

David, 55, was born in York and won a place at RADA in 1966 after an early career in industry. He has an impressive list of television credits which includes: the award-winning BBC series *Our Friends in the North*, *Martin Chuzzlewit*, *The Buddha of Suburbia*, *Between The Lines*, *Casualty*. He has also appeared in the popular ITV series *Band of Gold*, *A Touch of Frost* and *Bramwell*.

David's theatre credits include award-winning performances in the RSC productions of *Hamlet*, and *Henry IV Part II*. He won the Laurence Olivier 1990 award for best supporting actor as the Fool in *King Lear* at the National Theatre.

He is currently filming *Vanity Fair*—a new six part BBC series—in which he appears as lecherous baronet Sir Pitt Crawley.



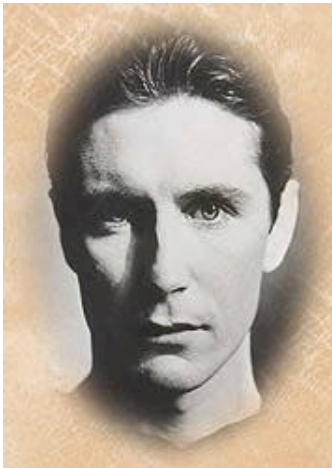
## Eugene Wrayburn

Eugene Wrayburn is Dickens's most radical hero: charismatic yet moody, gloomy, lazy and arrogant: *'a gentleman came coolly sauntering towards them, with a cigar in his mouth, his coat thrown back, and his hands behind him. Something in the careless manner of this person, and in a certain lazily arrogant air with which he approached, holding possession of twice as much pavement as another would have claimed, instantly caught the boy's attention.'* This is Eugene Wrayburn.

Wrayburn is a barrister, though he has never worked since being called to the bar: *'And I,' said Eugene, 'have been 'called' seven years, and have had no business at all, and never shall have any. And if I had, I shouldn't know how to do it.'*

But Eugene is capable of passion too. He becomes embroiled with Bradley Headstone the schoolmaster, in a tortuous love triangle over Lizzie Hexam. And it this love, so

unsuitable for a gentleman, which in the end redeems him and makes him a wiser and better man.



## Paul McGann

Paul McGann plays Eugene Wrayburn, a charismatic lawyer, caught in a tortuous love triangle which drives him to the edge of self-destruction.

For Charles Dickens the story may have been uncomfortably close to home. Paul explains: *'The author confessed to a close friend that there was more of him in this character than any others he'd ever drawn.'*

McGann was fascinated by Eugene's moral ambiguity. *'It's very modern in that it throws up questions that remain unanswered. When you think of Eugene's motives, there are times when he is very close to damnation. Eugene isn't cuddly; he's difficult and dubious.'*

The 39-year-old Liverpool-born actor became involved in plays at school before entering RADA at 18. His brothers Stephen, Joe and Mark are also actors. All four found fame with the rock and roll musical *Yakkety Yak*, which took the West End by storm in 1985. It was 11 years before the brothers worked together again in the major BBC series about the Irish potato famine: *The Hanging Gale*. The story was based on the experiences of his own family.

With Eugene, McGann is adding to an impressive list of outsider roles from his role in the cult *Withnail and I*, through to *The Monocled Mutineer* and *Dr Who*.

*'They're all marginals,'* he says. *'What is more interesting is that they're all heroes in their respective stories, yet for audiences they're not the easiest of people. You don't give your allegiance to them easily. They're strange and awkward, not cosy.'*

Paul's film credits include *Alien 3*, *Paper Mask*, *Empire of the Sun*, *Dealers* and Ken Russell's *The Rainbow*.

McGann's latest movie roles are as a police psychologist in *Downtime* and a sceptical Yorkshireman in *Fairy Tale: A True Story*.



## Bradley Headstone

Bradley Headstone is one of Dickens's more enigmatic characters. Intense, self-made, *'in his decent black coat and waistcoat, and decent white shirt, and decent formal black tie, and decent pantaloons of pepper and salt, with his decent silver watch in his pocket and its decent hair-guard round his neck, looked a thoroughly decent young man of six-and-twenty.'*

Though, as a schoolteacher of the poor—and thus as a force for social progress—he begins by attracting sympathy and approval, his doomed passion for Lizzie Hexam, aided and abetted by her brother Charley, and his consequent hatred of his rival Eugene Wrayburn, lead him down the path of madness, murder, self-destruction and death.



## David Morrissey

David Morrissey plays Bradley Headstone, a repressed schoolteacher, locked in the love tangle which forms the emotional core of *Our Mutual Friend*. Bradley is driven by envy, emphasising the strong issue of class that rings through the book.

David explains: 'He is on the outside looking in at society, and he's desperate to be inside. At the time, there was a massive backlash against educating the working-classes. It was thought that if you did, they wouldn't be satisfied with their lot. If you teach them to read, it was said, they'll just read subversive literature.'

Although he found the role rewarding, Morrissey admits that the demands were great. 'It's been very draining. When we were filming in Wales in a very confined space, it was all very intense and wounding stuff. It's physically tiring. You have to wind up for any role, but Bradley asks more of you, because he wears his heart on his sleeve. Towards the end, he's become a loose cannon and it's quite hysterical.'

It was all the more exhausting as Morrissey had only just finished an emotionally demanding shoot for Tony Marchant's acclaimed contemporary London drama, *Holding On*. He played another character descending into madness, an Inland Revenue inspector called Shaun. Coincidentally, his research for *Holding On* involved reading *Our Mutual Friend*. Both are concerned with portraying the life of London and its people.

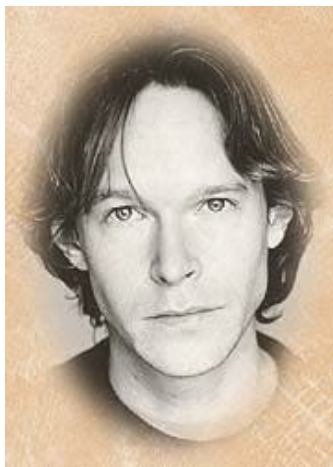
Now David, whose TV credits include *The Knock*, *Between The Lines* and *Out of The Blue*, would like a break from gritty realism. He is looking for light relief. 'I'd love to do a comedy,' he says, 'but no one ever asks me.'



## John Harmon

John Harmon is 'our mutual friend' of the title: 'A dark gentleman. Thirty at the utmost. An expressive, one might say handsome, face. A very bad manner. In the last degree constrained, reserved, diffident, troubled.'

Rightful heir to the fortune of his cruel and miserly father, and constrained by the terms of the will to marry Bella Wilfer, a girl whom he has never met, he is driven to assume a number of false identities in the course of his search for justice and love: '...in that same moment he was the Secretary also, Mr Boffin's Secretary. For John Rokesmith, too, was as like that same lost wanted Mr Julius Handford as never man was like another in this world.'



## Steven Mackintosh

For Steven Mackintosh the enigmatic John Harmon was the gift of a role. 'I'm not what you call a method actor,' he says, 'I like to play characters far removed from myself—characters who are evil and passionate and shrouded in mystery. I'm not comfortable with that 'extension of myself' kind of acting.'

'Some people play themselves brilliantly, but I like to go through a transformation. What I look for is to make a journey. I like having accents and costumes. Acting in it's most basic form is mimicry, that's where it all starts as a child.' Steven jokes: 'Basically, I'm a pretty boring person so there's no point in playing myself.'

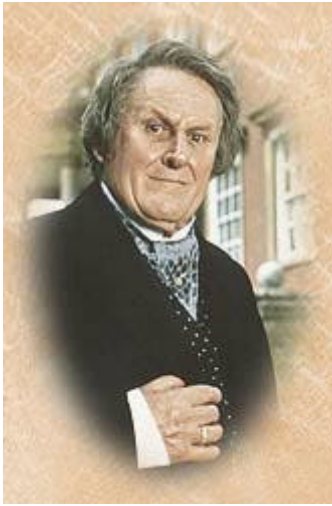
As Harmon he is a rich man who fakes his own death and assumes a new identity. The 30-year-old actor, who has starred in *House of America*, *Blue Juice*, *The Buddha of Suburbia*, *Karaoke* and *Prime Suspect*, is at home playing complex characters.

For Steven, the Harmon character offered a lot of scope. 'I found the idea of him using another identity to come back and observe things really intriguing.'

There were emotional challenges. A scene Steven found hardest was a confrontation with the villainous Silas Wegg. 'When I explode to Kenneth Cranham's character, it's a major turnaround. Having been very contained, suddenly John flips and pins Wegg to the wall. This man has strong emotions.'

He adds: 'I like naturalistic acting, and I like to see subtlety. When you're trying to portray honesty, the important thing is not to fuss it up. Play it direct that's the key.'

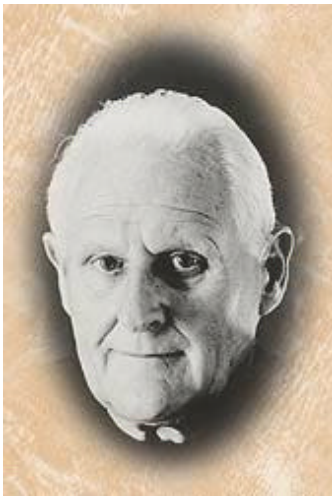
'The production is very dark,' Steven says, 'and very modern in many respects. A lot of people are going to come to this with certain expectations of what a costume drama should be like. Hopefully we will change those preconceptions.'



## Mr Boffin

**Mr Nicodemus, or 'Noddy', Boffin:** 'a broad, round-shouldered, one-sided old fellow in mourning, coming comically ambling towards the corner, dressed in a pea over-coat, and carrying a large stick. He wore thick shoes, and thick leather gaiters, and thick gloves like a hedger's. Both as to his dress and to himself, he was of an overlapping rhinoceros build, with folds in his cheeks, and his forehead, and his eyelids, and his lips, and his ears; but with bright, eager, childish-inquiring, grey eyes, under his ragged eyebrows, and broad-brimmed hat. A very odd-looking old fellow altogether.'

Mr Boffin was for many years a loyal employee of old Harmon, a dust contractor. He is suddenly catapulted from lower-class poverty to upper-class riches, becoming in the process 'The Golden Dustman', when he and his wife inherit the Harmon estate by default after John Harmon, his old employer's son, is found dead in the river.



## Peter Vaughan

Veteran actor Peter Vaughan plays Dickens's 'golden dustman' Mr Boffin. The role was light relief after his acclaimed portrayal of an elderly man suffering from Alzheimer's in *Our Friends in the North*.

Peter says: 'Boffin is a truly wonderful, almost larger than life, character—but there is a true worldliness about him. He may be an innocent abroad when he comes into the money but he is shrewd at the same time. The whole journey he goes through is marvellous. Dickens has created a colourful, rich tapestry and the scripts capture the essence of that beautifully. I enjoyed every minute of it.'

In his 70s, Peter has been enjoying an Indian summer in his career. 'It all started when I did *Remains of the Day*,' (the Merchant/Ivory period drama in which he played Anthony Hopkins's butler father.) 'In the last two or three years, I've had a lovely ride.'

Peter started his career in repertory at the Grand Theatre, Wolverhampton. He first appeared in London in *Le Malade Imaginaire* at the Garrick Theatre in 1950. Later theatre credits include *Entertaining Mr Sloane* by Joe Orton and *Season's Greetings* by Alan Ayckbourn.

Television series include *Fox*, *Chancer* and *Bleak House* and he has appeared in major film roles including *Straw Dogs*, *Time Bandits*, *Brazil*, *The French Lieutenant's Woman* and *The Crucible*.

'All my roles are different,' Peter says. 'The similarity in all of them is that I always try to be truthful, answering the author and bringing the character to life. That's what all actors try to do, be believable.'

'As for the future,' Vaughan says, 'I don't plan anything. All I want is something that moves me, like *Our Mutual Friend* does. I'm absolutely amazed when anybody offers me a job. I'm truly astonished to have lasted this long.'



## Mrs Boffin

Mrs Boffin is a delightfully good-humoured woman, always laughing and clapping her hands with glee. She is 'a stout lady of a rubicund and cheerful aspect, dressed (to Mr Wegg's consternation) in a low evening-dress of sable satin, and a large black velvet hat and feathers. 'Mrs Boffin, Wegg,' said Boffin, 'is a highflyer at Fashion. And her make is such, that she does it credit.'"

On their entry into society, Mrs Boffin tries to adopt a small boy in memory of their dead young friend John Harmon. Both she and Mr Boffin agree to take Bella Wilfer into their home and play a leading part in her conversion from spoilt child to contented mother.



## Pam Ferris

Pam Ferris has had a life-long love affair with period drama and was gripped by the panorama of Dickens's novel.

'It was incredible in terms of the web of relationships that *Our Mutual Friend* contains,' Pam says. 'Playing Mrs Boffin was one of the happiest jobs I have ever had. I have been a fan of Peter Vaughan's for years and to play his wife excited the hell out of me.'

'The Boffins are an interesting couple—I think of them as modern-day lottery winners. They start off threadbare and are launched into a world where they have loads of money but they are very much at the mercy of people cleverer than themselves.'

For Pam there were complex elements to the story. Dickens was interested in social mobility and in this novel he examines how the Boffins, despite their new-found wealth, have to become acceptable to the English upper classes.

'He is toying with the idea whether money corrupts and how tough people's morals have to be to withstand it.'

Pam became a national treasure in Britain as a television actress with her performance as Ma Larkin, the loveable H.E.Bates character in *The Darling Buds of May*. In complete contrast she won popular international acclaim as the manic school-mistress in *Matilda*, Danny DeVito's film based on a Roald Dahl story.

She is currently filming new episodes for the hit television series *Where The Heart Is*, based on the day-to-day life of a district nurse. 'I am very self-critical with everything I do,' she says. 'The one thing I was least displeased with was my performance in *Roots* by Arnold Wesker at The National Theatre.'



## Bella Wilfer

Bella Wilfer is witty and irresistible. ‘...a girl of about nineteen, with an exceedingly pretty figure and face, but with an impatient and petulant expression both in her face and in her shoulders (which in her sex and at her age are very expressive of discontent).’ Her family is the epitome of suburban respectability, but her father’s earnings are small.

Bella hates being poor and desperately wants money. “Talk to me of love!” said Bella, contemptuously: though her face and figure certainly rendered the subject no incongruous one. “Talk to me of fiery dragons! But talk to me of poverty and wealth, and there indeed we touch upon realities.”

Bella is taken up by the Boffins, at whose home she comes to know John Rokesmith, the Boffins’ secretary. She is determined to marry out of poverty, but eventually comes to realise the true value of love through recognising John’s outstanding qualities.



## Anna Friel

Anna Friel plays Bella Wilfer, a hard-nosed charmer who has a lesson to learn on the true value of love. And for the young British actress it was a learning experience in coping with the constraints of Victorian dress. Anna’s costumes—which took 20 minutes to get into—were a major challenge.

She explains: ‘The trick is not to make people aware that you’re having to think about the way you walk. ‘There was one sequence we shot in a room lit by a hundred candles. It was boiling hot. We did a five-page scene from lots of different angles. Just as I started thinking ‘I’m going to have to go outside,’ I swooned. ‘But that was great because for the next scene I had to faint—it was method acting!’

Anna related to the ‘journey’ that her character makes. ‘Her aspirations change. Bella realises it’s better to follow her heart than listen to her head.’

Anna sees her character as a thoroughly modern Ms. ‘Although the clothes and the dialogue spring from the period, we play the rest as contemporary. We play angry, for instance, as you would now—except we say ‘beast’ instead of a modern swearword. The filming, too, is quite modern, using lots of montage. It’s about emotional truth rather than just a design test.’

Anna, 21, found fame in her role as Beth Jordache in the Merseyside soap Brookside. And she has been filming almost constantly since. She is currently sporting striking short blonde hair for her latest role as Lisa Leeson in Rogue Trader, a biopic about Nick Leeson.

Other up-and-coming productions include Landgirls (with Our Mutual Friend co-star Steven Mackintosh) and three BBC films: The Tribe, directed by Stephen Poliakoff, St Ives with Miranda Richardson and Richard E Grant, and The Stringer.



## Silas Wegg

Silas Wegg is an avaricious, evil-minded seller of street ballads—with a wooden leg—who is taken up by Mr Boffin as a kindness, put into the Boffins's former 'Bower', and responds by plotting to extort their fortune from them. *'Wegg was a knotty man, and a close-grained, with a face carved out of very hard material, that had just as much play of expression as a watchman's rattle. When he laughed, certain jerks occurred in it, and the rattle sprung.'*



## Kenneth Cranham

Kenneth Cranham's transformation into arch-schemer Silas Wegg was a physical challenge. Hopping about on one leg while trying to get his hands on the fortune belonging to his employer, Mr Boffin (Peter Vaughan), became more than he bargained for.

*'It's actually very hard getting about in that condition,' Kenneth explains. 'Also, I'm never going to play another part with facial hair—having glue on your face is the nastiest thing. And Wegg has the most horrendous set of teeth. I used to sit in make-up looking at the mirror and thinking: 'I'm over-acting before I've started.''*

*'It's difficult not to do a 'Dickensian' performance. You hope to play it for real.'*

But there were compensations. On location in a remote part of Wales, Kenneth discovered a special professional chemistry working with co star Timothy Spall as Mr Venus.

*'Both Timothy and I asked who was playing the other character and when we found out who it was, we both immediately said we'd like to do it. It's very nice when you're stuck in the middle of nowhere to be with someone you respect.'*

Kenneth, who has an extensive career in television, films and the theatre, has starred in more contemporary pieces such as *Oranges Are Not the Only Fruit* and *El CID*. But he feels a special affinity for the 19th Century.

*'I find the Victorian period fantastically exciting. And Our Mutual Friend is not a million miles from society now. You could meet someone like Silas Wegg in any city—someone who's lived all his life on his wits and on the streets.'*



## Mr Venus

Mr Venus is a preserver of animals and articulator of skeletons. 'The face looking up is a sallow face with weak eyes, surmounted by a tangle of reddish-dusty hair. The owner of the face has no cravat on, and has opened his tumbled shirt-collar to work with the more ease. For the same reason he has no coat on: only a loose waistcoat over his yellow linen.'

Embittered by rejection in love, Mr Venus is drawn into a conspiracy with Silas Wegg to defraud the Boffins. But he only temporarily takes the path of evil before his sense of justice reasserts itself.



## Timothy Spall

Mr Venus adds to Timothy Spall's gallery of unforgettable social misfits. The 39-year-old Londoner found TV fame as hapless Brummie Barry in *Auf Wiedersehen Pet*, followed up later by *Outside Edge*, and *Life Is Sweet*. And Timothy found he warmed to his role as Dickens's lovelorn bone-articulator faced with a dilemma over good and evil.

'Our Mutual Friend is about kindness,' he explains. 'The everlasting antidote to evil. That's a big theme in Dickens. You end up having pity for the villains. Even with Rogue Riderhood (David Bradley) and Silas Wegg (Kenneth Cranham), you know they're despicable, but you can't help thinking, 'are they redeemable?''

'I've got a reputation for playing irritating, Grand Guignol pariahs,' he says. 'But I've never been one to instantly dislike a character just because he's unpleasant. In fact, it's quite the opposite. I'm drawn to pariahs by the simple cliché that everybody has got a story to tell.'

Timothy, who was top of his year in RADA in 1978, said that tough city life in South London had not prepared him for sudden fame in *Auf Wiedersehen Pet* which was the TV comedy hit of the eighties.

After a period of doldrums, he got his feet back on the ground with classic roles in the theatre and movie parts, including a cameo appearance in the Clint Eastwood film *White Hunter, Black Heart*.

He also teamed up with *Eastenders* star Daniela Westbrook to play a Cockney wide-boy for the TV comedy *Frank Stubbs Promotes*.

His acclaimed performance in Mike Leigh's *Secrets and Lies* established Spall as a serious screen actor. And the work continues to flood in. Since filming *Our Mutual Friend* he has starred in the movies *The Wisdom of Crocodiles*, *Still Crazy with Billy Connolly* and *Jimmy Nail*, and Poliakoff's *Trilogy* with Lindsay Duncan.

Timothy is about to start work on Mike Leigh's latest film.

**Also Featuring  
(In Order Of Appearance)**

<i>Gaffer Hexam</i>	<b>David Schofield</b>
<i>Charley Hexam</i>	<b>Paul Bailey</b>
<i>Mortimer Lightwood</i>	<b>Dominic Mafham</b>
<i>Sophronia Lammle</i>	<b>Doon Mackichan</b>
<i>Alfred Lammle</i>	<b>Anthony Calf</b>
<i>Lady Tippins</i>	<b>Margaret Tyzack</b>
<i>Police Inspector</i>	<b>Roger Frost</b>
<i>Mr Wilfer</i>	<b>Peter Wight</b>
<i>Mrs Wilfer</i>	<b>Heather Tobias</b>
<i>Lavinia Wilfer</i>	<b>Catriona Yuill</b>
<i>Coroner</i>	<b>Michael Cronin</b>
<i>Abby Potterson</i>	<b>Linda Bassett</b>
<i>Pleasant Riderhood</i>	<b>Rachel Power</b>
<i>Lammle's Servant</i>	<b>Vanessa Hadaway</b>
<i>Guest 1</i>	<b>Sarah Crowden</b>
<i>Guest 2</i>	<b>Cate Fowler</b>
<i>Guest 3</i>	<b>John Dallimore</b>
<i>Guest 4</i>	<b>Peter Howell</b>
<i>Guest 5</i>	<b>Ray Gardner</b>
<i>Mr Twemlow</i>	<b>Robert Lang</b>
<i>Mr Veneering</i>	<b>Michael Culkin</b>
<i>Mrs Veneering</i>	<b>Rose English</b>
<i>George Radfoot</i>	<b>Richard Hanson</b>
<i>Riah</i>	<b>Cyril Shaps</b>
<i>Miss Peecher</i>	<b>Georgina Lamb</b>
<i>Mary Anne</i>	<b>Jade Davidson</b>
<i>2nd Pupil</i>	<b>Victoria Harding</b>
<i>Jenny Wren</i>	<b>Kate Murphy</b>
<i>Little Johnny</i>	<b>Bertie Shelley</b>
<i>Betty Higden</i>	<b>Edna Dore</b>
<i>Sloppy</i>	<b>Martin Hancock</b>
<i>Mr Dolls</i>	<b>Willie Ross</b>
<i>Onlooker 1</i>	<b>Eddie Webber</b>
<i>Onlooker 2</i>	<b>Alan Talbot</b>
<i>Market Woman</i>	<b>Brigid Erin-Bates</b>
<i>Market Man</i>	<b>Philip Shelley</b>
<i>Reverend</i>	<b>Richard Stirling</b>
<i>Doctor</i>	<b>John Dicks</b>

# The Credits

profiles by Mike Williams

*producer*     **Catherine Wearing**

Catherine Wearing began her career at the BBC as a script editor working on *A Dark Adapted Eye*, *Persuasion* and the award-winning series *Common As Muck*. She went on to produce the four part BBC serial *A Mug's Game* which was nominated for Best Drama, BAFTA Scotland 1997. It was followed by the popular six-part series *Common As Muck—Series 2*, which was nominated for Best Comedy Drama, British Comedy Awards 1997.

*director*     **Julian Farino**

Julian Farino's television directing credits include *Wokenwell* for Granada, the BBC's critically acclaimed series *Out of the Blue*, ITV's *Medics*, *In Suspicious Circumstances* and *Coronation Street*.

He has also directed documentaries, including *Savage Hearts*, *Squashed Tomatoes*—a look at the world of children's entertainers—and *The Gift*, which followed three young children auditioning for a place at the prestigious Cheltenham School of Music.

*screenplay by*     **Sandy Welch**

Catherine Wearing began her career at the BBC as a script editor working on *A Dark Adapted Eye*, *Persuasion* and the award-winning series *Common As Muck*. She went on to produce the four part BBC serial *A Mug's Game* which was nominated for Best Drama, BAFTA Scotland 1997. It was followed by the popular six-part series *Common As Muck—Series 2*, which was nominated for Best Comedy Drama, British Comedy Awards 1997.

*music by*     **Adrian Johnston**

Adrian Johnston has written over 70 scores for leading British theatres and over 60 new scores for silent films. He wrote the music for the feature films *Welcome to Sarajevo* and *I Want You* and has just completed the score for the comedy thriller *Divorcing Jack*.

Adrian has been drummer, bassist and keyboard player with *The Waterboys* and *The Mike Flowers Pops*. He recorded and produced the Mike Flowers Pops 1995 Christmas hit—*Wonderwall*—at his studio.

*production designer*     **Malcolm Thornton**

Malcolm Thornton began his career with the BBC as a design assistant in 1973 and became a senior designer working across a range of light-entertainment programmes. His television credits include the cult sci-fi series *Dr Who*, along with acclaimed dramas such as *The Men's Room* and BBC films, including *Enchanted April* and *Cold Comfort Farm*.

*director of  
photography*

**David Odd**

David Odd started his career his BBC career in animation after leaving art school and moved on to become a documentary film and drama cameraman. He has worked as a director of photography for the last ten of his 30 years in the industry. David's television credits include the award-winning drama series Prime Suspect and TV films featuring the classic detective hero, Sherlock Holmes.

*film editor*

**Fran Parker**

Fran Parker was born in Yorkshire and joined the BBC after specialising in film at Manchester Art College. She became an assistant film editor after training by the Corporation. Her first films included Dennis Potter's acclaimed Pennies From Heaven and Blue Remembered Hills.

Fran became a full film editor in 1982, working on documentaries and drama series including Bergerac and Miss Marple. Other BBC film credits include Redemption and Unnatural Pursuits, for which she won a BAFTA award in 1993.

Fran's previous costume drama productions have included Scarlet and Black, Nostromo, The Moonstone and The Beggar Bride.

*costume  
designer*

**Mike O'Neill**

Mike O'Neill 'grew up in the theatre over thirty years'. He practised his craft as a costume designer with the Royal Shakespeare Theatre Company for more than fifteen years, working on classic productions. Mike is a specialist in period drama, but his recent television credits also include contemporary, quality drama series—such as GBH and Prime Suspect.

*hair & make-  
up designer*

**Lisa Westcott**

Hair and make-up designer Lisa Westcott has been nominated for an Oscar for her work on Mrs Brown, the period movie starring Judi Dench and Billy Connolly. Lisa was trained by the BBC and in her 26 years with the Corporation worked on many award winning dramas, including the Dickens classic Bleak House—for which she received a BAFTA award. She won a second BAFTA for the film The Madness Of King George.

*Sound  
Recordist*

**Richard Manton**

Dick Manton's career with the BBC spans 34 years. For 25 years he has worked as a sound recordist on every type of award-winning programme—from documentary to major drama. He was honoured with a BAFTA craft award for his work on the BBC film An Englishman Abroad, directed by John Schlesinger.

<i>first assistant director</i>	<b>Susie Liggat</b>
<i>production manager</i>	<b>Matthew Purves</b>
<i>location managers</i>	<b>Andy Jackson</b>
	<b>Kas Braganza</b>
<i>script supervisor</i>	<b>Sue Hills</b>
<i>production co-ordinator</i>	<b>Vanessa Jones</b>
<i>second assistant director</i>	<b>Kayla Miller</b>
<i>third assistant director</i>	<b>Paul Sykes</b>
<i>runners</i>	<b>Becky Symons</b>
	<b>Anna Lewis</b>
<i>production executive</i>	<b>Howard Kingston</b>
<i>production accountant</i>	<b>Elaine Gilks</b>
	<b>Rhonda Smith</b>
	<b>Daniel Budd</b>
<i>contracts executive</i>	<b>Thalia Reynolds</b>
<i>art directors</i>	<b>Stevie Herbert</b>
	<b>Adam Marshall</b>
<i>production buyers</i>	<b>Gill Farr</b>
	<b>Clare Solly</b>
<i>construction manager</i>	<b>John Thorpe</b>
<i>properties master</i>	<b>Gary Watson</b>
<i>properties</i>	<b>Ian Newton</b>
	<b>Chris Eytle</b>
	<b>Danny Euston</b>
	<b>Dempsey Cook</b>
<i>standby carpenter</i>	<b>Laurie Griffiths</b>
<i>standby painter</i>	<b>Rocky Franklin</b>
<i>costume assistants</i>	<b>Samantha Horn</b>
	<b>Michele Carragher</b>
	<b>Saffron Webb</b>
	<b>Mark Foster</b>
	<b>Ralph Hinton</b>
<i>make-up artists</i>	<b>Philippa Hall</b>
	<b>Lesley Smith</b>
	<b>Jayne Buxton</b>

visual effects	Colin Gorry
graphic designer	Christine Buttner
focus puller	Craig Feather
clapper/loader	Tony Slater-Ling
gaffer	Tony Wilcock
camera grip	Steve Ellingworth
best boy	David Bourke
electricians	Kurt Elwell
	Jamie Summers
	Mickey May
	Dave Gray
assistant film editor	Andy Hillier
boom operator	Stephen Fish
dubbing editors	Graham Headicar
	Katherine Hodgson
executive producers	Phillippa Giles
	Michael Wearing
casting director	Marilyn Johnson
dubbing mixer	Paul Hamblin
associate producer	Alison Gee

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# The Creators

by Mike Williams

It took a small army of artists and craftspeople to bring *Our Mutual Friend* to the screen. It took the combined vision of four creators to set Charles Dickens's novel in front of the camera.

*Producer:* **Catherine Wearing**



Catherine Wearing didn't need persuading when approached with the idea of filming an adaptation of *Our Mutual Friend*. She says: 'I found the book a revelation. I was struck by the sheer epic nature of the story. The size of it is extraordinary. At the very centre of the work is the ache of two great love stories and the longings of five great lovers.'

Catherine was seduced by Dickens's mastery of characterisation. 'He presents characters as they are, rather than as the reader would like them to be. Dickens never underestimates people's intelligence. All his characters have a wit that's life-enhancing.'

She adds: 'It may seem fanciful but I'd like to think that if Dickens were alive today he'd be fascinated by television and the opportunities it gives us for documenting our lives. Who's to say that he wouldn't have been writing for *Eastenders*?'

Catherine worked hard at bringing an element of 'true grit' to the production. 'The filmic nature of Dickens's environments is a sheer joy. I thought: 'with this material we could do a visually fresh period piece'. Also, we had long discussions with the writer, director and designer about what people expect. We've worked hard to lose the received Christmas card images of Dickens and present a more epic, more honest version.'

Screenwriter: **Sandy Welch**



When writer Sandy Welch was asked to adapt a classic novel for the BBC, she had no hesitation in suggesting *Our Mutual Friend*—one of her favourite books. However, she knew it was not going to be an easy task. ‘It’s a very large novel, with not one but two great love stories,’ Sandy says. ‘That is a lot to intertwine through a four-part series and it was difficult to cut everything down to six hours.’

Sandy’s love for the book meant that making cuts was a painful process. ‘Dickens was such a great dramatist, it’s hard to cut parts without having to reconstruct other scenes. And once you do that, of course, you’re drifting away from the text.’

Sandy confesses that some aspects of the original novel were hard to convey to a modern audience. ‘A marriage between an upper-class man and a working-class girl was an absolute impossibility in those days. We have to keep reminding the audience with subtle hints about the attitudes of the day.’

‘Dickens’s characters are amazing. Very few of them are straightforward or ‘politically correct’,’ adds Sandy. ‘That’s why no matter how much society changes, people will always identify with them.’

*Director:* **Julian Farino**



Director of Photography with Julian Farino (right)

Director Julian Farino was drawn to *Our Mutual Friend*'s emotional depth and scale. 'This had so much diversity of mood and emotion. It's one of the few scripts I've read that was crying out to be filmed. Dickens is a dramatist. He almost cuts his novels in film terms, and the way he writes is very visual.'

But the epic nature of the drama presented a major challenge. 'How do you do justice to Dickens?' Julian asks. 'He's so brilliant because he always puts the character in the foreground. There is a fantastic richness and a maturity about the characters because they're all very tied in with their environment. Similarly, this production is not about the period backdrop. There shouldn't be anything in any frame that doesn't feed back into the emotional story.'

Julian believes *Our Mutual Friend* continues to be relevant. 'It has universal themes: unrequited love, parental damage, the need for betterment—these things are true in any era.'

Julian adds: 'There's something about the extraordinary maturity of Dickens's story-telling that feels very modern. Jane Austen is more about manners. But when you look at a character in this like Bradley Headstone, you think, 'how could someone have created that a hundred years ago?' He is so ruthlessly created, he seems contemporary. The way Dickens allows his passion to come through is very modern. There really is no distance between us and the period.'

Julian's television directing credits include *Wokenwell* for Granada, the BBC's critically acclaimed series *Out of the Blue*, ITV's *Medics*, *In Suspicious Circumstances* and *Coronation Street*.

He has also directed documentaries, including *Savage Hearts*, *Squashed Tomatoes*—a look at the world of children's entertainers—and *The Gift*, which followed three young children auditioning for a place at the prestigious Cheltenham School of Music.

Composer: **Adrian Johnston**



The challenge for Adrian Johnston was combining both scale and intimacy in the atmosphere for *Our Mutual Friend*. The 37-year-old Cumbrian composer had to echo the light and shade of Dickens's epic tale in the music.

'I always like to eke out the tone as soon as possible because then everything else falls into place,' he says. 'With this project it took a while because it was complex. It needed to be melancholy at times but not tragic or comic—reflecting a twilight world of yearning.'

Adrian studied English language and literature at Edinburgh University. In 1984 he co-founded a small-scale theatre company, The Shadow Syndicate, and has since written over 70 scores for leading British theatres. He scored his first feature film, Michael Winterbottom's *Jude*, in 1996, and later composed music for Winterbottom's *Welcome to Sarajevo* and *I Want You*.

He also scored Stephen Poliakoff's *The Tribe* and *Food of Love* and has just completed the score for the comedy thriller *Divorcing Jack*, starring David Thewlis. Adrian has also written and performed over 60 new scores for silent films.

Scores for *Strange Fish* and *Enter Archilles*, adapted for BBC2 from the original stage versions, both subsequently won the Prix Italia (Music and Arts) in 1994 and 1996. Other BBC television work includes *Broken Glass* and *Measure For Measure* as well as *Death Of A Salesman* for BBC Schools.

Adrian scored the first series of *Touching Evil*, starring Robson Green and will complete the second series this Spring.

Adrian has been a drummer, bassist and keyboard player with groups, including The Waterboys and The Mike Flowers Pops—he recorded and produced their 1995 Christmas hit—*Wonderwall*—at his studio. He has since co-produced songs with Mike Flowers for the feature film *Austin Powers—International Man of Mystery* and for the forthcoming *Hacks*.

# The Story

## EPISODE ONE



Gaffer Hexam, a river scavenger, aided by his daughter Lizzie, drags a mysterious body out of the murky waters of the river Thames.

Gaffer refuses to share his bounty with his former partner, the scheming Rogue Riderhood.

Meanwhile in the highest echelons of fashionable society the lavish and vulgar wedding of Sophronia and

Alfred Lammle is being celebrated. The hypocrisy of the marriage is revealed when both Lammles privately admit to being penniless adventurers.

Mortimer Lightwood learns that the mysterious body is that of John Harmon, the estranged heir of a wealthy dust millionaire. Harmon Senior's solicitor Mortimer, accompanied by his charismatic and cynical best friend, the barrister Eugene Wrayburn, hurry to the Hexams' riverside shack. Here Eugene finds himself unaccountably attracted to the radiant Lizzie. When the mysterious Julius Handford arrives at the police mortuary, his strange behaviour arouses suspicion about his involvement in the murder of John Harmon. Julius Handford then disappears.

The faithful dustman Mr Boffin and his wife Mrs Boffin now inherit Old Harmon's fortune. Overnight they are catapulted into a life of luxury. They offer a huge reward for the arrest of the murderer. Others have less noble reasons to be upset by John Harmon's death. The witty and irresistible Bella Wilfer, who was betrothed to the dead man, must now go into mourning for a man she has never even met. Bella must find other means to escape the poverty trap.



The mysterious Julius Handford reappears as one 'John Rokesmith'. Taking a particular interest in Bella, this enigmatic young man becomes the Wilfer's lodger and secretary to the Boffins. The Boffins announce their wish to 'adopt' the beautiful Bella so she can join them in their adventures in society. Bella and John are set to see a lot more of each other.

Lizzie movingly tells her younger brother Charley that the time has come for him to leave the river and pursue his education. She expertly copes with Gaffer's anger at what he sees as his son's betrayal.

Mr Boffin's new employee, the dastardly Silas Wegg, is fascinated to hear the love-lorn Mr Venus's account of the hidden treasures waiting to be discovered in the dust mountains. So, when Mr Boffin offers him the tenancy at the dust yard, he greedily accepts.

Spurred on by his desire to get his hands on the Boffins' reward, Rogue Riderhood tells Eugene and Mortimer that Gaffer killed John Harmon. That night, the three of them wait in the darkness for Gaffer to return. Fascinated, Eugene spies on Lizzie until Gaffer's boat emerges from the fog, dragging his broken body behind. Gaffer is dead. Lizzie is left totally alone.

## EPISODE TWO

The Boffins enjoy their first forays into fashionable society despite the two-faced curiosity of Lady Tippins's clique. Bella particularly relishes this luxurious new lifestyle. The ever-watchful John Rokesmith finds himself falling in love with the increasingly mercenary Miss Wilfer who, in turn, is frustrated by his secretive manner. The reason for Rokesmith's obsessive secrecy is now revealed. He is indeed John Harmon, who has chosen to remain 'dead', adopting this new identity so as to test the love of the woman he was meant to marry. What he did not expect was that he would actually fall in love with her.



Lizzie has now set up home with her child-like friend, Jenny Wren, a dolls' dress-maker.

Eugene meets her when he comes to call.

Eugene persuades Lizzie to accept his offer to pay for her education. Meanwhile her brother's school-master, the upright Bradley Headstone, believes himself to be the more appropriate teacher. His

devoted obsession with Lizzie begins to intensify, leading him to confront Eugene. The two men recognise that they are rivals in love.

Silas Wegg and Mr Venus toast their drunken pact to collaborate in a search for hidden treasure amongst the dust.

The Boffins' plan to adopt the penniless orphan, Johnny, from Betty Higden falls apart when Johnny becomes fatally ill. Mr and Mrs Boffin emerge from their grief and decide to adopt another of Betty's charges, the hapless Mr Sloppy. Seeing Bella's tenderness at Johnny's death deepens Rokesmith's dilemma. One night the tensions erupt in a furious argument. Rokesmith declares his love for Bella, but she rejects his penniless proposal. Rokesmith is left feeling his love is doomed.

Headstone makes his stumbling and agonised proposal of marriage to a terrified Lizzie. She refuses him, knowing this will also alienate her from her brother Charley.

Chillingly transformed, Headstone threatens Eugene's very life. Lizzie implores Eugene to take care.

Whilst Eugene keeps a moonlit vigil outside her window, Lizzie, realising that Eugene will never give up, chooses to vanish into the night.



### EPISODE THREE

Bella watches dismayed as Mr Boffin is transformed into a miser who takes perverse pleasure in humiliating Rokesmith at every opportunity.

Eugene cannot trace Lizzie's whereabouts. She has completely disappeared. Headstone's obsession with his rival rages unchecked and he enlists the services of Rogue Riderhood to help him find his love. Lizzie, now working in a paper mill upstream, discovers the exhausted and dying Betty Higden. After Betty's funeral, Bella finds out Lizzie's reasons for living in hiding. She is determined to protect Eugene from Headstone's murderous rage, even if it means she will never set eyes upon him again. Inspired by Lizzie's love, Bella tells Rokesmith of her disgust at Mr Boffin's treatment of him. A new warmth flows between them.



Parasites are advancing on the Boffins from all sides.

When the con-niving Silas Wegg and Mr Venus find a more recent version of Harmon's will, one that bequeaths much less to the Boffins, they hatch a vicious blackmail scheme. The penniless Lammles also have their eye on Mr Boffin's fortune. They betray Bella's confidence by

telling Mr Boffin of Rokesmith's proposal. In a rage, Boffin lambastes Rokesmith as pitifully unworthy of Bella and dismisses him from the house. Bella, disgusted, leaves the Boffins preferring to return to her life of poverty. As she approaches her family home, Rokesmith rushes up to her and proposes marriage. Overwhelmed, she accepts. They marry in secret the next day.

Eugene, lost without Lizzie, finds his only solace lies in goading Headstone by leading him on nightly wild goose chases round the City. Eugene finally manages to extract Lizzie's whereabouts out of Jenny's father, Mr Dolls. He traces her to the village where she lives, but so, unhappily, does Headstone, aided by Riderhood.



Alone at last Eugene and Lizzie declare their love. She, knowing the danger if Headstone were to see them together, realises they are condemned to a life of separation and leaves Eugene.

Alone, Eugene declares that the next time he will seduce Lizzie. But at that very moment Headstone's murderous blows rain down upon him. Lizzie, terrified,

pulls her lover's bloody and half-dead body from the river.

## EPISODE FOUR

Mr Venus tells Mr Boffin about Silas Wegg's plan to extort the Boffin fortune. In return, Mr Boffin persuades Pleasant Riderhood to marry Mr Venus, who is deeply in love with her. Mr Venus finds happiness but promises Mr Boffin that he will keep up his charade with Silas Wegg a while longer. At the dust-yards Wegg demands that Boffin divide the Harmon fortune in his favour.



A dying Eugene marries Lizzie.

When Mortimer meets Bella's husband for the first time he is deeply shocked to discover that the mysterious John Rokesmith is also Julius Hanford. Despite her husband's enigmatic behaviour, Bella reveals that she is expecting a baby. She is further bewildered when John announces he has a 'new

position' with a 'dwelling house, rent free'. On arrival at the Boffins townhouse all is revealed. The Boffins had realised that 'Rokesmith' was in fact John Harmon some time ago and had contrived with him their elaborate act to illustrate Bella's true good nature. John begs the forgiveness of his astounded wife.

When Silas Wegg hobbles into the house to claim his fortune, John Harmon, hurling him against the wall, triumphantly explains that the will Wegg holds is worthless. Wegg is unceremoniously dispatched from their lives.

Mortimer wants Headstone to be punished for his attempted murder of Eugene. Eugene, however, maintains that had it not been for Headstone's lunatic actions, he would have seduced Lizzie that fateful night and lost her love forever.

Headstone, ravaged and hollow-eyed, tries to pin the assault on Rogue Riderhood. But Riderhood discovers Headstone's treachery and uses it as ammunition in his own vicious blackmail plan.



In his self-created hell, Headstone realises his only escape is to kill himself and Riderhood. Locked in a fatal embrace, they plunge to their icy deaths.

Winters turns to summer and our lovers enjoy an idyllic picnic together. Bella and John delight in their new baby son while the love that has blossomed between Mr Sloppy and Jenny

Wren is much in evidence. Eugene determines to live his life with Lizzie openly and to dismiss 'society's' opinion. It is left to his friend Mortimer to confront society with their hypocrisy and cant.

**THE END**

# The Costumes

by Sheila Jackson<sup>1</sup>

The period chosen for the costumes of *Our Mutual Friend* by the designer, Mike O'Neill, is from the middle of the 1860s onwards. O'Neill's approach is from a sociological standpoint; he is very aware of and carefully investigates the motivation of every character and his or her place in society. The clothes, he says, although designed for the production and keeping to the period shape, should explore the instinctive choice of the individual, and character should never be swamped by the costume as is often a failing in costume drama.

Mid-Victorian costume was eminently respectable, reflecting a solid bourgeoisie and a widowed queen in recluse, a strong contrast to the previous thirty years which had seen the near nakedness of the Regency followed by the Gothic frivolities of the 1820s.

By the 1860s, women's dress had become all enveloping, completely concealing the figure.



Only in the evenings was flesh revealed by a décolletage brazenly showing off seductive white shoulders and breasts. At all times there was an emphasis on tiny corseted waists, below which huge bell-shaped skirts were supported first by bulky petticoats and later by crinolines. These cages of whalebone, tape and wire released the wearer from the weight of innumerable petticoats. The shape also conveniently hid the numerous pregnancies of Victorian women.

The prevailing influence was French, and there was an awareness of Worth, who, although an Englishman, had moved to France and become the rage of Paris. Affluent ladies followed the French styles illustrated in monthly magazines for women, which included both fashion plates and paper patterns; each issue was eagerly awaited for news of the latest trends.

Mike O'Neill was able to consult extensive references for the period.



Punch came into being in 1841 and from that date depicts characters from every walk of life. John Leech is among its many artists. Phiz (Hablot K. Browne) and Cruikshank, contemporaries of Dickens, pictured the Dickens world in the illustrated editions. Periodicals such as *The London Evening News* and the writings of Mayhew with their accompanying illustrations document the situation of the very poor. Among painters in England, Frith excelled in the

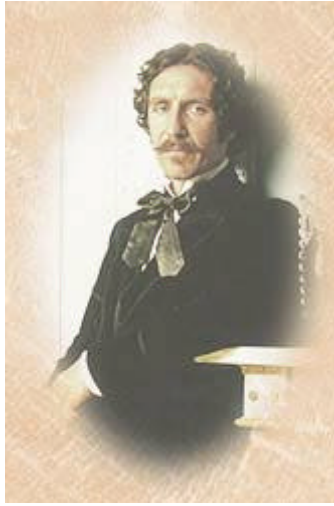
detail of crowd scenes and French elegance is recorded by Monet and Tissot. And with the advent of photography a new era of on-the-spot recording began. The Victorian family had a passion for being photographed—studio 'Cabinet Portraits' proliferated and were preserved in family albums. Even royalty and the aristocracy faced the camera lens.



<sup>1</sup>Sheila Jackson is the author of *Costume for the Stage*.

She designed the costumes for *Upstairs, Downstairs*.

But too many costumes in a drama can be bewildering, so in *Our Mutual Friend*, except for the nouveaux riches Veneerings or Bella Wilfer and Mrs Boffin, where sudden wealth—as of a lottery winner—results in an urge to spend money on fashionable clothes, frequent costume changes are resisted, only made where the action of the plot demands them. This avoids confusion, making the recognition of the very many Dickens characters easier for the viewer.



Among professional men there is the expected uniformity of dress varied only by neckwear and occasional eccentricity. Mid-Victorian men's clothes were predominantly formal, very uniform in shape and of sober colours. Because of the influence of English tailoring these styles were widely favoured throughout the world—Empire builders in far flung colonies dressed as at home disregarding the unsuitability of climate to clothes; ambitious natives aped their colonisers by affecting European dress to further their careers.

Mike O'Neill creates the characters of the riverside excellently—telling silhouettes underline the sinister atmosphere. Likewise the ragged workers on the dustheaps, where well-chosen garments are assembled to create reality. Colour here is absence of colour—bleached out and negative. As in all periods, clothes worn by the Victorian lower classes belonged to the styles of bygone times and would have been many years out of date. Those of labouring people reflected the occupations they followed, whilst at the bottom of the heap, unfortunates were hardly more than a bundle of rags.

The limitation of colour and dependence on strong shapes is appreciated in the many vignettes which stud the production: Mr Venus in his studio with Wegg, the tavern of the Six Jolly Fellowship Porters, the humble Wilfers at home, all provide memorable images.

Mike describes his work on the production as ongoing to the end, and with this flexibility of approach he was ready to alter and amend from day to day as characters came together in previously unforeseen combinations. Adjustments of colour and detail sometimes needed to be made to improve the picture. Hats especially often needed to be trimmed or remodelled to fit and suit wigs.

The result is a happy creation—Mike O'Neill's understanding of the spirit of the Dickens story and its richly varied characters has made a valuable contribution to *Our Mutual Friend*.



# The Sets

by Karen Liebreich <sup>1</sup>

Dickens set *Our Mutual Friend* in London; the city plays an important part in the novel. But while much of nineteenth century London still survives, there is not quite enough to make it easy to find locations for all of the action. The scenes set on the Limehouse waterfront were one difficulty. The teeming, ramshackle slums which Dickens describes are – thankfully – long gone. And where could one possibly find a range of dust-mountains with a ‘Bower’ for the Boffins nestling among them?

## Production designer: MALCOLM THORNTON

When Malcolm Thornton was asked to oversee the production design for *Our Mutual Friend* he knew immediately that he did not want to go down the heritage trail. ‘I wanted it to reflect what the characters think,’ he said. ‘The atmosphere was the most important thing, not the historic detail.’

But of course the detail had to be right too. In the early stages Malcolm had an important meeting with Andy Jackson, the location manager, to discuss the requirements. There was a huge amount of work, but the most pressing need was to find the main locations, the warehouses on the shoreline and the dust heaps with the Bower House. ‘Keep an open mind,’ Andy was told.

The warehouse shoreline was crucial. Not only did it feature in the opening sequence, but it provided the backdrop for much of the action. The opening impression and the whole feel of the series would be set by the quality of the atmosphere. ‘It had to suggest the lives of the people, people who live on the river, who scratch their living from the river,’ explains Malcolm Thornton. So the first brief he gave the location manager was to find a selection of buildings which could represent Southwark on the Thames, around 1860. After several weeks on the road, he returned with thousands of photos of unsatisfactory buildings. Almost as an afterthought, he threw down a couple of grainy photos of Cardiff Docks.



Malcolm pounced on them. One in particular showed a foreshore covered in the most satisfyingly thick mud. At the top of the beach was a sailing club with its serried ranks of dinghies. Andy had taken the picture early in the morning, and a grey mist hovered over the water. It was visually very strong.



Malcolm grabbed a piece of tracing paper, and with a quick sketch, showed how they could construct the 19th century warehouses from scratch along the front of the clubhouse. It would mean building everything, which they had not banked on doing, and moving the bulk of the shoot to Cardiff.

The result is impressive. A Thames barge was hired for a couple of weeks, sailed round the coast from Portsmouth, and dressed to represent several different boats as the story unfolds. The

whole mass of warehouses was built from scratch.

Gaffer Hexam's hut, which was at Shepperton and had already been used for several scenes, was transported and dropped into place at the water's edge using a huge crane to lift it over the set. The whole construction and shooting process had to be planned around the tides, which varied from lapping within a few inches of the floorboards, to leaving several metres of glutinous black mud at low tide.

Having moved the riverside scenes to Cardiff it seemed logical to hunt for a location for the dust heaps in the vicinity. They found a disused quarry with a waste area of little grey-green hills. In the story, the owner lives right in the middle of his heaps, supposedly somewhere behind Kings Cross. Malcolm decided to place Boffin's Bower right at the foot of one of the hillocks. Cut-outs of buildings in Highgate Hills could be used with care to show the city background. Mr and Mrs Boffin were given a timber extension at the back of the brick house.



First, drains had to be laid to remove the rivulets of water which were running down the heaps. Then a steel core had to be set on concrete on the surface of the quarry, then the house was clad in wood, and finally rendered and painted to look authentic. Inside, several of the rooms were really built, to facilitate shooting. The whole house had to be ready in five weeks. The weather was atrocious. Two days before shooting started the ceiling in the main bedroom fell in, laden down with moisture.

And of course, once the shoot started, the weather was sunny and glorious, when it was supposed to be dull and depressing. But that's not the production designer's fault.

## Location Manager: ANDY JACKSON

An organisational nightmare. 5% inspiration, 95% perspiration. This could describe the work of Andy Jackson, location manager on *Our Mutual Friend*. 'It's a lovely job,' he says. 'The job satisfaction is incredible.'

But that's not how he felt when he returned after six weeks of fruitless hunting for the main locations for *Our Mutual Friend*. The main site, a sprawling riverfront warehouse complex, supposedly on the Thames in Southwark in the 1860s, was proving elusive.

Andy drove nearly 7,000 miles around the coasts and tidal river estuaries of England hunting for the right place. 'The only county we didn't get to was Cornwall,' he recalls ruefully. He and his assistant Cas Braganza were exhausted.

Returning with thousands of photos, he glumly presented his findings to Production Designer, Malcolm Thornton. 'I was pretty down,' he recalls. 'We needed a whole row of buildings for the warehouses, and it had to be tidal.'

Suddenly Malcolm pounced on some grainy black and white snapshots of Cardiff docks. This was it. There was a foreshore with eighty years of undiluted mud, undulating and black. There was space at the top of the beach to build the warehouses.

Andy set to work. He had to get 38 separate permissions from the dock police, the Cardiff Bay Development Authorities, the harbour authorities, the sailing club and all the other interested parties. He had to tiptoe through local politics to get boats and buoys moved, the coastline even had to be dredged, everyone had to be convinced.

For one night-time scene, Gaffer Hexam has to row up the Thames. Simple? No. First the sixty companies whose lights shine out over Cardiff bay had to turn their lights off. The huge Gulf Oil Refinery had to be blacked out during filming. Nippon Electric Glass had to turn off the warning light on their tall chimney. The airport authorities had to be warned that the chimney would be unlit for the duration of filming.

Meanwhile other sites had to be found and organised too. Altogether *Our Mutual Friend* is shot in 84 different locations. The Middle Temple, Lincolns Inn Fields, Gun Street near Liverpool Street Station, Somerset House... The back streets of the warehouses, for instance, are shot in Chatham Dockyards. That presented new problems. Chatham is a working shipyard, and the day shooting was scheduled, a ship showed up to be sand-blasted. Andy had to spring into action and sort out the problem (he had to pay for the sand-blasting to be postponed a day).

Having shifted the riverside shoot to Cardiff, it made sense to try and find the other major location - the dust heaps - in the vicinity. Andy scoured the Brecon Beacons. No working quarry would do, since the crew would be setting up and shooting for several weeks. Finally, driving around, they discovered Trifil, a disused stone quarry twelve miles north-east of Merthyr Tydfil. 'As soon as we saw it, we knew it was wonderful.'



But first toilets, water and accommodation for the construction team had to be provided. Security was also an issue, since the quarry is fairly isolated. All problems that fall on Andy's shoulders.

And there are particular difficulties with shooting a period drama. Modern traffic noise is unacceptable. Hollington Hall, near Stratford-on-Avon was to stand in for Mr and Mrs Boffin's house once they have inherited money. While perfect in other respects, with its salmon pink plasterwork, the Hall lies by the main road, so for three days the police had to restrict traffic to between takes.

But anything is better than shooting in London. For one scene, shot at the English Speaking Union in Charles Street, standing in for the Veneerings house, Andy needed major preparation. Firstly all the residents on the street had to remove their cars. Then all the surrounding buildings had to be checked. Curtains had to be drawn back, blinds had to be removed, letter boxes had to be replaced if they were not in period, security grids had to be unscrewed, telephone wires had to be concealed. Then the road had to be gritted to hide the modern road markings and surface. The council places severe restrictions on film crews' parking. No meters are to be used, only a certain number of bays can be used. Andy needed to get fifteen large vehicles as close as possible. Horse boxes, canteens, costume and make-up vans, Winniebagos, generators, cherry-pickers for lighting...

Before anything could be filmed, Andy and his team had already spent eight hours setting the scene. And once the actors were finished, the letter boxes had to be replaced, the grit on the road had to be sucked up, and the next location had to be prepared for the following day's shooting.

And Andy still thinks it's a great job!

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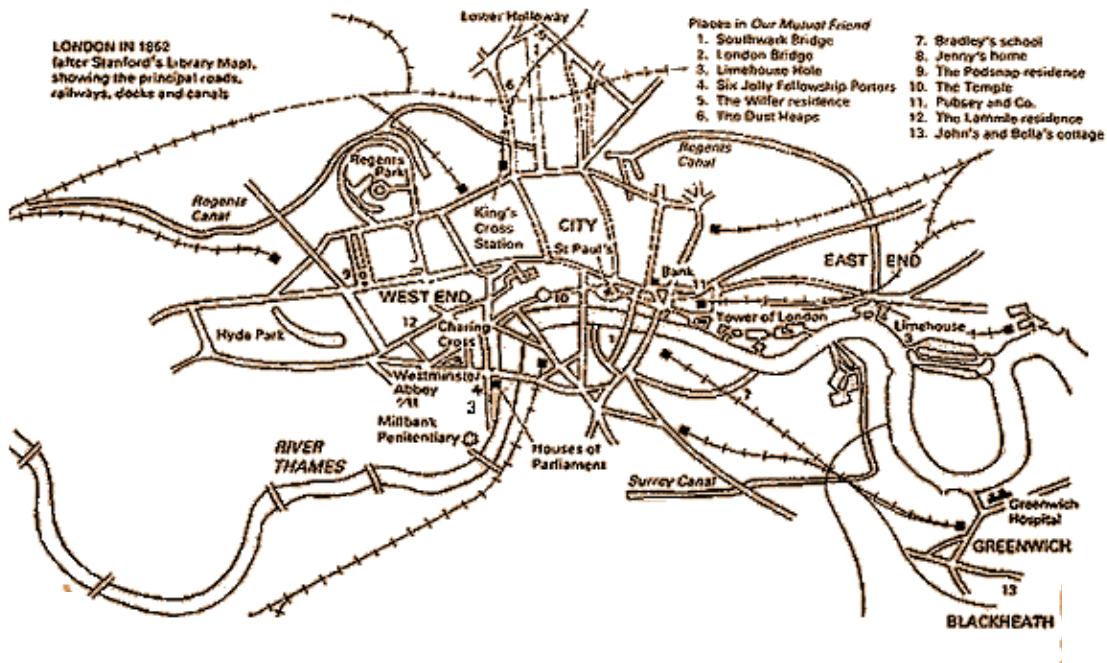
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# Dickens's London

Though Dickens does sometimes take his characters out of London, and even, in the case of *A Tale of Two Cities*, out of England, Dickens has a special place as a chronicler of Queen Victoria's capital. Our Mutual Friend is set entirely in the city, except for the few scenes at Plashwater Mill Weir Lock, somewhere near Henley. Much of Dickens's journalism is about the metropolis too. He knew it very well – going daily for long walks around the city streets.

But how much of Dickens's London remains today?

## Map of London in 1862



## LONDON THEN AND NOW

By Paul Kriwaczek <sup>1</sup>

Dickens is so particular in describing the parts of London in which he sets his story, that it is sometimes hard to remember how much London has changed since his time. Not that the fashionable districts are very different. Today's Podsnaps might still live just off Portman square. Duke Street St James's has exchanged its livery stables for garages, but there are still Twemlows who lodge there. In Smith Square, home to Jenny Wren the doll's dressmaker, one can no longer find 'a blacksmith's forge, and a timber yard, and a dealer's in old iron' but there is still the 'very hideous church with four towers at the four corners, generally resembling some petrified monster, frightful and gigantic, on its back with its legs in the air', though today St John's Smith Square is used for concerts and recordings.

<sup>1</sup> Paul Kriwaczek is Editor of the BBC Dickens web site

It was during Dickens's lifetime that London put on the great spurt of growth which was to take it from the slowly expanding human-scaled city that it had been for a thousand years or more to a giant metropolis with a seemingly insatiable capacity to swallow up its puny neighbours. For unlike many other world cities, planted on new sites and making their growth by slowly expanding their margins, London grew in a landscape close packed with ancient villages and hamlets which kept their old names and something of their character as their fields, orchards, woodlands and market gardens were covered over with streets, shops and houses and their rivers and streams sent underground.



The coming of the railway and the short-distance omnibus made London's expansion possible. For the first time it became practical for the respectable but low paid to continue to work in the city while moving home out to new suburban estates where house prices and rents were far cheaper than in town. Such a one was R. Wilfer: 'His home was in the Holloway region north of London, and then divided from it by fields and trees.'

The Holloway Road had long been part of the main route north out of London and by the beginning of the nineteenth century was lined with villas and cottages and little lanes leading off into tea gardens in the surrounding countryside. In the 1860s, the fields round about were being covered with row upon row of suburban villas of such stifling conformity as to make a perfect setting for the family Wilfer, and even to provide Mr Pooter of the *Grossmiths' Diary of a Nobody* the ideal environment in which to be absurdly conventional.

At the same time, a number of large department stores were built along the Holloway Road itself, not so much for the new suburbanites, but more to attract the carriage trade and the users of public transport—in effect to provide the Victorian equivalent of the out-of-town shopping mall. Beale's was established here in 1829. Jones Brothers was built in 1869, became part the John Lewis partnership, and is now a resource centre.



Though Dickens's Holloway was divided from London by fields and trees, even in his day this patch of countryside was already becoming defiled: 'Between Battle Bridge and that part of the Holloway district in which he dwelt, was a tract of suburban Sahara, where tiles and bricks were burnt, bones were boiled, carpets were beat, rubbish was shot, dogs were fought, and dust was heaped by contractors.'

One of those dust contractors was of course John Harmon's father and it was between Battle Bridge and Holloway that Mr Boffin, the Golden Dustman, had his bower. '...when you've got nigh upon about a odd mile, or say and a quarter if you like, up Maiden Lane, Battle Bridge, ask for Harmony Jail.'

Today, Maiden Lane is no more than a tiny side street; the original course of the lane up towards Highgate is still there but now known by other titles: York Way, Brecknock Road, Dartmouth Park Hill. Battle Bridge too, is only marked by a cul-de-sac, though once it had been a real village with a real bridge over the Fleet River. In 1836 a sixty feet high monument was built at the crossroads here, bearing a statue of King George IV on top. This erection proved so unpopular with the locals that the statue was taken down in 1842 and the rest demolished three years later. The entire brief episode left nothing but a name behind: Kings Cross.

The site of Noddy Boffin's dust heaps, a little north of where Kings Cross Station was built in 1851, on the site of a demolished smallpox hospital, had long been used for disposing of London's unwanted detritus. A gigantic mound of ashes from Harrisons Brickworks in the Grays Inn Road was only removed when the land was sold in 1827.



The area's reputation as a dumping ground has proven hard to shake off. Even today parts of the landscape are still something of an industrial wasteland, where spoil heaps crouch between semi-derelict factories and warehouses.

Other districts in Our Mutual Friend's London have been changed quite beyond recognition. The life-threatening filth, squalor and poverty of the Victorian inner city have largely been conquered; the rookeries of tumble-down shanties and tenements have been razed and rebuilt, most more than once; many to become office buildings. In the East End, an even greater transformation has taken place since Dickens's day.

The mid nineteenth century Pool of London was one of the great trading ports of the world. As reported in 'A day's business in the port of London', one day—September 17th 1849—saw 121 ships arrive, 106 British, 15 foreign, 52 cargoes from the colonies, 69 from foreign states. manned by 1,387 sailors.

The Limehouse end of the Lower Pool was the main entry point for the thousands of tons of coal needed to keep the city's furnaces, fireplaces and cooking stoves in operation. The Colliers—sturdy, broad-beamed vessels—were moored in tiers along the banks, required to leave a fairway of 300 feet in the middle of the river for other vessels to pass, but often failing to do so—and this, in the days of sail.

Not surprisingly few masters were willing to risk even smaller vessels to such an obstacle course, preferring to stand out in the approach roads and unload their cargo onto lighters for final delivery to the wharves. Larger ships would put in to the great West India Docks, dug across the Isle of Dogs in 1800, and transfer their goods to lighters from there. In the course of all this transshipping of loads, enough fell into the river to provide a living for waterside characters like Gaffer Hexam and Rogue Riderhood, inhabiting the darkness and dirt of Limehouse Hole 'among the riggers, and the mast, oar and block makers, and the boat-builders, and the sail-lofts'.

Dickens knew the district well. He would often visit his godfather who lived there, for Limehouse was once a desirable address. But by the 1860s the area was going down in tone. The local rector complained: 'the parishioners are for the most part poor, comprising a large number of persons employed at the Docks, and engineering and ship building yards. There is an increase of low lodging houses for sailors and the removal of the more respectable families to other localities.'


Perhaps the rector would have been heartened to know that 137 years later there are no more docks, no more ship building yards, no more sailors and that the respectably smart and socially upwardly mobile are making their homes in the converted wharves and warehouses. Limehouse Hole Stairs still lead to the water, but have been rebuilt in so characterless a style, that all sense of their history has been washed away.





Yet not everything of Our Mutual Friend's Limehouse has been lost. Dickens himself foresaw that the 'Six Jolly Fellowship Porters' public house, so doughtily managed by Miss Abby Potterson, had staying power: 'In its whole constitution it had not a straight floor, and hardly a straight line; but it had outlasted, and clearly would yet outlast, many a better-trimmed building, many a sprucer public-house.'

He was right. The tavern has survived all the dramatic changes to the locality and to this day still stands proudly in Narrow Street under the sign of 'The Grapes'.



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# Dickens's Life

by Ryan Johnson and Sara Hackenberg <sup>1</sup>



Charles Dickens was born near Portsmouth on February 7, 1812. The happiest years of his childhood were spent in Chatham, Kent, where his family lived between 1817 and 1823. It was in Chatham that Dickens was first introduced to the world of literature and drama. In 1823, his family moved to London, where his father was suddenly arrested for debt and incarcerated in Marshalsea Debtors' Prison.



For the three months that John Dickens and his family lived in a single, cramped room in the Marshalsea, Charles—then only eleven—was left to live alone in lodgings, and was sent to work at Warren's Blacking Factory.

These three months changed Dickens as a person and shaped his outlook as a writer and social critic. It was at Warren's that Dickens met the boy on whom he would later base the Artful Dodger of *Oliver Twist*. The misery of the Warren experience is reflected in several chapters of the semi-autobiographical *David Copperfield*. Many of his broad novelistic images and themes—prisons, degraded conditions of labour, children lost in the city—grew out of this traumatic childhood experience.

Dickens returned to school after the family's situation improved. He attended the Wellington House Academy from the years of 1824-1827 and, at fifteen, entered the world as a solicitor's clerk. He studied shorthand at Doctors' Commons, which led to work as a Parliamentary reporter: his speed and accuracy amazed his contemporaries. By 1833, he contributed his first sketches of urban life to the *Monthly Magazine* and other periodicals. These were soon collected in *Sketches by 'Boz'* and in 1836, on the crest of this wave of success, he married Catherine Hogarth.



<sup>1</sup> Ryan Johnson and Sara Hackenberg are at the Department of English, Stanford University

Now twenty-four, Dickens started the weekly serial publication of *Pickwick Papers*, which quickly made him a literary phenomenon. While Dickens wrote his first novel, *Oliver Twist*, and edited *Bentley's Miscellany*, the Dickens family moved from their first home at Furnival's Inn to 48 Doughty Street. The death of Catherine's sister Mary, to whom both were very attached, troubled the couple deeply during this active time: images of her are later reflected in Dickens's portraits of saintly, diminutive female characters like Little Nell and Little Dorrit. *Nicholas Nickleby* appeared in 1838, and the family moved up again, to 1 Devonshire Terrace. Setting the pattern of industriousness that would typify his entire career, Dickens wrote *Master Humphrey's Clock*, which included *Barnaby Rudge* and *The Old Curiosity Shop*, within only the next two years.



In 1842, Dickens took America by storm. His six-month trip bore literary fruit: the controversial and unflattering *American Notes* and the slyly devastating American episode in *Martin Chuzzlewit* (1843-4). He published *A Christmas Carol* in December 1843, the first of five widely popular Christmas books. In the mid to late 1840s, the Dickens family lived in Italy, Switzerland, and Paris as well as maintaining residence in London. He published *Pictures from Italy* in 1846, *Dombey and Son* in 1848, and his 'favourite child,' *David Copperfield*, in 1850. Also during this decade, in 1847, Dickens's commitment to philanthropic causes led him to help establish Miss Coutts's Home for Homeless Women, where he 'booked' the degraded but fascinating clientele.



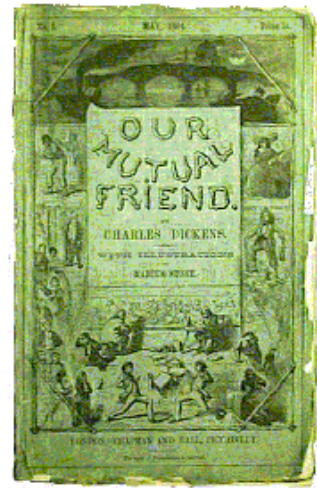
In 1851, the Dickens family moved to Tavistock House. But by now, their marriage had grown increasingly troubled. Catherine had born Dickens ten children, but by the end of the decade he separated permanently from her, and in 1858, he made the acquaintance of the actress Ellen Ternan, with whom he maintained a close relationship until his death.

The fifties marked a return to journalism for Dickens, and increasing attention to social problems. He launched *Household Words* in 1850, a periodical that spanned the decade (and was incorporated into *All the Year Round* in 1859). In 1852-3 *Bleak House* appeared, one of his most famous novels and a frontal attack on the foggy and wasteful legal system. *Hard Times* and *Little Dorrit* shortly followed, lambasting exploitative industrialism and rapacious financial greed. The benefit of all this social criticism, however, was his purchase in 1856 of the gentleman's residence he'd always dreamed of owning, Gad's

Hill Place in Kent. He then detoured into historical fiction, publishing *A Tale of Two Cities* in 1859.

Dickens began his immensely popular public readings in 1858. The stress and strain of these performances, which he toured in both England and the United States, led to a breakdown in 1869. The sixties saw the publication of more journalistic essays in *The Uncommercial Traveller* (1860), the weekly-serialised novel *Great Expectations* (1860-61), and his last twenty-number monthly novel, *Our Mutual Friend*. After a farewell season of public readings early in 1870, he began *The Mystery of Edwin Drood* in April. His persistent illness would not relent, however; Dickens died on 9 June, 1870. *Edwin Drood* was left uncompleted. *Our Mutual Friend* became his last finished work.

From its first page, in which a waterman collects a corpse from the eerie nightworld of the Thames, the dark and overwhelming urban atmosphere of London is vividly rendered in *Our Mutual Friend*. The novel is one of the last Victorian texts to focus on the rapidly changing conditions of the city. In the late 1850s and early 1860s, London suffered through innumerable improvements: new railroads, an urban subway system, a drainage and sewage system, and the Thames Embankment this construction made necessary. The resulting rubble helped produce the mounds of 'dust' described in the novel. The mounds represent the wealth at the centre of the narrative, and hold the key to its surprise ending. Moreover, the motif of recycling, notable in the image of the mounds, shapes many aspects of the novel. In a sense, some of the characters in *Our Mutual Friend* are recycled and renewed: Mr. Riah, for instance, famously revises the negative portrayal of the Jewish character Fagin in Dickens's earlier *Oliver Twist*. Dickens also reiterates preoccupations that surface throughout his career, such as deep concern for the poor, satiric disdain for wealthy London 'Society,' arrogant and dismissive nationalistic snobbery, and continuing fascination with the latest political and scientific developments. Dickens's rich interweaving of such disparate elements makes *Our Mutual Friend* one of his most complex and rewarding works.



Two Prize Medals, 1862.

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## AFTERWORD

by Catherine Wearing<sup>1</sup>

We wanted to adapt Charles Dickens's last completed novel for television for a myriad of reasons. At heart is the conviction that this is one of the greatest novels by one of the greatest writers. And the belief that pulsating throughout the work is the ache of two great love stories and the longings of five great lovers.

Our lovers—the charismatic lawyer, Eugene Wrayburn; the self-destructive schoolteacher, Bradley Headstone; Lizzie Hexam, a working-class girl who lives and works on the river Thames; the irresistible and witty Bella Wilfer; and the mysterious John Harmon—meet to fall in love. This novel is profoundly concerned with the predicament of love—familial, material and romantic—the contradictions and difficulties, demands and pain that exist alongside the seduction, the passion and the romance. Here love can ruin. The aptly named Mr Venus says just this when first we encounter him, in his shop of human bones, experiencing a profound melancholia, having been rejected by the love of his life, Pleasant Riderhood:

'And so a man climbs to the top of the tree, Mr Wegg, only to see that there's no look-out when he's up there. I sit here of a night surrounded by the lovely trophies of my art, and what have they done for me? Ruined me.'

Dickens does not flinch from the misery love can create. Indeed, the story-teller in him seems to feed upon it. John Harmon determines to return home incognito in order to examine his perverse father's choice of bride and find her wanting. Instead, he falls in love with Bella Wilfer despite finding her wanting. In another instance, Dickens powerfully and ruthlessly creates a complex love triangle between Eugene, Headstone and Lizzie, plundering class hierarchy for a dramatic springboard into this epic Greek tragedy of a love story. In this world, as Gaffer Hexam says to his daughter Lizzie, just moments before he learns his son Charley has abandoned him, 'distress is for ever a going about, like sut in the air'.

And yet this is the same world where the love stories finale in convincing tidal waves of happiness. Dickens constantly flirts with and passionately explores the tension between the world as it is and the world as we would like it to be, between people as they are and as we would, perhaps, prefer them to behave. There are no easy answers here. Honest ambiguity reigns.

Every character, regardless of background, status or education, however large or small a role they play in this multi-layered story, is treated as intelligent, as possessing a soul which they can lose. Even as the hapless Twemlow exudes a three-dimensional dramatic life. By refusing to smooth over their edges, Dickens's characters are free to be truly human. And there is nothing more beguiling.

Eugene Wrayburn is a radical anti-hero whom Dickens had been threatening to create for some time. We find precedents for the reckless anti-hero in the Steerforth of *David Copperfield* and in *A Tale of Two Cities*, Sidney Carton. But neither of these two characters is allowed to survive their stories. Steerforth, though adored by David, and despite being inspiring and tragic, treats Emily badly and dies by drowning. There is an interesting echo here with Headstone's eventual fate. Carton is condemned to a rather melodramatic and moralising end: 'It is a far, far better thing that I do than I have ever done, it is a far, far better rest that I go to than I have ever known'.

Eugene, uniquely, lives. His initial cynicism and disdain of the world is matched by the viciousness of his 'winding up' of Mr Dolls and his cruelty in deciding to pursue Lizzie to the end. It is out of the question to marry her, and out of the question to leave her.

<sup>1</sup> Catherine Wearing is the Producer of *Our Mutual Friend*

The crisis. Dickens chooses just this moment for Headstone to rain down his angry blows on Eugene, nearly killing him. Eugene comes to realize that without his shadow Headstone he would have seduced his lover and condemned her to inevitable ruin. Dickens's refusal to flinch from or compromise Eugene's essentially ambiguous charisma allows the happy ending Eugene and Lizzie achieve to play for real. His long fascination with ambiguous central characters here reaches its fullest embodiment.

Eugene could not have existed without Bradley Headstone. While Eugene first presents most of the characteristics one might have thought anathema to Dickens, Headstone is quite the opposite. He has earnestly worked his way up to create a role for himself in the world, a position of value—Headstone is a teacher of the poor. By rights, Lizzie should be his. But the battle between these two men soon shifts from one of straightforward class tension to a more primitive struggle for power. As Dickens tells us when they first meet in the great mantelpiece scene, 'There was some secret, sure perception between them, which set them against one another in all ways'. And so begins their mutual stalking of one another. Eugene cannot help but goad Headstone on, forcing him to reveal levels of anarchic energy and tumultuous self-destruction in his battle with love:

'You could draw me to fire, you could draw me to water, you could draw me to the gallows, you could draw me to any death, you could draw me to anything I have most avoided, you could draw me to exposure and disgrace. This... is what I mean by your being the ruin of me.'

Again, the ruin love creates. Dickens brilliantly ensures that Headstone manages to deliver his rival Eugene right into Lizzie's arms. And Eugene's deathbed demand that Mortimer protect the schoolteacher from conventional punishment delivers Headstone into the hands of his tormentor Rogue Riderhood and to his death:

'If he should be accused, you must keep him silent and save him. Don't think of avenging me; think only of hushing the story and protecting her... Listen to what I say to you. It was not the schoolmaster Bradley Headstone.'

Dramatically, psychologically and emotionally, this love triangle smells sheer, epic and contemporary.

Our Mutual Friend boasts two of Dickens's more compelling and complex heroines, Lizzie Hexam and Bella Wilfer. Bella wants money and is not ashamed of wanting it. She is a realist and soon understands that she must marry out of poverty. Her frankness and wit are irresistible and stir more recent memories, such as that of Marilyn Monroe's character in *Gentlemen Prefer Blondes*. Bella's journey of recognition in love is an unflinchingly unsentimental education. By the same token, it is Lizzie who rescues Eugene. It is his not her life that is at stake. Freed from cliché, the complex telling of Lizzie's struggle to love is treated with radical equality. Hers is a struggle for a life of the imagination and the heart.

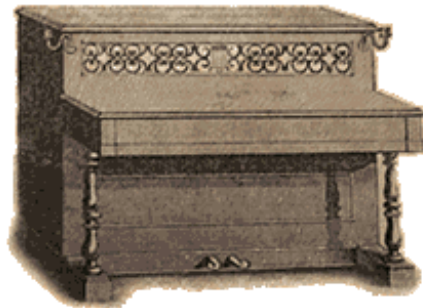
In many ways, both on the surface and subtextually, *Our Mutual Friend* is shockingly contemporary. The opening chapter reads like a suspense thriller—we are immediately plunged into the murder mystery surrounding John Harmon's quest for identity. Dickens uses narrative techniques, such as dislocations of time and dreamscapes, which make the novel ripe for filming. It may be fanciful, but I often imagined while we were shooting the series, how Dickens would have loved the collaborative process of film-making, how he would have revelled in the bringing together of all the various skills, talents and personalities. And, perhaps, how he would have rejoiced in the possibilities of telling stories for that most democratic of mediums, television.

As the adorable Mr and Mrs Boffin chart their way through the shark-infested waters of life in society, having worked for years as dust collectors, who can fail to reflect on the vagaries and possibilities of our own present-day lottery culture? As we observe the hypocrisies and inequalities inherent in the brilliantly titled *Veneerings'* world of new money, again, who can fail to reflect on our own boom-and-bust political and economical structures?

The two central dramatic landscapes of the novel, the snaking presence and metaphoric power of the river Thames and the sinister lunar landscapes of the Bower and its dust heaps, create a portrayal of London, of a capital city in its entirety. It is interesting to note that the television dramatist Tony Marchant, who recently created for BBC2 the ambitious drama *Holding On*, a tapestry of tales depicting life in a fast-moving and unforgiving London, began his work by reading *Our Mutual Friend*.

In a sense it feels superficial to claim contemporary clout for a piece of such creative worth, for a story so inevitably immersed in the culture of the 1860s. But one need only imagine Dickens like his fellow observer, the brilliant Henry Mayhew, walking the streets of his beloved city like a latter-day documentary film-maker to know that here is an artist fascinated by the imaginative fire of life as it is lived, by people as they are, by the world as it is, and it is this that powers our attempt to re-explore the genius of Charles Dickens's *Our Mutual Friend* today.

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## POSTSCRIPT IN LIEU OF PREFACE

by Charles Dickens

When I devised this story, I foresaw the likelihood that a class of readers and commentators would suppose that I was at great pains to conceal exactly what I was at great pains to suggest: namely, that Mr John Harmon was not slain, and that Mr John Rokesmith was he. Pleasing myself with the idea that the supposition might in part arise out of some ingenuity in the story, and thinking it worth while, in the interests of art, to hint to an audience that an artist (of whatever denomination) may perhaps be trusted to know what he is about in his vocation, if they will concede him a little patience, I was not alarmed by the anticipation.

To keep for a long time unsuspected, yet always working itself out, another purpose originating in that leading incident, and turning it to a pleasant and useful account at last, was at once the most interesting and the most difficult part of my design. Its difficulty was much enhanced by the mode of publication; for, it would be very unreasonable to expect that many readers, pursuing a story in portions from month to month through nineteen months, will, until they have it before them complete, perceive the relations of its finer threads to the whole pattern which is always before the eyes of the story-weaver at his loom. Yet, that I hold the advantages of the mode of publication to outweigh its disadvantages, may be easily believed of one who revived it in the *Pickwick Papers* after long disuse, and has pursued it ever since.

There is sometimes an odd disposition in this country to dispute as improbable in fiction, what are the commonest experiences in fact. Therefore, I note here, though it may not be at all necessary, that there are hundreds of Will Cases (as they are called), far more remarkable than that fancied in this book; and that the stores of the Prerogative Office teem with instances of testators who have made, changed, contradicted, hidden, forgotten, left cancelled, and left uncanceled, each many more wills than were ever made by the elder Mr Harmon of Harmony Jail.

In my social experiences since Mrs Betty Higden came upon the scene and left it, I have found Circumlocutional champions disposed to be warm with me on the subject of my view of the Poor Law. Mr friend Mr Bounderby could never see any difference between leaving the Coketown 'hands' exactly as they were, and requiring them to be fed with turtle soup and venison out of gold spoons. Idiomatic propositions of a parallel nature have been freely offered for my acceptance, and I have been called upon to admit that I would give Poor Law relief to anybody, anywhere, anyhow. Putting this nonsense aside, I have observed a suspicious tendency in the champions to divide into two parties; the one, contending that there are no deserving Poor who prefer death by slow starvation and bitter weather, to the mercies of some Relieving Officers and some Union Houses; the other, admitting that there are such Poor, but denying that they have any cause or reason for what they do. The records in our newspapers, the late exposure by *THE LANCET*, and the common sense and senses of common people, furnish too abundant evidence against both defences. But, that my view of the Poor Law may not be mistaken or misrepresented, I will state it. I believe there has been in England, since the days of the *STUARTS*, no law so often infamously administered, no law so often openly violated, no law habitually so ill-supervised. In the majority of the shameful cases of disease and death from destitution, that shock the Public and disgrace the country, the illegality is quite equal to the inhumanity—and known language could say no more of their lawlessness.

On Friday the Ninth of June in the present year, Mr and Mrs Boffin (in their manuscript dress of receiving Mr and Mrs Lammle at breakfast) were on the South Eastern Railway with me, in a terribly destructive accident. When I had done what I could to help others, I climbed back into my carriage—nearly turned over a viaduct, and caught aslant upon the turn—to extricate the worthy couple. They were much soiled, but otherwise unhurt. The same happy result attended Miss Bella Wilfer on her wedding day, and Mr Riderhood inspecting Bradley Headstone's red neckerchief as he lay asleep. I remember with devout thankfulness that I can never be much nearer parting company with my readers for ever, than I was then, until there shall be written against my life, the two words with which I have this day closed this book:-

THE END

September 2nd, 1865.