# Unseen sketches reveal Charles Dickens’s theatrical side and intimate friendships



Unpublished sketches capturing Charles Dickens in a rare and intimate light have been unveiled at the Charles Dickens Museum in London. Created between 1855 and 1857 by Nathaniel Powell, Dickens’ neighbour in Tavistock Square, these pen, ink, and watercolour drawings vividly depict the renowned author during rehearsals of his theatrical productions, including his play Mr Nightingale’s Diary and the collaborative work The Frozen Deep. The sketches showcase Dickens himself, his theatre company, family members such as his eldest daughter Mamie Dickens, and notable friends including Mark Lemon, former editor of Punch magazine, and Victorian novelist Wilkie Collins, famed for The Woman in White and his collaboration with Dickens.

According to the museum, these informal drawings deliver one of the only known immediate glimpses of Dickens actively engaged in his enduring passion for performance. Frankie Kubicki, director of the Charles Dickens Museum, explained that the sketches offer a dynamic view of Dickens’ world, revealing the frenetic energy and camaraderie behind the polished public image of his theatrical endeavours. Kubicki noted, “They bring Dickens’s world and character to life in a way that we haven’t quite seen before.” This collection was recently acquired by the museum with the support of the Art Fund, Arts Council England/V&A Purchase Grant Fund, and the Wilkie Collins Society.

One of the sketches has been integrated into the museum's ongoing “Showtime!” exhibition, which continues until January 2026, while the others are displayed in Dickens’s study at Tavistock House. This historic building is the only surviving London residence of the author, where he wrote some of his most celebrated novels, including Bleak House, Hard Times, Little Dorrit, and A Tale of Two Cities. Visitors can view the sketches alongside the very space where Dickens crafted these literary classics, deepening the connection between the man, his writing, and his theatrical interests.

The discovery enriches the museum's broader efforts to illuminate Dickens’s personal and professional life. Recently, the Charles Dickens Museum also acquired 120 previously unseen letters from Georgina Hogarth, Dickens’s sister-in-law and lifelong companion. These letters are expected to provide further insight into Dickens’s character and domestic life, complementing the vivid visual narratives offered by Powell’s sketches.

The newly unveiled sketches redefine how Dickens’s multifaceted creativity is understood, highlighting the intersection of his literary genius with his dramatic ambitions. By capturing private moments of rehearsal and camaraderie, they invite visitors and scholars alike to appreciate a less formal, yet profoundly human side of one of Victorian England’s greatest cultural figures.

### 📌 Reference Map:

* Paragraph 1 – [[1]](https://www.irishnews.com/entertainment/unpublished-sketches-of-charles-dickens-go-on-display-for-first-time-HNSQSZSCC5NILHXO7IUATB2BWQ/), [[2]](https://www.standard.co.uk/showbiz/celebrity-news/english-wilkie-collins-london-miriam-margolyes-bloomsbury-b1244277.html), [[4]](https://www.standard.co.uk/showbiz/celebrity-news/english-wilkie-collins-london-miriam-margolyes-bloomsbury-b1244277.html), [[5]](https://www.standard.co.uk/showbiz/celebrity-news/english-wilkie-collins-london-miriam-margolyes-bloomsbury-b1244277.html), [[6]](https://www.standard.co.uk/showbiz/celebrity-news/english-wilkie-collins-london-miriam-margolyes-bloomsbury-b1244277.html), [[7]](https://www.standard.co.uk/showbiz/celebrity-news/english-wilkie-collins-london-miriam-margolyes-bloomsbury-b1244277.html)
* Paragraph 2 – [[1]](https://www.irishnews.com/entertainment/unpublished-sketches-of-charles-dickens-go-on-display-for-first-time-HNSQSZSCC5NILHXO7IUATB2BWQ/), [[2]](https://www.standard.co.uk/showbiz/celebrity-news/english-wilkie-collins-london-miriam-margolyes-bloomsbury-b1244277.html), [[4]](https://www.standard.co.uk/showbiz/celebrity-news/english-wilkie-collins-london-miriam-margolyes-bloomsbury-b1244277.html)
* Paragraph 3 – [[1]](https://www.irishnews.com/entertainment/unpublished-sketches-of-charles-dickens-go-on-display-for-first-time-HNSQSZSCC5NILHXO7IUATB2BWQ/), [[2]](https://www.standard.co.uk/showbiz/celebrity-news/english-wilkie-collins-london-miriam-margolyes-bloomsbury-b1244277.html), [[4]](https://www.standard.co.uk/showbiz/celebrity-news/english-wilkie-collins-london-miriam-margolyes-bloomsbury-b1244277.html), [[5]](https://www.standard.co.uk/showbiz/celebrity-news/english-wilkie-collins-london-miriam-margolyes-bloomsbury-b1244277.html)
* Paragraph 4 – [[3]](https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/uk-england-london-68215442)
* Paragraph 5 – [[1]](https://www.irishnews.com/entertainment/unpublished-sketches-of-charles-dickens-go-on-display-for-first-time-HNSQSZSCC5NILHXO7IUATB2BWQ/), [[2]](https://www.standard.co.uk/showbiz/celebrity-news/english-wilkie-collins-london-miriam-margolyes-bloomsbury-b1244277.html), [[4]](https://www.standard.co.uk/showbiz/celebrity-news/english-wilkie-collins-london-miriam-margolyes-bloomsbury-b1244277.html)

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## Bibliography

1. <https://www.irishnews.com/entertainment/unpublished-sketches-of-charles-dickens-go-on-display-for-first-time-HNSQSZSCC5NILHXO7IUATB2BWQ/> - Please view link - unable to able to access data
2. <https://www.standard.co.uk/showbiz/celebrity-news/english-wilkie-collins-london-miriam-margolyes-bloomsbury-b1244277.html> - Unpublished sketches of Charles Dickens, created in 1855 and 1857 by his neighbour Nathaniel Powell, are on display at the Charles Dickens Museum in London. These pen, ink, and watercolour sketches depict Dickens and his theatre company during rehearsals for plays like 'Mr Nightingale’s Diary' and 'The Frozen Deep'. The exhibition runs until September 21, 2025, with one sketch featured in the 'Showtime!' exhibition and others displayed in Dickens's study, where he wrote novels such as 'Oliver Twist' and 'Nicholas Nickleby'.
3. <https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/uk-england-london-68215442> - The Charles Dickens Museum in London has acquired 120 previously unpublished letters written by Georgina Hogarth, Dickens's sister-in-law, housekeeper, and friend. These letters, purchased for £6,048 from a private collection, offer insights into Dickens's life and character. Hogarth, who lived with Dickens after his separation from her sister Catherine, continued to reside with him until his death. The museum plans to display these letters, enhancing its existing collections and providing a fuller picture of Hogarth's role in Dickens's life.
4. <https://www.standard.co.uk/showbiz/celebrity-news/english-wilkie-collins-london-miriam-margolyes-bloomsbury-b1244277.html> - Unpublished sketches of Charles Dickens, created in 1855 and 1857 by his neighbour Nathaniel Powell, are on display at the Charles Dickens Museum in London. These pen, ink, and watercolour sketches depict Dickens and his theatre company during rehearsals for plays like 'Mr Nightingale’s Diary' and 'The Frozen Deep'. The exhibition runs until September 21, 2025, with one sketch featured in the 'Showtime!' exhibition and others displayed in Dickens's study, where he wrote novels such as 'Oliver Twist' and 'Nicholas Nickleby'.
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