

CLOSER by Patrick Marber

In the Studio

7th - 21st June

This is a brutal comedy of modern love where four strangers meet and couple. In a series of beautifully crafted duologues they connect, disconnect and reconnect in bewildering combinations. Sexual jealousy and sexual betrayal confuse their efforts to get closer as they try to avoid loneliness and isolation. Brisk, witty and obscene, *Closer* is a thrilling, intimate and caustically funny love story for today, revealing how little we sometimes know about each other and ourselves.

This play contains sexually explicit language which some may find offensive.



**MARY QUEEN OF SCOTS
GOT HER HEAD CHOPPED OFF**

by Liz Lochhead

In the Playhouse

21 - 28 June

This is a ferociously iconoclastic re-examination of Mary's life from one of Scotland's best contemporary playwrights. We are led at break-neck speed through Mary's last years and forced to examine the parallels with modern life. The language is rich and varied, incorporating Elizabethan English and contemporary Scots, and the characters are full-bodied, subtle, humorous and virile.

When first performed in 1987, *Mary Queen of Scots* won the prestigious "Scotsman Fringe First" award at the Edinburgh Festival. Not to be missed.



The Questors Student Group Presents

YOU CAN'T TAKE IT WITH YOU

by Moss Hart and George S. Kaufman

In the Playhouse

12 - 19 July

Alice Sycamore, the only normal person from a zany family, falls in love with her boss, Tony Kirby, and has to introduce his family to her own. The Kirby's are a wealthy, stuffy family of great self-importance, while the Sycamore's are a collection of good-hearted lunatics. When the two families come together, lifestyle and philosophy collide head-on. The Kirbys, predictably, are appalled at the wild unorthodoxy of Alice's family, which presently results in the arrest of the family—and of the Kirbys themselves.

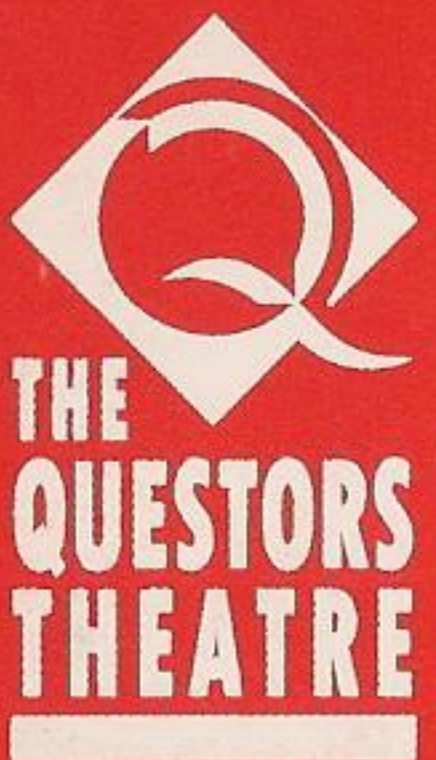


programme research and design by Kate Morton

produced by CLS Tel: 07768 923484

The Life & Adventures of NICHOLAS NICKLEBY Parts 1 & 2

by Charles Dickens, adapted for the stage by David Edgar
with incidental music by Stephen Oliver





Enquiries: 020 8567 0011
Box Office: 020 8567 5184
Fax: 020 8567 8736
e-mail: enquiries@questors.org.uk
Web site: www.questors.org.uk

Welcome to The Questors Theatre, one of London's best kept secrets - except to its 3,000 members. How do I know about the Questors? I am proud to have been their President for over 17 years. Founded in 1929, it has since grown into the largest community theatre in Europe with a reputation for the highest standards, not only in acting but in direction and design as well. Luckily, with so many members, we have a wealth of talent to call on for all aspects of production and members are encouraged to be as actively involved as they would like. Alternatively, they simply enjoy the social side of the club, including the friendly Grapevine Bar (one of the many perks of membership) and the many and varied shows in our newly refurbished 350 seater Playhouse Theatre and more intimate Studio Theatre.

The Questors runs a professionally recognised two-year acting course in conjunction with Kingston College. There are also acting courses for beginners, free backstage training courses, visiting companies from home and abroad, regular art exhibitions, and workshops and clubs for young people. In short, there is something for everyone and with annual membership costing as little as £23.50 (including up to 8 free shows) it's great value for money as well.

But don't just take my word for it, the next time you're in West London call into The Grapevine Bar on any Wednesday evening at 8pm for a free tour of the theatre and a drink on us!

Worth looking into? Definitely!

Dame Judi Dench
President of The Questors Theatre

THE JOURNEY

It has long been my dream to direct these two plays. When I saw *Nicholas Nickleby* at the RSC in the early eighties I was mesmerized by the sheer captivating energy of the production and the exciting and simple way it was presented. What was unique about the experience, certainly for audiences in this country, was to have the opportunity to see an entire Dickens novel recreated on stage by a group of forty actors playing 150 characters in 92 scenes. I have never forgotten those two marathon evenings at the Aldwych Theatre, and I never will.

The first steps of our humble journey to recreate the magic of that original show were taken in the Spring of 2002 when I was working on the design for Anne Neville's production of *The Winters Tale*. I had just been given approval to direct *Nicholas Nickleby* in the Spring 2003 Season. Colin Horne, who was also working with me on the *Winter's Tale* set, volunteered to be Production Manager for NN and together we stepped forth on a long and at times winding road towards this performance. Colin has been such a tremendous support to me on this show; I certainly could not have done it without him.

I spent six weeks editing down the plays so as to reduce the overall performance time to around three hours for each play, whilst trying to retain all the characters. I ran a workshop on the Questors Open Day in September last year for twenty-six actors, exploring the themes of the play. Auditions commenced in the middle of November and seven weeks later I was able to cast the production with a group of actors committed to working with me for sixteen weeks on this vast project.

On the 2nd February 2003, I stood in front of a group of thirty-five actors, who sat round in a circle at the first rehearsal of these two epic plays. The group was very diverse, ranging from long standing experienced Questors actors to others yet to make their debut on our stage. Since then the company have battled their way through this complex narrative, creating a vast array of colourful characters and dramatic set pieces. The group of actors who have worked with me on this show have all contributed enormously towards the end result. Their imaginative input is what has helped shaped the vision for this show and I admire and respect their dedication and commitment, they are now The Nicholas Nickleby Company. I also salute my wonderful crew, who have been equally dedicated to making this show work efficiently and professionally.

Finally a word of thanks to David Edgar, who has been very supportive of our production and for his wonderful adaptation of this truly inspiring story.

Mike Langridge

The Life and Adventures of NICHOLAS NICKLEBY

(PARTS ONE AND TWO)

by **CHARLES DICKENS**

adapted for the stage by **DAVID EDGAR**

First Performance of Part One - 24th May 2003

First Performance of Part Two - 26th May 2003

CAST

THE NICKLEBY FAMILY

NICHOLAS NICKLEBY	David Hovatter
KATE NICKLEBY	Tanya McCall
RALPH NICKLEBY	Michael Langridge
MRS. NICKLEBY	Cathy Wallace

LONDON

MR. BONNEY	Geoff Braman
NEWMAN NOGGS	John Dobson
HANNAH	Lydia King
MISS LA CREEVY	Monyene Kane
MR. SNAWLEY	Kevin Madley
SNAWLEY MAJOR	Kerri Logan
SNAWLEY MINOR	Lydia King
BELLING	Matt Sheahan
WILLIAM	James Goodden
WAITRESSES	Tessa Vale, Jananne Rahman

COACHMAN	Tony Bromham
MR. MANTALINI	Francis Lloyd
MADAME MANTALINI	Tessa Vale
FOOTMAN	Matt Sheahan
MISS KNAG	Kerri Logan
RICH LADY	Monyene Kane
HER DAUGHTER	Francesca Arpino
MILLINERS	Jananne Rahman, Sheri Desbaux, Linda Shannon, Francesca Arpino

YORKSHIRE

MR. SQUEERS	Nigel Lawrence
MRS. SQUEERS	Anne Neville
SMIKE	Derek Stoddart
PHIB	Lydia King
FANNY SQUEERS	Caroline Bleakley

YOUNG WACKFORD SQUEERS	Anthony Curran
JOHN BROWDIE	Simon Roberts
TILDA PRICE	Jananne Rahman

The Boys

TOMKINS	Phillip Sheahan
COATES	Kevin Madley
GRAYMARSH	Mike Hislop
JENNINGS	Chris Ifould
MOBBS	Derek Chandler
BOLDER	Howard Benbrook
PITCHER	Richard Gallagher
JACKSON	Douglas Murray
COBBEY	Francis Lloyd
PETERS	James Goodden
SPROUTER	Francesca Arpino
ROBERTS	John Dobson

LONDON AGAIN

MR. KENWIGS	Anthony Curran
MRS. KENWIGS	Tessa Vale
MORLEENA KENWIGS	Lydia King
MR. LILLYVICK	Howard Benbrook
MISS PETOWKER	Jananne Rahman
MR. CROWL	Phillip Sheahan
GEORGE	Nigel Lawrence
GIRL	Kerri Logan
MR. CUTLER	Richard Gallagher
MRS. CUTLER	Linda Shannon
MRS. GREEN	Anne Neville
LADY FROM DOWNSTAIRS	Monyene Kane
OLD LORD	Vincent McQueen
YOUNG FIANCEE	Lydia King
LANDLORD	Mike Hislop

PORTSMOUTH

MR. VINCENT CRUMMLES	Tony Bromham
MRS. CRUMMLES	Anne Neville
THE INFANT PHENOMENON	Lydia King
MASTER PERCY CRUMMLES	James Goodden
MASTER CRUMMLES	Matt Sheahan
MRS. GRUDDEN	Monyene Kane
MISS SNEVELLICCI	Caroline Bleakley
MR. FOLAIR	Richard Gallagher
MR. LENVILLE	Francis Lloyd
MISS LEDROOK	Francesca Arpino
MISS BRAVASSA	Linda Shannon
MR. WAGSTAFF	Mike Hislop
MR. BLIGHTY	Geoff Braman
MISS BELVAWNEY	Kerri Logan
MISS GAZINGI	Sheri Desbaux
MR. PAILEY	Chris Ifould
MR. HETHERINGTON	Anthony Curran
MR. BANE	Nigel Lawrence
MR. FLUGGERS	Vincent McQueen
MRS. LENVILLE	Tessa Vale
MR. SNEVELLICCI	Phillip Sheahan

LONDON

SIR MULBERRY HAWK	Simon Roberts
LORD FREDERICK VERISOPHT	Douglas Murray
MR. PLUCK	James Goodden
MR. PYKE	Chris Ifould
MR. SNOBB	Kevin Madley
COLONEL CHOWSER	Geoff Braman
BROOKER	Chris Ifould
SCALEY	Kevin Madley
TIX	James Goodden
MR. WITITTERLEY	Richard Gallagher
MRS. WITITTERLEY	Linda Shannon
ALPHONSE	Derek Chandler
WAITERS AT THE COFFEE HOUSE	Richard Gallagher, Sheri Desbaux, Geoff Braman

CHARLES CHEERYBLE	Mike Hislop
NED CHEERYBLE	Derek Chandler
TIM LINKINWATER	Vincent McQueen
ANGRY MAN	Francis Lloyd
FRANK CHEERYBLE	Douglas Murray
Dr. LUMBAY	Geoff Braman

MARRIED LADIES

NURSE	Kerri Logan, Caroline Bleakley
ARTHUR GRIDE	Monyene Kane
MADLINE BRAY	Phillip Sheahan
WALTER BRAY	Francesca Arpino
PEG SLIDERSKEW	Tony Bromham
MINISTER	Caroline Bleakley
HANDSAW	Kevin Madley
CAPTAIN ADAMS	John Dobson
WESTWOOD	Anthony Curran
CROUPIER	Francis Lloyd
CASINO PROPRIETOR	Richard Gallagher
SURGEON	Vincent McQueen
UMPIRE	Howard Benbrook
OFFICER	Geoff Braman
MRS. SNAWLEY	Francis Lloyd
YOUNG WOMAN	Kerri Logan
YOUNG BOY	Sheri Desbaux

Other parts played by
members of the company

MUSICIANS:

VIOLIN	Lisa Milne Henderson
VIOLIN	Catherine Lemmon
VIOLIN	Michael Tanner
VIOLA	Lynda Bird
BASS	Paul Hughes
FLUTE/PICCOLO	William Morton
BASSOON	Bill Robinson
TRUMPET	Ian Brunton
TROMBONE	Alexia Constantine
HORN	Frank Watson
KEYBOARDS	Phiroz Dalal
REHEARSAL PIANISTS	Phiroz Dalal Sarah Morrison Don Kincaid

Wedding Anthem sung by Choristers from
St. Paul's Cathedral.
Master of the Choir, Barry Rose.

FOR PARTS ONE AND TWO

There will be a 15 minute interval
between ACT ONE and ACT TWO

The Life and Adventures of Nicholas Nickleby
is set in London, Yorkshire, Portsmouth and
Devon during the first half of the
Nineteenth Century.

PRODUCTION

Director and Set Designer
Assistant Directors

Costume Designer
Lighting Designer
assisted by

Musical Director
Sound Designer
Production Manager
Wardrobe Manager
Wardrobe

Stage Managers

Deputy Stage Managers

Assistant Stage Managers

Prompter
Construction Managers

Constructor
Lighting Operators

Sound Operator

Michael Langridge
Caroline Bleakley,
Anne Neville
Raymond Childe
Andrew Dixon
Tim Edwards,
Tim Hayward
Guy Middlemiss
Alan N Smith
Colin Horne
Anne Gilmour
Lanre Ajayi,
Kavita Angra,
Elizabeth Bisinotto,
Julia Cooke,
Jean Derby,
Sarah Galton,
Donatella Lazzari,
Alison McCall,
Eleanora Murphy,
Kirsty Packham,
Sue Peckitt,
Emma Ryder,
Vishaali Sankadecha,
Pam Smith,
Bridgett Strevens,
Lyndsey Udall,
Sylvia Wall,
Emily Wijeyesinghe,
Jenny Yates

Nigel Bamford,
Liz Prior

Bernard Brady,
Deborah Jones

Geoff Beynon,
Inma Del Castillo,
Geoffrey Morgan,
Magdalena Mejcz,
Penny Seyfert,
Louis Tonna

Gordon Miller

Roger Brace,
Michael Hagan

Karen Tolladay
Richard H Lewis,

Lakin Mors

Mike Caddy

Property Mistress
Hair and Makeup

Work Experience Students

Student Group Members

Upholsterers

Property Makers

Get-in Crew

Lighting Riggers

Scenic Artists

Set Painters

Deborah Carey
Jessica Davis,
Emily Martin,
Nerys Martin,
Lisa Morhej,
Keira Philo,
Laura Salmon,
Caroline Silk,
Beverley Sloman

Khemie Gata-Aura,
Lucie Jeffery,
Hannah Webster,
Ben Weston

Sophie Fontaine,
Mark Golland,
Dominique Gozdawa,
Adam Winczewski

Jo Perse,
Jenny Richardson

Hazel Ashworth,
Ash Haji,
Cathy Kelleher,
Jennie Rawlings

Adrian Asher,
Peter Collins,
Paul Devlin,
John Feather,
Geoff Moore,
Chris Sydenham,
Christopher Tomlins

Damien Lazell,
Ellie Maffett,
Terry Mummery,
Patrick Smart

Elaine Hagan,
Alex Marker

Lanre Ajayi,
Sinead Lawler

Thanks to
Gillian Carver of St Ann's Special School, Hanwell,
St Andrews United Reformed Church,
Malvern Theatre Players,
The House Services Team, Parsons E&C

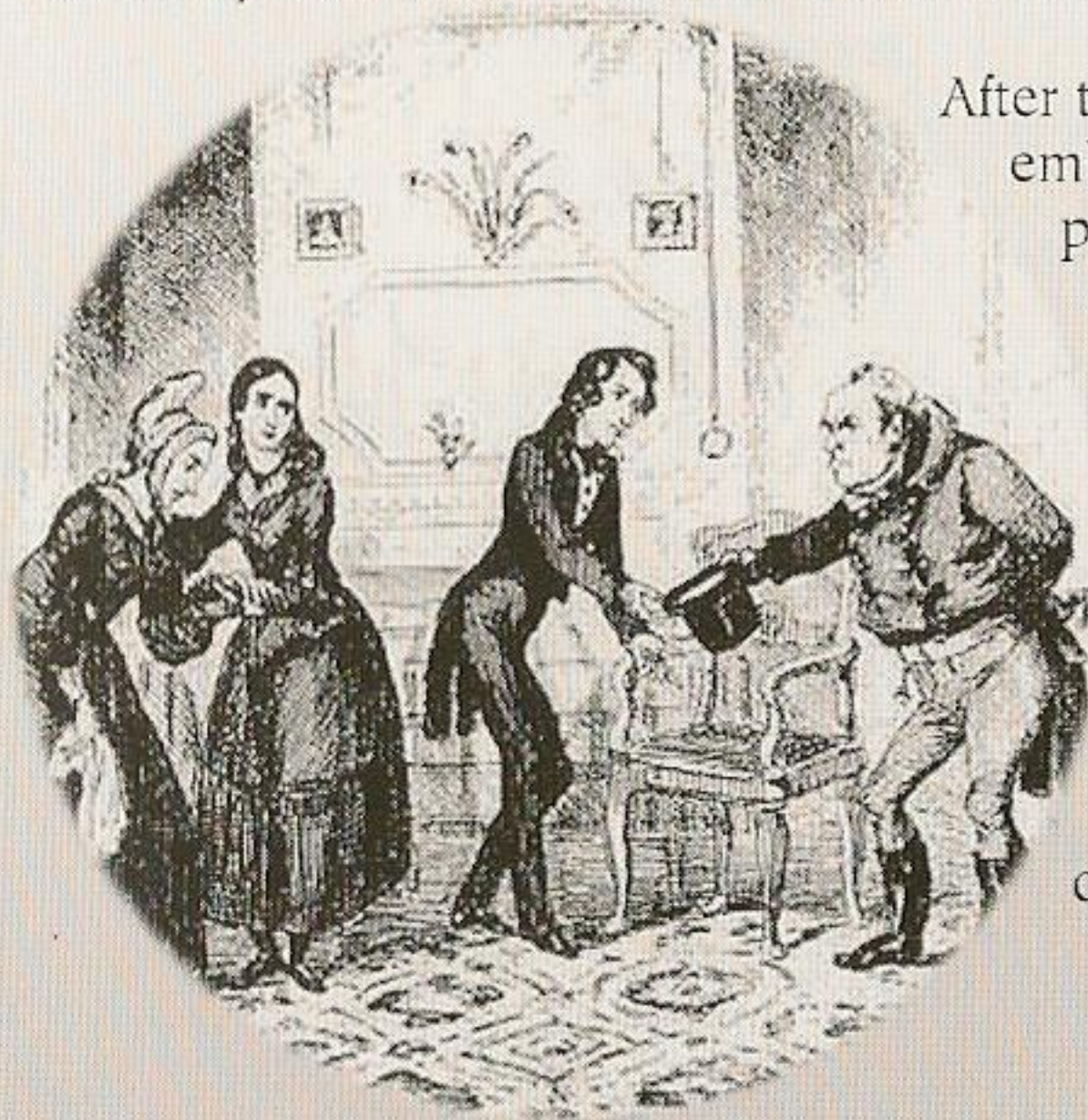
CHARLES DICKENS

Charles Dickens was born on 7th February 1812 in Portsmouth and spent most of his childhood in London and Kent, both of which feature frequently in his novels.

His childhood was marred by the arrest of his father, a minor, and somewhat careless, civil servant, for debt. He was sent to work at Warren's Blacking factory, only being rescued when his father was released from jail. His experience at the blacking factory haunted him all his life and his sense of humiliation and abandonment was the force that drove him to write many of his novels. He did, however, continue his education at a day school in London and at the age of fifteen found employment as an office boy at an attorney's.



In 1829 he became a free-lance reporter in the Courts and Parliament, and it was here that he developed his talent for sharp and concise description that was to characterise his writing. His first published story appeared in 1833, and shortly afterwards he adopted the soon to be famous pseudonym "Boz", as the author of a series of sketches of daily life in London (*Sketches by Boz*, 1836). Their success enabled him to marry Catherine Hogarth, and also a commission to write the text to accompany a series of humorous sporting illustrations by Robert Seymour. Seymour committed suicide after the first issue, however, and Dickens decided to change the style of the piece from being a series of vignettes into a comic narrative. In this form, it became *The Pickwick Papers*, and to everyone's surprise, was enormously successful. It was illustrated by H.K. Browne, "Phiz", who would collaborate with Dickens for many years to come. One peculiarity of the novel that remained from its original conception was that it was published in monthly instalments, a method that was subsequently widely used.



After the success of *The Pickwick Papers*, Dickens embarked on a career as a full-time novelist, producing work at an incredible rate. He proudly assumed the role of a professional author, something which most of his contemporaries deplored as it went against their conceptions of the gentleman, who does not work by the sweat of his brow. He has been criticised ever since for his attitude in this matter, some critics going as far as to say that his novels are so long because he was paid by the word or by the line.

Certainly, *Sketches by Boz* were just sketches, and *The Pickwick Papers* a selection of papers, but with his next novel, *Oliver Twist*, he began to move towards a more coherent narrative structure, which was to find its most eloquent form in *Nicholas Nickleby*, (1838-39). At this point in his career he wanted to do something larger than either of his first two novels, and he did this mainly by combining the best elements of both. He knew that the comedy of *The Pickwick Papers* was extremely popular, but he didn't want to lose his reputation as a topical or controversial novelist. So, in *Nicholas Nickleby* he devised a plot that could accommodate both humour and social comment.



From early on in his career, Dickens was outspoken on social issues. He travelled to America in 1842 and published *American Notes* as a consequence. It created a furore in America, not least because he criticised the - as far as Dickens was concerned, highly distasteful - American habit of chewing tobacco and spitting the juice out. More seriously, he advocated the abolition of slavery. His earlier novels are more concerned with the suffering of individuals, rather than the wider ills of society. The pathetic and helpless protagonists of *Oliver Twist* and *The Old Curiosity Shop* are calculated to arouse sympathy rather than critical awareness. However, from the mid-1840's, Dickens began to view society as an organic whole with encompassing cultural patterns, and his subsequent novels are much more

relevant to the times in which he lived. As a novelist, his concern was with his characters. He did not attempt to provide practical solutions to the problems of the time, he only sought to highlight these problems. This is particularly evident in novels such as *Dombey and Son* (1846 - 1848), *Bleak House* (1852 - 1853) and *Hard Times* (1854).



Dickens is also often known as "The Man Who Invented Christmas". The first of his Christmas novels *A Christmas Carol* appeared in December 1844, and it is this that has preserved the Christmas customs and fixed our image of the holiday season as one of wind, ice, and snow without, and piping hot turkey, and family cheer within. He wrote many subsequent Christmas stories, which grew progressively darker, including *The Cricket and the Hearth* (1845) and *The Haunted Man* (1848).

In 1845, Dickens formed his own amateur theatrical company, which would occupy a great deal of his time from then on. This close association with the theatre had a very important impact on Dickens the author. Theatrical characters abound in the novels, and the stories are told in such a visual way that they easily lent themselves first to illustrations in the novels, later to stage dramatisations, and finally to film. In 1857, they performed *The Frozen Deep*, for the Queen, and when a young actress named Ellen Ternan joined the cast in August, Dickens fell in love with her. The next year, after a period of difficulties, he separated from his wife. They had, for many years, been "temperamentally unsuited" to each other. Dickens, charming though he was, was also fundamentally insecure emotionally and must have been extraordinarily difficult to live with. In 1860, during a period of retrospection, Dickens burned many personal letters, and re-read his own *David Copperfield*, the most autobiographical of his novels, before beginning *Great Expectations*. By 1865 he was in poor health, largely due to consistent overwork. His condition was not helped when he, along with Ellen Ternan, was involved in a railway accident which left him very shaken. However, Dickens carried on, against doctor's orders, until he suffered a mild stroke in 1869.



He cancelled his reading tours but began work on *The Mystery of Edwin Drood*. He suffered another stroke in 1870, after working a whole day in the chalet of his home at Gads Hill, and died the next day, leaving the work unfinished. To the great sadness of an entire nation, he was buried five days later in Westminster Abbey.

"If I have done but little good, I trust I have done less harm, and that none of my adventures will be other than a source of amusing and pleasant recollection."

PORTABLE THEATRE

Dickens' description of the Crummies' Travelling Theatre Company was based on the portable theatres of the Victorian age. They ranged from simple tents to elaborate wood and canvas buildings, carried from place to place by road or rail. They housed audiences from a few hundred to well over a thousand people.



They had their roots in the companies of itinerant players of earlier centuries, and in the 18th Century wood and canvas booths built at Fairs such as London's Bartholomew Fair, and Stourbridge Fair and Hull Fair.

An early 19th Century Showman named John Richardson is usually credited with the "invention" of portable theatre, although it is unlikely that he was alone in his ideas. It is said that he had wagons built to carry his booth from Bartholomew Fair to following fairs. The idea obviously caught on as by the 1820s the names that were to dominate the Victorian portable theatre business had appeared. Some even lasted into the 20th Century. In 1935 a reader of the "Weekly Guardian" recalled seeing Rayner's Travelling Theatre:

"About 52 years ago Sammy Rayners penny show was an attraction in the old Sneinton Market-place. I used to save up my halfpennies to go to the show. Front seats were twopenny, and back seats one penny (no tax). Of course, my limit was a penny in the gallery. This was made of wood about 5" wide. There was no foot rest, your legs had to hang down, and if you were not careful you would fall through"

RAYNER'S THEATRE

SNEINTON MARKET.

The public are respectfully informed that the above Travelling Theatre is now erected in Sneinton Market, and will open on

SATURDAY, Mar. 24,

With a First-Class Dramatic and
VARIETY COMBINATION.

Splendid New Scenery!
Magnificent Wardrobe!

Entire Change of Programme each Evening.
Everything New and Original.

During the Easter Holidays there will be several grand

ILLUMINATED DAY PERFORMANCES.

Your patronage and support is earnestly solicited. One visit alone will ensure the success of this old-established and well-known Travelling Theatre.

Popular Prices. Don't Forget Saturday.

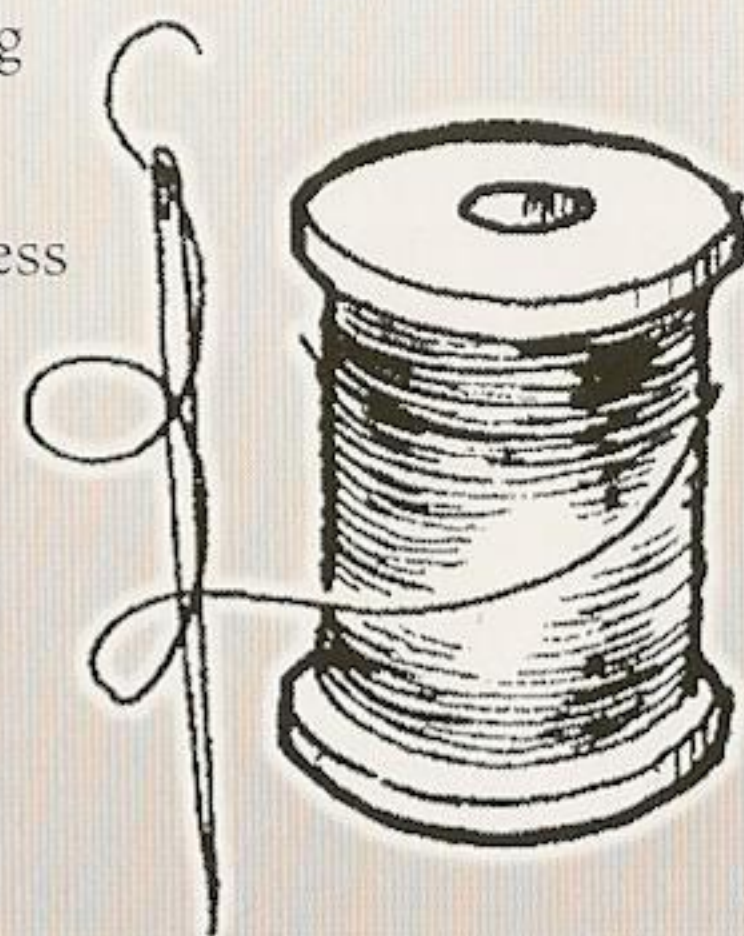
The Tale of the Distressed Seamstress

"O, Men with Sisters dear!
O, Men! with Mothers and Wives!
It is not linen you're wearing out,
But human creatures' lives!
Stitch—stitch—stitch,
In poverty, hunger, and dirt,
Sewing at once, with a double thread,
A Shroud as well as a Shirt."
*Extract from 'The Song of the Shirt',
Thomas Hood, 1799-1845*

In the early 1840s, lower middle-class, middle-class, and even upper-class women were increasingly put in the position of having to support themselves, and needlework was seen as a 'natural' profession for women. The number of women involved in dressmaking alone in the early 1840s was estimated to be 15,000, and the 1851 census shows 267,791 people who listed their occupation as Milliner/Dressmaker, the 7th most common occupation out of 143 in total.

In the spring of 1843, the Second Report of the Children's Employment Commission shocked the public with horror stories of the cruel and heartless exploitation of needlewomen in the backrooms and garrets of London. The public was appalled to learn that so many "delicate" young women lived, worked, and died, in such miserable conditions. And, even worse for Victorian sensibilities, that some resorted to, or succumbed to prostitution.

The case of the distressed seamstresses became something of a cause celebre, and their plight became the subject of many poems, stories, songs and newspaper articles. The story was always the same: a young, virtuous and blameless woman leaves her home in the countryside and becomes a seamstress in the big city, where she encounters an evil employer and/or seducer and begins an irreversible decline leading to death or prostitution. Whenever the question arose of what to do about the impoverished and volatile working classes, the story of the distressed seamstress reappeared.



Millinery

The term milliner dates back to Italy in the 16th and 17th Centuries when it meant 'supplier of fancy goods', such as straw hats, gloves and other accessories that Milan was renowned for. It was only in the 1770s that the milliner began to design and make hats. By the mid 1800s, millinery had established itself as being on the same level as haute couture, with the first important name in millinery being Caroline Reboux.

MILLINERY AND DRESSMAKING.
MRS. LYE
 Returns her sincere thanks for the very liberal support she has received in the above part of her business, and hopes, by punctuality and moderate charges to merit a continuance of their support.
 Mrs. L. begs to submit the following low scale of charges:—
 Making Plain Dress - 2. 6.
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DOTHEBOYS HALL

EDUCATION

AT MR. WACKFORD SQUEER'S ACADEMY DOTHEBOYS HALL

At the DELIGHTFUL Village of DOTHEBOYS near GRETA BRIDGE in YORKSHIRE

where youth are boarded, clothed, booked, furnished with pocket-money, provided with all necessities, instructed in all languages, living and dead, mathematics, orthography, geometry, astronomy, trigonometry, the use of globes, algebra, single stick (if required), writing, arithmetic, fortification, and every other branch of classical literature.

TERMS: 20 Guineas per annum
no extras, no vacations, and diet unparalleled.

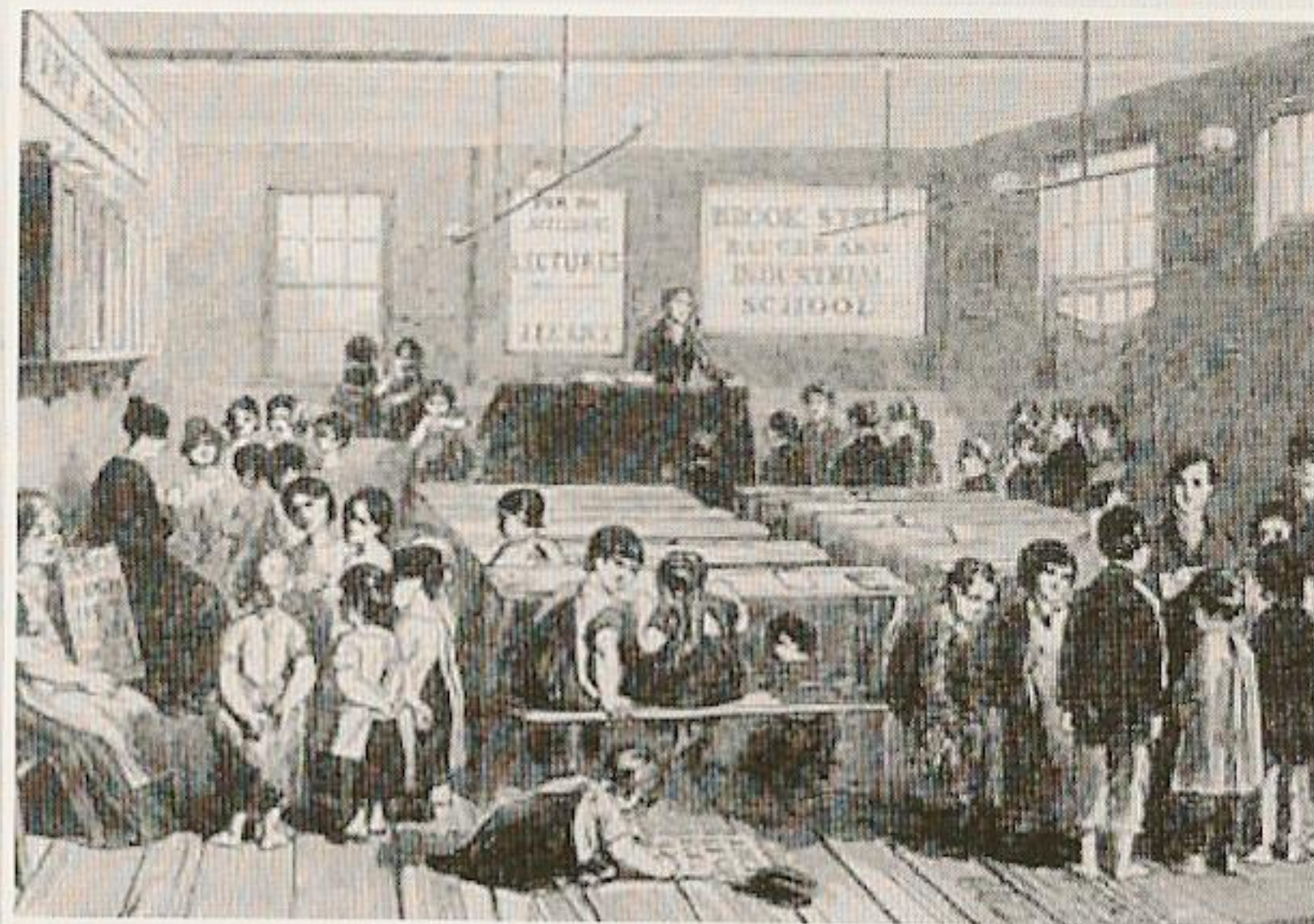
"This story [*Nicholas Nickleby*] was begun, within a few months after the publication of the completed "Pickwick Papers." There were, then, a good many cheap Yorkshire schools in existence. There are very few now."

(Charles Dickens)

Cheap boarding schools in Yorkshire were advertised in the London papers with an emphasis on 'no holiday' and were a convenient place to dispose of unwanted or illegitimate children. Before Dickens wrote *Nicholas Nickleby*, he travelled, incognito with his illustrator, H. K. Browne (Phiz), to Yorkshire and stayed at Greta Bridge and Barnard Castle. Whilst there, he visited several schools in the area and was horrified by what he saw. They encountered William Shaw, headmaster of Bowes Academy, in whose school several boys had died or went blind from mistreatment and neglect. Visiting a cemetery in the area Dickens found the graves of many of the students of these schools and one in particular Dickens said "put Smike into my head"

"Although schoolmasters, as a race, were the blockheads and impostors who might naturally be expected to spring from such a state of things, and to flourish in it; these Yorkshire schoolmasters were the lowest and most rotten round in the whole ladder."

(Charles Dickens)



The state of things to which he refers was a pretty poor one. There was no State provision for education at this time. Most poor children worked; their families needed the money, which they would lose if the children went to school. Some children went to Sunday schools, and some of the younger ones to so called 'Dame' schools, run by one woman. Some places masqueraded as schools, but were really workshops using children as virtual slave labour making lace or plaiting straw. The primary function of schooling was not to educate, but to fit people for their place in the social order.

"I must not lie or steal.

I must not be discourteous or envious.

God has placed me where I am in the social order.

He has given me my work to do.

I must not envy others.

I will not try to change my lot in life.

It is a sin of which I will never be guilty"

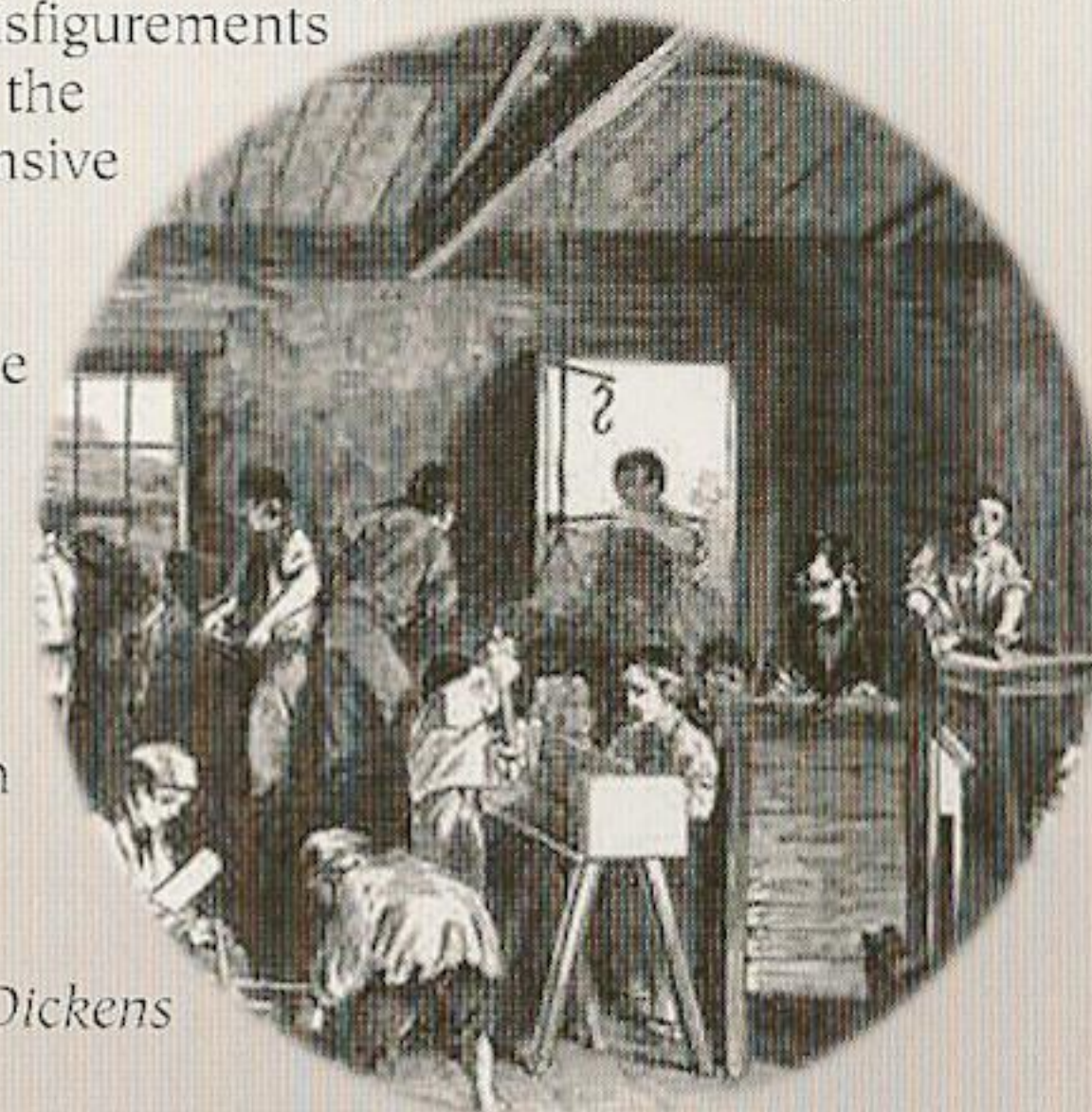
(Victorian lesson)

In Scotland, every Parish had had a school since the seventeenth century, and as early as 1807 a bill was introduced in England's Parliament which would have replicated that system. The bill was passed at the Commons but defeated in the House of Lords where it was argued that the interests of the Established Church were not protected. No further progress of note was made until 1833 when Parliament made its first limited grant to education. Although it was a small amount of money, it nonetheless showed that the government for the first time accepted its financial responsibility for the education of the poor.

Dickens did much to highlight the terrible state of the education system, and no more so than in his portrayal of the vile Wackford Squeers. It gave Dickens "great amusement and satisfaction" to learn that more than one Yorkshire schoolmaster had claimed to be the model for Squeers, and intended to take an action against Dickens for libel. In fact, Dickens says that he actually played down the horrors that he had witnessed for fear that the truth would be "deemed impossible".

"That there are, upon record, trials at law in which damages have been sought as a poor recompense for lasting agonies and disfigurements inflicted upon children by the treatment of the master in these places, involving such offensive and foul details of neglect, cruelty, and disease, as no writer of fiction would have the boldness to imagine. And that, since he has been engaged upon these Adventures, he has received, from private quarters far beyond the reach of suspicion or distrust, accounts of atrocities, in the perpetration of which upon neglected or repudiated children, these schools have been the main instruments, very far exceeding any that appear in these pages."

Charles Dickens



MONEY AND THE COST OF LIVING

Bankruptcy looms as a horrifying possibility or a tragic fact in many Victorian novels, including many of Dickens' works. Dickens' father, a clerk in the Navy Pay Office, himself was famously imprisoned for debt. His wife and children, with the exception of Charles, who was put to work at Warren's Blacking Factory, joined him in the Marshalsea Prison. In an age that had none of the modern provisions of social security, the threat of becoming bankrupt was extremely serious. Victorians represented the bankrupt as a human being helpless against the indifferent forces of nature.

Investment in the early Victorian era was a risky business, especially after the Joint Stock Act of 1833, which encouraged private investment and provoked a series of speculative surges and crises. There was no such thing as a limited Company, so that everyone involved in a business was liable for any debts, which tended to restrict the supply of venture capital.

"Annual income twenty pounds, annual expenditure nineteen nineteen and six, result happiness. Annual income twenty pounds, annual expenditure twenty ought and six, result, misery."

(Mister Micawber, *David Copperfield*)

"When workers lost their employment - which they might do at the end of the job, of the week, of the day or even of the hour - they had nothing to fall back on except their savings, their friendly society or trade union, their credit with local shopkeepers, their neighbours and friends, the pawnbroker or the Poor Law, which was still the only public provision for what we now call social security. When they grew old or infirm, they were lost unless helped by their children, for effective insurance or private pension schemes covered only a few of them. Nothing is more characteristic of working class life, and harder for us to imagine today, than this virtually total absence of social security. (Eric Hosbawm, *Industry and Empire: The Birth of the Industrial Revolution*, 1999)

Pre-decimal money

20 shillings = £1

12 pennies = 1 shilling

240 pennies = £1

One farthing (a fourth-thing) = 1/4 of a penny

One halfpenny (hay-p'ny) = 1/2 of a penny

Three farthings = 3/4 of a penny

Two pennies = 1/2 groat

Three pennies = one threepenny bit (made of silver)

Four pennies = one groat

Six pence (silver) sometimes called a tanner

2 shillings = one florin

2 shillings sixpence = a half crown

Five shillings = a crown

Ten shillings = a half sovereign

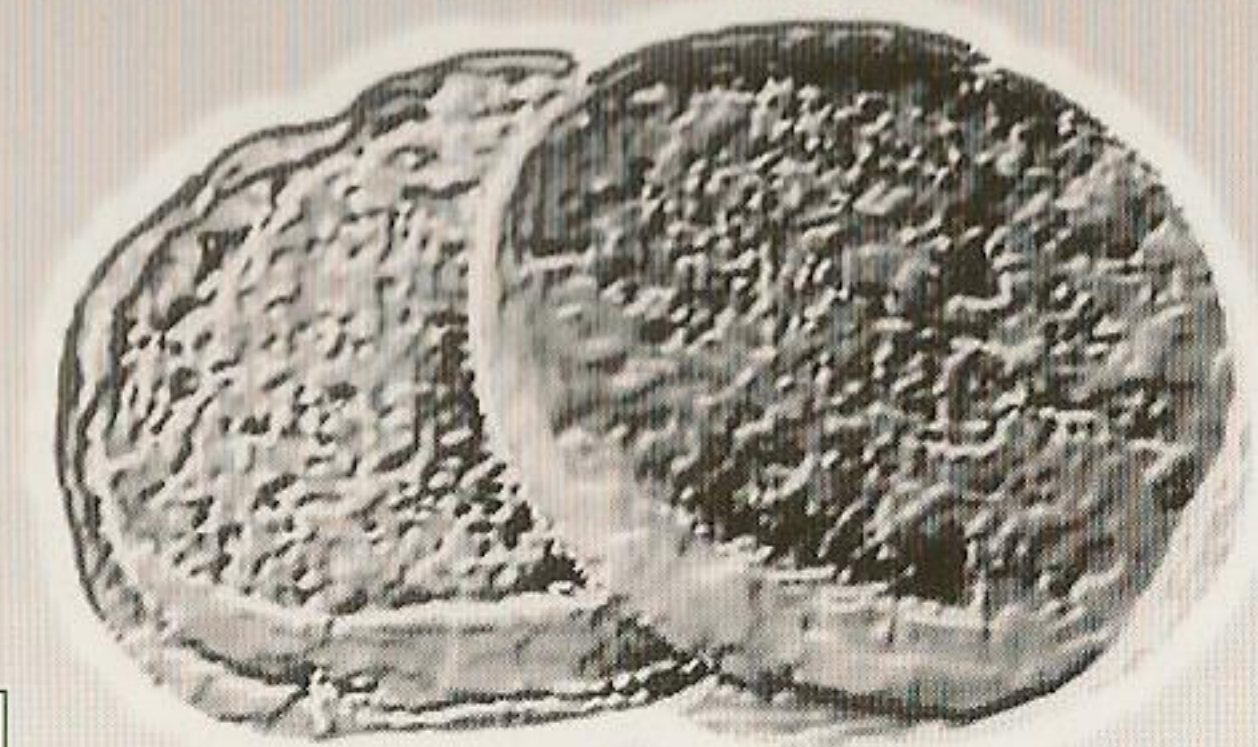
Ten shillings sixpence = a half guinea

One pound and one shilling = one guinea

MUFFINS

Oh, do you know the muffin man
The muffin man, the muffin man.
Oh, do you know the muffin man
Who lives on Drury Lane?

Oh, yes I know the muffin man
The muffin man, the muffin man.
Oh, yes, I know the muffin man
Who lives on Drury Lane.



The term muffin is thought to have come from an old French word "moufflé", meaning "soft" when referring to bread. There are references to English muffins as early as 1747 when the first recipes appeared in print, but they enjoyed most of their popularity during the nineteenth century. In the Victorian era, muffin men would carry trays of muffins balanced on their heads through the streets at teatime, ringing a handbell to draw attention to their wares.



Muffineer: (n)

Covered dish for keeping toasted muffins hot.

Recipe

Muffins

1lb fine oatmeal, 1 tsp salt, 1 oz compressed yeast, 1/2pt warm water and milk. Sift oatmeal with salt, cream yeast with sugar. Add milk and water, make a hole in middle of oatmeal, pour in yeast and milk, mix to dough of rather soft consistency. Arrange a layer of flour 2 inches thick on wooden tray or board - make holes in flour. Into each put small portion of dough, cover with blanket. Stand near fire till dough has risen. Cook on heavy iron sheet over fire.

Source: This recipe is taken from a handwritten notebook of recipes collected by Margaret Wales (1898-1993). It was probably compiled in the early 1920s soon after her marriage. Margaret noted that 'This recipe is over 100 years old'.

Additional historical information

Mrs Beeton (*The Book of Household Management*, Isabella Beeton, 1861) remarked that 'Muffins are not easily made, and are more generally purchased than manufactured at home'. In London, they could be purchased from street sellers like the nursery rhyme Muffin Man Who Lived in Drury Lane.

DAVID EDGAR (stage adaptation)

Edgar was born in Birmingham in 1948 and studied drama at Manchester University. His writing career began as a journalist in Bradford, and he then began writing for the emerging Fringe theatre of the late sixties. His writing was, from the first, political and hard-hitting. His 52 plays and screenplays encompass such wide-ranging subjects as the emergence of fascism; *Destiny*, economic history; *The Dunkirk Spirit*, an attack on the 1973 "Fanfare for Europe Celebrations" *A Fart for Europe*, women's oppression; *Liberated Zone*, industrial relations; *Our Own People* and the 1984 Miners Strike; *That Summer*. His best known plays have been written for the National Theatre (including *Albert Speer* 2000 and *The Shape of The Table* 1990) and the RSC (*The Jail Diary of Albie Sachs* 1978, *Nicholas Nickleby* 1980, *Maydays* 1983 and *Pentecost* 1984). He continues to write for the stage, radio and television and has taught at Birmingham University since 1989. He is also a distinguished journalist on political and arts topics.

STEPHEN OLIVER (incidental music & lyrics)

Born in 1950, Stephen Oliver studied with Kenneth Leighton and Robert Sherlaw Johnson at Oxford. While still a student he composed and had performed a number of operas including *The Duchess of Malfi* (1971). This set the tone for the rest of his career with many of his compositions being associated with drama. *Nicholas Nickleby* was one of many RSC productions for which he composed incidental music and he literally found his way into people's homes with his music for the 1981 radio production of *Tolkien's Lord of the Rings* and the BBC Shakespeare television series. He also collaborated with Sir Tim Rice on the musical show *Blondel* (1983) and in 1991 realised a cherished ambition with his opera *Timon of Athens* which was first performed by English National Opera. Compositions in other genres include works such as *The Dong with the Luminous Nose* (1976) to words by Edward Lear for narrator and string ensemble and a Recorder Concerto for Michala Petri (1988). His other artistic accomplishments included making English performing translations of various operas and in 1982 writing and presenting *Understanding Opera*, a series for London Weekend Television. He was closely involved with the Batignano opera festival in Italy where three of his stage works were premiered including his last composition, an adaptation of Mozart's little-known comic opera *L'oca del Cairo*. He died in 1992.

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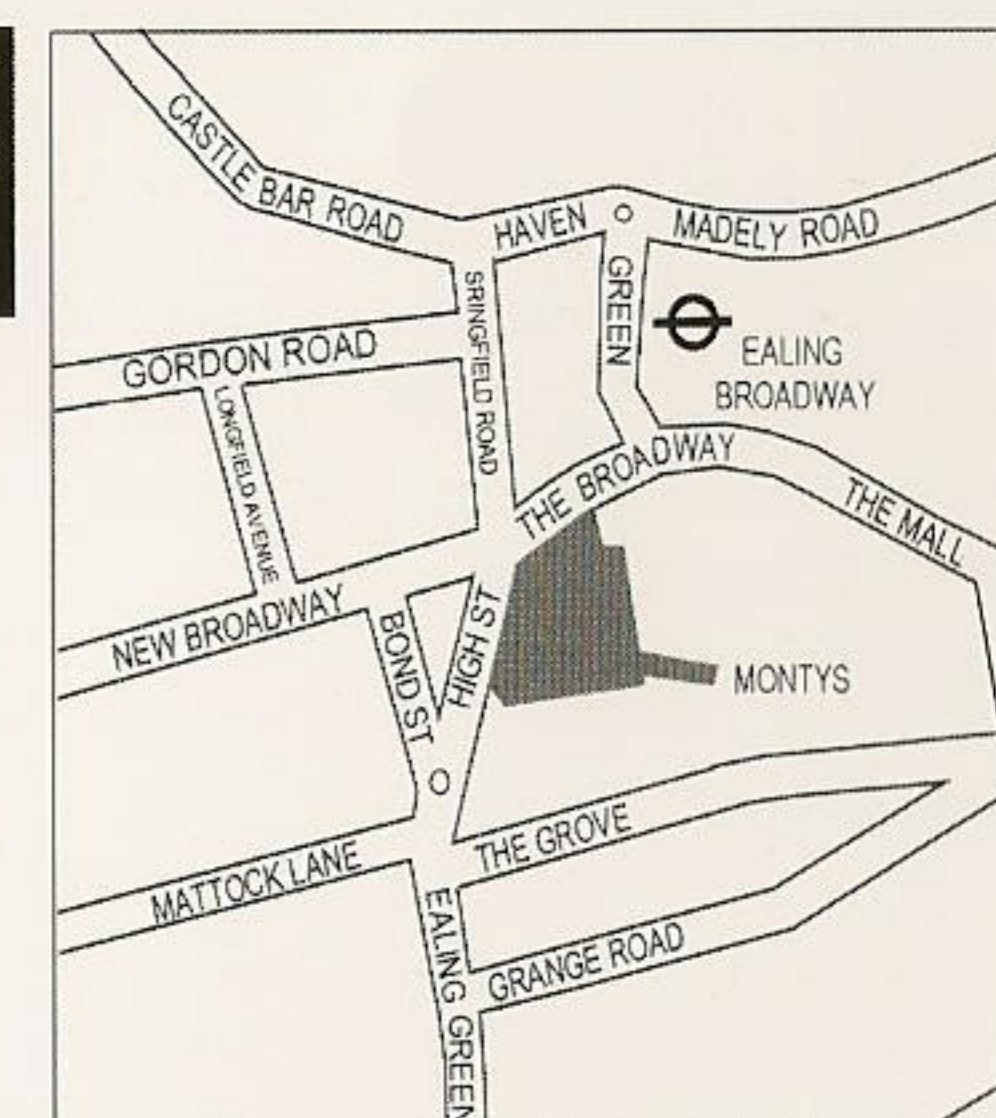
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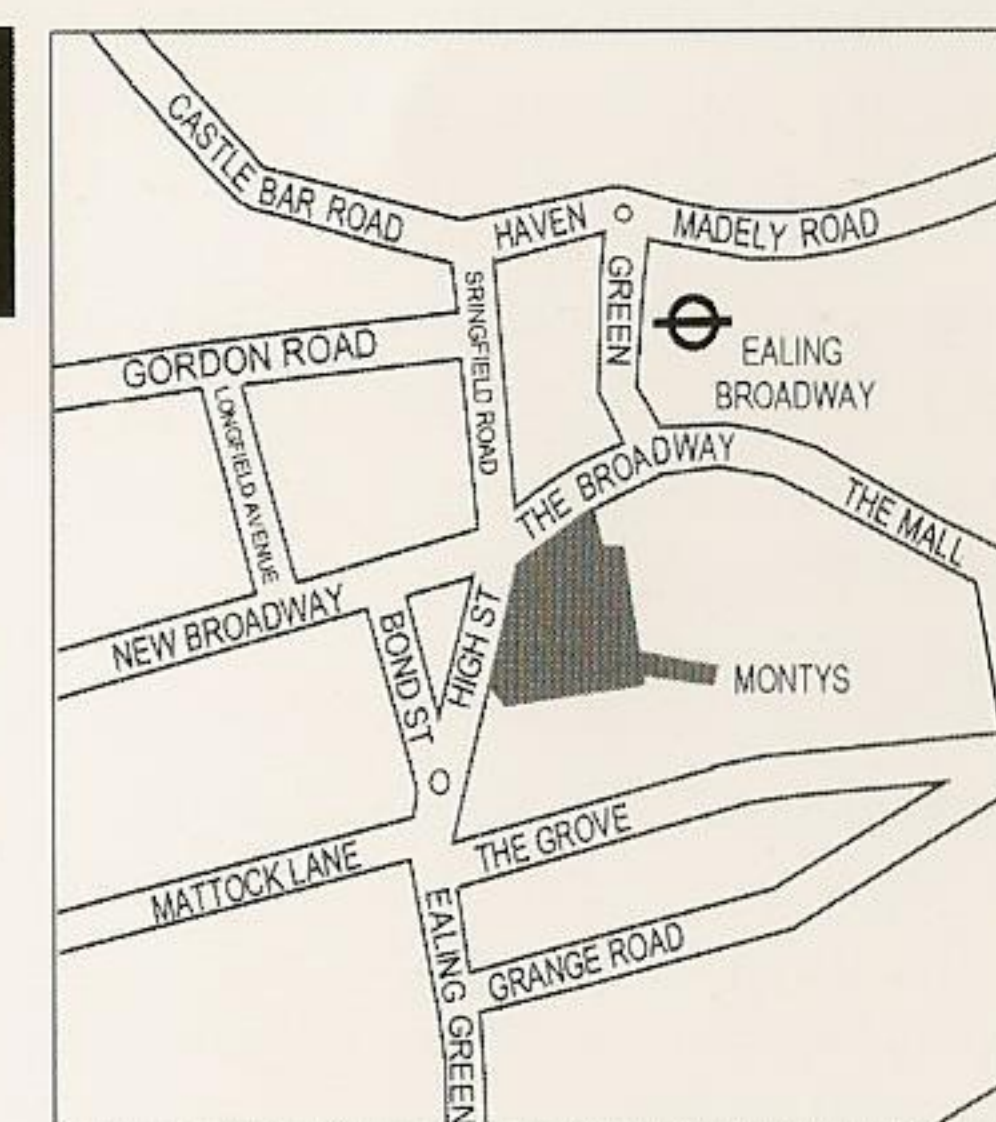
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