

Our Mutual Friends

Dickens Walk #2: Angel to Holborn



Duration: 1.5 hours, approximately
Start: Angel Tube Station on the Northern Line

The walk starts by following the route taken by Oliver and the Artful Dodger on the way to meet Fagin in Chapter 8 of *Oliver Twist*.

- Turn left out of Angel tube station and cross the junction 100 metres to the south. *“They crossed from the Angel into St. John’s Road;”* (now St. John’s Street) *“struck down the small street which terminates at Sadler’s Wells Theatre;”* (1st right into Chadwell Street and immediately left into Arlington Way, coming out onto Rosebery Avenue beside the theatre; turn right, follow the Avenue for 200 metres, fork left at Garnault Place, and right into Exmouth Market) *“through Exmouth Street and Coppice Row;”* (now Farringdon Road: turn left at the end of Exmouth Market) *“down the little court by the side of the workhouse;”* (turn 2nd right after the fire station on Farringdon Road, into Baker’s Row) *“across the classic ground which once bore the name of Hockley-in-the-Hole;”* (turn first left along Crawford Passage and straight ahead into Herbal Hill – Hockley-in-the-Hole was an area where Ray Street crosses this route, beside the Fleet river, where bear-baiting and bull-baiting took place in the 17th and 18th centuries) *“thence into Little Saffron Hill;”* (now Herbal Hill) *“and so into Saffron Hill the Great;”* (cross Clerkenwell Road into **Saffron Hill**) *“along which the Dodger scudded at a rapid pace, directing Oliver to follow close at his heels. Although Oliver had enough to occupy his attention in keeping sight of his leader, he could not help bestowing a few hasty glances on either side of the way as he passed along. A dirtier or more wretched place he had never seen. The street was very narrow and muddy, and the air was impregnated with filthy odours. There were a good many small shops; but the only stock in trade appeared to be heaps of children, who, even at that time of night, were crawling in and out at the doors, or screaming from the inside. The sole places that seemed to prosper, amid the general blight of the place, were the public-houses; and in them, the lowest orders of Irish were wrangling with might and main. Covered ways and yards, which here and there diverged from the main street, disclosed little knots of houses, where drunken men and women were positively wallowing in the filth; and from several of the doorways, great ill-looking fellows were cautiously emerging, bound, to all appearances, on no very well-disposed or harmless errands.”*

- Continue along Saffron Hill to the *One Tun* pub on the right just before Greville Street. This was the original for the ‘*Three Cripples*’ tavern described in *Oliver Twist* as “*a dark and gloomy den, where a flaring gas-light burnt all day in the winter time: and where no ray of sun ever shone in the summer*”. Fagin and Bill Sikes met there in Chapter 15 of *Oliver Twist*.
- Turn right at Greville Street and left into ***Bleeding Heart Yard***. Mr. & Mrs. Plornish lived here, and Daniel Doyce and Arthur Clenham had their works here (over the now-disappeared gateway) in *Little Dorrit*.
- Retrace your steps to Saffron Hill and turn right. This continuation of Saffron Hill southwards beyond Greville Street was ***Field Lane*** in Dickens’s time. This is where Fagin had his headquarters and the street is described in Chapter 26 of *Oliver Twist* as follows: “*Near to the spot on which Snow Hill and Holborn Hill meet, there opens; upon the right hand as you come out of the City; a narrow and dismal alley leading to Saffron Hill. In its filthy shops are exposed for sale bunches of second-hand handkerchiefs, of all sizes and patterns; for here reside the traders who purchase them from pickpockets. Hundreds of these handkerchiefs hang dangling from pegs outside the windows or flaunting from the door-posts; and the shelves, within, are piled with them. Confined as the limits of Field Lane are, it has its barber, its coffee-shop, its beer-shop and its fried-fish warehouse. It is a commercial colony of itself: the emporium of petty larceny; visited at early morning, and setting-in of dusk, by silent merchants, who traffic in dark back-parlours; and who go as silently as they come. Here the clothesman, the shoe-vamper, and the rag-merchant, display their goods, as signboards to the petty thief; here, stores of old iron and bones, and heaps of mildewy fragments of woollen-stuff and linen, rust and rot in the grimy cellars.*”
- At the end of this street, climb the steps up to Charterhouse Street and turn right. The first turning on the right is ***Ely Place***, where Mr. Waterbrook lived in *David Copperfield*, and where he entertained David, Agnes Whitfield, Uriah Heep and Thomas Traddles at dinner.
- Cross Holborn Circus and continue west along High Holborn to the Prudential Building on the right, at Nos. 138-142. Here stood ***Furnival’s Inn*** until the present building was erected in 1897. Enter the courtyard, passing, on the right, a plaque commemorating Dickens’s residence here from 1835-1837, and see his bust in a glass case at the far end of the main courtyard. He brought his wife here after their marriage in Chelsea, and began writing ‘*Pickwick Papers*’.
- Continue west along High Holborn, crossing Gray’s Inn Road, turn right through an archway into Gray’s Inn, and ahead through a second archway. The first courtyard is ***South Square*** (called Holborn Square in Dickens’s time), and Dickens was a clerk for solicitors Ellis & Blackmore, from May to December 1827, at No. 1 (turn left and you are in front of it). The building still exists, although the rest of the square had to be rebuilt after the Second World War. Opposite is ***Grays Inn Hall***, mentioned in *Pickwick Papers*. If taking this walk on a weekday, pass to the left of the Hall, under the archway, and go

first left through a covered passage. Follow the railings of the gardens to your right, past 4 Field Court, and turn right into **Raymond Buildings**. Go to the far end, at the entrance from Theobald's Road, and see No. 1, where Dickens worked as a clerk on the 2nd floor for Ellis & Blackmore, from December 1827 to November 1828. It was rebuilt after the War. If it is a weekend, you should be able to get into South Square as described above, but the other entrances to the Inn will be closed. In that case, retrace your steps to High Holborn, turn right and go 150 metres along until you reach Brownlow Street. Turn right there, left and right at the top to go along Bedford Row, and right at Theobald's Road to pass the gate to Gray's Inn beside Jockey's Fields. From here you can see **No. 1 Raymond Buildings** and can continue the walk as set out below.

- Cross Theobald's Road; turn right, then first left into John Street. Follow this to the end and go ahead into **Doughty Street**, where Dickens lived at No. 48 from 1837- 1839. Here he finished *Pickwick Papers*, wrote *Oliver Twist* and *Nicholas Nickleby* and started *Barnaby Rudge*. It is the only surviving building in London in which he lived, and is today the Charles Dickens Museum, open every day of the year 10 am to 5 pm.

- Continue up Doughty Street and turn left into Guilford Street; 200 metres on, turn left into Lamb's Conduit Street. Take the first turning on the right into **Great Ormond Street**. A short way along, on the right, is the Children's Hospital. Dickens was a major benefactor of this hospital and gave the proceeds of many of his public readings to it in the 1860s.

- Continue to the end, turn right at Queen's Square, go through the pedestrian way straight ahead at the top of the square, and turn left back onto Grenville Street. Turn right at Herbrand Street and 2nd left into Bernard Street. The tube station is a few metres along on the right.

Walk ends at Russell Square Tube Station on the Piccadilly Line.