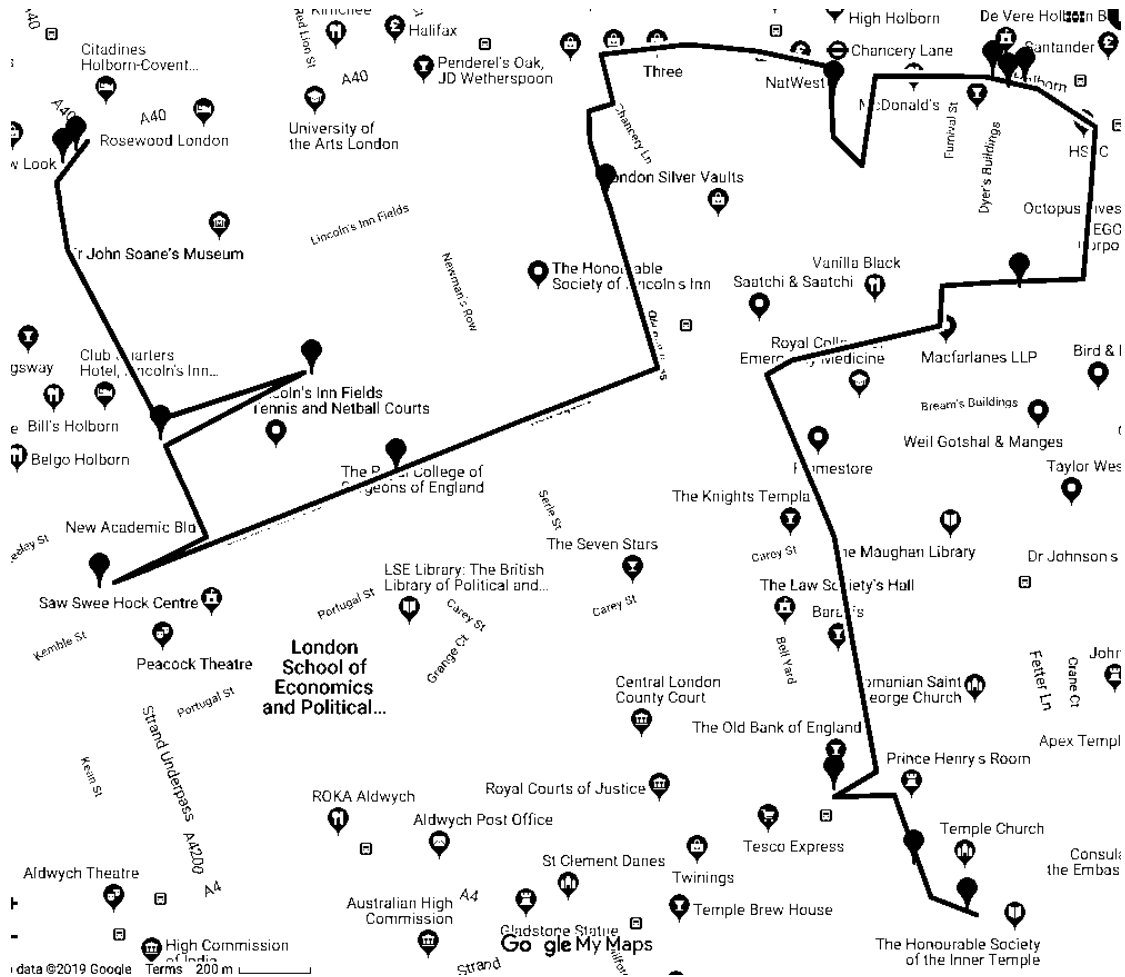


## Our Mutual Friends

### Dickens Walk #5: Lincoln's Inn and Temple with Philip Hoare



*Five walks that highlighted Dickensian landmarks in London, including places that Dickens frequented and the areas that featured in his books. Compiled by Andrew Pitcairn-Hill, these walks provide a frame of reference for Our Mutual Friends as a whole, and were walked by five well-known writers, who each produced a record, on Tumblr and Google Maps, of what they saw on the day, and what the journey called to mind.*



## Walk 5: Start

Philip Hoare is the author of six works of non-fiction: biographies of Stephen Tennant and Noel Coward; *Wilde's Last Stand*, *Spike Island* and *England's Lost Eden*. His latest book, *Leviathan or, The Whale*, won the 2009 BBC Samuel Johnson Prize for non-fiction. He is Leverhulme Artist-in-residence at The Marine Institute, Plymouth University.



## Toyko or Moscow?



Tokyo or Moscow? Blade Runner or Bleak House? Funnelled down ever-narrower conduits, the lunchtime forage, the piss up the alley, the opening and closing of the City: always admitting, never leaving. Off these streets lay Mrs Clapp's Molly house; Anne Radcliffe, author of Gothic novels, was born; Thomas Chatterton died in a garret. Nearby, in the 1980s, stood the Blitz Club, with its time-travelling new romanticists.



## Riots - Lincoln's Inn Fields



In the 1980s, Lincoln's Inn Fields was a tent city, its ancient plane trees and shrubs under-camped by the dispossessed of the Thatcher revolution, sleeping rough on the same ground where the King Mob of the Gordon Riots had gathered two centuries before. The infamous Poll Tax riot of 1990 ended a decade of unrest (or began a new one) with anarchy washing at the fringes of the City...



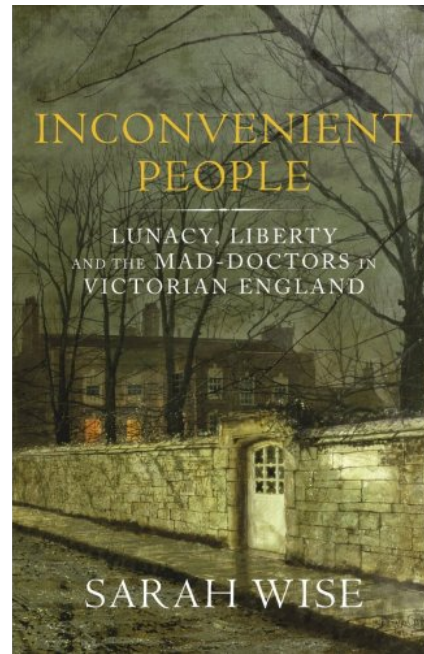
## Mr Podsnap



John Foster's house. Foster – 'Mr Podsnap' - was Dickens' best friend. He also supervised the incarceration of Lady Lytton, the inconvenient wife of Edward Bulwer-Lytton, into a private lunatic asylum. 'In cases where there is method and infuriating mixed, reason and madness,' he advised the then incredibly popular writer, who was embarrassed by his wife's revelations, 'you [must] act wisely in making the attempt'.



## Richard Owen - Mr Venus



Across the square lies the Royal College of Surgeons, an enlightened cabinet of modern curiosities assembled by the surgeon and scientist John Hunter – known as ‘Tearguts’ to William Blake – which by then had come under the curatorship of Richard Owen, the man who had invented the term ‘dinosaur’, and who in turn would provide the basis for Mr Venus, the taxidermist and articulator of bones in *Our Mutual Friend*. Owen, a grandiloquent man, also claimed the discovery of the moa. In a photograph of him, now the curator of the British Museum (Natural History), he resembles an ancient bird himself.





## Porous London



In the 1850s, Kingsway did not exist; the City was uncontained. Likewise, the Thames was unembanked. Instead, the waters washed the feet of such buildings as Somerset House, and access to the river came in a series of steps - Temple Stairs, Essex Stairs, Arundel Stairs, Surrey Stairs, Salisbury Stairs, Whitehall Stairs. For all that the water seems more tamed today, the Thames was much more porous then; it seeped into the city.



## 'Stone Buildings', penetrated by German shrapnel



'Stone Buildings', penetrated by German shrapnel, now grazed by hot-house leaves. In Berlin, similar pockmarks are visible, many bullet holes from snipers, all at human height. But few bombs fell on the gilded streets of the City; most came to earth in the East End and the Docklands.



Metal lettering hammered into the ground, reminiscent of Jamie Reid's 'blackmail' typography for the Sex Pistols. In the square beyond, a lead pump, and a plastic tube containing rat poison. The gateway to Staple's Inn is guarded by a spiked iron corset, to protect its sides from careering carriage wheels, not unlike those that bolster the high walls of Victorian asylums, carrying their own urgent cargo.



## Megalosaurus



Alfred Waterhouse's Prudential Building, site of Furnival's Inn, where Dickens took up residence. In the opening of *Bleak House* (1852), he imagines the mud of the streets, 'as if the waters had but newly retired from the face of the earth', and through them 'a Megalosaurus, forty feet long or so, waddling like an elephantine lizard', as fresh from the Thames's ooze – or even from the about-to-be constructed dinosaur park in the new site of the Crystal Palace...



## Dragons



Or perhaps one of the guardian dragons which still decorate the City like gothic imps...





## Antediluvian beasts



Later Waterhouse would design the Natural History Museum, its layers of terracotta and stone created to mimic geological strata, whilst antediluvian beasts hang like gargoyles from its ledges: pterodactyls ready to take off into the London streets.



## Associated Press



The now decrepit modernist entrance to the Associated Press building, a cave-like ruin, Beirut after the bombing; nothing dates so much as the future. In Dickens' day, the press was king. Now the signs indicate a new service industry of 'Human Resources' have taken over.





## And banks became pubs



And banks became pubs. When I worked in Fleet Street in the late 1980s, most of the business was conducted from its bars. Copy was filed in a drunken haze.

In Dickens' time, the street was regulated by the Temple Bar:

'The raw afternoon is rawest, and the dense fog is densest, and the muddy streets are muddiest near than leaden-head old obstruction, appropriate ornament...Temple Bar... Never can there come fog too quick, never can there come mud and mire too deep, to assort with the groping and floundering condition which this High Court of Chancery, most pestilent of hoary sinners, holds this day in the sight of heaven and earth.'



## Temple



‘I lounged away the day’, he wrote in his journal entry for 10 November 1849, ‘ – sauntering thro’ the Temple courts & gardens, Lincoln’s Inn, The New Hall, Gray’s Inn, down Holborn Hill thro’ Cock Lane (Dr Johnson’s Ghost) to Smithfield (West)’.

In 1849, Herman Melville came to London, stayed in Craven Street at Charing Cross, and wandered its streets wearing his green coat.





## And the Thames flows on



The new young gods of the universe follow an elliptical path, orbiting their own, from school to college to court. At the weekends, the City lies fallow, repossessed by its phantoms: consumptive poets, queers and queans, punks and pedlars, writers and reprobates, with their own fancy dress. And the Thames flows on.

‘What greatness had not floated on the ebb of that river into the mystery of an unknown earth!... The dreams of men, the seed of commonwealths, the germs of empires.’ Joseph Conrad, *Heart of Darkness*



## End of walk