



Charles Dickens' everlasting characters

Ten new stamps celebrate the Dickens bicentenary

Released on 19 June a special stamp issue of ten new stamps, comprising six sheet stamps and four on a miniature sheet, marks the 200th anniversary of the birth of Charles Dickens. The world-renowned British novelist was born on 7 February 1812 in Portsmouth, Hampshire, and was buried in Poets' Corner in 1870. He became world-famous in his own lifetime and today Dickens' novels and the numerous stage and film adaptations of them are still popular in many countries. Charles Dickens' *A Tale of Two Cities*, for example, is a global best-seller, the book having been bought by more than 200 million people.

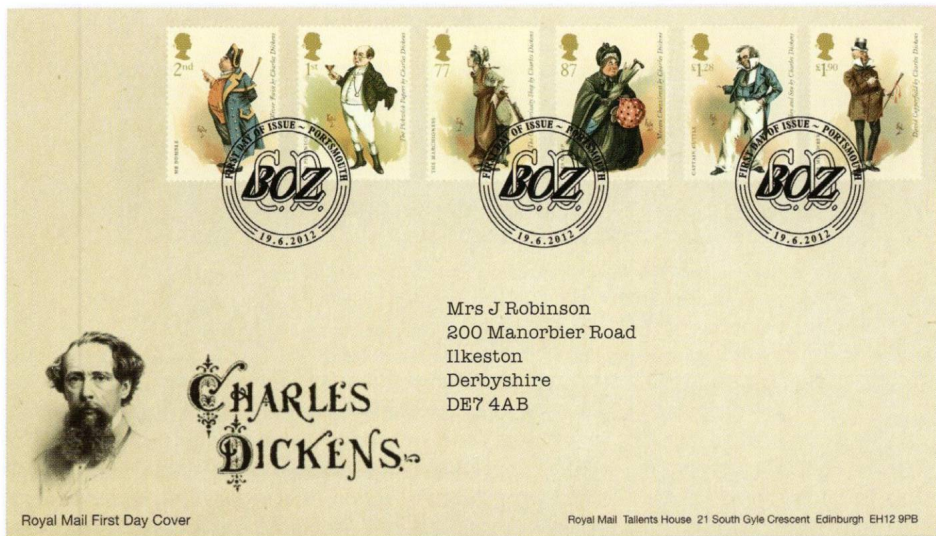
Stamp by stamp The six stamps shown above feature illustrations from 'Character Sketches from Charles Dickens' by Joseph Clayton Clarke, otherwise known as Kyd. They were originally published around 1890 and depict the following characters from Dickens' novels.

Mr Bumble, second class stamp, from 'Oliver Twist' is a parish beadle, of whom Dickens wrote, '... tears were not the things to find their way to Mr Bumble's soul; his heart was waterproof.' It was Bumble who removed the nine-year-old Oliver Twist from the orphanage where he had grown up and secured him a place in a workhouse, where the boy is cruelly treated and famously asks for more.

Mr Pickwick, first class stamp, from 'The Pickwick Papers' is an 'observer of human nature' and the founder and perpetual president of the Pickwick Club. He and three other 'Pickwickians' (Winkle, Snodgrass and Tupman) make coach journeys to places far away from London and report on their findings to the other members of the club. Their travels provide the chief theme of the novel.



Above: the Tallents House First Day postmark and the alternative postmark, for which Portsmouth was chosen because it is the birthplace of Charles Dickens



The Marchioness, 77p, from *'The Old Curiosity Shop'* is the nickname given to the wicked Miss Brass's maidservant by Dick Swiveller, who befriends and later marries her. There is a gentle suggestion that The Marchioness might be the illegitimate daughter of Miss Brass, possibly by the novel's villain Quilp.

Mrs Gamp, 87p, from *'Martin Chuzzlewit'* is a dissolute nurse with a drink problem, a notorious Victorian stereotype before the reforms of campaigners such as Florence Nightingale. The character sketch was so popular with the British public that umbrellas became known as 'gamps', after Mrs Gamp's own umbrella, which was displayed with 'particular ostentation'.

Captain Cuttle, £1.28, from *'Dombey and Son'* is left in charge of Solomon Gill's maritime instrument maker's shop while Solomon goes off in search of his nephew. Dombey's daughter lodges with Cuttle when she runs away from her father.

Mr Micawber, £1.90, from *'David Copperfield'* was modelled on Dickens' father, John Dickens, who like Micawber spent some time in a debtors' prison. Micawber is a rather comical figure who addresses his debts with long bouts of hyperbole. He is remembered for his constant assurance that 'something will turn up'. ▶

Charles Dickens Stamps Specifications

Number of stamps	Six
Design	Howard Brown
Stamp format	Portrait
Stamp size	27mm x 37mm
Printer	Cartor Security Printing
Print process	Lithography
Number per sheet	25/50
Perforations	14 x 14
Phosphor	All over
Gum	PVA

Charles Dickens Prices

Stamp Set	£5.92
Miniature Sheet	£2.40
Presentation Pack	£8.85
First Day Cover, stamps, UK	£7.58
First Day Cover, overseas	£6.32
First Day Cover, mini sheet, UK	£3.36
First Day Cover, mini sheet, overseas	£2.80
First Day Envelope	30p
Coin Cover	£15.95
Stamp Cards	£4.95

Charles Dickens 1812–1870



"No one who can read, ever looks at a book, even unopened on a shelf, like one who cannot."

Charles Dickens

Charles Dickens Miniature Sheet Specifications

Number of stamps	Four
Size of sheet	190mm x 67mm
Design	Howard Brown
Stamp format	Landscape
Stamp size	37mm x 35mm
Printer	Cartor Security Printing
Print process	Lithography
Perforations	14 x 14.5
Phosphor	All over
Gum	PVA

Charles Dickens Miniature Sheet The Miniature Sheet is made up of four new first class inland letter rate stamps featuring illustrations by Hablot Knight Browne (aka Phiz) that were used to illustrate the original novels. Browne and Dickens met in 1836, when Dickens asked him to illustrate *The Pickwick Papers*. The creative partnership proved such a success that they worked together for 23 years, until the publication of *A Tale of Two Cities*, when Dickens felt that the mood of Browne's illustrations did not work well with the changing style of his writing.

The sheet's border carries a famous quotation from *Our Mutual Friend* by Charles Dickens: 'No one who can read, ever looks at a book, even unopened on a shelf, like one who cannot.'

Above: four illustrations by Hablot Knight Browne (1815–82) featured on the Miniature Sheet.

Below: the pictorial postmark featured on the Charles Dickens Coin Cover



Miniature Sheet, stamp by stamp On the first stamp *Nicholas Nickleby* is shown giving Whackford Squeers a taste of his own punishment – caning. Squeers is the bullying headmaster of Dotheboys Hall school.

Bleak House is depicted by another illustration from Phiz that perfectly captures a moment in the novel. It is entitled Mrs Bagnet is Charmed with Mr Bucket.

Early editions of *Little Dorrit* included the Phiz illustration on the third stamp of the Miniature Sheet, showing the moment when Dorrit introduces Maggy, the granddaughter of her old nurse, to Arthur Clennam outside Marshalsea Debtor's Prison.

On the final stamp is an illustration from *A Tale of Two Cities*. It depicts Charles Darnay being arrested by French revolutionaries.

Dickens' great-great-great granddaughter's view The lavishly illustrated Presentation Pack contains the six Charles Dickens stamps and the Miniature Sheet. Inside the pack, Lucinda Dickens Hawksley relates details of her great-great-great grandfather's life.

A separate illustrated carrier bears a map of London, with notes explaining the significance of various locations in Dickens' work and life. These include his boyhood home in Lant Street, Southwark and Wellington



Street in Covent Garden, where the offices of Dickens' magazines were located. The Presentation Pack is designed by Interabang and printed by Walsall Security Printers.

Charles Dickens Covers The First Day Cover Envelope was designed by Interabang. The envelope is printed by Dobson and Crowther Ltd and the filler card was designed by Interabang. As an alternative to the Tallents House, Edinburgh postmark, a pictorial Portsmouth postmark will also be available, chosen because Portsmouth was the birthplace of Charles Dickens.

Orders for Serviced First Day Covers have to reach Royal Mail by 19 June 2012. Customers may also send stamped envelopes on the day of issue to Royal Mail, Tallents House for the Tallents House, Edinburgh postmark •

Top: Charles Dickens Coin Cover reminds us of the importance of pen and ink in Dickens' time

Above: Charles Dickens Presentation Pack, with fascinating reading inside