



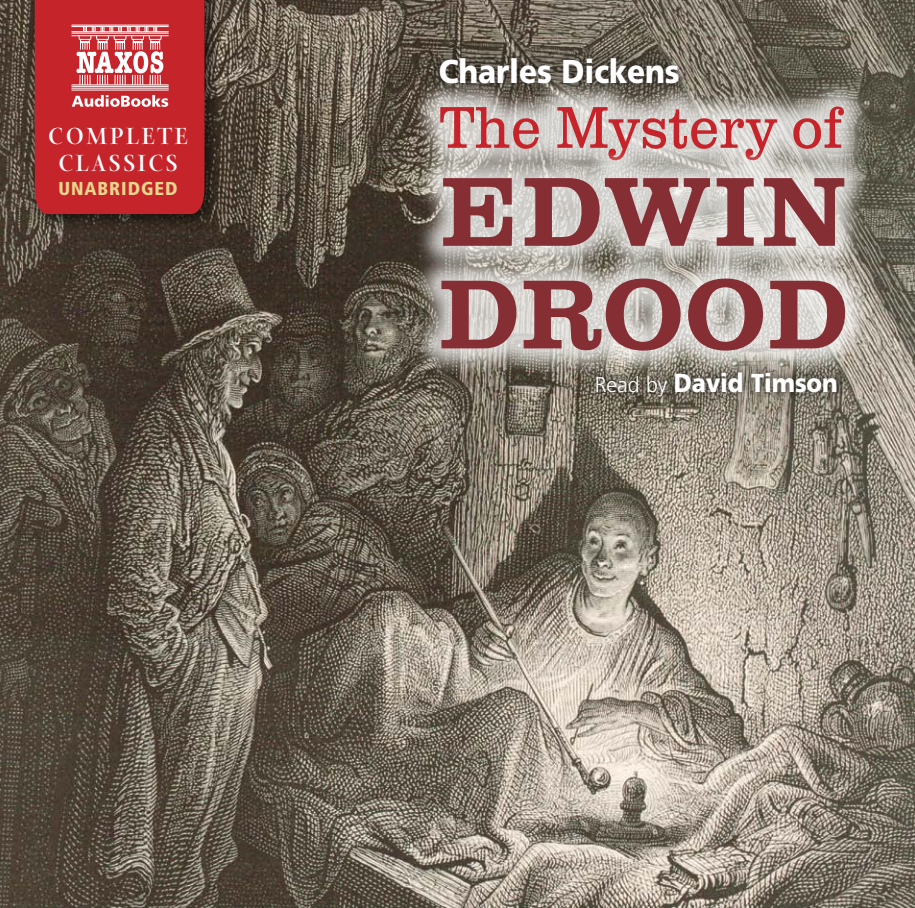
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Charles Dickens

The Mystery of EDWIN DROOD

Read by David Timson



1	Chapter 1: The Dawn	4:41
2	She blows at the pipe as she speaks...	5:39
3	Chapter 2: A Dean, and a Chapter also	7:00
4	'Sorry to hear from Tope that you had not been well, Jasper.'	6:29
5	'I say, tell me Jack...'	6:52
6	'I really was going to say something of the kind, Jack...'	7:41
7	Chapter 3: The Nuns' House	7:37
8	The pet pupil of the Nuns' House is Miss Rosa Bud	7:59
9	'Perhaps we had better stop short, Rosa?'	7:29
10	The two youthful figures, side by side...	5:56
11	Chapter 4: Mr Sapsea	6:00
12	'If I have not gone to foreign countries, young man,' Mr Sapsea...	5:44
13	Mr Jasper has closed his eyes as the auctioneer has deepened...	5:23
14	With a two-foot rule always in his pocket...	7:47
15	Chapter 5: Mr Durdles' Friend	6:52
16	'Is there anything new down in the crypt, Durdles?'	9:06
17	Chapter 6: Philanthropy in Minor Canon Corner	6:00
18	'It's from Mr Honeythunder, of course,' said the old lady...	7:26
19	Some remote fragment of Main Line to somewhere else, there was...	4:37
20	The rough mental notes made in the first five minutes...	6:29

21	Chapter 7: More Confidences than One	6:54
22	'In a last word of reference to my sister, Sir...'	6:35
23	'Pussy's not used to an audience; that's the fact,' said Edwin Drood.	8:16
24	Chapter 8: Daggers Drawn	6:03
25	'Perhaps,' says Jasper, in a soothing manner...	8:38
26	This insulting allusion to his dark skin infuriates Neville...	7:38
27	Chapter 9: Birds in the Bush	6:16
28	To Rosa direct, she brought a petition from her brother...	7:40
29	Mr Grewgious, with a sense of not having managed...	6:45
30	Rosa sat still and silent.	6:30
31	Rosa shook her head, with an almost plaintive air of hesitation...	4:33
32	As he held it incumbent upon him to call on Mr Jasper...	6:48
33	Chapter 10: Smoothing the Way	7:27
34	As, whenever the Reverend Septimus fell a-musing...	5:40
35	The river at Cloisterham is sufficiently near the sea to throw up...	6:53
36	Mr Crisparkle, in utter amazement, looked at Helena...	7:08
37	'I shall probably be asked to marry them,' he reflected...	7:49
38	Chapter 11: A Picture and a Ring	5:54
39	As Mr Grewgious sat and wrote by his fire that afternoon...	5:51
40	Mr Grewgious had meant to be arch...	7:18

41	Mr Bazzard, with a frowning smile at the fire, put a hand into his...	8:27
42	'And now, Mr Edwin,' he proceeded...	8:29
43	Chapter 12: A Night With Durdles	7:34
44	'What friend o' yourn is dead?' asks Durdles.	5:11
45	'Ware that there mound by the yard-gate, Mister Jarsper.'	6:37
46	The taciturnity of Durdles is for the time overcome...	7:26
47	The iron gate attained and locked...	7:38
48	Chapter 13: Both at Their Best	6:51
49	The hoarse High Street became musical with the cry...	8:53
50	'Your guardian has spoken to me too, Rosa dear.'	10:29
51	Chapter 14: When Shall These Three Meet Again?	9:44
52	Helena thinks it over, and thinks well of it.	6:48
53	As dusk draws on, he paces the Monks' Vineyard.	6:35
54	John Jasper passes a more agreeable and cheerful...	10:20
55	Chapter 15: Impeached	5:23
56	When his face was cleansed, Neville recognised in the speaker, Joe...	7:25
57	It would be difficult to determine which was the more oppressed...	8:09
58	Chapter 16: Devoted	6:10
59	Mr Crisparkle came in at the moment.	5:36
60	It was starlight.	7:41

61	The more his case was looked into...	6:00
62	Chapter 17: Philanthropy, Professional and Unprofessional	6:45
63	'The Commandments say, no murder.'	8:05
64	'These are strong words, sir!' exclaimed the philanthropist.	9:58
65	'It is growing dark. Will you go my way with me...'	10:49
66	Chapter 18: A Settler in Cloisterham	6:27
67	Mr Tope's official dwelling, communicating by an upper stair...	6:34
68	'Might I ask His Honour,' said Mr Datchery...	6:46
69	Chapter 19: Shadow on the Sundial	6:23
70	She is so conscious of his looking at her with a gloating admiration...	5:05
71	Again Rosa quails before his threatening face, though innocent...	6:55
72	Chapter 20: A Flight	6:01
73	It was the first time she had ever been even in Cloisterham...	6:31
74	'Your rest too must be provided for,' he went on...	6:13
75	'How came you to be his master, sir?' asked Rosa.	7:12
76	Chapter 21: A Recognition	6:52
77	'Would you have the kindness to take seats?' said Mr Grewgious.	6:02
78	Chapter 22: A Gritty State of Things Comes On	5:44
79	Helena's dark eyes looked very earnestly at the bright face...	7:28
80	'And now, my dear,' said Mr Grewgious...	8:14

81	'Can we see these rooms marm?' inquired her guardian.	7:31
82	'Cannot people get through life without gritty stages, I wonder?'	6:05
83	'My information,' retorted the Billickin...	9:40
84	Chapter 23: The Dawn Again	8:59
85	He divests himself of his shoes, loosens his cravat...	7:09
86	She gently lays him back again...	6:12
87	At length what remains of the last candle is blown out...	8:49
88	Mr Datchery begins very slowly to count out the sum demanded...	6:23
89	'I like,' says Mr Datchery, 'the old tavern way of keeping scores...'	5:08
90	Postscript	4:28

Total Time: 10:32:01

Charles Dickens

(1812–1870)

The Mystery of **EDWIN DROOD**

The Mystery of Edwin Drood is without doubt Dickens's darkest and most enigmatic novel. Inevitably enigmatic because he never completed it: it is half-finished, less than 92,000 words, and we have no idea how Dickens intended his story to develop. The dark tone is struck as soon as the novel commences with an unnamed man in the grip of an opium dream, and the setting of the novel builds on that sense of darkness and foreboding. The action takes place for the most part in the fictional cathedral town of Cloisterham. Ignored by the developing railway, Cloisterham is a backwater dwindling into obscurity and neglect, symbolic of the decay and destruction which is a main theme of the book, whether self-inflicted or as the result of passing time. Many of the characters are either touched by

the decay or enmeshed within it, like John Jasper, slowly killing himself with opium, or Durdles the stonemason, who works amongst the broken fragments of old tombs, debris and stone-dust.

The cathedral represents the dead centre of Cloisterham; atrophied and irrelevant. Cloisterham is based on Rochester, in Kent, where Dickens had lived as a boy, and in this novel he seems to be re-examining the idyllic scenes of his childhood in the light of experience. The Rochester of *The Pickwick Papers*, bustling and full of life, has, for Dickens, decayed into a town of hidden secrets. Christmas time too is no longer the time for scenes of reconciliation and family cheer for which Dickens was renowned in his writing, but the time he chooses for Edwin Drood to disappear. Dickens's

changing viewpoint perhaps reflected the changes in his own life.

Dickens began *The Mystery of Edwin Drood* in 1869, whilst in a state of complete exhaustion after a gruelling tour of public readings that had seriously undermined his constitution. Maybe the collapsed state of his nerves accounts for the dark mood of this book, which explores, as his daughter Kate wrote: 'the tragic secrets of the human heart.' The necessary duality demanded when living a secret life (Dickens had been with Ellen Ternan now for some years), may well have taken its toll. This novel contains scenes of sexual aggression and frustration, which possibly reflect his own private experiences; rejection, coldness and indifference had been characteristics of Dickens's novels since his affair with the young actress had begun in 1858. The character of Estella in *Great Expectations*, for instance, may be based partly on Ellen.

Dickens's poor health was a constant concern during the writing of *Edwin Drood*. His friend Forster noted that when Dickens read the first instalment to his

friends, he was suffering acute pain in his left arm and foot. A further series of public readings early in 1870 added to the stress of writing the novel. His friends noticed he became progressively greyer and thinner, with a haunted look in his eyes. He was, as he had always been, a driven man. However, as his daughter Kate said: 'Any attempt to stay him... was as idle as stretching one's hands to a river and bidding it cease to flow.' His work was, and always had been, his life.

The first instalments of *The Mystery of Edwin Drood* showed he had lost none of his popular appeal. Around 50,000 copies were sold, pointing to a big success on completion. He had recaptured his old form, with the creation of comic characters like Durdles and Mrs Billikin promising a richness of comic invention to come. But that was not to be. On 8 June 1870, he worked a full day in the Swiss chalet in the garden of Gadshill, where he wrote all his later novels. Around six in the evening, with a final flourish on the manuscript denoting the end of a chapter, Dickens went back to the house for dinner. During the meal

he was taken ill, collapsed, and went into a coma. 24 hours later, on 9 June, he died. A solitary tear rolled down his cheek moments before he expired.

The air of mystery surrounding *The Mystery of Edwin Drood* is compounded by the greater mystery of how Dickens would have developed and ended it. He was aiming to write a detective story, a murder-mystery, a 'sensation' novel in the style of his great friend Wilkie Collins, who had already influenced Dickens's *Bleak House* and *Our Mutual Friend*. He imitated his friend's bold style: for instance, the use of opium, so much a feature of *The Mystery of Edwin Drood*, also pervades Collins's *The Moonstone*, written in 1868. Like Collins too, Dickens filled his plot with red herrings and wrong turnings. With the novel uncompleted it is impossible to decipher which clues, if any, are genuine.

Edwin Drood is supposedly murdered in Chapter 14, and almost any one of the characters could be the murderer. Are we to suspect Jasper, who takes an unhealthy interest in his nephew's activities, spies on him, and could have

killed him whilst under the influence of opium, perhaps? Or the troubled Neville Landless, who takes an instant dislike to Edwin and has difficulty controlling an ungovernable temper? Or are these too obvious as suspects? Would Dickens have revealed a darker side to Mr Crisparkle, a shining example of muscular Christianity who equates bodily fitness with spiritual fitness? Theories abound, and have done so ever since the novel was published in its unfinished form in 1870. Up to the present time, scholars and writers have created more than a hundred different endings to the book.

Looking for clues to Dickens's intentions, it seems there are two main mysteries which have fascinated these literary detectives.

The first is the fate of Edwin Drood. Was he actually murdered? If so, how, by whom, and where was his body hidden? If not, how did he escape, what became of him, and does he reappear later in the novel, to observe his would-be killer and bring about his conviction? Dickens had explored a similar idea in his previous novel *Our Mutual Friend*, in which John

Rokesmith, who is supposed drowned, adopts another identity to observe the effects his death has on those around him. Is it likely Dickens would repeat this idea in the very next novel he wrote?

The second mystery is the identity of Datchery, the 'stranger who appeared in Cloisterham' after Drood's disappearance? It seems probable that Datchery was another character in disguise: the frequent references to his flowing white hair, obviously a wig, and the incongruity of his black eyebrows enforces this theory. If Datchery is Drood escaped from the dead and returned to convict his 'murderer', why is the disguise necessary? He knows his assailant, so why not openly accuse him? Several other characters could perhaps be Datchery, and nearly all have been put forward by various theorists since 1870. The most daring, though not entirely incredible, was opined in 1905 by J. Cuming Walters. He proposes that Helena Landless is Dick Datchery, and backs up his claim with Dickens's reference to her childhood escapades with her brother: 'Each time she dressed as a boy and showed the

daring of a man.' Certainly at her first encounter with Jasper she sees his true nature, and Dickens, possibly signalling the importance of this perception to the later development of the book, makes sure his readers have not missed the significance: 'Let whomsoever it most concerned look well to it.' Furthermore, Helena would need to hide her feminine handwriting, which explains Datchery's use of chalk symbols as a means of notation, rather than words.

And so the theories continue. Only Dickens knew the answer. It was his custom to plan out a novel almost in its entirety before he began to write it, but in this case no notes exist beyond the first few chapters, and only enigmatic references made by Dickens in letters to his friend and mentor Forster give us any indication of his plans. In his biography of Dickens, Forster wrote:

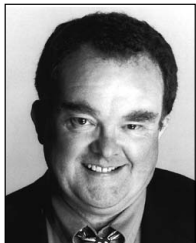
The story... was to be that of the murder of a nephew by his uncle; the originality of which was to consist in the review of the murderer's career by himself

at the close, when its temptations were to be dwelt upon as if, not he the culprit, but some other man, were the tempted. The last chapters were to be written in the condemned cell, to which his wickedness, all elaborately elicited from him as if told of another, had brought him.

If Drood was murdered then there can be no doubt from his letter to Forster that Dickens intended the murderer to be Jasper, and the book as we have it seems to be a study of a murderer's mind and the effects that opium had on it. Dickens was fascinated by the criminal mind as he had shown in his treatment of Jonas Chuzzlewit and Bradley Headstone, but here there was to be the addition of a confession in the condemned cell. Furthermore, Dickens's illustrator, Luke Fildes, claimed that the introduction by Dickens of a 'large black scarf of strong close-woven silk', worn by Jasper for the first time in Chapter 14, was to be the means of Drood's death, by strangulation. So Jasper murdered Edwin Drood. Or

would Dickens have changed his mind as he so often did when developing his novels? Alas, we'll never know.

Notes by David Timson



David Timson has made over 1,000 broadcasts for BBC Radio Drama. For Naxos AudioBooks he wrote *The History of Theatre*, which won an award for most original production from the Spoken Word Publishers Association in 2001. He has also directed five Shakespeare plays for Naxos AudioBooks, including *King Richard III* (with Kenneth Branagh), which won Best Drama award from the SWPA in 2001. In 2002 he won the Audio of the Year award for his reading of *A Study in Scarlet*. He has read the entire *Sherlock Holmes* canon for Naxos AudioBooks.

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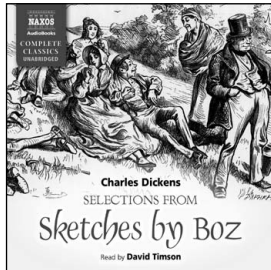
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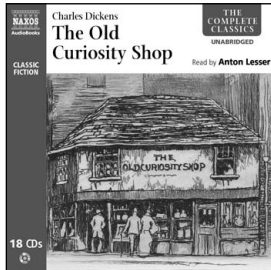
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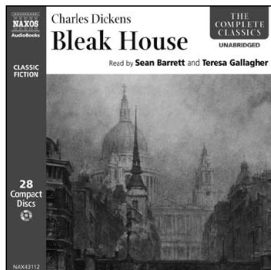
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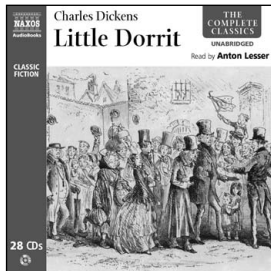


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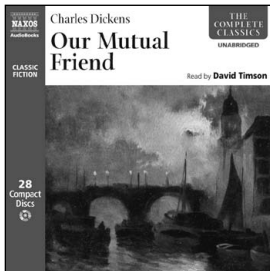
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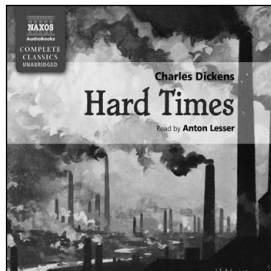
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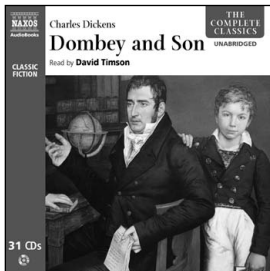
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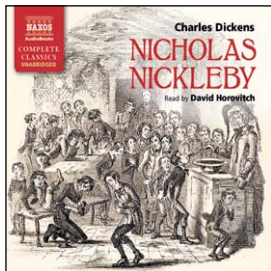
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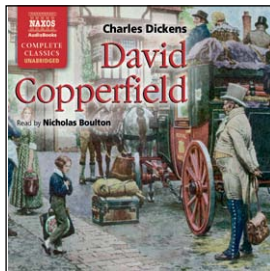
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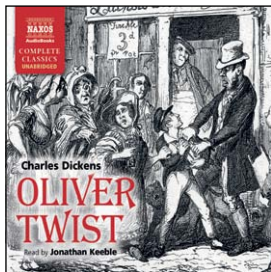
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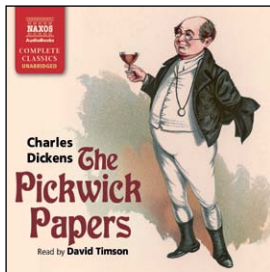
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Charles Dickens
The Mystery of
EDWIN
DROOD

Read by **David Timson**

Through a mist of decay and opium, Dickens weaves a tale of murder and mystery in this, his last novel. Set in the fictional cathedral town of Cloisterham, John Jasper, the choir-master, takes an obsessive interest in his nephew Edwin Drood and his fiancée Rosa Bud. But when young Edwin disappears on Christmas Eve, has Jasper killed him? Alas, we'll never know as Dickens died before completing the novel. It is an intriguing, enigmatic and also richly comic story, showing that Dickens was at the peak of his powers to the very end.



David Timson has made over 1,000 broadcasts for BBC Radio Drama. For Naxos AudioBooks, he has written *The History of Theatre*, directed five Shakespeare plays, and read the entire *Sherlock Holmes* canon.

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