

Narrated by Paul McGann



Dickens, Real-Life Villains

A 9 OF CUPS PRODUCTION

Deck Rowena Amos - Images for illustration purposes only by

Logline

We discover the fascinating real-life people behind Charles Dickens' most notorious villains; Miss Havisham, Bill Sikes and Ebenezer Scrooge.

Synopsis

Charles Dickens is one of the world's most famous writers, and creator of some of literature's darkest, most complex villains. Examining fascinating new evidence, we discover if his fictional characters of Miss Havisham, Bill Sikes and Ebenezer Scrooge could have been based on real people, asking leading experts for their verdicts.

Format

A narrator led, factual documentary. / **3 x 60 mins broadcast episodes.** ABC1 demographic.

Longevity

Potential for further episodes on Dickens (e.g. Fagin, Uriah Heep).

Or for other literary villains such as: Moriarty (Sherlock Holmes), Long John Silver (Treasure Island), Dracula, Richard III, Normal Bates (Psycho).

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Miss Havisham

Miss Havisham is the famous embittered recluse in 'Great Expectations.' Having been jilted at the alter, she now resides inside her decaying mansion, still enshrined in her wedding dress and plotting revenge against men.

We look at evidence for three possible candidates:

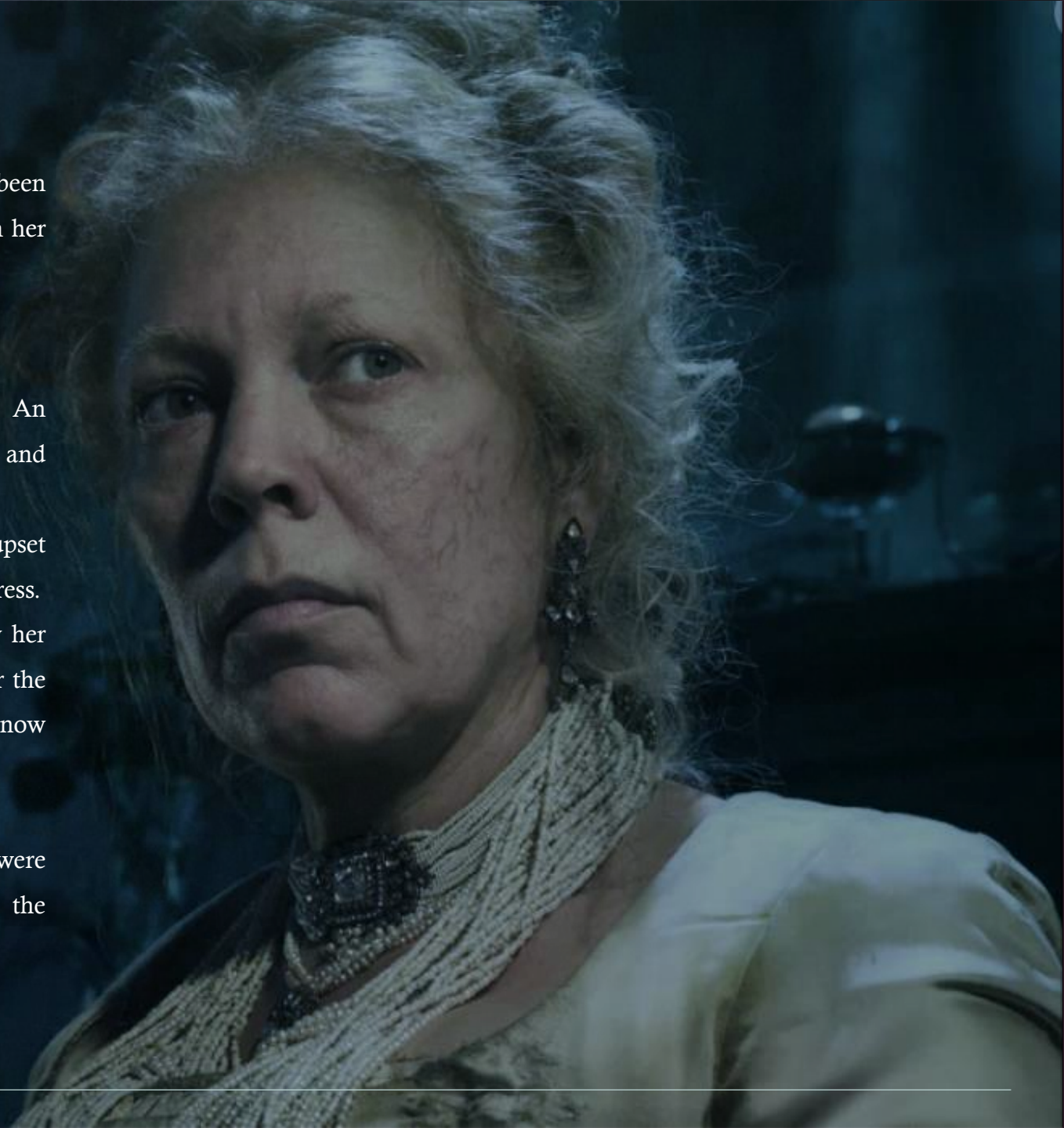
Jane Lewson better known as 'Lady Lewson' from Clerkenwell, London. An eccentric, reclusive lady known for her unusual hygiene habits using pig fat, and claiming to have been 116 when she died.

Eliza Emily Donnithorne, lived over in Australia. A jilted woman who was so upset she became a recluse. Reportedly found dead aged 65 still wearing her wedding dress.

Margaret Catherine Dick, from Bonchurch, Isle of Wight. Forbidden to marry her chosen man, she protested by becoming a recluse, spending each day in bed for the rest of her life. We reveal her Doctor's prescription, which included 'Beetlejuice' now a known poison.

We delve further into the role of women in Victorian Britain and how they were expected to behave during mourning, looking at customs and culture. Could the women in Dicken's own life have even influenced his creation of Miss Havisham?

Dickens, Real-Life Villains: Miss Havisham



‘Lady’ Jane Lewson

Eliza Donnithorne



JANE LEWSON.

Responsible for her own and family's ruin.



Dickens, Real-Life Villains: Miss Havisham

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Margaret Dick of Bonchurch



Bill Sikes

Bill Sikes is the vicious thug who appears in Dickens' novel 'Oliver Twist'. We look at how he represents the harsh reality of poverty in the lower social classes of Victorian Britain and review evidence of a real-life 'William Sykes', a trader who sold tallow for oil lamps in the bustling markets outside his home at 11 Cleveland Street, very close to where Dickens lived. We examine the real 'Ripper style' murder of red-light worker, 'Eliza Grimwood', was she the inspiration for the scene where Sikes kills his girlfriend Nancy?

Dickens, Real-Life Villains: Bill Sikes

Ebenezer Scrooge

Ebenezer Scrooge is the cold-hearted miser who despises Christmas, haunted by the ghosts of Jacob Marley, Christmas past, present and yet to come. The book, of course, is 'A Christmas Carol.'

We look at evidence of a real-life sculptor, known locally for his miserly ways, who happened to reside in Norfolk Street just next to where Dickens lived. Another shop called 'Goodge and Marley' is very close to that in the book of the sign 'Scrooge and Marley' – is this just a coincidence?

We also investigate another candidate, **John Elwes**, MP of Berkshire in the previous century, known for being from a family of skinflints and reputation as an eccentric character.

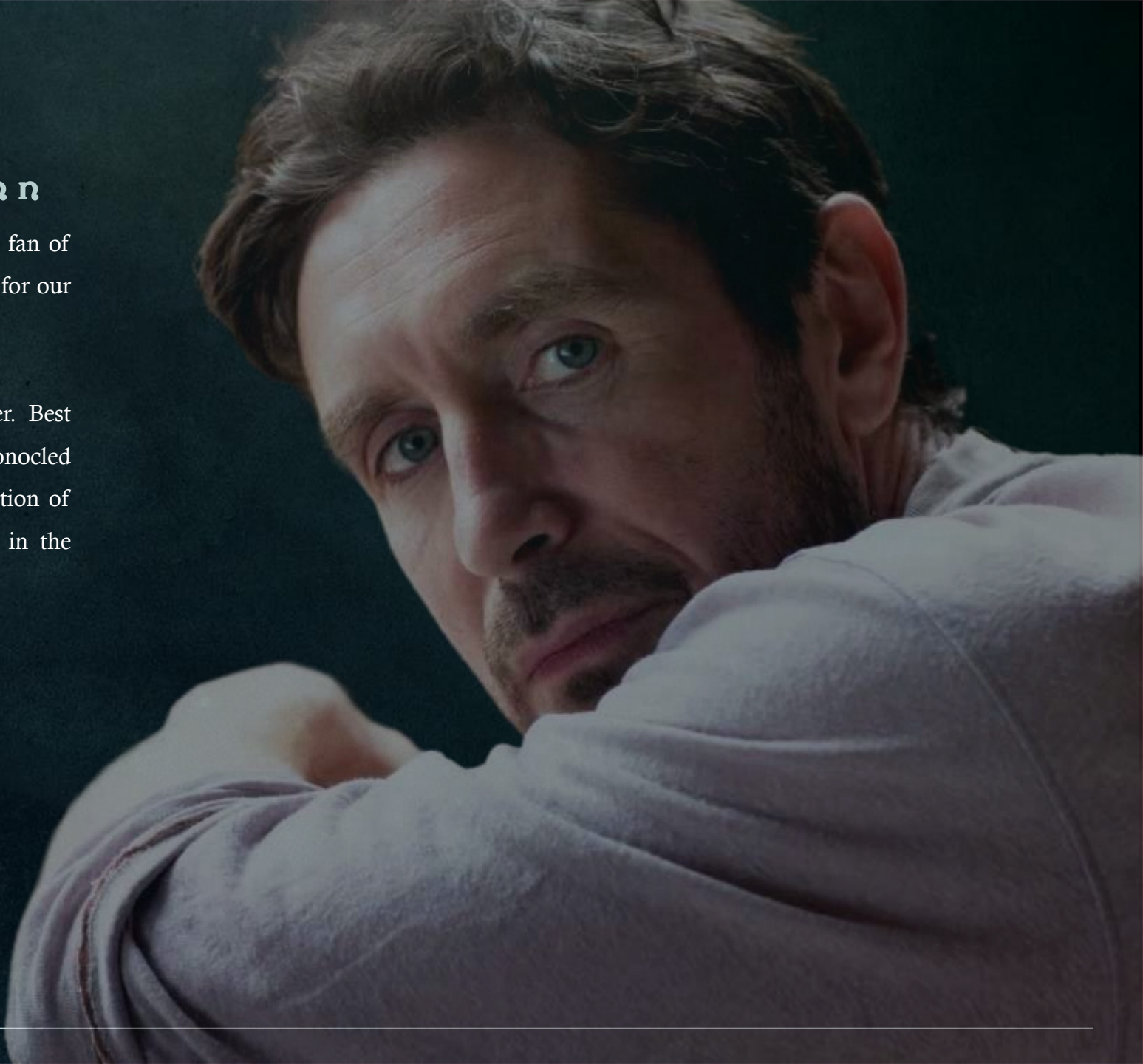
There was also suggestion that Dickens found a gravestone whilst our walking in Canongate Kirkyard, Edinburgh in June 1841. It read 'Ebenezer Lennox Scroggie' who was a 'meal man' (a merchant trader), a phrase which Dickens misread and wrote in his notebook "To be remembered through eternity only for being mean seemed the greatest testament to a life wasted."

Narrator: Paul McGann

Paul McGann is not only a master of narration but also a huge fan of Dickens. His calm, intelligent voice will provide the perfect tone for our audience.

Born in Liverpool, he has enjoyed an acclaimed acting career. Best known for the cult film 'Withnail and I', TV series 'The Monocled Mutineer' and 'Hornblower' and of course as the eighth incarnation of Doctor Who. Notably he starred as hero Eugene Wrayburn in the adaptation of 'Our Mutual Friend' by Charles Dickens.

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Expert: Lucinda Hawksley

An author, art historian and broadcaster, Lucinda is an expert in Dickens and patron of the **Charles Dickens Museum** in London. She also specialises in literature and social history from the 19th century.

She's featured as an expert on numerous TV shows including Channel 4's 'Miriam's Dickensian Christmas', Channel 5's 'Charles Dickens with Gyles Brandreth' and BBC1's 'Charles Dickens and the Invention of Christmas.'

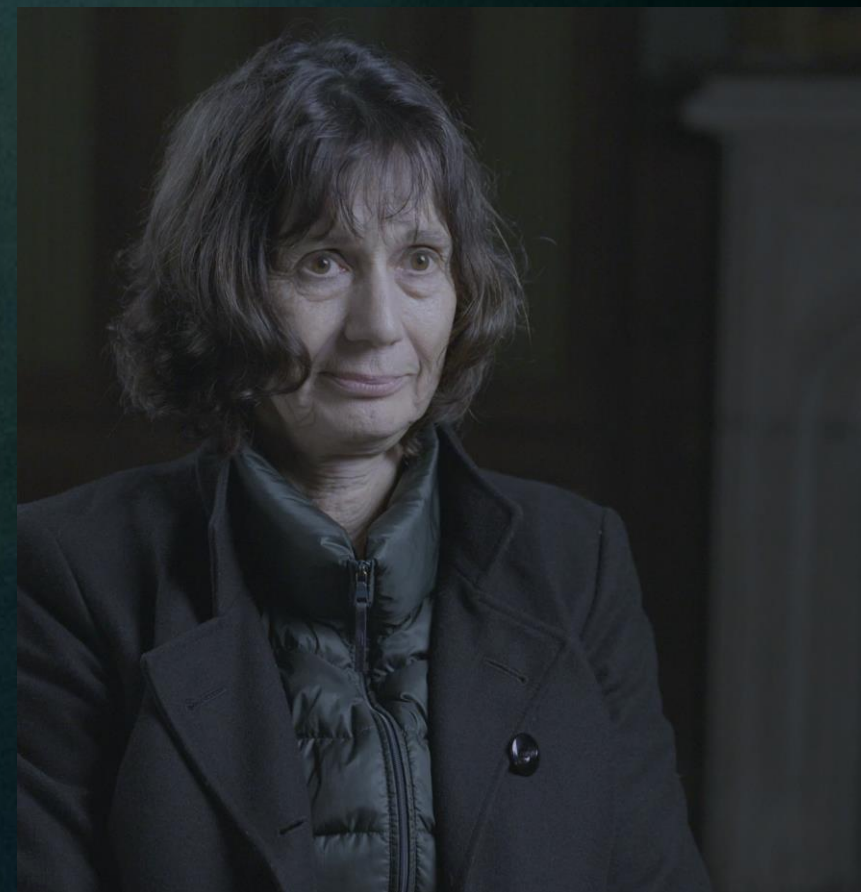
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Expert: Ian Dickens

Ian is the great, great-grandson of Charles Dickens and former President of the Dickens Fellowship.

An actor and theatre producer turned author; Ian has a wealth of knowledge with fascinating insights about his family predecessor.

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Dr Christopher Pittard / Holly Medland Lees / Sue Lowday

We also hear from other experts Dr Christopher Pittard, a Senior Lecturer at Portsmouth University, specialising in Victorian literature, fiction and social themes, with a keen interest in Dickens. He is joined by Historian, Holly Medland-Lees, an expert on Victorian customs and who specialises in women's social roles in the 19th Century. Sue Lowday is a Dickens researcher, hosting Charles Dickens tours.

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Style

Our experts are set against the gloomy backdrop of their villain's world. For Miss Havisham it's the eerie, twilight of Satis House, it's the slums of 'Jacob's Island' for the setting for Bill Sikes, and we locate into the old warehouse of 'Scrooge and Marley' for Ebenezer's tale.

A narrator will lead our viewers on a journey into Victorian Britain. Using actor recreations, graphics, stock drama footage and interviews to submerge our audience into the Dickensian world. Long, slow paced camera shots will build the sense of foreboding, combined with close-up details to create a sense of emotion.

Music

Music will be classical and of the period, with strings and cello to create a moody Victorian backdrop. Our theme is Gnossiennes No 1 by the late French composer Erik Satie from the late 19th Century, reworked on strings by Romi Kopelman.

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Core Team



Richard Topping

DIRECTOR Richard Topping has over 25 years in both directing and editing, mostly in unscripted. With that rare combination of artistic flair and a practical eye for detail, he's a excellent at keeping cast and crew motivated. He's worked with the BBC, CH4, Nat Geo, CNN and the FT and with names such as Sir David Attenborough, Steve Backshall, Davina McCall, Sheila Hancock and Michel Roux.



Rowena Amos

WRITER & PRODUCER Rowena Amos is an award-winning writer and producer working at Southwark Playhouse before moving into film and TV. An entrepreneur, who's run several successful award-winning businesses. Her corporate background at Virgin Media means she's used to running large projects and budgets. With an eye for detail and pro-active attitude she's the driving force of the company.



Kevin Early

DOP Kevin Early is a lighting cameraman and DOP with over 25 years' experience in unscripted. Working on numerous TV series and corporate films around the world, most recently as DOP on Channel 5's Jewel of the South. He has a meticulous approach, with an in-depth tech knowledge and creative vision. He's worked with the BBC, CNN, CNBC and CH5 with names like Angelina Jolie, Will.i.am, Matt Damen, Hugh Grant and Roger Federer.