

## Charles Dickens' iconic desk saved for the nation

29 March 2015

Desk where the classics *Great Expectations*, *Our Mutual Friend* and *The Mystery of Edwin Drood* were written on display at author's former London home.

Image



Dickens's Dream by RW Buss which features Dickens' iconic desk

Image



Charles Dickens Museum

Charles Dickens' desk and chair

A grant of just over £780,000 from the National Heritage Memorial Fund (NHMF) has enabled the Charles Dickens Museum in London to purchase the world-famous author's desk and chair.

Since his death in 1870, Charles Dickens' desk and chair has become almost totemic of the man. So much so, this particular desk and chair which he used in his final home, Gad's Hill Place in Kent, are depicted in two paintings begun in the year of this death – *The Empty Chair* by Luke Fildes and *Dickens' Dream* by RW Buss.

The items were passed through the Dickens family after his death before being auctioned for the Great Ormond Street Charitable Trust in 2004. They are currently in private ownership and could have been sold at public auction if they had not been bought by the museum. The desk and chair are on display at the Charles Dickens Museum in London.

Carole Souter, Chief Executive of NHMF, said: "Charles Dickens is one of the UK's most celebrated literary figures, whose stories and characters means he is as popular today as he was in this lifetime. It's exciting news that visitors to his London home can continue to enjoy the unique opportunity to see the very desk at which some of his most famous works were created."

Robert Moye, Director of the Charles Dickens Museum, said: "We are delighted to have been able to acquire Charles Dickens's iconic writing desk and chair for

permanent display in his Study at 48 Doughty Street. They hold a unique place in our literary heritage and, as we embark on our exhibition exploring *The Mystery of Edwin Drood*, it is timely that the desk he used when writing his final novel has been secured for the benefit of all our visitors.”

Margaret Ford, International Head of Books and Manuscripts, Christie’s, said: “This evocative desk and chair, the most important associated with Charles Dickens, is close to my heart. Having sold it to benefit the Great Ormond Street Hospital in 2008, I am delighted to have negotiated its sale to a permanent home, thanks to the vision and determination of the Charles Dickens Museum and the generosity of the NHMF.”

## **Notes to editors**

### **Charles Dickens Museum**

The Charles Dickens Museum holds the world’s most important collection of material relating to the great novelist and social campaigner. Located in Dickens’s only surviving London family home, the museum gives visitors a unique insight into the life and work of the author. ‘My house in town’, as Dickens referred to 48 Doughty Street, was an important place in the writer’s life. Within its walls his eldest two daughters were born, his sister-in-law Mary died aged 17 and some of his best-loved novels were written, including *Oliver Twist* and *Nicholas Nickleby*. The museum is particularly grateful to the National Heritage Memorial Fund, the Dickens Fellowship and The Robert Gavron Charitable Trust for their generosity and support in acquiring these two items.

### **About Christie’s**

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## **Further information**

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