

Rambles Around Marylebone

Wilkie Collins: Where He Lived

by

William M. Clarke



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Author of "The Secret Life of Wilkie Collins"

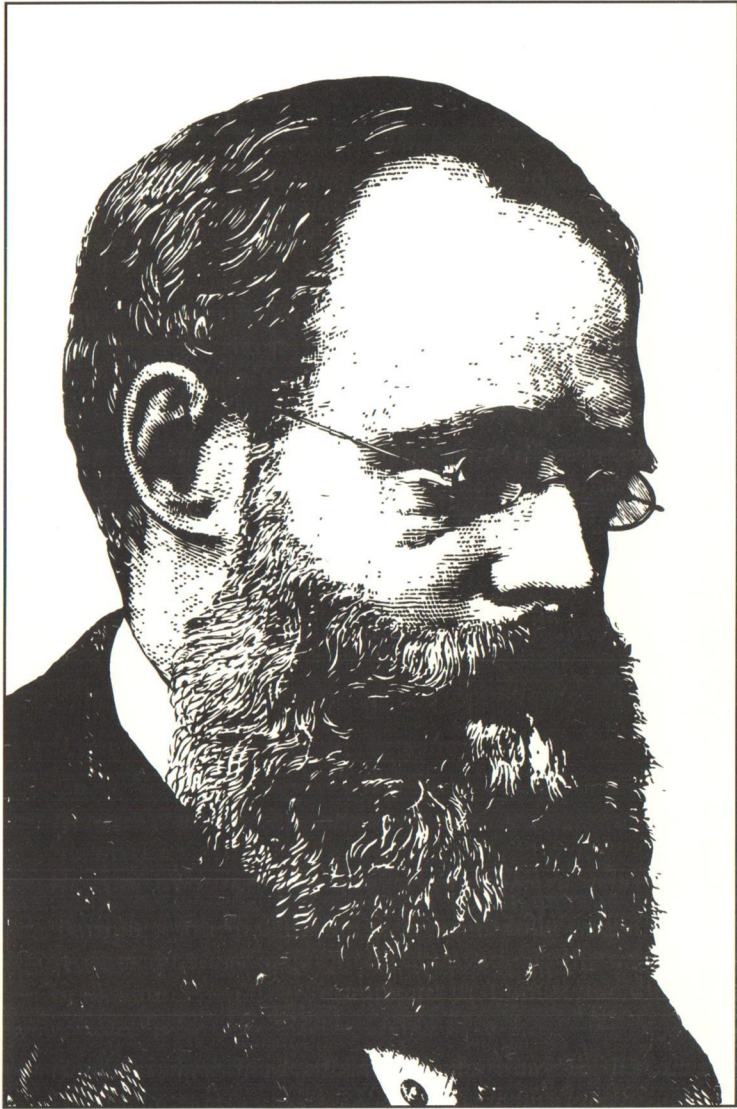
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William Clarke.



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Faithfully yours
Wilkie Collins

William Wilkie Collins was born in New Cavendish Street in Marylebone on January 8, 1824. He rarely moved away from the Marylebone area for any significant time thereafter and died little more than two streets away at the bottom end of Wimpole Street, 65 years later, on September 23, 1889.

This is the area where he was brought up, where he lived with his mother and brother, after his father's death, where he both kept and lived with two mistresses and where, apart from writing excursions to Ramsgate, Broadstairs and Italy, he wrote most of his thirty odd novels. One mistress, Caroline Graves, lived with him in several different houses. The other, Martha Rudd, brought up his three children (two girls and a boy) within the Marylebone area.

This brief guide has been compiled to give a flavour of the area he lived in and the streets he frequented. The energetic can simply start at Baker Street Underground Station and end two or three hours later at Great Portland Street Station. But since the London pavements are plainly harder than in Wilkie's time and the traffic far noisier, a piece-meal approach may be less tiring: a little at a time.

One final note. The accompanying maps, one compiled in the mid- nineteenth century giving Collins contemporary streets, the other based on the current Geographers' A-Z London guide, show how far the area has changed. For example, Taunton Place has changed both its position and its angle. New Cavendish Street, which in Collins' day extended only from Harley Street to Great Portland Street, is now more than twice the length. Albany Street too has doubled its original length. What was originally New Road became Marylebone Road in Collins' time. Harley Place was then where the London Clinic now is, and not half way down Harley Street.

Buildings, and even street numbers, have also changed in over a century. One street number, 2 Harley Place, actually changed, while Collins and his mother were living there, to 11 Harley Place. So a little imagination will not come amiss.



The numbers shown below will be found on the maps.

START FROM BAKER STREET UNDERGROUND STATION

1. Walk north up Baker Street towards Regents Park. At the V-junction ahead, avoid the main road (Park Road) veering to the left, and take the road immediately ahead to the Outer Circle (the road going round the park). A short distance up here on the left is Sussex Place, standing back from the road. Next on the left is:

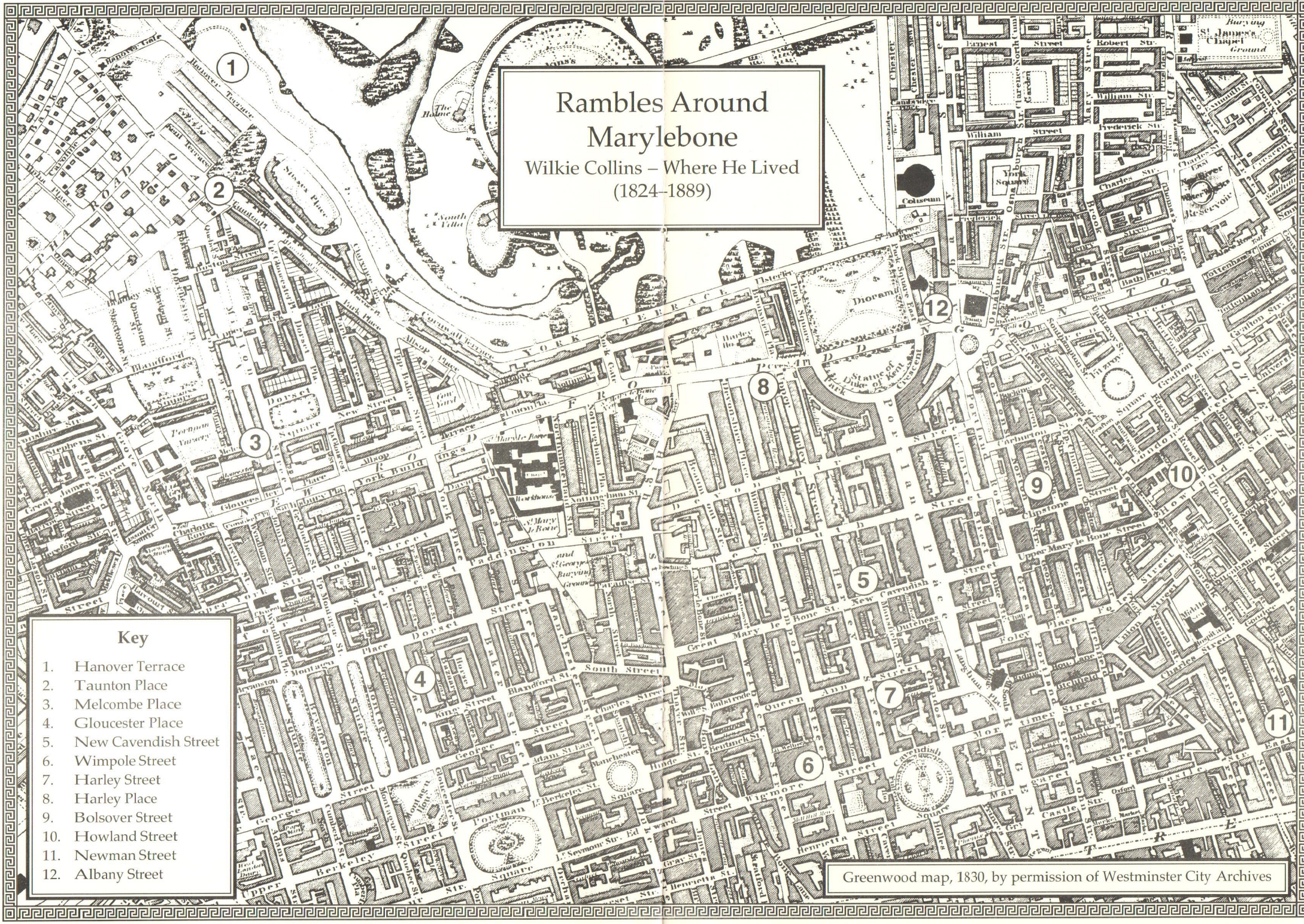
HANOVER TERRACE (1)

Collins' mother Harriet moved to No 17 a couple of years after his father's death. Wilkie and his brother Charles lived with her there in the early 1850s and held

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Wilkie Collins – Where He Lived
(1824–1889)

- Key**
1. Hanover Terrace
 2. Taunton Place
 3. Melcombe Place
 4. Gloucester Place
 5. New Cavendish Street
 6. Wimpole Street
 7. Harley Street
 8. Harley Place
 9. Bolsover Street
 10. Howland Street
 11. Newman Street
 12. Albany Street



Greenwood map, 1830, by permission of Westminster City Archives

open house to all their literary and artistic friends: Charles Dickens, John Millais, Holman Hunt etc..

2. Turn next left at Hanover Gate and then left again into the main road (Park Road) going back towards Baker Street Station. Cross over to the other side and turn right down Gloucester Place. Immediately after Rossmore Road on the right is a small street named:

TAUNTON PLACE (2)

Martha Rudd, using the name of Dawson, lived at No 10 in the original terrace here from early 1874 until 1890 when the row was demolished and rebuilt. When Collins visited her he became William Dawson, Barrister at Law and it was in Taunton Place that Martha brought up Collins' three children (Marion, Harriet and William) from this 'morganatic' marriage.

3. Walk along Taunton Place to the end and turn left into Boston Place. Follow the road down until Marylebone station appears on your right. The street running in front of the station is:

MELCOMBE PLACE (3)

Collins lived here, at No 9, with his mistress Caroline Graves for four years in the mid-1860s.

4. Turn left along Melcombe Place into and through Dorset Square until Gloucester Place is reached again. Turn right, cross over Marylebone Road and continue down on the right hand side of:

GLOUCESTER PLACE (4)

Below Montagu Place on the right is No 65 (formerly 90 when Collins was in occupation) with a blue plaque on the wall confirming Collins' residence. He lived here for close on twenty years from the late 1860s, with his mistress Caroline Graves and her daughter Harriet (until her marriage to his solicitor).

5. Cross over the road and turn left down Blandford Street, crossing Baker Street and then, on reaching Marylebone High Street, turn left and then immediately right into:

NEW CAVENDISH STREET (5)

Not only was Collins born in this street ; he later lived at No 2a for a short time in rooms rented from a local doctor with his mistress Caroline Graves.

6. Continue along New Cavendish Street. About four streets further one reaches and can turn right down:

WIMPOLE STREET (6)

Collins lived for the last eighteen months of his life, still with Caroline Graves, at No 82 at the bottom end of Wimpole Street, dying there in September 1889.

7. Return to New Cavendish Street and again continue eastwards for two further streets. The second one is:

HARLEY STREET (7)

Collins lived with Caroline Graves at No 12 for four years in the early 1860s. In the Census of 1861 he falsely filled in the form at this address putting himself down as a married lodger, a barrister at law and author, with Caroline as his wife. It was here that they celebrated the success of The Woman in White.

8. In a small turning off Harley Street, between New Cavendish Street and Queen Anne Street is:

HARLEY PLACE (8)

This is not the Harley Place where Collins lived with his mother, at No 2, for a couple of years in the late 1850s. That house was in a terrace in New Road (now called Marylebone Road), called Harley Place, between the top of Harley Street and Devonshire Place, roughly where the London Clinic now is.

9. Once again return to New Cavendish Street and continuing eastwards cross over Portland Place. Eventually Great Portland Street is reached. Continue across it and the next street on the left is:

BOLSOVER STREET (9)

This is the first street to be identified as the London home of Martha Rudd. It was at No 33 that Collins' first two children, Marion and Harriet, were born. She later moved to 55, Marylebone Road for a short spell before moving to Taunton Place.

10. Continuing along New Cavendish Street, the street finally ends at Cleveland Street. Immediately ahead is the beginning of:

HOWLAND STREET (10)

Collins lodged here, briefly, in 1856 about the time he first met Caroline Graves.

11. If one turned right down Cleveland Street, this would, in turn, become:

NEWMAN STREET (11)

It was in Newman Street that Caroline Graves died in 1894. She was buried with Wilkie Collins in Kensal Green Cemetery. Martha Rudd continued to tend the grave after their death and the grave remains in her name.

12. Turning left into Cleveland street and following it north one eventually reaches Euston Road. On the other side of the road is a church with a bookstore. The street running north to the left of this is:

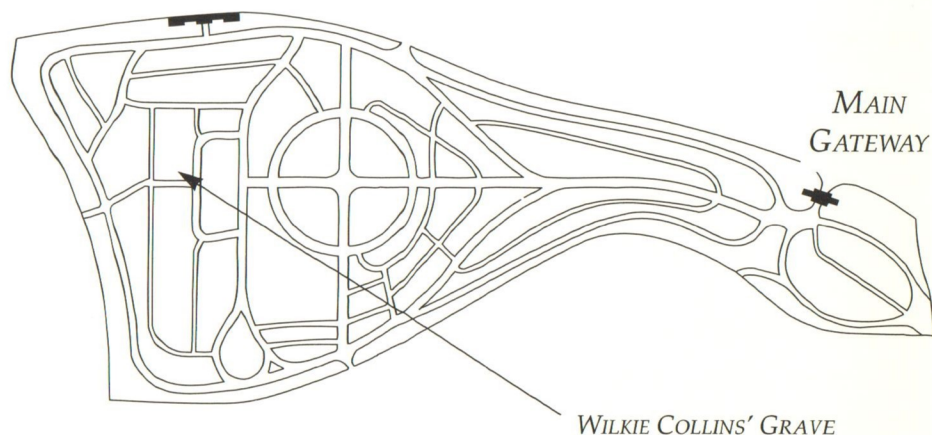
ALBANY STREET (12)

Caroline Graves lived with her daughter Harriet at 124 Albany Street for a short time at the end of the 1850s. It was here that Collins first openly acknowledged his liaison with Caroline and answered correspondence from this address.

FINISH AT GREAT PORTLAND STREET UNDERGROUND STATION

The really energetic can now either catch the Underground, or hop on a No 18 bus, to visit Collins' well kept grave at Kensal Green Cemetery.

KENSAL GREEN CEMETERY, established by an Act of Parliament in 1832, and administered by the General Cemetery Company, is the longest surviving English cemetery that remains in private ownership.



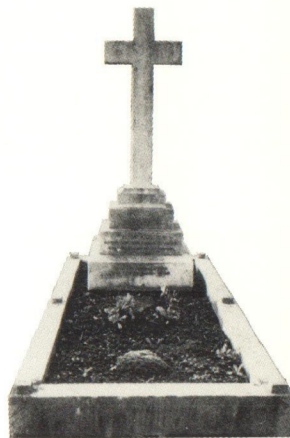
How to get to Kensal Green

Rail BR to Euston, then to KG
Underground Bakerloo line to KG
Bus 18 to Cemetery gate

Times of Opening

Summer: March to October
9-6 Mon to Sat, 10-6 Sun

Winter: November to February,
please phone the
Cemetery for details of opening times
Tel: 081-969 0152.



THE WILKIE COLLINS SOCIETY, with an international membership, was formed during the summer of 1980 to promote research in to the life and works of Wilkie Collins, "the author of *The Woman in White* and other works of fiction" (to quote his own epitaph at Kensal Green).

WILLIAM M. CLARKE is the author of *The Secret Life of Wilkie Collins*. His wife Faith is the great grand-daughter of Wilkie Collins.



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