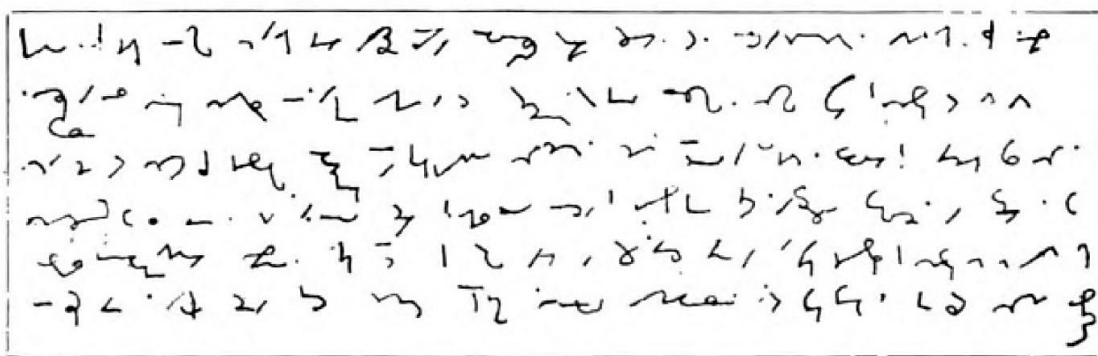


## 2024 Easter Challenge

### A new Dickens shorthand mystery?

This month we are taking a break from Notebook D and digging into a new mystery. Claire has been exploring the papers of the Dickens-loving stenographer, William J. Carlton, at the Charles Dickens Museum in London.<sup>1</sup> Carlton's correspondence notes an interesting reproduction of a piece of shorthand in an article by Arthur T. Dolling, titled 'The Story and Romance of Shorthand', from *The Strand Magazine* in 1912.<sup>2</sup> The image caption states that this is a 'specimen of Charles Dickens's shorthand taken from one of his notebooks (1833).'



A SPECIMEN OF CHARLES DICKENS'S SHORTHAND, TAKEN FROM ONE OF HIS NOTE-  
By permission of] BOOKS (1833). Original from [Miss Hogarth.

These 6 lines do not appear in any of the surviving notebooks and William L. Stower Hewett, who was helping Carlton with the shorthand transcription, confessed himself 'much puzzled' by the reproduction, suggesting that 'it gave me a shock, for every character is so perfectly formed, almost as if it had been printed, and [...] not the slightest bit like the shorthand of the [Manchester] notebook'.<sup>3</sup>

To help us decide whether Dickens may have written it, we first need to transcribe it. This challenge is quite similar to the 'Tavistock' letter because we have no idea of the context. So, every symbol that we can transcribe together will be important.

<sup>1</sup> Carlton wrote the book *Charles Dickens, Shorthand Writer* (1926), which you can view online via Archive.org: <https://archive.org/details/charlesdickensssh0000carl>. Carlton also coordinated attempts to decipher Dickens's shorthand in the twentieth century (see <https://dickenscode.omeka.net/exhibits/show/decodingdickens/decoding-attempts/twentieth-century>).

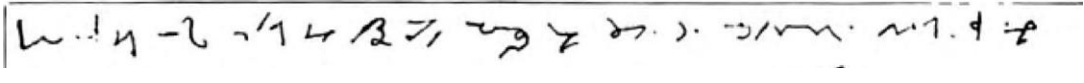
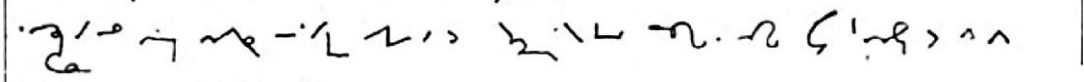

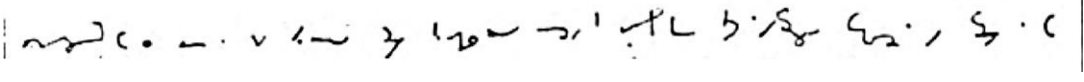
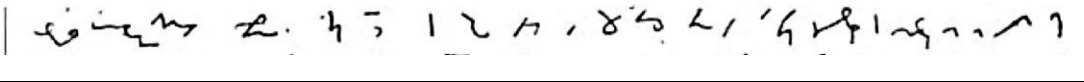
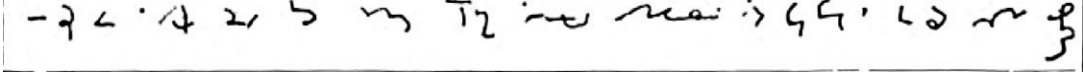
<sup>2</sup> See

<https://archive.org/details/TheStrandMagazineAnIllustratedMonthly/TheStrandMagazine1912bVol.XlivJul-dec/page/n471/>

<sup>3</sup> Letter from William L. Stower Hewett to William J. Carlton, 1 April 1949. Papers of William J. Carlton, Charles Dickens Museum, London.

We will also be interested in any ideas you may have on why the shorthand is or isn't Dickens's so we have left a space at the end for your comments on the shorthand and transcription.

Please complete as much of the transcription as you can and send your thoughts to Claire and Hugo ([claire.wood@leicester.ac.uk](mailto:claire.wood@leicester.ac.uk) and [bowleshugo@gmail.com](mailto:bowleshugo@gmail.com)) by **Friday 3 May 2024**. Good luck!

Line	
01	
02	
03	
04	
05	
06	

Your notes on the shorthand:

**Name:**

**Email:**

**Country of Residence (optional):**

**If the shorthand does turn out to be by Dickens, do you consent to being credited for your efforts and as the discoverer of any new symbols on the Dickens Code Roll of Honour AND/OR in an accompanying blog post? (please tick)**

Yes       No

**If 'yes', please state the name that you would like to be credited under (this could be your full name, your first name, a pseudonym, or a social media handle)**

**I wish to be credited as:** \_\_\_\_\_

*By signing this form and emailing in your competition entry, you agree to license your solution and report under a [Creative Commons CC BY-NC](#) license and grant permission for the 'Dickens Code' project website and related social media channels to reproduce your work, with appropriate credit. If you do not provide a signature, unfortunately we will be unable to process your competition entry.*

**Participant's signature:** \_\_\_\_\_

**Date:** \_\_\_\_\_