# Angela Burdett-Coutts (1814-1906)

Angela Burdett was the daughter of Sir Francis Burdett and his wife Sophia (whose father was Thomas Coutts the banker). Angela’s accession to the fabulous Coutts fortune, as well as the family name, in 1837 led to her becoming one of the most admired as well as one of the most generous philanthropists of her time. It also coincided with the still more memorable coronation of another wealthy young woman, [Princess Victoria](/19c/19c-victoria-biography). Burdett-Coutts – or Miss Coutts, as she was often known – would become the intimate friend (although rejected suitor) of the considerably older Duke of Wellington, whom she visited on several occasions at Walmer Castle. For many years she also worked closely with [Dickens](/dickens) on his ‘home for homeless women’ in London.

Burdett-Coutts stayed in [Ramsgate](/dickens/19c-ramsgate) several times in the mid-1840s to early-1850s: during two of these summer holidays [Dickens](/dickens) and his family were staying in nearby [Broadstairs](/dickens/dickens-broadstairs). [Dickens](/dickens) wrote to Burdett-Coutts in August 1847 asking her to supper to meet the Danish author [Hans Christian Andersen](/19c/19c-christian-andersen), who was also staying in [Ramsgate](/dickens/19c-ramsgate).[[1]](#footnote-1) [Andersen](/19c/19c-christian-andersen) would memorably outstay his welcome at [Gad’s Hill](/dickens/dickens-gads-hill) in 1857, but on this occasion the two writers expressed mutual enthusiasm, and [Andersen](/19c/19c-christian-andersen) was delighted that Burdett-Coutts had accepted [Dickens](/dickens)’s invitation partly in order to meet him. In September [Dickens](/dickens) was writing to Burdett-Coutts in [Sandgate](/placesqz/sandgate-overview),[[2]](#footnote-2) although he had hoped to hear that she would be staying near him in [Broadstairs](/dickens/broadstairs-19th-century).

In October 1850, [Dickens](/dickens) was writing the last pages of \_David Copperfield\_ at [Fort House](/dickens/dickens-fort-house) and was unlikely to welcome distraction even from such a valued friend as his ‘dear Miss Coutts’, nearby though she was at the Royal Albion in [Ramsgate](/dickens/19c-ramsgate).[[3]](#footnote-3)

Like [Dickens](/dickens), Burdett-Coutts clearly felt an affection for the seascape of Thanet, and she would have been aware of the perils caused by the notorious [Goodwin Sands[(/dickens/david-copperfield-goodwin-sands). In 1859 she presented the people of [Margate](/19c/19c-margate) with a lifeboat, which arrived by train and was duly processed through the town under the protection of her secretary ([Dickens](/dickens)’s former editor W. H. Wills), accompanied by the town crier and members of the corporation, with a banner announcing the donation of the ‘Angela and Hannah’. [[4]](#footnote-4)

Burdett-Coutts would return to Kent in person in 1881 on her marriage to the 29 year old William Bartlett, who then became William Burdett-Coutts-Bartlett. The newspapers stuck closely to the more conventional aspects of this union, noting that the newly married pair went to Ashford Church, where the bride was ‘affable, and talked to everybody she met there. Late in the afternoon the Baroness and her husband left for [Canterbury](/19c/19c-canterbury)’ so that she could be closer to her medical attendant (‘Local intelligence’), before spending the rest of the honeymoon at Bartlett’s home of Ingledon in Ashford.

In her lifetime Angela Burdett-Coutts ‘set a new standard in philanthropy: prompt and practical, her charity was given with style and without condescension.’[[5]](#footnote-5) On her death 5 years after [Queen Victoria](/19c/19c-victoria-biography), she was buried in Westminster Abbey, becoming once again a near neighbour of [Dickens](/dickens).

**Author: Carolyn Oulton**

**Bibliography**

# Andersen, Jens. \_ *Hans Christian Andersen: A New Life\_.* London: Duckworth, 2005.

# Healey, Edna. Angela Georgina Burdett. \_Oxford Dictionary of National Biography\_.

<https://www.oxforddnb.com/view/10.1093/ref:odnb/9780198614128.001.0001/odnb-9780198614128-e-32175> Accessed 29 May 2022.

# --. \_*Lady Unknown: The Life of Angela Burdett-Coutts\_.* Sidgwick and Jackson, 1978.

‘Local Intelligence’. \_*Exeter and Plymouth Gazette Daily Telegrams\_*. 7 March 1881. 2.

‘Margate. Inauguration of the Life Boat Presented by Miss Burdett Coutts.’ \_*Kentish Gazette\_*. 22 March 1859. 3.

‘Marriage of the Baroness Burdett-Coutts’. \_Essex Newsman\_. 19 February 1881. 3.

Storey, Graham and K. J. Fielding, eds. \_*The Pilgrim Edition: The Letters of Charles Dickens*.\_ Volume 5: 1847-1849. Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1977.

--. \_*The Pilgrim Edition: The Letters of Charles Dickens\_*. Volume 5: 1847-1849. Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1977.

1. To Miss Burdett-Coutts. 30 August 1847. Pilgrim 5. 154. [↑](#footnote-ref-1)
2. To Miss Burdett-Coutts. 21 September 1847. Pilgrim 5. 166. [↑](#footnote-ref-2)
3. To Miss Burdett-Coutts. 7 October 1850. Pilgrim 6. 10. [↑](#footnote-ref-3)
4. ‘Margate. Inauguration of the Life Boat Presented by Miss Burdett Coutts.’ Hannah Brown was Burdett-Coutts’s companion. [↑](#footnote-ref-4)
5. Healey, ODNB. [↑](#footnote-ref-5)