

The RLS Club News



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Hands-on event: After listening to Nigel McMurray's Graphic Stevenson talk, Club members had the opportunity to examine several items from his collection

Graphic Stevenson

FOR many of us, our first encounter with Stevenson was in graphic form, whether in the versions created by Dudley D. Watkins for D.C. Thomson or in the Classics Illustrated series which originated in the USA in the post-war period.

So for some in his audience at the Royal Scots Club in Edinburgh, Nigel McMurray's September talk was a trip down memory lane, although he ranged much more widely in his presentation of how Stevenson's work has been illustrated, from within his lifetime to the present day.

Nigel showed how very actively interested RLS was himself in the illustrations of his stories. From there he gave us a highly entertaining and impressively

researched account of how generations of illustrators have portrayed the works, illuminated by a varied selection from his own extensive collection of the classics in graphic form.

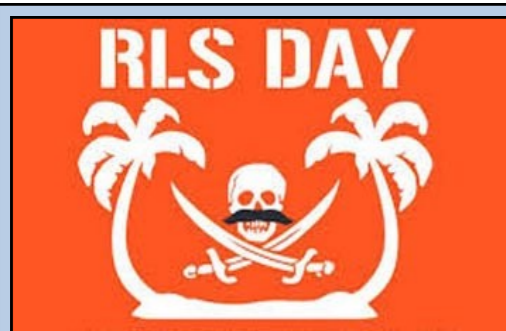
He bravely allowed us to explore the fragile items 'hands on', giving us the opportunity to pursue aspects of individual interest, or simply to wallow in nostalgia.

Overall, Nigel educated and entertained us on an aspect of Stevenson studies which some people may regard as ephemeral, but which for a good number of us has had a profound and lasting influence on how Stevenson's characters still appear in our mind's eye.

DAVID REID



Inside: Writers' Workshop, European Conference, RLS Day Preview and Events



THIS year's main Club event for the RLS Day celebrations in Edinburgh is RLS: The French Connection, a day-long reading of Stevenson poems, essays and stories with a Gallic theme, in honour of our French and Belgian visitors at the European Network conference.

The prestigious venue will be the new French Institute and Consulate in Lothian Buildings on George IV Bridge, and anyone wishing to take part in the readings should email jeremy.hodges@blueyonder.co.uk

This year the City of Literature Trust has had to scale back its involvement in RLS Day but the Club has stepped in to co-ordinate the programme of events and publicise it on a new website, which will be available shortly via the City of Literature home page.

Not to be missed among events during the wider RLS Week is a lunch with our chairman as the speaker, at the Royal Overseas League on Wednesday November 15 at 12pm.

STEVENSON AND THE DEVIL INSIDE

OLD Nick manifests himself in many and subtle ways in Stevenson's writing, sometimes coming too close for our comfort, but there is no need to bring a long spoon for this lunch with the devil featuring Club chairman David Reid as the speaker. Tickets for the event at the Royal Overseas League, 100 Princes Street, Edinburgh, cost £24, including two-course lunch, coffee and wine. Book on 0131 225 1501.

CLUB EVENTS

OCTOBER 20

MRS JEKYLL & COUSIN HYDE

WHY did RLS dedicate Strange Case of Dr Jekyll and Mr Hyde to Katharine de Mattos? Club member Jeremy Hodges examines the long and close relationship between the two cousins, from childhood romance and her unhappy marriage to the creation of Jekyll & Hyde and the bitter Henley-Stevenson quarrel. Be the first to hear extracts from Jeremy's new book, ahead of publication in RLS Week. Royal Scots Club, 7pm, price £3. Names please to Margaret Wilkie, email wilkiejl@blueyonder.co.uk or ring 0131 477 6738.

NOVEMBER 18

ANNUAL LUNCH

THIS year's speaker for the annual Robert Louis Stevenson Club lunch at the New Club will be Ian Campbell, Emeritus Professor of Scottish & Victorian Literature at the University of Edinburgh. This is always a popular event and early booking is advised. For further details, menu and booking form, see accompanying papers.

Inspired by RLS

IT was a great pleasure to be involved in the Robert Louis Stevenson competition for schools. The competition invites young writers to produce an essay or short story inspired by Stevenson's life and works. Twelve of the submitted entries were shortlisted.

Each of the shortlisted writers had enthusiastically engaged with the invitation to be inspired by Stevenson. They each included a short statement explaining how their piece of writing related to RLS.

Strange Case of Dr Jekyll and Mr Hyde was popular, as was the sea. Other themes included travel, doubles and romance. Anna McPhail of Portobello High School took the top prize for her reflective essay Beach Comber.

The twelve shortlisted writers were invited to attend a creative writing workshop led by myself at Edinburgh Napier University. Members of the RLS Club and representatives of Edinburgh Napier University, including Professor Linda Dryden, also attended.

It was a huge pleasure to meet the young writers, all of whose work I enjoyed. They approached the workshop with enthusiasm, good humour and an air of professionalism which bodes well for their future as writers.

The workshop was themed around RLS's work, life and writing techniques. The students appeared to enjoy learning more about Stevenson. I do hope that the Club continues to organise the competi-

ELEVEN selected entrants for the Inspired by RLS Creative Writing Competition took part in a stimulating Master Class led by author Louise Welsh at Edinburgh Napier University.

The competition, run jointly by the university and the Robert Louis Stevenson Club, drew entries from some gifted senior high school pupils. Anna McPhail of Portobello High School won the George Addis Trophy and the Reflective Writing prize while Felix Swift Roberts of the Gordon Schools, Huntly, won the prize for fiction. Banchory Academy and Trinity Academy, Edinburgh, also featured in the prize list.

tion and I would love to be involved in future years.

'Beach Comber' by Anna McPhail is a beautifully rendered, mature reflective essay. It is a worthy overall winner. Anna successfully conveys a sense of the narrator's grandfather's memories being passed across the generations via the conduit of the sea. This is a story full of controlled emotion and texture. Anna's love of the sea was shared by Robert Louis Stevenson. 'The Double' by Felix Swift Roberts is a terrific horror story full of real tension. Felix has embraced the concept of the doppelganger with real understanding.



Literary winners: Louise Welsh with Felix Swift Roberts and Anna McPhail

His story is nicely paced and engages with the kind of taboos RLS would recognise.

Sioned Ellis of Banchory Academy has created a disturbing tale inspired by the concept of the doppelganger which kept me hooked right up to its unsettling ending. 'Birthmark' balances tension and nar-

rative beautifully. I would also like to give an honourable mention to Morven Stead of Trinity Academy whose reflective essay St Christopher showed originality and mature insight. Morven's love of travel is something RLS would understand.

LOUISE WELSH



Heriot Row: Delegates at the home of Robert Louis Stevenson

Global view of Stevenson brings new perspectives

STEVENSON experts from around the world converged on Edinburgh for the Robert Louis Stevenson International Conference 2017.

Entitled Robert Louis Stevenson: New Perspectives, it was held at Edinburgh Napier University's Merchiston campus from July 5-8 and chaired by Club member Professor Linda Dryden, with the assistance of Dr Lena Wanggren and Duncan Milne.

More than 50 delegates attended from around 15 countries, including Brazil, Chile, China, America, France, Spain, Germany, Italy and Australia.

Following an opening afternoon of excellent papers, the social side of the event kicked off with a BBQ at Linda's house. The following day there were further excellent papers, with lunch at Mont-

pelier's and an evening dinner at the Osteria del Tempo Perso in Bruntsfield. After more papers on Friday, the delegates had a free afternoon to explore Edinburgh before being treated to a drinks reception laid on by John MacFie at 17 Heriot Row. Dinner was at Yeni on Hanover Street.

The conference was a huge success, and it is expected that many of the papers delivered in July 2017 will find their way into *The Journal of Stevenson Studies* in 2018. The next RLS conference will take place in Bordeaux in 2020.

After a summer break, Linda was busy again in August leading an RLS workshop on Stevenson and Lloyd Osbourne's story *The Ebb Tide* at the Edinburgh International Book Festival, which also featured an exhibition on the Mehew Collection.

Honoured to be members of the Club

TWO eminent Stevensonians have been awarded honorary memberships this year by the Robert Louis Stevenson Club.

Emeritus Professor Barry Menikoff of the University of Hawaii has made an outstanding contribution to Stevenson studies which has been internationally recognised, and has been enormously influential in stimulating interest in and regard for the works of Stevenson worldwide.

He has also established friendly links with our Club in his visits here, most recently when he gave the keynote address at Edinburgh Napier University's celebration of RLS Day in November 2016 and joined us at our Annual Lunch.

A Ten Year Membership has been awarded to the author Louise Welsh who has given some memorable experiences to the young writers she has engaged with in the past two years in connection with the Club's Writing Competition.

Louise has refused to accept any honorarium for the commitment which she has given to judging the competition and conducting the Writers' Master Class, but she has been very pleased to accept our offer of Club membership.

For ordinary members the Club has introduced new subscription arrangements. For reasons lost in the mists of time, the Club's membership year and subscription year have run from different dates and we are now removing this inconsistency, making both run from October 1.

Also, if new members join during the membership year they will now be asked to pay a sum equivalent to £2.00 per month (£2.50 if joint or overseas) for the period until the regular annual subscription is due for renewal.

Now, whenever a new member may join, the initial cost of the subscription will be on a fair and equal basis. The changes will not affect existing members, but if you are encouraging others to join the Club (as we hope you do!) this information may be helpful.

While we enjoy the responses we receive from our occasional email circulars, it is clear some of our email addresses are no longer valid. If you have changed yours, please let David Reid know so that we can keep in touch, and make sure our records are up to date.

Welcoming Europe to Louis's home town

EDINBURGH will welcome delegates from the European Network in the Footsteps of Robert Louis Stevenson when its AGM is hosted by the Club in November.

The serious business meeting will take place in Edinburgh on November 10, followed by a weekend of RLS-related visits

culminating in RLS Day on Stevenson's birthday, November 13.

Events planned for our European friends include a visit to North Berwick and a guided walk around Edinburgh's Old Town. Led by Club member John Shedden, delegates will visit the Royal Mile, the Cow-

gate, Niddry Street, Advocates Close, St Giles, and other Stevenson haunts.

During the walk John's text (and Stevenson's words) will be rendered into French by fellow Club stalwart Rosemary Johnston until journey's end at Makars Court and the Writers' Museum.



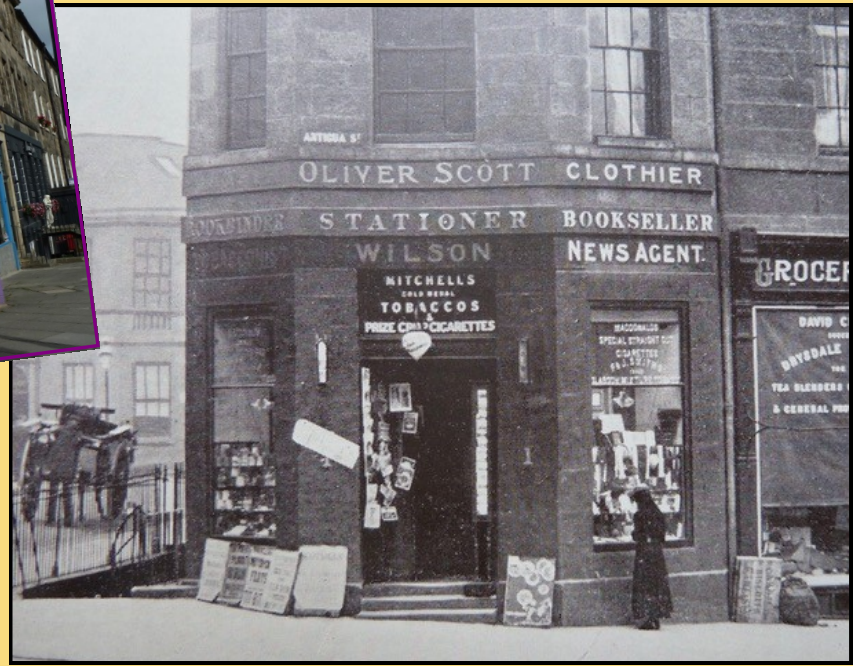
DINERS tucking in to some Middle Eastern street food or smoking a hubble-bubble pipe at Pomegranate restaurant in Edinburgh may not realise they are in a room visited frequently by the young Robert Louis Stevenson.

In the 1860s, Louis was a regular customer at what was then a newsagents in Antigua Street, which he would pass on regular Saturday strolls down to see the ships at Leith.

The shop of course sold sheets of cut-out characters, 'Penny Plain and Twopence Coloured', for Skelt's Juvenile Theatre, which fascinated Louis and his cousin Bob.

They would spend hours colouring them in and imagining the various scenes, having spent almost as long deliberating over which of the plays to buy – to the great annoyance of the shopmen.

'They kept us at the stick's end, frowned us down, snatched each play out of our hand ere we were trusted with another, and, incredible as it may sound, used to demand of us upon our entrance, like banditti, if we came with money or with empty hand. Old Mr. Smith himself, worn out with my



Diner where young RLS once fed his childhood dreams

eternal vacillation, once swept the treasures from before me, with the cry: "I do not believe, child, that you are an intending purchaser at all!"

'These were the dragons of the garden; but for such joys of paradise we could have faced the Terror of Jamaica himself. Every sheet we fingered was

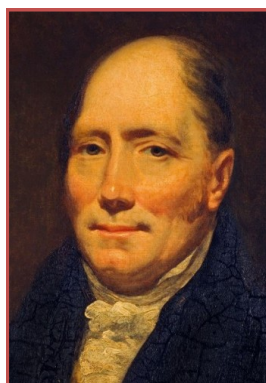
another lightning glance into obscure, delicious story; it was like wallowing in the raw stuff of story-books.

'I know nothing to compare with it save now and then in dreams, when I am privileged to read in certain unwritten stories of adventure, from which I awake to find the world all vanity.'

Grandfather and guiding light to those in peril on the sea

THE grandfather of Robert Louis Stevenson is being honoured by Historic Environment Scotland with a blue plaque on his former home at 1-3 Baxter's Place, Edinburgh, now a hotel. The citation on the plaque reads: 'Robert Stevenson (1772-1850): Famous

Scottish lighthouse engineer and the grandfather of Treasure Island author Robert Louis Stevenson. He devoted himself with determination to follow the profession of a civil engineer, and applied himself to the practice of surveying, and architectural drawing.'



CONTACTS

RLS Club Contact: David Reid, 20 Beveridge Road, Kirkcaldy, Fife, KY1 1UX. Tel: 01592 204645

Email: davidalison.reid@gmail.com

RLS Club News Editor:

Jeremy Hodges, 21 Russel Street, Falkirk, Stirlingshire, FK2 7HS.

Tel: 01324 613072

Email: jeremy.hodges@blueyonder.co.uk