

UPDATE

The Robert Louis Stevenson Club June 2017



To the Lighthouse

WE mustn't over-dramatise the scene but the ship did heave and the lower deck bilges were awash as our intrepid party dared the seas between Anstruther and the Isle of May.

The scant remains of a shipwreck can still be seen on the rocks near the island harbour but trip organiser Rex Homer counted us all safely back at the end of the day.

The Isle of May lighthouse has special significance in the annals. It was established as the first permanent light in Scotland in 1636 and the remains of the tower which supported its brazier are still visible alongside Robert Stevenson's 1815 building, which still operates today.



Sea voyage: Club members, below, brave the waves en route to the Isle of May, above

Forthcoming Events programme overleaf

Courtesy of the Nature Reserve's Warden we had access to all the levels of the tower, culminating in the superb views from the top, of the Isle, the Lothian and Fife coasts and in the distance, through binoculars, even the faintest glimpses of the Bell Rock appearing and disappearing in the haze.

The lighthouse has all the Stevenson characteristics of distinctive architecture, superb craftsmanship and commanding presence.

June is the best time of year for visitors to experience the varied bird life of the island – particularly the nesting terns which shrieked in our ears and clipped our stray hairs, the ninety thousand puffins and



the engaging eider ducks with their chicks.

The dramatic cliffs were clad with nesting guillemots, razorbills and gulls, with gannets skimming the waters below and seals on the outlying rocks.

The ruins of the medieval monastery testify to over a thousand years of human

THE former beacon on the Isle of May was described to RLS by old James Lindsay 'who was for me a mirror of things perished; it was only in his memory that I could see the huge shock of flames of the May beacon stream to leeward, and the watchers, as they fed the fire, lay hold unscorched of the windward bars of the furnace'.

July 15 Annual General Meeting

THE Annual General Meeting of the Robert Louis Stevenson Club will be held in the Mackenzie Building of the Faculty of Advocates (Old Assembly Close, 172 High Street, Edinburgh) at 11.00am (Coffee from 10.30am), conducted by chairman David Reid.

The AGM is your opportunity to air your views and ideas for the Club's development. The RLS Club is always looking for new ways to celebrate and promote the life and works of RLS. Do try to come along.



Going up: The lighthouse stairs

Isle of May adventure

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habitation but nature is still the dominant force on the Isle. On the return voyage we were escorted by a pod of dolphins.

Ian Gardiner then rounded off the day by leading us to the house where the young RLS spent a summer observing the harbour works in Anstruther. At Cunzie House, Louis sat up at night penning the work he hoped would make his name immortal. But as he watched while moths perished in the flame of the lamp, he realized Voces Fidelium was like-

wise perishable and consoled himself with port and brandy sent by his parents after he told them: 'I fear *vin d'Anstruther*, and having procured myself a severe attack of gripes by two days total abstinence on chilly table beer, I have been forced to purchase Green Ginger (Somebody or other's "celebrated"), for the benefit of my stomach, like St Paul.'

After a month, Louis declared: 'I am utterly sick of this grey, grim, sea-beaten hole...' But our day had been exhilarating.

DAVID REID

CLUB EVENTS

SEPTEMBER 14

GRAPHIC STEVENSON

STEVENSON was a star of the Classics Illustrated graphic novels published from the 1940s to the 1990s, created in the USA to counteract the violent graphic comics of the times. Club member Nigel McMurray has one of the largest collections of CI in the UK and this will be a hands-on event. Royal Scots Club, Edinburgh, at 7pm. Price £3, names to Margaret Wilkie, wilkiejl@blueyonder.co.uk or ring 0131 477 6738.

OCTOBER 20

MRS JEKYLL & COUSIN HYDE

WHY did RLS dedicate Jekyll & 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 that led to the estrangement of the two 'children of the heather and the wind'.

Be the first to hear extracts from Jeremy's new book, ahead of publication in RLS Week. Royal Scots Club, 7pm, price £3. Names to Margaret Wilkie as above.

NOVEMBER 9-12

EUROPEAN VISIT

WELCOME delegates to the AGM in Edinburgh of the European Cultural Route In the Footsteps of Robert Louis Stevenson. Further details in Autumn newsletter.



RLS the French Way

TRAVELS with a Donkey in the Cevennes met the Flight in the Heather from Kidnapped when a group of six French RLS fans spent ten days in Scotland experiencing the Stevenson Way and the Highlands.

Their guide was Club member Ian Logan of the Stevenson Way who collected them from Edinburgh airport and drove them up to Oban, where after a typical Scottish meal of fish and chips they boarded the ferry to Mull. From Fionnphort they went by boat to Balfour's Bay on Earraid, where David Balfour and Alan Breck were shipwrecked in Kidnapped.

Having purchased fresh fish, crab and lobster the group dined in style, thanks to French culinary *savoir faire*.

There was a visit to the Wood of Lettermore and the scene of the Appin Murder, and to the hill above the narrows of Ballachulish where, despite David's best efforts in Catriona, James of the Glens was hanged.

Further adventures on the Stevenson Way included venturing onto Rannoch Moor in David and Alan's footsteps before ten days of camaraderie came to an end in Stirling with plenty of singing and dancing in the pub.

MEMBERS paying annually are asked to check their subscription is up to date and that any standing order is updated to the new rate of £25.

BOOKS kindly donated by Club member Dr Jake Davidson, as per the Chairman's earlier email message, will be on sale at the AGM.

CONTACTS

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