



California calling

SUNNY California came to autumnal Edinburgh in September when three members of The Robert Louis Stevenson Club of Monterey arrived on an RLS pilgrimage.

Some of our members had met them on an earlier visit to California and now Monica Hudson, Elizabeth Anderson and Robin Chapman repaid the compliment and were warmly welcomed by their sister Club in Scotland.

A full programme of events had been organised, from visits to the Writers' Museum and the Stevenson memorial plaque in St Giles Cathedral to a meal in the Hispaniola room, once Rutherford's bar where Louis was a regular and now part of Ciao Roma restaurant.

There were visits to Colinton Manse, to see the swing immortalised in *A Child's Garden of Verses*, and also to North Berwick, where sadly bad weather cancelled a boat



Aboard the Hispaniola: Susan Gellaitry, Elizabeth Anderson, Monica Hudson, Mitchell Manson and Robin Chapman in what was once Rutherford's bar

trip to Fidra, inspiration for *Treasure Island*.

One of the party, Robin Chapman, has a special interest in the novelist Dorothy Emily Stevenson, granddaughter of Louis's uncle

David, and visited her home in Moffat to meet her granddaughter Wendy Simpson.

The culmination of the Edinburgh visit was a soiree with wine and a buffet at Louis's Heriot Row home,

hosted by John Macfie with a selection of Stevenson-related music and readings which left all our Club members eager to meet up again soon with our friends from California.



Out of town: Our visitors with Rex Homer in North Berwick, far left, and Robin Chapman in Moffat at the grave of Dorothy Emily Stevenson, where she met the author's granddaughter Wendy Simpson

Drinking in the pleasures of Stevenson in Bordeaux

I SET out for the Stevenson and Pleasure conference with *Treasure Island* as my holiday book and a determination to find out more about Stevenson and the city of Bordeaux.

The conference at the Université Bordeaux Montaigne brought together a cosmopolitan array of university academics and independent scholars from France, Scotland, England, Germany, Italy and USA who shared their insights on various aspects of Stevenson and Pleasure.

There was a strong contingent from Bristol, which features in *Treasure Island*. There were many delegates from Edinburgh, including RLS Club fellow member Martin White, who gave a presentation entitled *The Hunting of the Snark*. Other topics included Stevenson and Charm, Stevenson Versifier, Stevenson's Fables, Stevenson's Travels, Romance, Pleasure and Wellbeing, Stevenson and the Pleasures of Cosmopolitanism.

There were interesting sessions on adaptations: cartoon retellings of *Treasure Island*, and *Jekyll and Hyde* video games. The keynote speaker opening the conference was Jean-Pierre Naugrette of Université Sorbonne Nouvelle-Paris 3, whose topic was Stevenson and the Pleasure of Nightmares. The questions and answers sessions throughout the conference were very stimulating. We enjoyed fellowship over meals and drinks, sometimes in the shade of the trees out-



Adding academic weight: Richard Dury and Robert-Louis Abrahamson

side the lecture theatre. During the final session, Lesley Graham spoke on the pleasure of following Stevenson with particular reference to Scotland. She showed a slide of book covers, including Ian Nimmo's *Walking with Murder: On the Kidnapped Trail* which depicted the statue of Alan Breck and David Balfour in Corstorphine, Edinburgh.

I mentioned that I had visited it and had asked a passer-by to take my photograph in front of it. She had to cross the road to fit it all in because it is so colossal. I am proud that a statue of the heroes of *Kidnapped* is on display in the capital of Scotland, the birthplace of RLS. Lesley announced that the statue had been un-

veiled by Sean Connery. The chairman of the final session, Gilles Ménégaldo, brought this Stevenson symposium to a conclusion by saying: 'Let's leave it there with Sean Connery.'

Bordeaux has much to offer. It was delightful to take the tram every day from the city centre to Pessac and to enjoy views of Bordeaux. On the Thursday evening we had a splendid cocktail reception at the Bordeaux Mairie or city hall — a great honour. We enjoyed Champagne and Grand Vin de Bordeaux.

I like to wear a rose as a buttonhole. On the tram to Hôtel de Ville I had noticed a florist and asked a steward if it were nearby. He asked what colour of rose I would like. 'Any colour,' I replied. He took me to a mantelpiece where there was a vase of white roses and gave me one — as a member of the 1745 Association I was particularly gratified, since



Wine is bottled poetry: Martin White and Bob Harley enjoy the conference in Bordeaux

white roses are associated with Bonnie Prince Charlie.

A highlight of the evening was *An Apology for Idlers*, a presentation and dramatic reading by Richard Dury and Robert-Louis Abrahamson.

On the Friday evening we had a delightful conference dinner at Restaurant

La Belle Epoch on the banks of the Garonne before wandering outside to enjoy the cooler air by the riverside.

Saturday's visit to St Emilion was cancelled by the police because of the unprecedented temperature of 42 degrees and the fear of heatstroke, but on Sunday morning I visited the wine museum, Cité du Vin, and enjoyed the exhibits and the marvellous architecture before attending an Anglican church service.

To compensate for any disappointment, on my return to St Andrews I went straight to Luvian's Bottle Shop, bought a bottle of St Emilion, Château La Courolle and drank to happy memories of informative and inspiring presentations and a beautiful city.

Many thanks to Lesley Graham, Nathalie Jaëck and Julie Gay for making it all happen.

BOB HARLEY

Welcome lifesaver for Vailima

THE Club's £1,000 donation to help keep Stevenson's home in Samoa open to the public has been gratefully received by Vailima's manager.

When Samoa closed its borders to visitors because of the Covid pandemic and Vailima lost its main source of income from tourism, the future looked bleak.

So the Club's donation came as a welcome surprise to Vailima's manager, Margaret Silva Felise., who responded: 'What a wonderful news! It is your generosity and belief in our mission that enables us to perform our work and we are deeply grateful for your generous support. Faafetai tele lava (Thank you very much) God bless!!'

Funds for Vailima are still required — to make a personal donation, contact Club treasurer Jim Wilkie, wilkiejl@blueyonder.co.uk or call 0131 477 6738.

Introducing the new Chairman of the RLS Club

MY first recollection of Robert Louis Stevenson is as a primary age schoolboy. I well remember having to recite and memorise 'The Lamplighter'.

This memory has stayed with me, reinforced by the fact that in the 1950s the streetlamp outside our Bearsden home, and in the Glasgow tenement closes where my respective grandparents lived, were all illuminated by gas lamps. As dusk approached the lamplighters would appear carrying their short ladders and open flame lighting stick to light the lamps after turning on the gas valve tap.

My second recollection was reading *Travels with a Donkey* as part of Higher English studies prescribed

by my inspirational English teacher — so many words with meanings unfamiliar to me to write out, memorise, and woe betide any of the class who were picked at random each week unable to give the meaning of these words. But what apposite, descriptive words these were, and what a stimulating learning experience which has stayed with me ever since.

Fast forward to eight years after graduation (1978), and an opportunity arose to research illnesses in returning Scottish travellers. This followed media publicity about the retrospective diagnosis of Legionnaires' Disease in a group of returning package holidaymakers from 1973 which until 1978 had eluded

all previous attempts to identify the causative organism. Within a very short period, I realised the importance of the wider application of this research having noted that international travel was growing exponentially, was the biggest, global growth industry, and so initiated my Doctorate studies, *Illnesses Associated with Travel*.

As a preface to my subsequent presentations at International Travel Medicine Conferences from 1988 to 2007 (Zurich, Atlanta, Paris, Acapulco, Geneva, New York, Vancouver, Trondheim, Verona, Singapore, Chennai, Shanghai, Hong Kong) as well as to more than 50 community organisations and

clubs in the UK, I would always quote from RLS: 'We are all travellers... in the wilderness of this world and the best we can find in our travels is an honest friend.'

It was following a presentation in Clarkston, Glasgow, that David Clapham spoke to me and asked if I had heard of the Robert Louis Stevenson Club. Courtesy of his intervention, my Club membership began in 2006 along with my continuing interest in the well-travelled Stevenson and the Club which link together Scotland, Travel Medicine and history. And this was how I 'came to know RLS'.

JON COSSAR

CLUB EVENTS

OCTOBER 18

IN RLS'S FOOTSTEPS

WALK from Cramond to the Hawes Inn. Meet 10.30am at the Cramond Brig Hotel (Miller & Carter Steakhouse), a No 43 bus ride from Edinburgh. Enjoy lunch at the inn immortalised in *Kidnapped*.

OCTOBER 19

LIBRARY VISIT

VISIT the National Library of Scotland from 2pm to 4pm where James Mitchell, Curator of Rare Books, will unveil some of the library's most interesting Stevenson holdings.

NOVEMBER 12

CATRIONA

CELEBRATE the first publication 130 years ago of the novel Stevenson regarded as his finest with an hour of readings at the Writers' Museum in Edinburgh, from 11am.

CLUB LUNCH

MOVE on to the New Club for the RLS Club's annual lunch with guest speaker Professor David Purdie. For details see accompanying lunch papers.

NOVEMBER 21

AN APERITIF WITH LOUIS

AS an alternative to our coffee mornings, meet for an early evening aperitif at the Film House, Lothian Road, Edinburgh, 5pm-7pm.

DECEMBER 6

COFFEE AND MINCE PIES

ENJOY a pre-Christmas gathering from 10.30am to 12.30pm at the Scottish Arts Club, 24 Rutland Square, cost £6.

FEBRUARY 2

ROUSILLON WINE

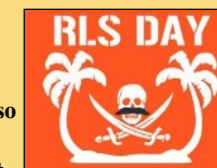
TASTE the wine immortalised by RLS in *The Wrecker* along with authentic French charcuterie and readings from the Paris chapters of the book he co-authored with Lloyd Osbourne. Meet 7pm at L'Escargot Bleu, 56 Broughton Street, Edinburgh. Cost the.

BOOK all events at least a week beforehand with Margaret Wilkie, wilkiejl@blueyonder.co.uk 0131 477 6738 or 07815 845586

Be part of RLS Day

MORE RLS Day events will appear gradually on the RLS Day website, so please check regularly for updates at

<https://rlsday.wordpress.com>. If you would like to give a reading from *Catriona* at our November 12 event at the Writers' Museum, email jeremy.hodges@blueyonder.co.uk



Fantastic Fables

THE winner and the two runner-up modern Fables in the international competition organised by Club member Martin White will be published in full on the *MrRLS.com* website during the week of RLS Day – each accompanied by an expert commentary by Robert-Louis Abrahamson, one of the four judges.

The winning Fable is *The Young Man and the Therapist* by CB McCall, which you can read below.

It was one of more than 450 entries from around the world, all inspired by the original Fables which Stevenson can be seen writing in this illustration.

The winner receives a prize of £500 with the RLS Club also providing prizes for the runners-up – *Stomach or Soul?* by Helen Yuretich and *School Clothes* by Karis White.



The Young Man and the Therapist

A YOUNG man was walking with his therapist.

‘I’m so sad,’ he said. ‘My true love has abandoned me.’

‘Ah,’ said the therapist, ‘but that is the past. Mindfulness tells us to concentrate on the here and now. Look at this delightful, purple heather blowing in the winter sunshine.’

‘And I’m so anxious,’ said the young man. ‘I’ve been distracted at work, and I’m sure my boss is going to fire me.’

‘Ah,’ said the therapist, ‘but that is the future. Mindfulness tells us to concentrate on the here and now. Listen to those seagulls, calling as they wheel above the cliffs.’

They paused at the highest point of the bluff and looked out over the sea.

‘I’m so hungry,’ said the young man. ‘I keep trying to remind myself of the good breakfast I ate before I came out – but that is the past, and mindfulness tells us concentrate on the here and now.’

‘Well, yes,’ said the therapist, putting his hand on the young man’s shoulder, ‘and what you are experiencing offers an excellent reminder that bodily sensations anchor us in the present moment...’

‘And I’m so cold,’ said the young man. ‘That wind is biting. I keep trying to remind myself that there is a warm fire waiting for me at home – but that is the future, and mindfulness tells us to concentrate on here and now.’

‘Indeed,’ said the therapist, squeezing the young man’s shoulder firmly, ‘and what you are experiencing offers an excellent opportunity to accept the present without trying to change it...’

‘Then I suppose I must accept what a wretched creature I am,’ the young man said. ‘In the present moment, I have no relationship or career. I’m ravenous. I’m freezing, and my only human contact is with a man who offers no advice other than to get used to it.’

And he stepped forward over the edge, dragging the therapist with him as he fell.

CONTACTS

RLS Club Contact: Jon Cossar, Flat 2, 65 Sassoon Grove, Edinburgh, EH10 5FB.

Tel: 0131 258 3119

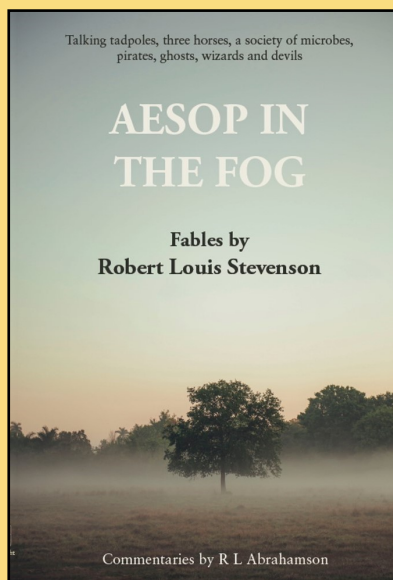
Email: joncossar@gmail.com

RLS Club News Editor:

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

Tel: 01324 613072

Email: jeremy.hodges@blueyonder.co.uk



Fables fathomed

DESPITE their brevity and their apparent simplicity, the full meaning of Stevenson’s Fables can be hard to fathom – but a new version guides and informs the reader with commentaries by Robert-Louis Abrahamson.

Aesop in the Fog contains all the Fables, plus *Moral Emblems and Tales* and *The Graver and the Pen*, with an illuminating commentary on each, along with the charming woodcut illustrations created by Stevenson himself.

To buy a copy of the book, published by Lamplight Press at £10, visit <https://thelamplightpress.com/aesop>