



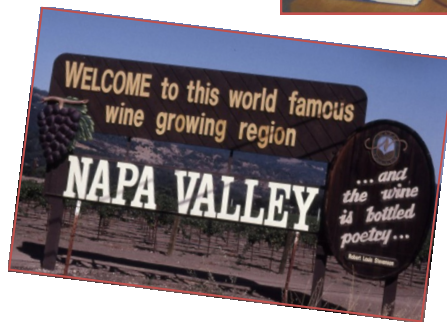
An evening of bottled poetry...



ROBERT Louis Stevenson's interest in wine began at an early age, 'from the raisin wine that a school-fellow kept secreted in his play-box'.

In later life he came to appreciate finer vintages, from the Fleury at Lavenue's restaurant in Paris to wines produced in California's Napa Valley, where his remark that 'the wine is bottled poetry' is still proudly displayed.

But one wine in particular is celebrated in *The Wrecker*, inspiring some of Stevenson's finest comic writing. In Paris he drank Roussillon wine for breakfast with his American friend Will Low, and Low's unfortunate experiences after drinking a little too much of it inspired Loudon Dodd's comic escapade getting hopelessly lost in a small hotel in Paris.



This supplied the perfect entertainment at the Club's Roussillon wine tasting at L'Escargot Bleu in Edinburgh, with Jack Johnston and Jeremy Hodges reading the relevant comic passages while members enjoyed the wine, generously provided by Eric Wishart.

Michael Walker of Vino Wines gave tasting notes and an instructive talk about

the Roussillon area in the South of France, close by the border with Spain, where the wines remain as strong as they were in Stevenson's day.

Even after returning from California as a chronic invalid, Louis continued to enjoy his wine. Incarcerated in a Swiss hotel in the mountain resort of Davos, he still managed to polish off a litre a day of red Valtellina wine from just across the border in Italy – for the good of his health, of course.

In Samoa, when his step-daughter Belle made a comic sketch of the family going up to dinner at Vailima, she drew Louis solemnly clutching a wine bottle.

And it would have done his heart good to see his friends drinking his health today.



...and an aperitif or two with Louis

THE French habit of enjoying an aperitif was readily adopted by Louis from his first visit to Siron's Inn by the forest of Fontainebleau, and Club members were happy to follow the precedent when they gathered to share an early-evening drink or two at Shakespeares in Edinburgh's Lothian Road – down which Louis in his twenties would wander by night in search of refreshment. Such events could now prove habit-forming – *Santé!*

Inside: A season of Stevenson, Louis in Menton, Cummy's grave and a Greene cousin

New work on RLS in the South Seas

LAST December a research team from the Universities of Edinburgh and Chester, working in collaboration with Pacific artists and poets, presented a summary of their work and activities to Club members.

The three year Remediating Stevenson project explores Stevenson's Pacific fiction and its legacies for contemporary readers in Samoa, Hawai'i and Scotland. As well as adding to Stevenson scholarship, it will produce new art and poetry inspired by the three short stories published together in 1893 – *The Bottle Imp*, *The Isle of Voices* and *The Beach of Falesá*.

Professor Michelle Keown, the project leader, introduced the background and context of the project, while Dr Shari Sabeti discussed her interest in Stevenson's readers and the educational potential of his Pacific writing.

Solomon Enos, a native Hawai'i artist, shared drafts of visual adaptations of the two Hawai'i based stories, and Professor Simon Grennan, who is both scholar and artist, discussed his theories of, and approaches to, adaptation.

The project involves work with schools (including two named after Stevenson in Hawai'i and Samoa), non-governmental organisations, and communities in both Scotland and the Pacific who have connections to Stevenson and his work.

Ultimately, the project hopes to renew interest in Stevenson's life and work, introduce his Pacific fiction to younger readers and promote a reciprocal and creative engagement between Scotland and the Pacific.

You can follow the project on Instagram: @remediatingrls

The real Borges

STEVENSON has inspired many writers worldwide, including Jorge Luis Borges. Yet while much has been written about the work of the Argentinian poet, essayist and short story writer, we know little about the man. Now a new book by Club member Cynthia Stephens reveals how the 'real Borges' can be discerned in his writing. *The Times Literary Supplement* review of *The Borges Enigma* declares: 'Stephens's hypothesis is tantalising, not in spite of its simplicity, but precisely because of it.'

Scottish Arts Club offer

AN opportunity to join the Scottish Arts Club without need for referees is being extended to RLS Club members. For membership details email admin@scottishartsclub.com

A season of Stevenson

A NEW Stevenson season kicked off last autumn with a chance to stretch the legs on an October walk from Cramond to the Hawes Inn at South Queensferry, from which David Balfour is shanghaied in Stevenson's novel *Kidnapped*.

The journey was one taken often by Louis, albeit by water in a canoe along with his lawyer friend Charles Baxter, and they would stop at the inn for refreshments.

The small party of intrepid walkers included Iain Gardiner, whose *Catriona* Trail booklet continues the route to the coast near North Berwick where David bids farewell to Alan Breck in the *Kidnapped* sequel.

Next day, members enjoyed a more sedentary event at the National Library of Scotland, where Curator of Rare Books James Mitchell had arranged for them to see a variety of Stevenson-related treasures. These ranged from miniature editions of RLS books, the size of a 50p piece, to the original *Treasure Island* map, above, drawn up by the firm of D&T Stevenson for inclusion in the novel.



November saw the celebration of RLS Day with a varied programme of events, live and online, to mark Louis's 172nd birthday on November 13. These included a Scottish Storytelling Centre talk about Stevenson's *Fables* by Robert-Louis Abrahamson. These little-known literary gems inspired a fine crop of modern imitations by writers worldwide for a *Fables* competition organised by Martin White, and the winners were read out and analysed as part of the talk.

To mark the 130th anniversary of *Catriona*, Club members at the Edinburgh Writers' Museum gave a selection of readings from Stevenson's long-awaited sequel to *Kidnapped*, while on RLS Day itself the Writers' Museum staged a musical tribute by a group of talented players, featuring the Robert Louis Stevenson violin made by Edinburgh luthier Steve Burnett and a brief narrative of Louis's life by Jeremy Hodges.

Central to the celebrations was the Club's Annual Luncheon, returning to the New Club after 2021's special centenary lunch at the Balmoral. The guest speaker was Professor David Purdie, whose remarks were warmly received by all at a most convivial gathering.



Edinburgh skyline: Members line up on the balcony of the New Club for the Annual Luncheon in honour of RLS

The season was then rounded off in December with coffee and mince pies at the Scottish Arts Club

organised by Martin White, and the winners were read out and analysed as part of the talk.

The event is part of the continued development of the European Cultural Route 'In the Footsteps of Robert Louis Stevenson' which ranges from *Travels with a Donkey* in the Cevennes, the Canals du Nord and Fontainebleau forest walks to following the *Kidnapped* story via the Stevenson Way, sharing Louis's childhood in North Berwick and enjoying *Treasure Island* in Bristol.

The French Government has provided support for work to improve the Stevenson Route website and to develop a wider route in France that may extend right through Paris and down to the South of France, where the



Stevenson trail: Club members on the coastal walk

Special Menton for Louis

PLANS are being laid to celebrate RLS Day 2023 in Menton, where Louis was 'ordered south' after months of religious tension with his parents and where he first began his career as a professional writer.

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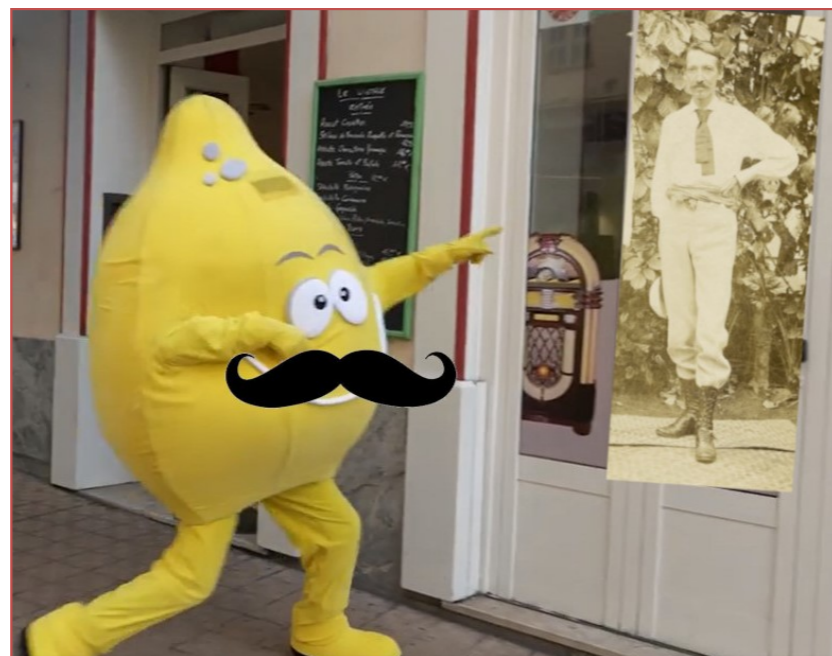
The French Government has provided support for work to improve the Stevenson Route website and to develop a wider route in France that may extend right through Paris and down to the South of France, where the

celebrations are now being discussed with the local Mairie in Menton.

Louis arrived there on his 23rd birthday and, recalling an earlier childhood visit, noted that 'the lemon and orange gardens still discharge in the still air their fresh perfume'. Menton remains famous for its annual lemon festival, and a growing awareness of Stevenson there can only benefit tourism further.

Martin White, who is helping to organise the November event and hopes other RLS Club members will join him there, said: 'If you are quick enough, you may even be able to book into the room Louis stayed in, up on the third floor of the Hotel Prince de Galles.'

The ECR Route has a very good mobile exhibition in French, German and English and is making overtures to the Swiss town of Davos to celebrate Stevenson there.



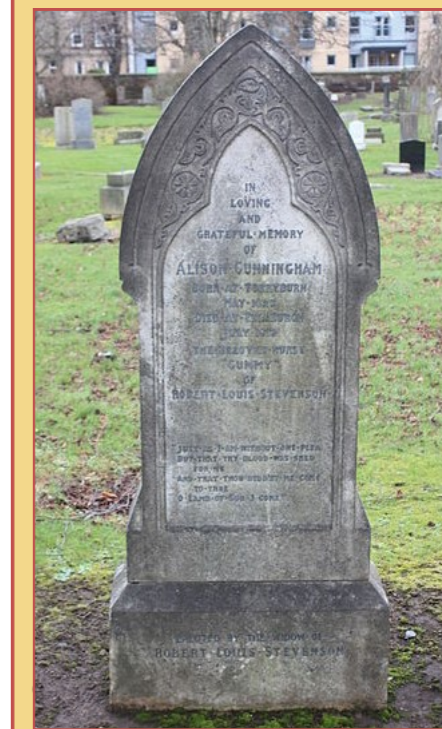
A lemon entry, my dear Stevenson: The Menton visit should prove fruitful

NEWS IN BRIEF

Spring clean for Cummy's grave

THE sorry state of Cummy's last resting place in Edinburgh's Morningside Cemetery prompted an anonymous wellwisher working on other graves to give it a spring clean.

The gravestone of Louis's old nursemaid Alison Cunningham had become so dirty that the inscription was almost illegible, but thanks to a professional cleaning all is spick and span once more. The Friends of Morningside Cemetery, who have no budget for such



Sorry state: The gravestone before cleaning

cleaning projects, would like to express their gratitude for keeping alive the memory of the woman Louis described as 'my second Mother, my first Wife'.

The world can now see the inscription 'in loving and grateful memory' of 'the beloved nurse "Cummy" of Robert Louis Stevenson', adding that the stone was erected on behalf of RLS by his widow Fanny.

CONTACTS

RLS Club Contact: Jon Cossar, Flat 2, 65 Sassoan 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

Greene cousin with a taste for Treasure

GRAHAM Greene and Robert Louis Stevenson shared more than a common ancestor – they had a similar childhood delight in buried treasure.

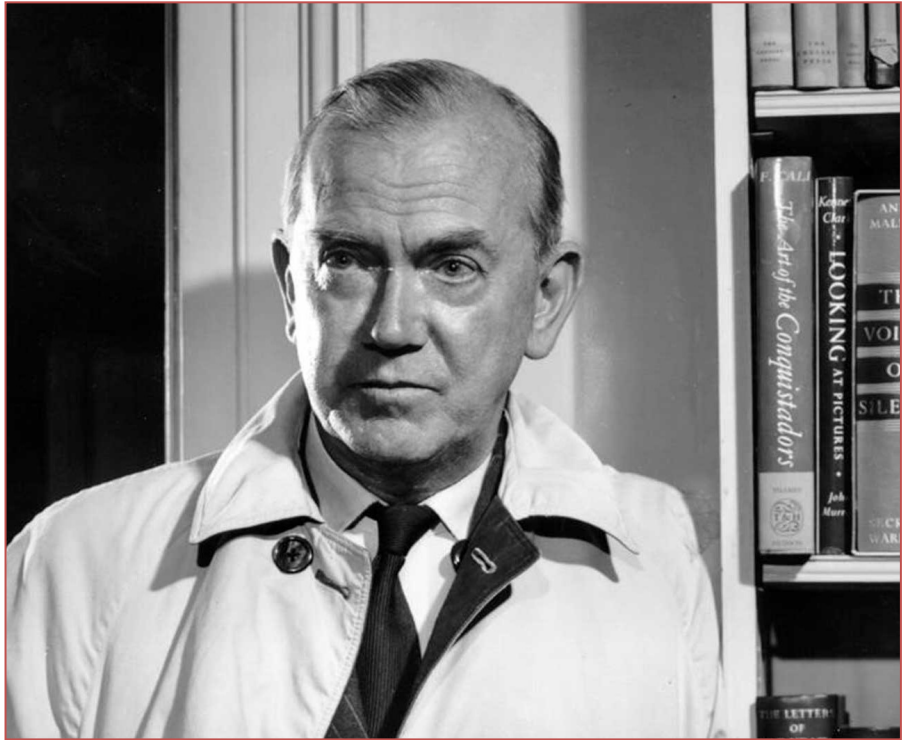
Similarities between the two authors, both descended from the Rev Dr Lewis Balfour of Colinton, have been uncovered by Philip Hombrey, who gave a presentation to last year's Graham Greene International Festival.

In his thirties, Louis wrote *A Child's Garden of Verses*, which ends with a nostalgic poem lamenting his lost childhood that could never be revisited: 'For, long ago, the truth to say, he has grown up and gone away, and it is but a child of air that lingers in the garden there.'

And the same nostalgia suffuses a story by Greene, in which the author of *Brighton Rock* and *Our Man in Havana* revisits, in fictional form, the idyllic summers he spent at the home of his uncle, Sir William Greene, at Harston House in Cambridgeshire.

In *Under The Garden*, the central character Wilditch, a middle-aged man who has suffered a heart scare, goes back to the village of 'Winton', on a hunt for a 'treasure' he buried there as a child.

'The more obvious Stevenson references in Greene's story are to Treasure Island,' said Hombrey. 'The book itself is mentioned, and Greene cleverly writes a treasure map into the text of his tale. It describes the route that Wilditch takes to Winton and includes crosses, at the site of the treasure, just as on the map found at the Admiral Benbow in Treasure Island.' Yet on finding the treasure, an old tin



Graham Greene: He and RLS were both descended from the Rev Dr Lewis Balfour

chamber pot, Wilditch is no longer able to see it through the imagination of a child – a sad fact lamented by Stevenson in his poem To Any Reader, published in 1885.

'The poem has a melancholic air, with an adult, remembering his childhood, and understanding that he can't return to those times,' said Hombrey.

'*Under the Garden* shares the same story, and when I noticed a reference to the year 1885 in the story's text, I saw that Greene was drawing the inspiration from his ancestor's poem.'

Hombrey's researches led him to discover an uncredited story called *The Mill*, published in Greene's old school magazine: 'In it, routes are described with exactitude, just as in *Under The Garden*, and can be followed on the same map.'

'Added to textual similarities with Greene's early work it has led me to the belief that *The Mill* is his first published story. It may be that Robert Louis Stevenson has led me to Graham Greene's lost treasure.'

MARCH 9 INSPIRED BY RLS

EACH year the Robert Louis Stevenson Fellowship enables authors to stay in Grez-sur-Loing and work on their writing in the French village where Louis spent many halcyon days. Hear Carol McKay,



pictured, talk about the impact of the Fellowship on her literary journey at the Scottish Arts Club, 24 Rutland Square, Edinburgh, 2.30 - 4.30pm. Cost £8, including coffee and biscuits.

EVENTS

APRIL 12 KIDNAPPED

ENJOY the National Theatre of Scotland's production of *Kidnapped*, the Musical, 'a swashbuckling rom-com adventure' at Edinburgh's Lyceum Theatre. Choose from Wednesday April 12 at

BOOKING: Call Margaret Wilkie, 0131 477 6738 or 07815 845586, email wilkiejl@blueyonder.co.uk

2.30pm, cost with Club discount £23, or Tuesday April 18 at 7.30pm, cost £26. Contact Margaret Wilkie ASAP to reserve your seat.

MAY 3 COFFEE MORNING

JOIN other Club members for coffee and a chat at Valvona & Crolla, Elm Row, Edinburgh, 10am – 12 noon.

DIARY DATES

THE Club AGM will be in Edinburgh at 10am on June 24, details in our Summer Update. The Annual Luncheon will be at the New Club at 12.30pm on November 18.