

UPDATE

The Robert Louis Stevenson Club July 2021



Voyage's happy end

At long last the volume of essays on Stevenson, commissioned by the Club to mark its Centenary last year, is ready to go to the printers.

Fortunate Voyager features contributions by friends of Stevenson from all walks of life, telling how he has inspired their work and has enriched their lives.

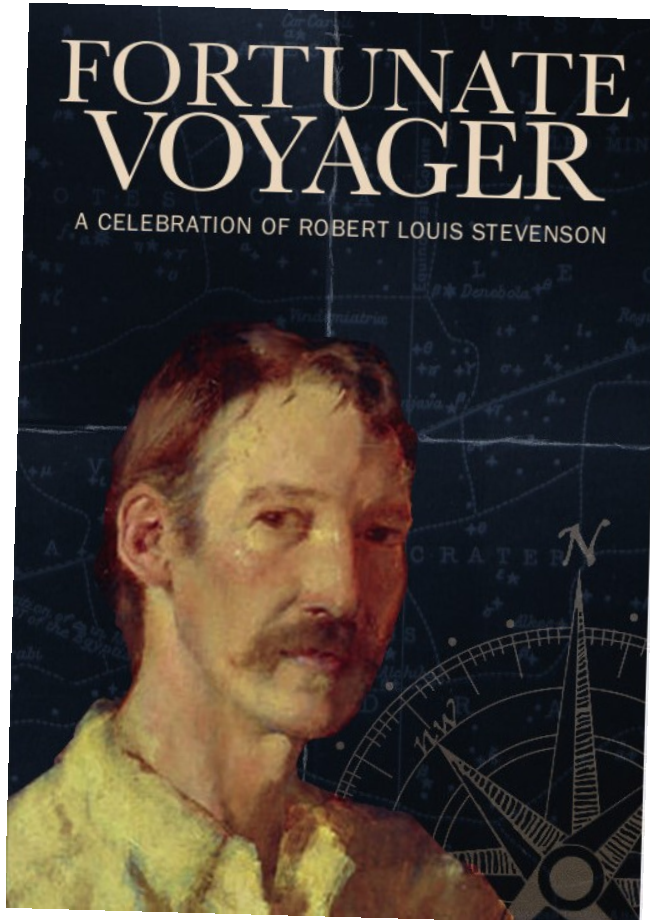
The title comes from a Stevenson quotation: 'We are all travellers in the wilderness of this world, and the best that we find is an honest friend. He is a fortunate voyager who finds many.'

The 60 contributors to the book each give their personal view of one of Scotland's greatest writers and one of literature's most charismatic personalities, showing how Stevenson remains a living force in the 21st century.

Contributors range from best-selling authors such as Ian Rankin, Val McDermid and Michael

Morpurgo, to eminent academics, politicians and pop royalty in the shape of Sir Paul McCartney.

The book complements one called *I Can Remember Robert Louis*



Handsome volume: The cover of the Centenary book

Stevenson, commissioned by the Club soon after its founding in 1920, in which those who had known RLS shared their living memories, gathered by Club member Rosaline

Masson. Contributions to *Fortunate Voyager* were commissioned by David Reid, Gillean Somerville-Arjat, Ian Nimmo, Linda Dryden and Jeremy Hodges. Mr Hodges said: 'We have all been delighted at the variety and quality of the essays sent to us.'

'They were all written for love, not money, and we would like to thank everyone for their generosity and willingness to take part in this unique venture. Louis is indeed fortunate in his friends today.'

The book's voyage from the initial idea to the present handsome volume has been fraught with difficulties, not least of which being the Coronavirus pandemic, which led to the original publisher pulling out of the project as it had to scale back its list.

But this setback turned out to be an opportunity for the Club to further interest in the life and works of RLS by working closely with Publishing students at Edinburgh Napier University. Working with the students and staff led by Professor Avril Gray to publish the book under the university's Merchiston Press imprint has been a pleasure, as they have shown great skill, commitment and enthusiasm for the project.

Fortunate Voyager is priced at £9.99 but Club members will be able to buy copies for £7.99 plus free postage. To reserve copies at this price, sending no money at this stage, members should contact Membership Secretary Tom Murison, email tamuraison@hotmail.com or by letter to 19/13 Roseburn Maltings, Edinburgh EH12 5LL. When the book is published you will be contacted to arrange payment and delivery.

Green light for Annual General Meeting

THE Annual General Meeting of the Robert Louis Stevenson Club will be held at the Mackenzie Building, Old Assembly Close, Edinburgh on Saturday September 4, commencing with coffee at 10am.

The present Committee is willing to continue in office, with Chairman Mitchell Manson and Secretary Elaine Greig prepared to serve another year if the membership wishes. Tom Murison is standing down as Membership Secretary after long years of service and a replacement is now required.

As numbers may be limited by social distancing requirements, all those wishing to attend should contact Margaret Wilkie in advance by email, wilkiejl@blueyonder.co.uk, telephone 0131 477 6738 or 07815 845586.

A Pilgrimage to Swanston



IT was away back in our Spring Newsletter of 2020 that we announced we would organise a walk led by Ian Gardiner along the Braid Valley Park to Swanston, then onward to Colinton.

The idea had been to celebrate the Club's centenary by recreating something of the annual pilgrimage to the Stevensons' summer residence made by members of the RLS Club each Spring in the 1920s.

Thenadays it was customary for Rosaline Masson (daughter of the Professor of English at Edinburgh University and sister of Louis's friend Flora Masson) to give an address in the school-house at Swanston about Stevenson and the location.

Louis would walk out to Swanston frequently from the centre of Edinburgh and would roam the Pentland Hills, either alone or in the company of the 'Roaring Shepherd' John Tod.

The 'Hills of Home' inspired his writing, including poems such as *Ille Terrarum* and *A Mile And A Bittock*, while Swanston Cottage features in



Summer residence: A painting of Swanston Cottage done in 1914

his novel *St Ives*. At our event on Friday July 30, Dr Dora Cossar will deputise for Rosaline Masson and say a few words before the group moves on to Colinton, where Louis's maternal grandfather the Rev Dr Lewis Balfour was once minister.

Covid rules now permit a reasonable number of people to meet outdoors but members should still observe sensible precautions and nobody should

attend who has recently been confirmed to be a carrier of the virus.

Meet 10am at the entrance to Braidburn Valley Park. Members should register their intention of going on this gentle walk, with the possibility of booking lunch, by contacting Events Secretary Margaret Wilkie no later than Monday July 26 (email wilkiejl@blueyonder.co.uk telephone 0131 477 6738 or 07815 845586).

OUR next newsletter will give details of our competition to write a 21st century Fable in the style of Stevenson, as a partner event of Scotland's Year of Stories 2022. This gives those of you who enjoy creative writing ample notice to study the master's 22 Fables in the months ahead.

PLANS are in hand to replace the RLS display board on the railings of Queen Street Gardens opposite the

NEWS IN BRIEF

Stevensons' Edinburgh home at 17 Heriot Row.

The board, put up by the Club in 1998, had been damaged so the display has been removed and a new one needs to be created.

Anyone who may be able to help with the artwork should contact Mitchell Manson.

CONTACTS

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