

UPDATE

The Robert Louis Stevenson Club July 2022



Unveiled: Club members with the new display to remind passers-by of the famous author who lived across the street

FOR the first time since the Covid pandemic, Club members paid a visit to Robert Louis Stevenson's home in Edinburgh for the unveiling of a new plaque to mark the years he spent there.

On a fine May morning we were welcomed once more to 17 Heriot Row by John Macfie, for whom the famous author's address has long been his own family home.

Following the unveiling by John's two daughters, we went in through the door Louis once used daily to the dining room where he and his parents would entertain friends at dinner parties, and where we would enjoy a buffet lunch with wine.

But before this we climbed the stairs to the first-floor drawing room where Louis's mother would welcome guests – a scene brought back to life in the first of our readings, in which Dora Cossar gave us Flora Masson's recollections of a Heriot Row dinner party. Yet Louis in

Happy return to Heriot Row

his early twenties could find life there claustrophobic, especially on returning home late at night, only to be interrogated by parents wanting to know where he had been – a comic scene painted for us by John Shedden, in an extract from the autobiographical *Edifying Letters of the Rutherford Family*.

Further readings by David Reid, from a letter revealing the horrendous tensions over religion between Louis and his parents, and Aileen Hunter, telling of Anne Jenkin's first meeting with Louis at Heriot Row, were followed by

John Macfie reading his contribution to our *Fortunate Voyager* book, revealing what it is like sharing a home with a famous author and tourist attraction – the perfect conclusion to our visit.

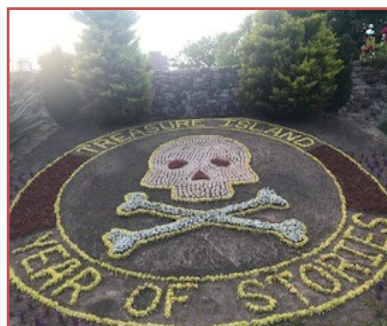
June saw members gathering at Ciao Roma restaurant in Edinburgh – once Rutherfords bar, frequented by Louis and his friends. There Isobel Reid, former Principal Teacher of English at Bo'ness Academy, gave some revealing insights into the joys of teaching Stevenson in schools. Her presentation in the

Continued overleaf

Treasure Island in bloom

TREASURE ISLAND is one of the greatest tales ever told by a Scottish author, and a new floral display gives it pride of place in Scotland's 2022 Year of Stories.

The skull and crossbones display is in the grounds of The Lodge at North Berwick, where RLS first began telling pirate stories while enjoying summer holidays in the town.



July 16 Annual General Meeting

THE Annual General Meeting of the Robert Louis Stevenson Club will be held on Saturday July 16 in the Mackenzie Building of the Faculty of Advocates, Old Assembly Close, 172 High Street, Edinburgh (coffee and tea from 10am), conducted by our outgoing Chairman Mitchell Manson.

The AGM is your chance to elect the Club's next Chairman and to air your ideas for the Club's future development. Agenda papers and copies of the Chairman's report will be available at the meeting.

Fabulous result for our worldwide competition

HE is famous for *Treasure Island* and *Strange Case of Dr Jekyll and Mr Hyde* – but for his own amusement RLS wrote *Fables*.

These little-known tales were published two years after his death in 1894, but their short, pithy format is a perfect model for today's writers of short 'flash fiction'.

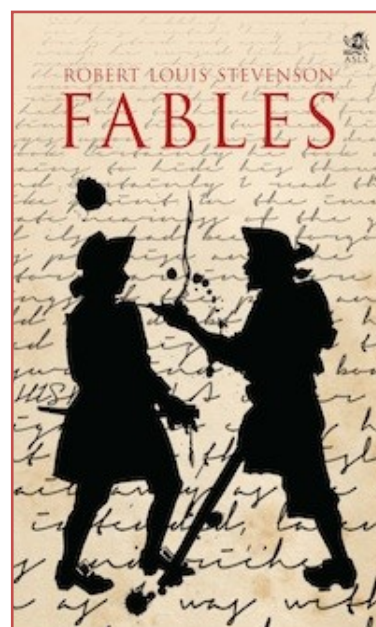
More than 450 of them have written a modern Fable inspired by Stevenson and entered an international competition sponsored by the Robert Louis Stevenson Club and the MrRLS.com website.

The prize-winners spanned the globe, with the winner from the edge of Sherwood Forest and runners-up from New Zealand and East London. Winner of the £500 first prize is CB McCall for a Fable entitled *The*

Young Man and the Therapist, chosen by judges chaired by author and journalist Alan Taylor, with Nathalie Jaëck, Professor of 19th Century British Literature at the University of Bordeaux-Montaigne, author and editor Rosemary Goring, and Robert-Louis Abrahamson, Emeritus Professor at the University of Maryland.

The RLS Club provided prizes also for two runners-up – Helen Yuretich and Karis White. All prizewinners will also receive a copy of Prof Abrahamson's new book, *Aesop in the Fog*. Organiser Martin White said: 'It's been exciting to run the competition and see the level of interest.'

Members will be able to read the winning Fable in our Autumn newsletter.



Inspiring today: The original Fables created by Stevenson

Sign up for more about Stevenson

ALL members receive our regular Club Newsletters, but we also from time to time circulate members by email about Club events and topics of wider interest to Stevenson enthusiasts.

If you do not already receive these circulars and would like to be included on the mailing list, please forward your email address to our email correspondent, David Reid, at davidalison.reid@gmail.com



Mark of friendship: Members by Sir Walter Simpson's last resting place

Grave matters

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Treasure Island-themed Hispaniola room – 'I'd love to bring a first-year class here' – was a vivid illustration of Stevenson's potential to excite young people and enrich them linguistically, imaginatively and socially.

It was clear that to step into Isobel's classroom was to enter a wider world of the imagination for young people to explore – with Stevenson as their guide.

Earlier in April, members were led on an Edinburgh graveyard tour by Mitchell Manson, visiting the last resting place of two of Louis's closest friends – his fellow Inland Voyager Sir Walter Simpson, in Warriston Cemetery, and the gifted but doomed Walter Ferrier, buried by the 'West Kirk', St Cuthbert's, off Princes

Street. Poor Ferrier's alcoholic decline had been catalogued in heartbreaking detail by Jeremy Hodges at our March literary lunch at the Courtyard hotel in Baxter's Place, once the home of Robert Stevenson.

All in all it was a welcome return to live events after two years of pandemic.

SPECIAL EVENTS

SEPTEMBER 16-20

THE Club is delighted to be welcoming three of our friends from the RLS Club of Monterey when they visit Edinburgh in September.

Events planned for President Monica Hudson and members Elizabeth Anderson and Robin Chapman include visits to South Queensferry, North Berwick and the National Library of Scotland.

Anyone wishing to take part should contact Mitchell Manson, see contacts panel on this page.

CONTACTS

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