

Student Matthew Smith dresses as Robert Louis Stevenson at the Writers' Museum. RLS Day on 13 November will feature events such as walking tours of the author's favourite haunts and a fancy dress 'tache mob'. Photograph: Jane Ralston



## Writing's on the wall for RLS Day

Fans of Treasure Island author Stevenson urged to celebrate his life and work

Brian Ferguson  
Arts Correspondent

IT WILL be Scotland's answer to Bloomsday, the date in June when Dubliners take to the streets to commemorate James Joyce's most famous novel *Ulysses*. Now fans of Robert Louis Stevenson are being invited to set aside their own day to celebrate one of the country's best-known literary sons.

RLS Day, as it has been dubbed, will take place on 13 November, Stevenson's birthday. Organisers of the event are urging supporters to dress up as their hero, complete with velvet jacket and moustache, tour landmarks associated with the writer and attend readings of his work.

The initiative is part of a drive to capitalise on Edinburgh's Unesco World City of Literature status, which was granted in 2004 but has come under fire for failing to generate ideas to attract visitors.

Among those taking part in RLS Day are actors Nigel Planer and John Sessions, both self-confessed Stevenson fans, who will be examining what made the writer tick. The Scottish National Portrait Gallery will host a complete reading of one of his best-known works, *Treasure Island*, and an event at the City Art Centre will be showcasing his photographic tours of the Pacific.

Yesterday, Sessions, the Ayrshire-born comic and actor,

said: "We all know about the merriness of Dickens but there was always something manic about his jolliness. Stevenson was different. There's a wholesomeness to Stevenson's humour in all its mischief and devilment. Dickens was really a stranger to joy in the way that Stevenson, to my mind, certainly wasn't."

On 13 November, Stevenson quotes will be scrawled on the city's pavements, a pop-up theatre will perform his work and a fancy dress "tache mob"

will be held. Other events will look into Stevenson's likely inspiration for *The Strange Case of Dr Jekyll and Mr Hyde*, walking tours that will take fans around some of his favourite haunts and a collection of

Stevenson memorabilia on show at the Writers' Museum.

Stevenson's former home at Heriot Row in the New Town – which is privately owned – will be opened to the public for a special event celebrating how the writer duped large sections of Edinburgh high society in the late 19th century by posing as a fictional writer Mr Libbel.

RLS Day takes its inspira-

tion from Bloomsday, an annual event on 16 June which was first staged in 1954. Dubliners re-enact Joyce's novel, which charts the story of a day in the life of Leopold Bloom. The Edinburgh City of Literature Trust, which is organising the Edinburgh event, hopes that its

event can become as much of a fixture.

Stevenson's association with Edinburgh – he was born in the city in 1850 – was key to the success of Edinburgh's bid to win City of Literature status.

Ali Bowden, director of the City of Literature Trust, said: "We love Robert Louis Stevenson in our City of Literature, from his writing and the many shenanigans he got up to in his life to his marvellous moustache and his penchant for velvet."

"RLS Day is our way of raising a glass to one of Edinburgh's most famous sons and keeping his spirit alive."

"Edinburgh keeps Robert Louis Stevenson in its heart and mind all year round: he's

remembered on plaques and in bookshops; in St Giles' Cathedral and in Princes Street Gardens, reading lists and cinema screens. But it's lovely to have an excuse to throw a party in his honour."

Edinburgh Napier University, which has a vast Stevenson archive, is also supporting RLS

Day, by hosting the event with Sessions and Planer.

Linda Dryden, director of the university's centre for literature and writing, said: "This is going to be a chance for the whole city to celebrate its most famous writer through theatre, book readings, literary chat and physical expressions of the spirit of the author of *Jekyll and Hyde* and *Treasure Island*."

"During the day our acting students will be popping up around the city with vignettes from *Jekyll and Hyde* and *Treasure Island*, and handing out postcards and badges to celebrate Stevenson. We really hope that as many people as possible will join in the fun and help us to bring Stevenson back to the literary prominence that he so deserves."

Edinburgh Napier University has made extensive efforts to bring together Stevenson collections from around the world to create an online database, [www.robert-louis-stevenson.org](http://www.robert-louis-stevenson.org). Its archive includes family portraits of the writer, photographs taken during his travels, poetry extracts, children's books and his travel writing.

Stevenson was born in a small stone house at Howard Place in Edinburgh in 1850, the only son of a prosperous civil engineer, Thomas Stevenson, who was joint-engineer to the Board of Northern Lighthouses. The young Stevenson was expected to follow in the family business and he enrolled on an engineering degree course at Edinburgh University in 1867. He later switched to law, but after one case he decided to become a writer.

In 1894, Stevenson, who had been plagued by ill health since childhood, died from a haemorrhage in Samoa, where he had moved with his wife Fanny. He was 44.

► [b.ferguson@scotlandonSunday.com](mailto:b.ferguson@scotlandonSunday.com)

## Annual RLS celebration to treasure for Capital

Hopes that special event will boost literary tourism in city

RORY REYNOLDS  
City Council Reporter

AS Edinburgh's greatest novelist he is already celebrated across the globe for his literary masterpieces.

Now the city is to celebrate one of its most famous sons with an annual Robert Louis Stevenson Day later this year to recognise the achievements of the Treasure Island author.

And it is hoped the celebration will follow the success of Bloomsday, the Dublin event held to celebrate the work of James Joyce, and boost literary tourism to the city.

The City of Literature Trust plans to designate November 13 – Stevenson's birthday – as Robert Louis Stevenson Day, although this year events will be held on November 17 as it is the closest Saturday. A range of events held across the city, from high-profile speakers and the chalking of quotations from his works on pavements, to a "tashmob" and a continuous

public reading of *Strange Case of Dr Jekyll and Mr Hyde*.

Theatrical performances will also take place in the city centre to bring the works to life. Edinburgh Napier University and the UNESCO World City of Literature Trust are organising the day-long festival following a one-off event last year and Ian Rankin has been behind the bid to ensure it is held every year.

The RLS author also suggested projecting quotations onto public buildings at night and organising literary tours of locations that played a part in the kidnapped and Jekyll and Hyde author's life.

Richard Lewis, the city's culture leader, said: "Robert Louis Stevenson is one of Edinburgh's most treasured sons and the

creation of RLS Day would be a fitting tribute to his life, work and legacy. We assisted with a number of special events held across the city last November, all of which generated significant interest, so clearly the public shares our enthusiasm. Of course, we already pay tribute to him year round with the city's fascinating Stevenson archive on display in the Writers' Museum."

In June a rare collection of Stevenson-related materials, including first editions and hand-written letters, was donated to Edinburgh Napier University and the National Library of Scotland.

It is planned that the material, totalling 2000 books, will eventually be made available to the public, and it is anticipated that this will support the development of the Robert Louis Stevenson Day.

Professor Linda Dryden, director of the Centre for Literature and Writing at Edin-

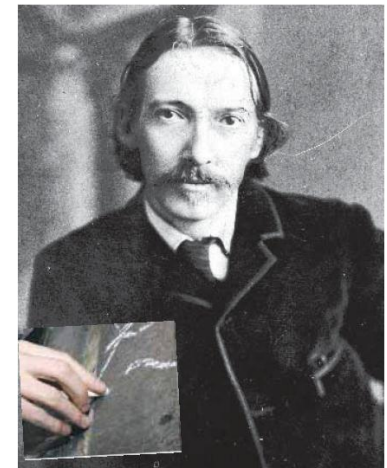
burgh Napier University, said there is expected to be international interest in the celebration of Stevenson, who she said has had a comparatively low profile compared to other respected authors.

She said: "A perennially popular author and an international brand, there are scholars around the world who study his works but Stevenson himself has never really been celebrated in any significant way as the son of Edinburgh. We want to bring together people who are interested in Stevenson and we anticipate there will be international interest."

Edinburgh City Council was expected to formally approve the proposal today. It has already awarded £33,000 in funding to the City of Literature Trust.

[rory.reynolds@edinburgh.gov.uk](mailto:rory.reynolds@edinburgh.gov.uk)

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PUBLICITY: Quotations from Stevenson's works will be written in chalk on pavements

## THE TIMES

### Get your moustaches ready to honour one of Edinburgh's most famous sons

Nick Draine

Robert Louis Stevenson is to be honoured with a day of celebration in Edinburgh inspired by the extravaganza of Bloomsday in Dublin celebrating James Joyce.

RLS Day will include readings and tributes on the author's birthday, November 13, as well as an attempt to persuade fans of his work to dress up in 19th-century style – including the author's trademark moustache.

The celebrations across Edinburgh will hope to echo those in Dublin on June 16 when the writer James Joyce is honoured with readings and parties.

Edinburgh has been encouraged to promote the work of one of its most famous sons by its position as a Unesco World City of Literature.

The city will host pop-up theatre and walking tours, and the author's former home on Heriot Row will be opened to the public.

Ali Bowden, director of the City of Literature Trust, which is organising the event, said: "We love Robert Louis

Robert Louis Stevenson was born in 1850 in Edinburgh, and he had been expected to follow the example of his father, who worked for Board of Northern Lighthouses, and become an engineer. While at Edinburgh Univers-

ity he became attracted by law but changed his mind and decided to become a writer.

He died in 1894 in Samoa but his name is still prominent thanks to works including *Treasure Island*, *Kidnapped* and *The Strange Case of Doctor Jekyll and Mr Hyde*.

One of the major contributors to RLS Day will be Edinburgh Napier Uni-

versity, which holds a large archive of the author's work. Linda Dryden, director of the university's centre for literature and writing, said: "This is going to be a chance for the whole city to celebrate its most famous writer."

"We really hope that as many people as possible will join in the fun and help us to bring Stevenson back to the literary prominence that he so deserves."

Stevenson in our City of Literature, from his writing and the many shenanigans he got up to in his life to his marvellous moustache and his penchant for velvet.

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John Sessions, the Ayrshire-born comic and actor, said that he would attend the celebrations. "We all know about the merriness of Dickens but there was always something manic about his jolliness. Stevenson was different. There's a wholesomeness to Steven-

son's humour in all its mischief and devilment. Dickens was really a stranger to joy in the way that Stevenson, to my



## AaarrrrRLS was our best buccaneer



ACTING students from Edinburgh's Napier University took to the high streets yesterday to help publicise RLS Day next Tuesday, celebrating the life of author Robert Louis Stevenson.

### Pirates on parade



PIRATES yesterday seized Edinburgh ahead of Robert Louis Stevenson Day, held on November 13 to mark the writer's birthday.

A series of events and Stevenson-

inspired shenanigans will pop up across the city to celebrate the creator of *Treasure Island*.

Events include a Stevenson "flashmob" with fans wearing velvet

and moustaches. Pictured at the Portuguese cannon on Calton Hill are Patrick Millar, Patrick Wallace and Lewis Brewer.

Picture: Steve Cox



# CITY SON IS CELEBRATED



■ GARETH EDWARDS

**H**is is perhaps the greatest literary figure from a city not short of famous writers.

The creator of enduring fantasies and adventures from the children's favourite Treasure Island to the dark horrors of Dr Jekyll and Mr Hyde, Robert Louis Stevenson has been an inspiration for today's Capital best-sellers JK Rowling and Ian Rankin.

On Tuesday the Capital, UNESCO City of Literature, will once again pay its respects to the great author with a celebration of Robert Louis Stevenson Day (RLSDay).

And this year the range of events is being brought right up to date with Stevenson inspired shenanigans taking place across the city.

A man of letters – of essays, novels, poetry, stories – Stevenson was also a practical joker, a moustache wearer and a whisky man. RLSDay will celebrate his words as well as his life, both of which continue to inspire and excite folk today, in Edinburgh and far beyond.

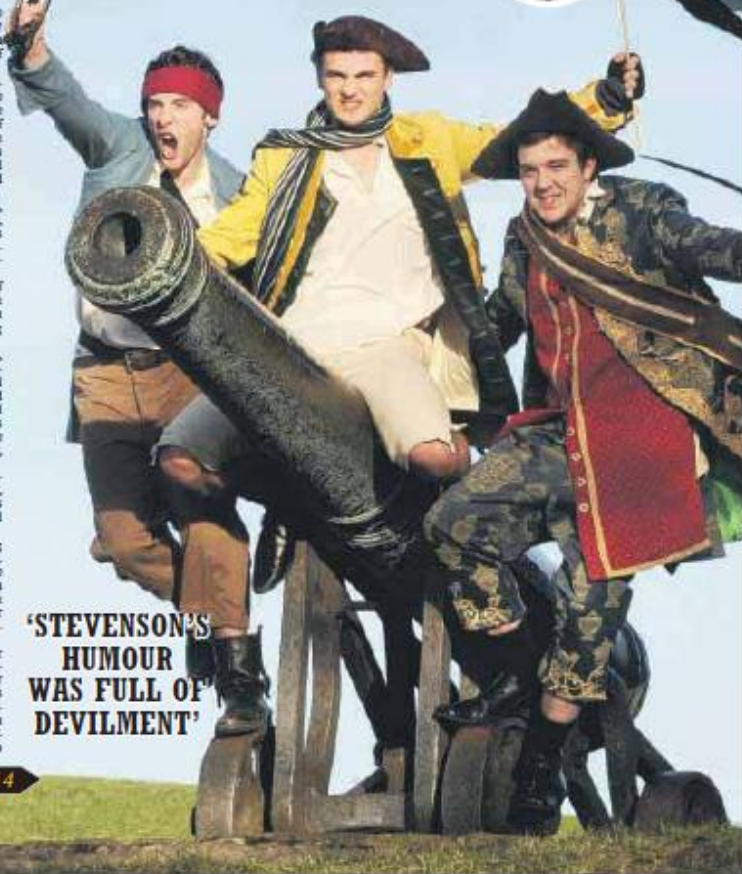
The events have been inspired by Dublin's Bloomsday, where James Joyce's Ulysses is commemorated in an annual pilgrimage.

And RLSDay has a rousing beginning with a Tache mob. At open in Parliament Square everyone is invited to don a moustache and velvet jacket and create a cacophony for Stevenson by reading their favourite of his works.

The Voltairean Gail and other tales of Robert Louis Stevenson's youth will delve deeper into Robert Louis Stevenson's time at the University of Edinburgh, while Louis, Libelism and the Land of Bohemia offer the rare opportunity to

**'STEVENSON'S HUMOUR WAS FULL OF DEVILMENT'**

TURN TO PAGE 14



## Nowhere to Hyde on city's RLS Day

FROM PAGE 13

enter his former Edinburgh home at 17 Heriot Row. With a cup of sea and a cream tart discover his alter ego, the duplicitous John Libbel.

RLSDay is a joint initiative between the City of Literature Trust and Edinburgh Napier University. Professor Linda Dryden, Director at the Centre for Literature and Writing (CLAW), Edinburgh Napier University said it was important for the city to recognise the work of one of its literary greats, and promised that students would help bring his work to life.

"Edinburgh Napier University is delighted to be collaborating with the City of Literature on RLSDay," she said.

"During the day our acting students will be popping up around the city with vignettes from Jekyll and Hyde and Treasure Island and handing out badges to celebrate Stevenson. Our celebrity speakers will also be dropping in to give guest readings of Treasure Island at the National Portrait Gallery.

"This is going to be a chance for the whole city to celebrate its most famous writer."

There will also be a rare opportunity to enjoy Robert Louis Stevenson's personal holiday snaps and musingss from 1888 when he toured Polynesia and Micronesia at Ill-Charred and Unlighted Seas: Robert

Louis Stevenson's Pacific Photography, being held in the City Arts Centre.

And in a perfect finale to RLSDay, actors and writers Nigel Planer and John Sessions discuss their lifelong fascination with the man, from moustaches to memoirs, tall tales to world travel.

Sessions, who is still best known for his work on shows like Spitting Image and Stella Street, said it was the humour that made Stevenson stand out for him.

"We all know about the merriness of Dickens but there was always something manic about

his jolliness," he said.

"Those parties where every one of his brood would have to join in – or else. There's a wholesomeness to Stevenson's humour in all its mischief and devilment. Dickens was really a stranger to joy in the way that Stevenson to my mind certainly wasn't."

To add to the birthday fun, Stevenson's writings will line the streets and everyone is being encouraged to share their favourite RLS facts on Facebook and Twitter #RLSDay.

Ali Bowden, City of Literature Director said they were hoping the city would join together in a party to honour Stevenson.

"For the second year in a row, we're delighted to be working with our friends at Edinburgh Napier and others to celebrate Robert Louis Stevenson. Edinburgh keeps Robert Louis Stevenson in their hearts and minds all year round: he's remembered on plaques and bookshops; in St Giles' Cathedral and in Princes Street Gardens, reading lists and cinema screens. But it's lovely to have an excuse to throw a party in his honour."

To find out full details of the events visit: [www.cityofliterature.com/news](http://www.cityofliterature.com/news)





# Sex marked the spot for Stevenson

Biography claims the author's pursuit of pleasure caused his early death, writes Marc Horne

HE WAS the charming, dapper and respectable Scots author who gained immortality by penning the evergreen children's classic *Treasure Island*.

However, it has emerged that Robert Louis Stevenson's life may have been cut short by syphilis, which he picked up while frequenting the fleshpots of his native Edinburgh.

The writer's untimely demise at the age of 44 has been widely attributed to tuberculosis and the debilitating effects of "overwork".

More than a century after his death, a new biography claims Stevenson's ill-health was most likely the result of a dalliance with a disease-ridden brothel girl. Jeremy Hodges' portrayal of the Kildrapp and Napier

shows that, like his enduring creation, Dr Jekyll, he lived a double life filled with dark secrets.

The biographer is convinced that Stevenson, who referred to himself by his middle name, contracted the condition while at Edinburgh University, where he spent more time in bordellos and illicit drinking

shebeens than in lecture halls. Speaking as Napier University prepares to host its annual Robert Louis Stevenson Day celebrations on Tuesday, he said: "It seems Louis lived half

his life in the knowledge that a moment of youthful folly had curtailed his life expectancy.

"To absorb the incurable seeds of destruction, all that was required was a little too much to drink in an Edinburgh public house, an ardent temperamer, and a brief encounter."

He added: "Exactly where and when it happened is uncertain, but it would seem some unblushing daughter of Venus did Louis a lasting injury one November night in 1872 around the time of his 32nd birthday."

"The first sign would have been a small, hard, painless swelling on an intimate part, and alone in his bedroom, he would have watched it grow until it was clear this was the primary sore of the great pox."

The writer hinted at his infection to a letter marked "private", sent to his close friend Charles Baxter. He wrote: "The doctor has just told me that I have succeeded in playing the devil with myself to a singular degree."

Hodges claims scholars drew a veil over the cause of the author's ill health. He said: "Sexually transmitted disease was unmentionable in Victorian times and people had a very sentimental view of Stevenson."

Professor Linda Dryden, who manages the official Stevenson website, was intrigued by the theory. She said: "He certainly played fast and loose down in dens of iniquity when he was a student."

Download *Lampit, Vicious Fairy Land* by Jeremy Hodges at [robert-louis-stevenson.org](http://robert-louis-stevenson.org)



Now celebrated in the city of his birth, Robert Louis Stevenson was once a public nuisance on its streets...

# JOKER and GENIUS

by Jeremy Hodges

It began with the ringing of doorbells late at night, long after respectable citizens had gone to bed. As heads in nightcaps emerged at upstairs windows, two young men swayed tipsily in the gaslight, pointing solemnly to a brass plate by the door inscribed: "Please ring."

Then the pair ran off into the Edinburgh night. Never did they suspect one of them would pen immortal classics such as *Treasure Island* and *Kidnapped*, and imprint the phrase "Jekyll and Hyde" on the world's consciousness.

Yet the New Town doorbell-ringers in the early 1870s were Robert Louis Stevenson and his mad

neering — like Louis's father Thomas, butler of lighthouse, who had an office in George Street. Or they might go into the church, which had a firm grip on Edinburgh, its bells ringing loudly to call the faithful to worship. For those who lacked faith, mere church attendance would suffice, so long as they did not flaunt their religious doubts.

SEX was condoned as a necessary evil. Young people would be introduced at dinner parties organised by their parents and a suitable marriage arranged. But young ladies were not meant to know anything about sex until their wedding night.

Their new husbands might have learned their more in the brothels which served the New Town. Older husbands, not wishing to burden their wives with more children, frequented the same establishments — sometimes with tragic consequences.

Nobody asked why the mother of Louis's friend Walter Farrier ended up paralysed in a bath chair years after her husband, a professor of moral philosophy, stayed into the Cromwell pleasure gardens on a business trip to London and contracted the syphilis that would kill him.

Yet Louis could sense the city his loved was also riddled with hypocrisy. It seemed impossible to be honest about your feelings — as his cousin Bob observed, it was as if your real life was in a hidden compartment beneath the false bottom of a trunk.

But when Louis enrolled at Edinburgh University, Bob was away, studying art in Paris. Louis was meant to be studying to be an engineer but was soon disillusioned by the university — where he found little original thought or intellectual challenge, just students bent on exams and getting a respectable job.

Instead, he attended lectures and named the less salubrious parts of the city, mainly by turning read books in the little kitchen where they washed and dried their white stockings by the fire in readiness for the night's work.

Watched and depressed, Louis took to hanging around graveyards and smoking hashish, in despair until Bob returned from Paris and everything changed. When not sketching naked ladies at Edinburgh School of Art — a practice the Scottish National Association for the Suppression of Licentiousness was trying to stop — Bob was up for any mischief the pair could devise.

They delighted in "jink", which meant doing the most absurd thing just for the fun of it. This went much further than annoying the neighbours in the middle of the night.

On the way back to Edinburgh, Bob had to change trains and had to money for the onward journey. So he ran into town and pawned a silver pair of trousers under a pseudo-

onym, telling the pawnbroker he was John Libbet... two B's. Years later, the famous author would reveal: "It seemed to us, it seems to me still, a mean, hungry, stinking sort of name. We thought that all of us should use it as a name to pawn under, and hence generated the great idea of Libbetism."

If Louis and Bob and all their friends went around pawning items under the name John Libbet, any social historian examining pawn shop records years hence would be mystified and, when he looked for evidence of this character elsewhere, behold, there would be no John Libbet, no, not one.

THE two cousins now began breathing life into their creation: "We bought some type for marking pocket-handkerchiefs and printed off, with incredible patience, many hundred visiting cards with the name of 'Mr Libbet'."

These began to be handed about in Edinburgh at a great rate, sometimes with manuscript additions and signed by the Libbet family.

Mr. Libbet handled the cards. Mr. Libbet came to the door. Mr. Libbet left, and his cousin Bob

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## Writer claims syphilis killed Stevenson

A NEW biography of Robert Louis Stevenson claims that the writer died at just 44 after catching syphilis from an Edinburgh prostitute.

Jeremy Hodges is convinced the "Treasure Island" author was killed by the disease in 1894 rather than tuberculosis and "overwork", as widely believed.

The biographer suggests letters between Stevenson and a close friend, plus extracts from his mother's diary lay bare Stevenson's battle against syphilis.

He said: "It would seem some unblushing daughter of Venus did Louis a lasting injury one November night in 1872 around the time of his 32nd birthday."

In a letter marked "private" from Stevenson to good friend Charles Baxter, the writer penned: "The doctor has just told me that I have succeeded in playing the devil with myself to a singular degree."

"That walk down Queen Street has made a fine sore of my burning and here I am."

Stevenson's ill-health was most likely the result of a dalliance with a disease-ridden brothel girl. Jeremy Hodges' portrayal of the Kildrapp and Napier

shows that, like his enduring creation, Dr Jekyll, he lived a double life filled with dark secrets.

The biographer is convinced that Stevenson, who referred to himself by his middle name, contracted the condition while at Edinburgh University, where he spent more time in bordellos and illicit drinking

shebeens than in lecture halls. Speaking as Napier University prepares to host its annual Robert Louis Stevenson Day celebrations on Tuesday, he said: "It seems Louis lived half

his life in the knowledge that a moment of youthful folly had curtailed his life expectancy. To absorb the incurable seeds of destruction, all that was required was a little too much to drink in an Edinburgh public house, an ardent temperamer, and a brief encounter."

He added: "Exactly where and when it happened is uncertain, but it would seem some unblushing daughter of Venus did Louis a lasting injury one November night in 1872 around the time of his 32nd birthday."

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Were Jekyll and Hyde author's brothel and drinking den days to blame for early death?

NICK DRALING

As a student, Robert Louis Stevenson was fond of the huge variety of experiences his home city of Edinburgh had to offer. But a new biography claims one of those experiences could have killed him.

Rather than the hallowed halls of the University of Edinburgh, it appears the author of *The Strange Case of Doctor Jekyll and Mr Hyde* was partial to the brothels and drinking dens of Scotland's capital in the 1870s. It was during visits to the houses of ill repute that he contracted syphilis, according to Jeremy Hodges, who has completed a biography of the author before celebrations to mark the 162nd anniversary of his birth tomorrow.

He said: "It seems Louis lived half his life in the knowledge that a moment of youthful folly had curtailed his life expectancy. To absorb the incurable seeds of destruction, all that was required was a little too much to drink in an Edinburgh public house, an ardent temperamer, and a brief encounter."

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In a letter marked "private" from Stevenson to good friend Charles Baxter, the writer penned: "The doctor has just told me that I have succeeded in playing the devil with myself to a singular degree."

A second letter read: "If you want to see a ruin, come to me. Seriously, old man, I'm lined and my outlook for life is a pretty bad one."

His mother recorded in her diary that: "Lou has burnt his leg with iodine and can only go to class in a cab." Mr Hodges said this could have been an extreme measure to get rid of lesions.

As the author travelled the globe he revealed symptoms including hair loss at a Swiss health resort in 1882 and temporary blindness two years later. Mr Hodges said: "Hair loss could be the fall-out from syphilis. Also blindness is not normally a side-effect of tuberculosis, but Louis would have known it could be a complication of syphilis."

The writer's ill health was ignored by peers because of the morals of the day, according to Mr Hodges. He said: "Sexually transmitted disease was unmentionable in Victorian times and people had a very sentimental view of Stevenson."

Professor Linda Dryden, director of Edinburgh Napier University's centre for literature and writing, said the claims in Mr Hodges book were "controversial" but agreed that Stevenson's life as a student was risqué.

She said: "By day he was respectable. At night he was carousing in the High Street, which was a bit of a den of iniquity at the time."

RLS Day tomorrow will include readings and tributes in Edinburgh as well as an attempt to persuade fans of his work to dress up in 19th-century style, including the author's trademark moustache.

Lampit, Vicious Fairy Land by Jeremy Hodges can be downloaded at [www.robert-louis-stevenson.org](http://www.robert-louis-stevenson.org)

Mr Hodges' biography, *Lampit, Vicious Fairy Land*, has been published as a serial on a website run by Edinburgh Napier University, which holds a large archive of the author's work.

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# The deadly double life of a literary giant

New biography reveals author's debauchery may have killed him

By Marc Horne

He gained immortality penning the children's classic *Treasure Island*. But Robert Louis Stevenson's life may have been cut short by syphilis, picked up in the fleshpots of his native Edinburgh.

The writer's untimely demise at the age of 44 has been widely attributed to tuberculosis and the debilitating effects of "overwork".

But more than a century after his death, a candid new biography has revealed that Stevenson's ill health was most likely the result of a youthful dalliance with a brothel girl.

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He added: "Exactly where and when it happened is uncertain, but it would seem some unblushing daughter of Venus did Louis a lasting injury one November night in 1872 around the time of his 32nd birthday."

In a letter marked "private" from Stevenson to good friend Charles Baxter, the writer penned: "The doctor has just told me that I have succeeded in playing the devil with myself to a singular degree."

A second letter read: "If you want to see a ruin, come to me. Seriously, old man, I'm lined and my outlook for life is a pretty bad one."

His mother recorded in her diary that: "Lou has burnt his leg with iodine and can only go to class in a cab." Mr Hodges said this could have been an extreme measure to get rid of lesions.

As the author travelled the globe he revealed symptoms including hair loss at a Swiss health resort in 1882 and temporary blindness two years later. Mr Hodges said: "Hair loss could be the fall-out from syphilis. Also blindness is not normally a side-effect of tuberculosis, but Louis would have known it could be a complication of syphilis."

The writer's ill health was ignored by peers because of the morals of the day, according to Mr Hodges. He said: "Sexually transmitted disease was unmentionable in Victorian times and people had a very sentimental view of Stevenson."

Professor Linda Dryden, who manages the official Stevenson website, was intrigued by the theory. She said: "He certainly played fast and loose down in dens of iniquity when he was a student."

Download *Lampit, Vicious Fairy Land* by Jeremy Hodges at [robert-louis-stevenson.org](http://robert-louis-stevenson.org)



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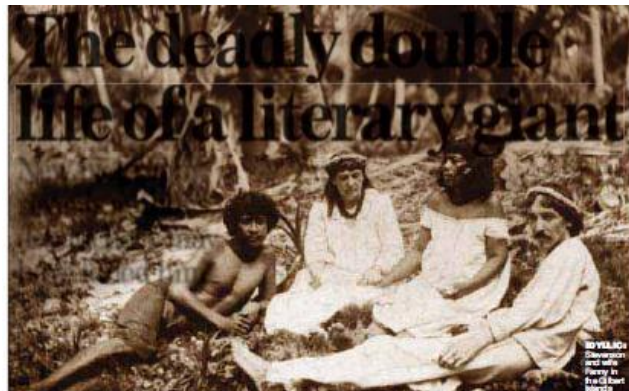
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ROBERT LOUIS STEVENSON and wife Fanny Land by Jeremy Hodges at [robert-louis-stevenson.org](http://robert-louis-stevenson.org)



# Raise a glass to the naughtiness of RLS

the life of Robert Louis Stevenson, Linda Dryden toasts the author's sense of mischief and love of life



WHEN it comes to great Scottish writers there is a tendency to think of Robert Burns or Sir Walter Scott. Robert Louis Stevenson, by contrast, is often relegated to the category of a writer of children's literature. He was, and is, so much more.

RLS Day aims to change all that. A collaboration between the City of Literature Trust and Edinburgh Napier University's Centre for Literature and Writing, it was conceived as a means of celebrating Stevenson as one of Edinburgh's, and Scotland's, most famous literary figures and wonderful characters.

Born at 8 Howard Place in Edinburgh in 1850, Stevenson suffered from chronic lung problems, and long sought a congenial climate for his health. His parents engaged a nurse, Alison "Cummy" Cunningham, who instilled in the young Stevenson – affectionately known as "Smoot" – her fierce Calvinism. Nevertheless, at the age of 23, Stevenson announced to his father, Thomas, that he didn't believe in Christianity, causing lifelong tension between the two.

He became a tearaway, leading his own Jekyll and Hyde existence in his home city. By day he was a respectable law student at Edinburgh University; by night he donned his famous velvet jacket and caroused in the taverns of the High Street and Southside, drinking with his friends and fraternising with prostitutes. This was Stevenson's rebellion against his deeply conservative domestic environment. Stevenson's sense of fun and playfulness permeates works like *Now Arabian Nights* and *The Dynamiter*. His tales of Prince Florizel and company in these volumes are full of practical jokes and comic characters, many of whom, like "the young man with the cream curls" are modelled on his cousin, Bob Stevenson. Bob became Stevenson's partner in crime, with Fanny, Stevenson's wife, once remarking: "Whenever my husband wished to

depict a romantic, erratic, engaging character, he delved into the rich mine of his cousin's personality."

With Bob, and their

friend Charles Baxter, Stevenson formed the IJR, the Liberty, Justice, Reverence League, whose motto was "disregard, everything our parents taught us," causing his father much distress.

When Stevenson finally settled down it was on the island of Samoa, with his wife and extended family. In Samoa he became known as Tusiata, the "Teller of Tales", and renowned for his lavish feasts in the grand house, Vailima, built for his family. Stevenson died there suddenly in 1894, and is buried

despite his long exile, Stevenson never forgot his native city, exemplified by this poetic extract in the unfinished *Weir of Hermiston*:

"I saw rain falling and the rainbow drawn

On Lammernmoir. Harkening I heard again  
In my precipitous city beaven bells

Winnow the keen sea wind. And here after,

Immet on my own race and place, I wrote."

Stevenson's "precipitous city" will not forget him either, on the anniversary of his birthday tomorrow.



The undisputed master of the adventure yarn, Robert Louis Stevenson's great literary achievements will be marked on a special day of celebration in his home city of Edinburgh tomorrow. Here, actors and writers Nigel Planer and John Sessions reveal why they think he is so special

TOMORROW is the birthday of Robert Louis Stevenson, and the occasion will be marked with the hosting of RLSDay in the famous author's home city of Edinburgh. Stevenson-inspired events will be taking place across the city, from exhibitions and talks to chalking and flash mobs, to celebrate the life and writings of the man of letters who brought us classic texts such as *Treasure Island*, *Kidnapped* and *The Strange Case of Dr Jekyll and Mr Hyde*, among many others.

Inspired by Dublin's Bloomsday, where James Joyce's *Ulysses* is commemorated in an annual pilgrimage, RLSDay has a rousing beginning with a 'tache mob'. At 1pm in Parliament Square fans are invited to don a Stevenson-style moustache and velvet jacket and create a cacophony for Stevenson by reading their favourite of his works – essays, novels, poetry, or stories.

The *Velveteen Cad* and other tales of Robert Louis Stevenson's youth will delve deeper into Robert Louis Stevenson's time at the University of Edinburgh, while *Louis, Libelism and the Land of Bohemia* offers the rare opportunity to enter his former Edinburgh home at 17 Heriot Row. And for the finale, actors and writers Nigel Planer and John Sessions discuss their lifelong fascination with the man, from moustaches to memoirs, tall tales to world travel, at the Reid Concert Hall. They will also give guest readings of *Treasure Island* at the National Portrait Gallery.

Here, the two guests of honour pay tribute to Stevenson in appreciations written for *The Scotsman*.

For further details of RLSDay log on to [www.cityofliterature.com](http://www.cityofliterature.com)

SAILORS and explorers have always written exciting accounts of their journeys – or had them ghost-written for them. Cooke, Bligh, Dampier and the rest, were men who had reasons to travel other than producing a book. For them publication was an often lucrative afterthought.

More recently though, travel-writing has become a genre in itself, the book becoming the reason for the journey rather than a simple record of it. Nowadays we expect the journey to be a metaphor for a more personal journey that, perhaps, the writer is undergoing. This new way of writing about travel owes its existence, as far as I can see, to Robert Louis Stevenson. Paul Theroux, Michael Jacobs, Eric Newby, have all trodden the path that Stevenson pioneered.

It has become a cliché to observe that Stevenson's life was an adventure which equals and sometimes surpasses the adventures of his swashbuckling characters. There were pistol fights and tribal wars in which he became involved. There was the smuggling of an exotic princess behind enemy lines, there were years of long sea voyages, tropical islands where he was the guest of palm-tree kings. There were deserted silver mines, cowboys, crooks, bohemians, cannibals and of course his on-off love affair with Modestine, the stubbornest of donkeys. Throughout all of this Stevenson kept writing, commenting on what he saw, on what he found out from his searching conversations with all he met, and most interestingly for us, what effect it was having on him. In this respect he is the most modern of writers.

There is a scene when he first sights land at Atona bay in the Marquesas Islands – which incidentally, he tries unsuccessfully to compare to the Scottish Highlands – when

some 50 or so half-naked tribal people swim up to and board his boat, invading the cabin where he is trying to write. In this scene Stevenson memorably describes the delight of one of the women as she makes a squeaky noise on the leather bench seat with her bare bum under her grass skirt. He and all of the tribal people laugh, but, he tells us, he was careful to hang on to his gun as these people were well known to be cannibals and their behaviour unpredictable. His lightness of touch in this passage is admirable, and his respect for the customs and mores of other races always, exemplary. In fact, in his book *Midwinter Enigmas*, about his train

across the centre of America, he flies with passionate indignation the dice encountered by the immigrant, ssc, packed into an adjoining carriage, looks forth at some length about n. This passage was cut from the book's interfering father and his editor, y Colvin, the book only appearing in full form after Stevenson's death, s these somewhat undiscovered

aspects of the writings of Robert Louis Stevenson that first stirred my interest in him as more than just a rollicking yarn spinner, and it is these aspects that I believe are important in the current reassessment of him as a great figure of nineteenth century literature.

'RLS is more than just a rollicking yarn spinner'

BY NIGEL PLANER



## A NEW CHAPTER IN WRITER'S LEGACY

ROBERT Louis Stevenson Day (RLSDay) is being marked tomorrow with a wide range of celebrations.

It will all start with a Tache mob at 1pm in Parliament Square, when people are invited to don a moustache and velvet jacket and create a cacophony for Stevenson by reading their favourite of his works. There will also be a chance to enjoy Robert Louis Stevenson's personal holiday snaps from 1888, when he toured Polynesia and Micronesia at ill-Charted and Unlighted Seas: Robert Louis Stevenson's Pacific Photography, to be held in the City Arts Centre.

Stevenson's writings will also line the streets and everyone is encouraged to share their favourite RLS facts on Facebook and Twitter #RLSDay.

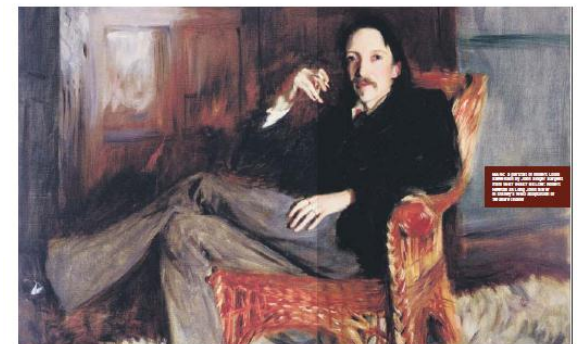
Stevenson became a tearaway, leading a Jekyll and Hyde existence in his home city



TREASURE ISLANDS: Stevenson relaxes in Vailima, and finally is buried in Samoa



Treasure Island, left, and The Strange Case of Dr Jekyll and Mr Hyde, right, are among the best-loved works by Stevenson, far right

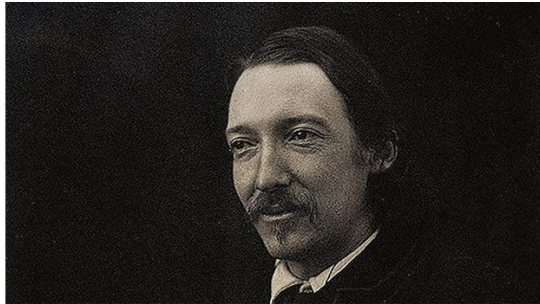




## How Robert Louis Stevenson made his mark on Edinburgh

By Rebecca Gordon 12 November 2012 06:30 GMT

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Louis Stevenson. The writer not only wrote about Edinburgh, but lived and learned here.

Monsterspace

Louis Stevenson. The writer not only wrote about Edinburgh, but lived and learned here.

Monsterspace

"There are no stars so lovely as Edinburgh street-lamps. When I forget thee, auld Reekie, may my right hand forget its cunning!"

Edinburgh had a special place in the heart of Robert Louis Stevenson. And so too does he in the heart of its dwellers.

As the capital prepares to celebrate one of its most famous literary sons, enthusiasts and strangers to his work alike will have the opportunity to cast an eye over his impressive bibliography.

Ranging from tales of piracy and treasure to psychopathic monsters, his literature is renowned for its sense of adventure and excitement.

But while his novels and short stories traverse the globe and realms of reality, his inextricable links with 'Auld Reekie' are ingrained in his world-famous texts.

Ali Bowden, director of Edinburgh UNESCO City of Literature Trust, said: "I think the reason Stevenson still appeals to us is not just because he wrote great books - everyone has read or seen a version of Treasure Island at least - but his life was so colourful and interesting. And he wrote about his life in Edinburgh."

Born in Edinburgh in 1850, Stevenson was raised in a house on Heriot Row, visiting the city on and off until the age of 29, when he left Scotland and Europe forever.

remembered in the city.

But aside from his roots, and a spell studying engineering, and then law, at the University of Edinburgh, how was the writer influenced by the city - and how did he influence it?

"He had a love-hate relationship with the city," added Ms Bowden. "Stevenson was really honest, he didn't gloss over it, he was really good at expressing that dark and light side of it."

"If you live in Edinburgh you totally get it, there are bits of it that really annoy us all, it's cold, it's dark, Stevenson lived in the New Town but spent his life hanging out in the Old Town. He wasn't snooty, he was hanging out with everyone and anyone. He was a really interesting Edinburgher."

This Tuesday, Stevenson's birthday, fans are expected to don their best velvet jackets, cultivate moustaches and attend readings of the author's work, for the first official RLS Day.

As part of a drive to promote Edinburgh's Unesco World City of Literature status - which was won in 2004, partly because of Stevenson's association with the capital - RLS Day will involve a series of events, including a talk by actors Nigel Planer and John Sessions and a complete reading of Treasure Island at the National Portrait Gallery.

The day is based on an annual event in Dublin, Bloomsday, which has taken place every June 16 since 1954 in celebration of James Joyce's most famous novel, Ulysses.

"I think part of our legacy is making sure we claim Stevenson. He's massively celebrated in the States and the world but he's ours. The way he wrote about our city, in Jekyll and Hyde in particular, he had really interesting things to say, not just about who we are," said Ms Bowden.

Participants are also being encouraged to spot some of the many landmarks linked with the historical figure.

Felicitas Macfie, lives in Stevenson's former home on Heriot Row along with her husband and six children, and will be opening the house, which they also run as a bed and breakfast, to incoming visitors for a talk and look around.

By has lived here since 1971 - my husband has grown up with the five here you live and breathe Stevenson and he becomes part of your

y clear we live in a special house. It's still entirely furnished the way s days, we keep it in the historic tradition as well as adapting it to

ad lots of people with an interest in Stevenson visiting the bed and ve a lot of people turning up to photograph the house. I think a tourism is a good thing, you'd be silly not to exploit it."

ot Row, Stevenson's home was on Howard Place in Canonmills, to Margaret Isabella Balfour and Thomas Stevenson, a lighthouse

is University of Edinburgh, he went to school in Canonmills and,

adium announcer over half-time became joke about Piers

### WhereArtI

Welcome to the WhereArtI sketch quiz. Every Monday the DailySketch becomes a mystery tour of Edinburgh, all you have to do is tell me where I am. Be in the top three correct answers to receive points on the leaderboard, 3 for 1st, 2 for 2nd and 1 for 3rd. Good luck!

#### WhereArtI #037

November 5, 2012 By [ES](#) 4 Comments



Hello and welcome to the weekly #WhereArtI quiz. All you have to do is sketch a landmark I have sketched above, the first three correct answers to the WhereArtI leaderboard. Hello to Scotsman readers too who join Monday of each month.

PLUS This week I have a bonus point up for grabs for anyone who can tell me the previous name and which famous Scot was once a regular visitor.

Clues to come for those who need them on [facebook](#) and [twitter](#). Hashtag #wherearti with your answers either below, on [facebook](#) or on the [ES facebook](#) page for clues throughout the day.



Email [contact@edinburghsketcher.com](mailto:contact@edinburghsketcher.com)

#### WhereArtI? leaderboard

	Name (and link)	pts
1st	<a href="#">@Grant</a>	24
2nd	<a href="#">@MrInch</a>	13
3rd	<a href="#">@Elfabu</a>	11
4th	<a href="#">@l_cardley</a>	10
5th	<a href="#">@nadyamusinga</a>	9
-	<a href="#">@SamDescartes</a>	9
7th	<a href="#">@stinkendall</a>	8
-	<a href="#">@lewisshileland</a>	8
9th	<a href="#">@scron</a>	6
-	<a href="#">@Gruven</a>	6

#### #wherearti on twitter



## Boyling Point by Frank Boyle



email: [info@boylecartoon.co.uk](mailto:info@boylecartoon.co.uk)  
website: [www.boylecartoon.co.uk](http://www.boylecartoon.co.uk)

Boyling Point 2 is on sale at ES





## Bronze statue to capture

New honour is planned in city of writer's birth

BRIAN FERGUSON  
ARTS CORRESPONDENT

ONE of Scotland's best-known writers is to be immortalised with a new statue – portraying him as a child.

Well over a century after his death, a public statue of Robert Louis Stevenson is being created to honour his connections to Edinburgh, the city of his birth.

A bronze statue of the writer – who famously denounced public memorials to writers – depicting him as a youngster will be installed outside the parish church where his grandfather used to be the minister.

The young Stevenson used to make regular trips to the village of Colinton, in the west of the city, while Dr Lewis Balfour preached there.

Now the statue, which is being designed by Midlothian sculptor Allan Herriot, is planned as the focal point of an art trail through the historic village. It will depict an aspiring writer with a notebook on his lap, watched by a local dog.

Although there are several memorials to Stevenson – including at his former home at Heriot Row and inside St Giles' Cathedral – there are only two modest statues inside the Writers' Museum, off the Royal Mile, where a vast collection of material linked to the writer is held.

The image of the proposed statue has been revealed ahead of the first ever city-wide celebrations to mark the writer's birthday today.

A new exhibition also begins

to celebrate the writer's life.



## Stevenson statue

A statue of author Robert Louis Stevenson as a child is to be put up outside Colinton parish church in Edinburgh, where his grandad Dr Lewis Balfour was once a minister.

## RLS in childhood

accompanied by a donkey.

The £150,000 project in Colinton, which has been approved in principle by Edinburgh City Council, will also see a number of panels of Stevenson poetry erected in the public garden outside the church – including *The Summer Sun*, *The Gardener*, *Looking Glass River* and *The Swing* – and on a walking

trail through the village. Ornamental steel railings will also feature a timeline depicting other notable occasions in Colinton's history.

Roy Durie, a member of Colinton Conservation Trust, which is behind the proposed statue, said: "We've been trying to get these plans off the ground for several years now, but the whole project now has permission

from the council and we're now working up the designs for the statue with the artist."

"The first part of the project is due to get under way next summer and the big priority is to get the statue in place as soon as possible. There are quite a few tributes around Edinburgh to Stevenson, but this is actually the first statue of him that anyone will be able to visit."

Stevenson was born in 1850 at Howden Place, Edinburgh, son of lighthouse engineer Thomas Stevenson, and his wife, Margaret. The family later lived at Heriot Row.

His childhood was plagued by illness which left him frail and thin. He studied engineering at Edinburgh University, but his

He eventually moved to Honolulu, where he died in 1894.

He left behind his works, including *Treasure Island*, *The Strange Case of Dr Jekyll and Mr Hyde* and *Kidnapped*.

The Edinburgh City of Literature Trust is staging a special RLS Day today as part of a campaign to both raise awareness of his work as well as promote literary tourism in the capital.

"The project is due to get under way next summer"

Roy Durie

## Taches hit the streets for Robert Louis Stevenson Day

By Laura Piper 14 November 2012 09:23 GMT

Tweet 6 +1 0 Like 1



Watch [here](#)

If the streets were looking a little hairier to you than usual yesterday it might be down to a rather special birthday celebration in the city.

The undisputed master of adventure, who has filled our heads with stories of pirates and treasure on the seven seas, has been honoured by fans in the best way they know how.

In tribute to Robert Louis Stevenson, literary lovers donned Stevenson-style moustaches and velvet jackets for a flash mob reading event of the storyteller's essays, novels, poetry, and tales.

Born in Edinburgh in 1850, Stevenson was raised in a house on Heriot Row, visiting the city on and off until the age of 29, when he left Scotland and Europe forever.

His fondness for his home city would remain very much a part of the author's life though, as he once wrote: "There are no stars so lovely as Edinburgh street-lamps. When I forget thee, Auld Reekie, may my right hand forget its cunning!"

And Edinburgh has shown its affection for its literary son too as they marked yesterday, his official birthday, by holding the first ever 'Robert Louis Stevenson Day'.

The day was modelled on a similar annual event held in Dublin, called Bloomsday, which has taken place every June 16 since 1954 in celebration of James Joyce's most famous novel, *Ulysses*.

Like *Ulysses*, Stevenson's work are filled with pages of adventure, ranging from tales of piracy and treasure to psychopathic monsters.

But while his novels and short stories traverse the globe and realms of reality, his inextricable links with 'Auld Reekie' are ingrained in his world-famous texts.

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## Stevenson Day? Yes, we must tache

YOU'VE heard of a flash mob – now welcome the tache mob.

About 40 people gathered in Parliament Square yesterday, resplendent in (mostly) fake moustaches and reading from their favourite Robert Louis Stevenson book.

The event was part of Edinburgh's first official Robert Louis Stevenson Day, celebrating the Edinburgh-born author on what would have been his 162nd birthday.

Professor Linda Dryden, co-founder of RLS Day, said: "It was fantastic fun."

## METRO home digest



A Robert Louis Stevenson flash mob descended on Edinburgh's Parliament Square yesterday as part of birthday celebrations for the author. Fans donned moustaches and velvet jackets – one of a number of RLS Day events in the capital



Series: Picture of the day

## Robert Louis Stevenson - picture of the day

A photographic highlight selected by the picture desk. Robert Louis Stevenson day is celebrated today on the 162nd anniversary of the writer's birth. Here is a portrait of the frail-looking writer surrounded by members of his household after he settled in Samoa, where he died, aged 44. For more pictures of the writer's life, see our [gallery](#)

Ranjit Dhaliwal  
guardian.co.uk, Tuesday 13 November 2012 16:36 GMT

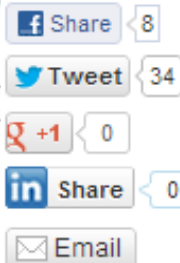


The Scottish writer sits on the verandah of his home in Vailima, Samoa. He settled on the island in 1890 and lived there until his death at the age of 44 after suffering from ill health for most of his life.

Photograph: Corbis

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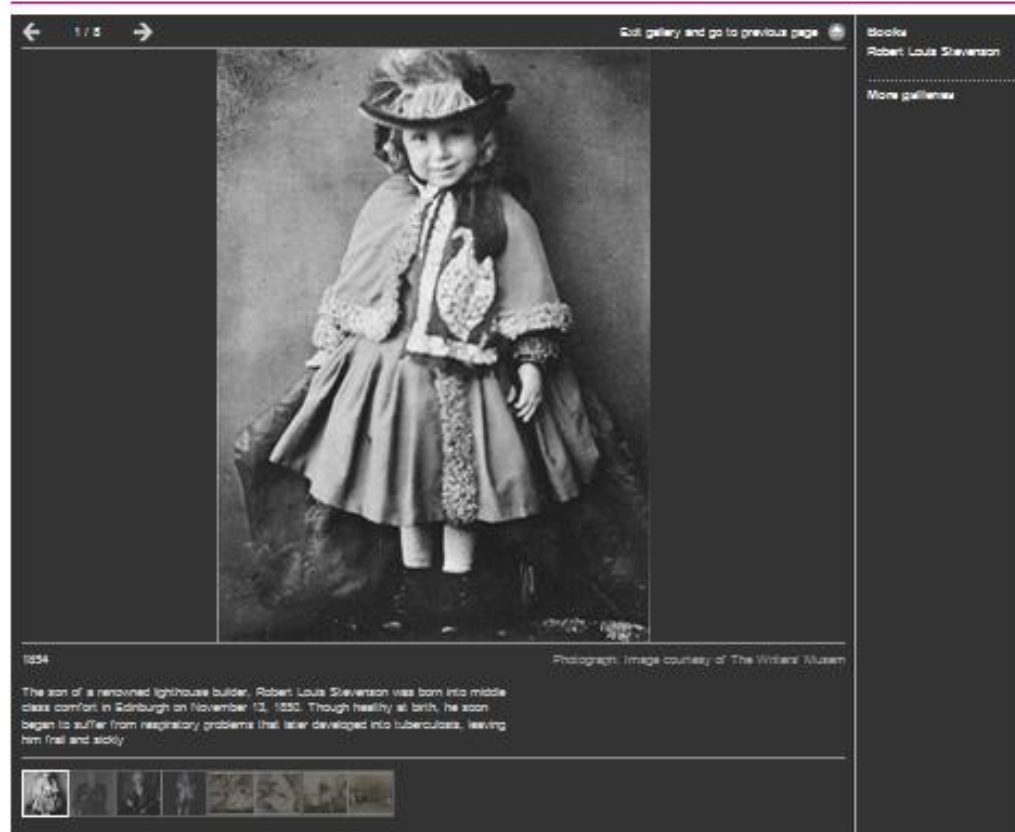
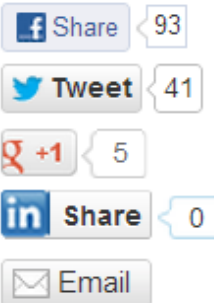
Series: Picture of the day



## Robert Louis Stevenson: a life in pictures

Today is the 162nd anniversary of the birth of Robert Louis Stevenson, celebrated author of (among others) Treasure Island, Kidnapped! and The Strange Case of Doctor Jekyll and Mister Hyde. Stevenson's home city of Edinburgh is marking the occasion with its second ever Robert Louis Stevenson day. If you can't make the celebrations, take a look instead at our gallery of photographs from the author's life

guardian.co.uk, Tuesday 13 November 2012 15:51 GMT



Robert Louis Stevenson: A life in pictures gallery. View [here](#)



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**John Sessions speaks to BBC Radio Scotland's Newsdrive about RLS Day. Listen [here](#) from 1:25:00**