



# ***THE WILKIE COLLINS SOCIETY***

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**NEWSLETTER**

**SPRING 2000**

## **MEMBERSHIP SUBSCRIPTIONS FOR 1999**

The 2000 membership subscription is now due and should be sent to Membership Secretary, Paul Lewis, at the above address. (NB subscriptions run from 1st January - 31 December). For this year, we have increased the subscription to £9.50 for UK and European members and £15.00 for those in the USA and outside of Europe. (The slightly greater increase for overseas members reflects the extra cost of postage for bulky items such as *The Journal*). Payments from abroad **must** be made in Sterling otherwise bank charges for conversion absorb almost all of the subscription.

## **A GAD'S HILL EVENING**

Paul Lewis is giving a talk to the Dickens Fellowship entitled 'Dickens, Wilkie Collins and Gad's Hill' on Friday 24 March at 8.00 pm at Gad's Hill itself. The evening commences at 7.00 pm with a buffet and concludes at about 9.30 pm. The Dickens Fellowship has arranged a coach to leave central London's embankment at 5.00 pm sharp for an inclusive cost of £17.50. Further details from Peter Duggan, 6 Citrus House, Alverton Street, Deptford, London SE5 5NP

## **WILKIE COLLINS AND MARYLEBONE - 1**

The St Marylebone Society is holding a Collins evening on Thursday 30 March at 6.30 pm. Andrew Gasson is giving a general talk with slides on 'The Life and Works of Wilkie Collins' which will be supplemented by Paul Lewis on 'Wilkie's Homes in Marylebone'. This will include details of Paul's recent research into several of Wilkie's addresses in this part of London. The venue is downstairs in the Junior Library, Marylebone Library, Marylebone Road, London NW1. The cost to visitors is £2.

## **WILKIE COLLINS AND MARYLEBONE - 2 A WALK WITH THE VICTORIAN SOCIETY**

The **Wilkie** Collins Society and The Victorian Society are planning a joint walk for late summer this year, to be based on William Clarke's *Rambles around Marylebone*. Andrew Gasson and Paul Lewis, who will make some additions and corrections in the light of his recent researches into this whole area of central London, will highlight the Wilkie information about the various addresses and it is hoped that a member of the Victorian Society will give some background details relating to general historical and architectural features. The provisional date is the afternoon of Sunday 10 September but more information will be available for the next Newsletter.

## **FRIENDS OF KENSAL GREEN CEMETERY**

At the conclusion of the formal Annual General Meeting of the Friends of Kensal Green Cemetery on Saturday 8 April 2000, at 2.00 pm in the Dissenters' Chapel, Dr Chris Brooks will give a talk on 'Property, Prurience, and the Body in Victorian Commemoration'. Wilkie, of course, was buried at Kensal Green on 27 September 1889 and Caroline Graves, his lifetime companion for some 30 years, was buried in the same grave when she died in 1895. This meeting would therefore provide a good opportunity to visit their final resting place. (Grave number 31754, square 141, row I).

## *THE CAMBRIDGE BIBLIOGRAPHY OF ENGLISH LITERATURE*

The third edition of *The Cambridge Bibliography of English Literature, Volume 4. The Nineteenth Century* (edited by Joanne Shattock,, ISBN 0 521 39 1 00 8) was published in January. The original CBEL was published in 1940 with a revised edition issued from 1969-1974. This new publication (CBEL3) has been 10 years in preparation and represents a mammoth updating of the original work. Volume 4, alone, runs to nearly 3,000 pages. The earlier distinction between major and minor novelists has been dropped. Novels, Poetry, Drama and Prose are now divided into Early, Mid and Late Nineteenth Century. There are sections on Book Production, Literary Relations with the Continent, general works on the Novel, Political Economy, Philosophy and Science, Religion, English Studies, Household Books, Sport, Education and Newspapers.

The CBEL3 entry on Wilkie Collins was compiled by Andrew Gasson and comprises seven pages compared with two or three columns in the second edition. It follows the house style which includes Bibliographies, Collected Editions, the major works, Plays, periodical publications in Miscellaneous Works, Parodies, Adaptations, Biographies and contemporary criticism, reviews and obituaries. The individual entries on the major works give details of periodical publication, first and subsequent English editions, US authorised and pirated editions and foreign translations.

Other entries vary from a few lines (eg Charles Allston Collins), typical of a vast array of authors all but lost in obscurity, to a vast 90 pages for Charles Dickens. Overall CBEL3 is a monumental work, compiled by a dedicated team which includes the editor Joanne Shattock, Professor of Victorian Literature at the University of Leicester, plus a list of 180 contributors. The volume truly contains huge resources of bibliographical information which will ensure it lives up to its claim 'to allow scholars the possibility of exploring the literature of the British Isles at a level not afforded by any other source.'

### **A SPECIAL OFFER FOR WCS MEMBERS**

Cambridge University Press are giving WCS members the opportunity to take advantage of a special offer of a 20% discount off the published price

of £125 which has been reduced to £95 plus £2.50 p & p. Orders should be sent direct to the Cambridge University Press using the form enclosed with this Newsletter.

## **WILKIE AND THE PIRATES**

During his lifetime, Collins was constantly plagued by literary piracy both in the USA and on the Continent and fought a never ending battle to protect his copyrights. His strong views (originally published in 1880) were reissued in the 1997 Wilkie Collins Society reprint *Considerations on the Copyright Question Addressed to an American Friend*. Ironically, then, Ira Nadel (editor of the recently published *Ioláni*) writes that he suspects that there is a pirated edition of this, Wilkie's first novel, produced in Spain. The publishers are rumoured to be based in Barcelona but there remains the mystery of how they obtained the text early enough to produce a pirated edition more or less at the same time as that of the authorised version from Princeton. Their attempted justification, that Collins has been dead for more than 70 years and that the work is in the public domain. has the same dishonourable flavour as that of their nineteenth century counterparts. If any members are travelling to Spain in the near future and find a copy, they may be able to shed some further light on the matter.

## **THE 100 BEST NOVELS**

It was interesting to see the *Daily Telegraph* of December 31 1999 which compared a number of its contributors, views of '100 Books of the twentieth century' with those it published a century earlier in 1899 as '100 Best Novels in the World - Books that must be Read, and Read, and Read Again'. The original list from 100 years ago was selected by the then editor of the *Telegraph* and included, amongst most of the high spots of nineteenth century literature, both *The Woman in White* and *The Moonstone*.

## **MARY BRADDON CONFERENCE**

Mary Braddon acknowledged in 1887 that she owed *Lady Audley's Secret* to *The Woman in White* and that 'Wilkie Collins was assuredly her literary father'. They also became personal friends.

There will be a conference on the 'Life and Work of Mary Elizabeth Braddon' on Saturday 13 May at Birkbeck College, London. Speakers will include Jennifer Carnell (author of a forthcoming biography); Donald Hounam (author of the television adaptation of *Lady Audley's Secret*); Michael Slater (Professor of Victorian Literature at Birkbeck); and Chris Willis, also of Birkbeck. The cost is £15 (£10 concessions) with cheques payable to Birkbeck College. For bookings and further information contact: Chris Willis, c/o Centre for Nineteenth Century Studies, School of English, Birkbeck College, Malet Street, London, WC 1E 7HX; e-mail [Chris@chriswillis.freeserve.co.uk](mailto:Chris@chriswillis.freeserve.co.uk) (other details to be found on her website at <http://www.chriswillis.freeserve.co.uk/braddonday.htm>).

## **LITERARY TOURS**

Hallam Anderson arrange coach tours to various parts of England to visit Literary Trails associated with several major authors. There is not as yet a Wilkie Collins tour but they do arrange day excursions and two day tours to 'Charles Dickens Country'. Other authors include Jane Austen, Thomas Hardy, the Bronte Family, D. H. Lawrence and William Shakespeare. All tours include a specialist guide and further information can be had from 3.11 Lafone House, 11-13 Leathennarket Street, London SE1 3HN (0207 234 0505).

## **ALLIANCE OF LITERARY SOCIETIES**

The WCS continues to be affiliated to the Alliance of Literary Societies which now numbers some 90 different member organisations. This year's annual meeting will be held on Saturday 15 April at the Birmingham and Midland Institute, Margaret Street, Birmingham. The morning will be taken up with the AGM and an open session for discussion.

The afternoon is being sponsored by the Bronte Society and commences at 2.00 pm with 'A Light-hearted Talk on Aspects of the Brontes' by Tom Winnifrith, Emeritus Professor of English at Warwick University. It will be followed by 'Notable Literatae who have been Associated with the Brontes' by Revd. John Waddington-Feather. The meeting will conclude with the customary readings by the Alliance President, Gabriel Woolf. The entry fee is a modest £1 and anyone interested in attending should contact the secretary, Rosemary Culley, at 22 Belmont Grove, Havant, Hampshire PO9 3PU (023 9247 5855).

### **MARGARET CARPENTER (1793-1872)**

Margaret Sarah Carpenter (nee Geddes) was a younger sister of Wilkie Collins's mother Harriet. A very talented artist, she had a long and successful career as a portrait and genre painter, and exhibited more pictures at the Royal Academy than almost any other woman artist of the 19th century.

Born in Salisbury, she moved to London in 1813 and at the age of 24 married William Hookham Carpenter, the son of an Old Bond Street bookseller. Between 1818 and 1829 they had eight children, of whom three died in infancy, but three - William, Percy and Henrietta - became artists themselves. The younger daughter Jane was Wilkie's favourite cousin and married his great friend Charles Ward.

Margaret was almost certainly a pupil of Sir Thomas Lawrence, and after his death in 1830 she was seen by many people as his natural successor as a portraitist. She counted John Constable among her close friends, and entertained the talented young painter Richard Bonington before his untimely death.

In the summer of 1993 Richard Smith organised an exhibition of her work at Salisbury Museum to mark her bicentenary. Some 34 oil paintings, watercolours and drawings were shown, and a great deal of interest, both local and national, was raised. Richard has continued to research her life, work and family, and has completed a biography which is now to be

published by Antique Collectors Club of Woodbridge. It will be profusely illustrated - including the recently-discovered portrait of Jane Carpenter at the age of 12 - and is provisionally scheduled to appear in the middle of 2001. Further details will follow in subsequent newsletters.

### ***THE ART OF DETECTIVE FICTION***

Macmillan and St Martin's Press in association with the Institute of English Studies at the University of London published *The Art of Detective Fiction* (ISBN 0-333-74601-5) on 10 March. The book originated in an international conference held in London, called 'Murder in Bloomsbury'. It consists of revised versions of papers given at this meeting together with others commissioned for the volume. The book should interest general readers with a love of detective fiction as well as scholars with a more academic approach to the subject. Apart from the editors, Warren Chemaik, Martin Swales and Robert Vilain, the sixteen contributors include Josef Skvorecky ('Poe and the Beautiful Segar Girl'), Sarah Dunant ('Body Language: a Study of Death and Gender'), David Trotter ('Fascination and Nausea: Finding Out the Hard Way'), Chris Willis ('Making the Dead Speak: Spiritualism and Detective Fiction'), Birgitta Bergland ('Desires and Devices: On Women Detectives in Fiction') and Margaret Kinsman ('A Band of Sisters'). The essays cover a variety of approaches with, as the blurb says, 'particular attention paid to the 'Golden Age' of English detective story-writing and to the 'hard-boiled' American version of the genre.' There is disappointingly little mention of Wilkie, however, although Warren Chemaik in 'Mean Streets and English Gardens' notes Dorothy Sayers comment 'If the detective story was to live and develop it *must* get back to where it began in the hands of Collins and Le Fanu, and become once more a novel of manners instead of a pure crossword puzzle.' Wilkie's Old Sharon, the slovenly detective from 'My Lady's Money', receives a very brief mention in Audrey Laski's 'The Detective as Clown: a Taxonomy'. She also discusses how the detective's associate (e.g. Gabriel Betteredge or Dr Watson) is used as narrator to solve the problem of keeping the real detective's thoughts away from the reader who might otherwise solve the mystery too soon.

The book is handsomely produced and has a Sherlock Holmes illustration on the front cover. (ISBN 0-333-74601-5, Macmillan; 0-312-22989-5, St Martin's Press, USA). The publishers have introduced it with a special offer price of £21.25 (normal price £42.50). Further details from Polly Barnett, Macmillan, Houndmills, Basingstoke, Hants RG21 6XS (Tel 01256 329242; Fax 01256 330688).

### ***THACKERAY; A WRITER'S LIFE***

This title, originally published as *Thackeray 's Universe: Shifting Worlds f Imagination and Reality*, by Catherine Peters is now available in paperback from Sutton Publishing (£12.99, ISBN 07509 2306 7). Catherine Peters, of course, wrote her acclaimed biography of Collins, *The King of Inventors*; Sutton Publishing are notable for re-issuing most of Wilkie's books in their excellent 'Pocket Classics' series as well as the latest paperback version of William Clarke's equally valuable *The Secret Life of Wilkie Collins*.

### **TALKING SCRIBBLE**

Talking Scribble is a new website for aspiring authors. For a first year fee of £15 the site will include a synopsis, text of the first chapter and details about the author of new works. Various categories are available with further details from 19 West Street, Liskeard, Cornwall, PL14 6BW ([info@talkingscribble.com](mailto:info@talkingscribble.com)).

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# SOME ADDITIONAL NOTES FROM PAUL LEWIS

## ART NOTES

The most famous painting by Wilkie's brother, Charles Allston, is on show in London for the first time since 1851. Usually to be found at Oxford's Ashmolean Museum, *Convent Thoughts* is now on display as part of a new exhibition at the Tate Gallery (shortly to be renamed Tate Britain), on the Embankment near Pimlico tube on the Victoria underground line. The exhibition, *Ruskin, Turner, and the Pre-Raphaelites*, is on show from 9 March -29 May 2000; full admission price £7.00.

John Ruskin (1819-1900) was a dominant art critic of the 19th Century. Wilkie gives a long assessment of his book *Modern Painters* in a letter of 12 January 1849 (Baker and Clarke, *The Letters of Wilkie Collins*, 1999 vol. I pp. 38-9). When Wilkie's friend John Everett Millais married Ruskin's ex-wife Effie, Wilkie was unable to attend the ceremony in Scotland. But he held a party for friends in London on the wedding day. Inviting Edward Piggot in a letter of 2 July 1855, he wrote "May he consummate successfully!" - Ruskin's marriage had been annulled on grounds of non-consummation. Ruskin refers to Charles Collins in his book *Pre-Raphaelitism*. (Further information can be obtained from [http://www.tate.org.uk/home/news/07\\_0100.htm](http://www.tate.org.uk/home/news/07_0100.htm)).

## WILLIAM COLLINS R.A.

Wilkie's and Charles's father, the more famous artist William Collins RA, will feature in a planned exhibition at the Museum of London about Collins Farm. Located in North Hampstead, the Farm was not named after William but was the home for some years of William's friend, the artist John Linnell. William himself took lodgings near the Farm in the summer of 1823 when his wife Harriet was pregnant with Wilkie. No more details are available at the moment but one or more rarely seen paintings by William should be on display as well as information on the artistic circles into which Wilkie was born.

## WEB UPDATE

One web address not mentioned in my guide in the last Newsletter is <http://www.imdb.uk.com>. This website is a very comprehensive database of all known films and lists 17 films and TV series based on Wilkie's works. Not as long the list as in A. J. Hubin's *Crime Fiction* nor indeed as in Andrew Gasson's *Wilkie Collins - An Illustrated Guide* but more detail is provided. If you have further information on any film you can e-mail it to the compilers who will eventually add it to the listing.

There are also a few of mentions of Wilkie at a newish site about Charles Dickens <http://www.perryweb.com/Dickens/indcx.html>. One crossword clue will give Wilkie Collins Society members no trouble at all! The text of an excellent contemporary review of *The Woman in White* in Blackwood's *Edinburgh Magazine* of May 1862 has now been made available on the internet. The site <http://www.bodley.ox.ac.uk/ilej/journals/srchbm.htm> will take you to a search page and typing in Wilkie Collins will locate a list of articles mentioning him. All are of interest but Vol.91 (559) May 1862 pp. 564-584 is the review of *The Woman in White* with comparisons to Dickens' *Great Expectations*.

## WILKIE WATCH

Wilkie's name keeps popping up in the newspapers. From a guide to Suffolk to a pub walk round Hampstead, his name is used as a writer of detective fiction, a bon vivant, a traveller, a taker of laudanum and the touchstone by which good dramatic novels are judged. Comparisons to Wilkie have been almost obligatory in reviews in reviews of Charles Palliser's novel *The Unburied* now out in paperback from Phoenix at £6.99. Though in my view, good as this Victorian pastiche is, Wilkie it is not. Another book recently compared to "the kind of nineteenth-century blockbuster we tend to associate with Dickens or Wilkie Collins" is Anita Shreve's *Fortune's Rocks* (Little, Brown £9.99). The Isle of Thanet (aka Ramsgate) was featured in *The Daily Telegraph* in a piece on cheap property in the South East of England. It began "What do Charles Dickens, Dennis Bergkamp, Wilkie Collins, Sir Edward Heath, and Queen

Victoria have in common? They all spent their summer holidays on the Isle of Thanet".

Peter Jeffrey, who played Mr Bruff in the adaptation of *The Moonstone* by Kevin Elyot shown on BBC television at Christmas 1996, died on Christmas Day 1999 aged 70. Peter was a founding member of the Royal Shakespeare Company. And Noel Johnson, who was best known as *Dick Barton - Special Agent* on the radio in the late 1940s, was discovered for that role while playing a small part in a BBC radio adaptation of *The Woman in White* in 1945. He died on 2 October 1999.

### **WILKIE ON TAPE**

Not new - it carries a copyright notice of 1998 - but worth looking out is an unabridged reading of 'The Dead Hand' and 'A Terribly Strange Bed' published by Audio Book and Music Company (24 Somerton Road, London; tel. 020 8830 7224). Actor Richard Mitchley's semi-dramatised reading (he denotes characters by different accents) is competent and there is something about having these creepy stories read aloud that adds to their power.

Also of interest is that in 'The Dead Hand' (first published as the doctor's story in 'The Lazy Tour of Two Idle Apprentices' in *Household Words*, 10 October 1857) Wilkie previews passages in two later novels and the title of a much later story. Compare "I have no name and no father. The merciful law of Society tells me I am Nobody's son!" ('The Dead Hand') and "legally speaking, she and her sister had No Name ... Mr. Vanstone's daughters are Nobody's Children; and the law leaves them helpless at their uncle's mercy" in *No Name* (1862) where the phrase 'nobody's child[ren]' appears no fewer than six times. Compare the doctor in 'The Dead Hand' "I candidly confess to you that, in bringing that man back to existence, I was, morally speaking, groping hap-hazard in the dark." and this passage from *The Moonstone* (1868) "Mr. Franklin replied that a course of medicine, and a course of groping in the dark, meant, in his estimation, one and the same thing." Finally, 'The Dead Hand' contains this phrase "my dead-alive patient at The Two Robins Inn". 'The Dead Alive' was the alternative US title for 'John Jago's Ghost', published in 1873.

## THE NAME COLLINS

Some biographical details of Wilkie and his father and brother are found in a piece in the March 2000 issue of *Family History Monthly*. There are, however, some factual errors: Wilkie was not born in Tavistock Square; he never intended to be a landscape artist and he was not a reel use nor forced into being one by begging letters; his brother Charles was never actually a formal member of the Pre-Raphaelite Brotherhood. But the piece gives interesting information about the history and distribution of the name Collins as well as two photographs of Wilkie. It also includes a summary of the life of another famous Collins, Michael the Irish Republican, together with some Internet references for Collins as a name. Wilkie himself gives some details of his ancestors in his biography of his father, *Memoirs of the Life of William Collins. R.A.* published in 1848. (Brenda Ralph Lewis; 'The Surname Collins', *Family History Monthly*, 54, March 2000 pp. 48-51, price £2.30.)

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