



THE WILKIE COLLINS SOCIETY

PATRONS Faith Clarke, Baroness James of Holland Park (P. D. James)

Chairman Andrew Gasson, 3 Merton House, 36 Belsize Park, London, NW3 4EA

Membership Paul Lewis, 4 Ernest Gardens, Chiswick, London W4 3QU

NEWSLETTER

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THE WCS JOURNAL

Volume 9 of the Wilkie Collins Society *Journal* is in its final stages of preparation and should be dispatched to members early in the new year. It will be a bumper issue with the contents including a lengthy study by Paul Lewis on ‘My Dear Dickens: Reconstructing the Letters from Collins’; ‘A Tale of Two Authors: The Shorter Fiction of Gaskell and Collins’ by Graham Law; and ‘From “A Journey in Search of Nothing” to “The Lazy Tour”’: Collins, Dickens, and the “Tyro Do Nothing”’ by Chris Louttit. There will also be the second ‘Addenda and Corrigenda’ to *The Collected Letters of Wilkie Collins* (William Baker, Andrew Gasson, Graham Law and Paul Lewis). Finally, Volume 9 will include reviews of Tamara S. Wagner’s *Longing: Narratives of Nostalgia in the British Novel* by Mark Knight; Rob Warden’s *Wilkie Collins’s The Dead Alive: The Novel, the Case, and Wrongful Convictions* by Lillian Nayder; and Collins’s *The Woman in White*, ed. Maria K. Bachman & Don Richard Cox, by Andrew Maunder.

MARYLEBONE JOURNAL

The latest issue of the Howard de Walden Estate’s elegantly produced *Marylebone Journal* for December-January features two short but interesting articles on Collins, both written by Louisa McKenzie. The first, entitled ‘A Double Life’, is mainly biographical. It stresses Wilkie’s disinclination for marriage against the background of his relationships with Caroline Graves and Martha Rudd. The other piece, ‘The Sensation Novel’, is mainly concerned with *The Woman in White*. There is a short resume of Collins’s addresses in Marylebone: 2a and 11 New Cavendish Street, 12 Harley Street, 82 Wimpole Street and 33 Bolsover Street. Strangely, however, there is no mention of Wilkie’s main residence for 20 years at 90 Gloucester Place (now renumbered 65) – presumably

because it is not actually on the Howard de Walden Estate which covers a significant part of the Marylebone area. Finally there is a full page image of Collins's from the series taken by Sarony, the well known New York photographer, during Wilkie's reading tour of America in 1873-1874. The picture is unusual **in** being a full-length study whereas most of the Sarony series are head and shoulder or three-quarters length. Further details can be found about *The Marylebone Journal* at <https://www.marylebonejournal.com/>. Or 020 7290 0940.

LIVES OF VICTORIAN LITERARY FIGURES

The next part of the Pickering & Chatto Series *Lives of Victorian Figures* is due to be published in January 2007 (ISBN 978 1 85196 819 0). Part V consists of three volumes, Wilkie Collins, Mary Elizabeth Braddon and William Thackeray. The Collins volume is jointly edited by Professor William Baker and Andrew Gasson. As with earlier books in the series, the volumes consist of a general introduction, followed by mainly contemporary biographical accounts. These are reproduced as annotated facsimiles of the originals with background material on the authors of the various extracts. These include:

George Makepeace Towle, 'Wilkie Collins', *Appleton's Journal of Popular Literature, Science, and Art* (1870); James Payn, *Some literary Recollections* (1885); 'A Novelist on Novel-writing: an interview with Wilkie Collins', *Cassell's Saturday Journal* (1887); 'Celebrities At Home. No. LXXI. Mr. Wilkie Collins in Gloucester-Place', *The World* (1877); Wilkie Collins, 'Reminiscences of a Story-Teller', *Universal Review* (1888); A. C. Swinburne, [Wilkie Collins], *Fortnightly Review* (1889); M. W. Townsend, [Wilkie Collins], *Spectator* (1889); H. Caine, 'Wilkie Collins. Personal Recollections', *The Globe* (1889); Edmund Yates, 'Moi-Meme. In Memoriam W.W. C., Obit September 23rd 1889', *The World* (1889); Andrew Lang, 'Mr Wilkie Collins's Novels', *Contemporary Review* (1890); Etheldine (Linda) Gardiner, [Wilkie Collins], *Temple Bar* (1890); Horace Pym, 'On Wilkie Collins', *A Tour Round My Bookshelves* (1891); Harry Quilter, 'In Memoriam Amici: Wilkie Collins', *Preference in Art, Life and Literature* (1892); Nathaniel Beard, 'Some Recollections of Yesterday', *Temple Bar* (1894); Mary Anderson, *A Few Memories* (1896); William Tinsley, *Random Recollections* (1900); Arthur Waugh, 'Wilkie Collins and His Mantle', *Academy Magazine* (1902); Edmund Downey, 'A Peep at the Author of "The Woman in White."'', *Twenty Years Ago* (1905); Lewis Melville, 'Wilkie Collins', *Victorian Novelists* (1906); Wybert Reeve, 'Recollections of Wilkie Collins', *Chamber's Journal* (1906); William

Winter, 'Wilkie Collins', *Old Friends* (1909); Marie and Squire Bancroft, *The Bancrofts: Recollections of Sixty Years* (1909); Arthur Compton-Rickett, 'Wilkie Collins', *The Bookman* (1912); Frank Archer, *An Actor's Notebooks* (1912); and Lucy Bethia C. Walford, *Memories of Victorian London* (1912)

Pickering & Chatto have agreed to offer members of the WCS a substantial discount, reducing the cost to £199 compared with the full published price of £275. Members wishing to order the books should quote their membership of the WCS and contact Pickering & Chatto direct at 020 7405 1005 or email sales@pickeringchatto.co.uk. Please note that Part V consists of all three volumes (Collins, Braddon and Thackeray) and the publishers cannot supply the Collins volume on its own.

'A HOUSE TO LET'

A new departure for BBC Radio 4 was the adaptation in five fifteen minute parts of 'A House to Let'. This piece was originally published as the extra Christmas number of *Household Words* for December 1858 under the editorship of Dickens. The story was jointly written by Charles Dickens, Wilkie Collins and Elizabeth Gaskell. In the original, the narrator is found a new London home by her servant, Trottes. She takes an interest in the run down and neglected house opposite which is 'To Let' and ends up adopting the young child she discovers is imprisoned there to keep him from his rightful inheritance. Collins contributed the short story, 'Trottes Report' and collaborated with Dickens on the opening and closing framework narratives, 'Over the Way' and 'Let at Last'.

'A House to Let' was the last of the Christmas numbers of *Household Words*. Collins had previously contributed: 'The Fourth Poor Traveller' ('A Stolen Letter') in 'The Seven Poor Travellers' (J 854); 'The Ostler' ('The Dream Woman') as the second part of 'The Holly Tree Inn' (1855); 'John Steadiman's Account' and 'The Deliverance' in 'The Wreck of the Golden Mary' (1856); and 'The Prison in the Woods' in 'The Perils of Certain English Prisoners' (1857). In 1859, Dickens fell out with the publishers, Bradbury & Evans, and started his own journal, *All the Year Round* which published altogether nine Christmas numbers. Collins contributed to four of these: 'The Ghost in the Cupboard Room' ("Blow up with the Brig!") in 'The Haunted House' (1859); 'The Seafaring Man'; and (with Dickens) 'The Money' and 'The Restitution' in 'A Message from the Sea' (1860); 'Picking up Waifs at Sea' (The Fatal Cradle) in

'Tom Tiddler's Ground' (1861); and *No Thoroughfare* (with Dickens, 1867).

MORE WILKIE AT THE BBC

During October and November, Radio 7, which concentrates on drama, repeated one of the BBC's early dramatisations of *The Woman in White*. Searching the BBC's website on either Radio 4 or Radio 7 produces a wide range of Collins mentions – everything from Pilchard fisheries in Cornwall (taken from *Rambles Beyond Railways*) to a review of a modern adaptation of *The Haunted Hotel* in Coventry.

WILKIE ON DVD AND VIDEO

Currently on ebay there are several film and video versions of *The Woman in White* and *The Moonstone*. These are mainly the 1990s (rather poor) BBC adaptations but the earlier and very much better version on DVD of *The Moonstone* from 1972 is still available from time to time as well as being sold at the BBC's own shop at the fixed price of £19.99. The 1934 film version of the same title is also regularly available but it is such a terrible adaptation that it is for enthusiasts only and not for the faint hearted!

THE CAMBRIDGE COMPANION TO WILKIE COLLINS

Wilkie, who "had no inclination for a University life, and if it be not heresy to say so, I am no great admirer of University life now" is the subject of a new study by Cambridge University Press. Edited and introduced by Professor Jenny Bourne Taylor, the publisher's blurb promises to "analyse Collins's exploration of the tensions which lay beneath Victorian society". The Companion has the following chapters by well known and distinguished scholars of Victorian literature.

1. Collins's career and the visual arts by Tim Dolin
2. The early writing by Anthea Trodd
3. Collins's shorter fiction by John Bowen
4. Collins and the sensation novel by Lyn Pykett
5. The Moonstone, detective fiction and forensic science by Ronald R. Thomas
6. The later novels by Jenny Bourne Taylor
7. The professional writer and the literary marketplace by Graham Law
8. The marriage plot and its alternatives by Carolyn Dever
9. Collins and Victorian masculinity by John Kucich

10. Collins and Empire by Lillian Nayder
11. Disability and difference by Kate Flint
12. Collins and the theatre by Jim Davis
13. The afterlife of Wilkie Collins by Rachel Malik

The Cambridge Companion to Wilkie Collins is part of the Cambridge Companions to Literature series. It is available as a hardback at £45 or a paperback at £16.99.

WILKIE WEBSITES

Both Paul Lewis and Andrew Gasson have recently been adding to their respective Wilkie Collins websites.

The quote in the above paragraph is from ‘Men and Women’ (5 February 1887). It is one of more than fifty contemporary biographies of Wilkie on Paul Lewis’s expanded website www.wilkiecollins.com. The passages are all either published in Wilkie’s lifetime or written by eyewitnesses to his life or work. Although most of them are known to scholars, very few have been available in e-text form before. Some – like the one in ‘Men and Women’ – contain quotes from Wilkie himself and constitute the closest we will ever get to autobiography. The collection is not complete, but it is still growing and if any readers know of passages that are not there please forward them to paul@paullewis.co.uk. In addition to the new biographies the collection of images of Wilkie also continues to grow slowly as new photographs or drawings emerge. There are now more than 90, including all the major paintings of Wilkie, most of the known photographs, and some other drawings.

At www.wilkie-collins.info Andrew Gasson has now added images of unusual, first and early editions for all of Collins’s books. Also included for each title are plot summaries and publishing history. There is another illustrated section on Collins’s published dramatic works. Other sections have also been updated and there are new pages for example on Wilkie’s liking for animals.

James Rusk continues to maintain his website of e-texts at www.digitalpixels.org/jr/wc/. Here you will find almost all of Collins’s fiction together with some of his dramatic adaptations. At www.musicweb-international.com/classrev/2002/May02/WCollins.htm there are some details about Collins and music. There are also one or two notes on *Poor Miss Finch* and epilepsy available at www.epilepsiemuseum.de/alt/lucillaen.html.

A WILLIAM FRITH EXHIBITION

The Guildhall Art Gallery in the City of London is holding the first exhibition for fifty years of paintings by Wilkie's close friend William Powell Frith (1819-1909). Frith studied art with Wilkie's brother Charles and Wilkie was a frequent visitor to Frith's home. Despite this there are just three brief references to Wilkie in Frith's autobiography. Similarly visitors will struggle to find much of Wilkie in this exhibition. The £20 catalogue contains a chapter on Dickens and Frith but just one mention, literally, of Wilkie Collins. For all that, it is a lovely little exhibition, bringing together for the first time Frith's three iconic panoramas of Victorian times – *Life at the Seaside* (1853), *Derby Day* (1856), and *Railway Station* (1862). Sadly the last two were glazed with reflective glass (the Tate which owns *Derby Day* should really know better) making distant or close study of the numerous characters very frustrating. *Life at the Seaside*, which was based on a visit to Ramsgate in 1851, shows many Ramsgate landmarks including Wellington Crescent at the top right where Wilkie once stayed. Other pictures include a charming study of a crossing sweeper (1858); this shows houses behind that could be Pembridge Villas near Notting Hill where Frith lived from the 1850s and where Wilkie was a frequent visitor. Like Wilkie, Frith had two families. Unlike Wilkie he had children with both the women in his life – twelve with his wife and seven with his mistress Mary Alford.

'Painting the Victorian Age' is at Guildhall Art Gallery, London EC2P 2EJ until 4 March and at the Mercer Art Gallery, Harrogate, 24 March to 15 July 2007.

WILKIE WALK-ON – *THE WORMS OF EUSTON SQUARE*

A rather strange Victorian pastiche has Dickens and Wilkie Collins as walk-ons. Author William Sutton warns in the blurb "I have been slovenly in my researches" and admits in an interview that he wrote the whole book, which is long, with no more reference material than an encyclopedia. He didn't say the dialogue is wooden and the plot creaks – but it does. *The Worms of Euston Square* by William Sutton, (Edinburgh 2006 ISBN 181183-JOO-X) is £9.99 but cheaper on Amazon. Safer to read more here before you buy www.william-sutton.co.uk and www.myspace.com/eustonworms

Wilkie also had a mention in a very interesting play *Little Nell* by Simon Gray. Drawing heavily on Clare Tomalin's biography of Dickens's lover Ellen Ternan *The Invisible Woman*, the play was on BBC Radio 4 on 16 December and a stage version is promised for 2007. At one point Ellen

asks Dickens how he refers to her among his friends “What do you call me to Wilkie?” she demands.

READ TO ME

If you like your books read to you but baulk at the price of full text versions of Wilkie’s works, then a public domain – ie free – version of the full text of *The Woman in White* would be of interest. LibriVox – see more at librivox.org – provides audio versions of public domain books. It is entirely voluntary, so the quality of the reading varies. Currently a team is working on *The Woman in White* using different voices for each narrator. The organizers claim to have the readers lined up but are looking for an editor to tie it all together. All you can hear so far are two auditions for Count Fosco at <http://wilkiecollins.wordsaloud.com>. To read about their current progress so far, you can investigate <http://librivox.org/forum/viewtopic.php?t=3721> Let them know if you can help.

WILKIE AT THE NFT

The National Film Theatre in London has been showing a small number of Wilkie Collins stories as part of a series called ‘Tales of Mystery and Laudanum’. It has found a 1957 television version of *The Woman in White* produced for the ‘Hour of Mystery’ on Thames Television. It is also showing the one remaining episode – 6 out of 7 – of the BBC’s 1959 version of *The Moonstone* – watch out for Patrick Cargill and James Hayter. The evening is rounded off by the Orson Welles ‘Great Mysteries’ version of *A Terribly Strange Bed* produced for Anglia Television in 1974 and introduced by the Great Man himself (Welles that is – not Wilkie!) and with roles for Rupert Davies and Colin Baker. Hurry for tickets on 29 December. www.bfi.org.uk/incinemas/nft/film/7079. The NFT also showed the awful 1997 BBC television version of *The Woman in White* directed by Tim Fywell; even Ian Richardson’s wonderful Mr Fairlie fails to save the altered plot and lack of Wilkie’s own words.

WILKIE AT SCHOOL

Education Secretary Alan Johnston – an ex-postman and rock guitarist – has stepped in to make sure that Wilkie remains part of the reading list for the school curriculum in English. At one time the entire pre-1914 literature list looked set to disappear. But Wilkie will now stay, along with Jane Austen, Charles Dickens, Elizabeth Gaskell, Henry James and

George Eliot. Johnston calls these writers “a crucial part of our national heritage.” The Qualifications and Curriculum Authority will begin consultations on the list in February with a view to publishing a final version in 2008. Only one reference to Wilkie comes from a search of its website – for the graveyard scene in *The Woman in White* at www.qca.org.uk/12571_2373.html.

QUOTE UNQUOTE

One of our continuing frustrations is the quote, widely attributed to Wilkie, “Make ’em laugh, make ’em cry, make ’em wait.” It is said to be his recipe for writing a successful story. It cropped up again in *The Guardian* letters page on 11 November. But when did he say it and where? If anyone can track it down to the nineteenth century please let the editors know.

RAMBLES BEYOND RAILWAYS

Daniel Stark, who e-texted Wilkie’s Comish travel book *Rambles Beyond Railways* has now followed in Wilkie’s footsteps and illustrated his e-text with his own photographs. The modern image of the Cheese Wring next to Henry Brandling’s original lithograph is particularly striking. See them at www.wilkiecollins.de/rambles/rambles-ext.html.

**Paul Lewis
Andrew Gasson**

**paul@paullewis.co.uk
apogee@apgee.co.uk**

**www.wilkiecollins.com
www.wilkie-collins.info**