



THE WILKIE COLLINS SOCIETY

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NEWSLETTER

SPRING 2015

P. D. JAMES - A LAST FAREWELL

Our late Patron, P. D. James died at the end of November aged 94. A memorial 'Service of Thanksgiving for the Life and Work of Baroness James of Holland Park' was held on Wednesday 29 April 2015 at the Temple Church. This is situated in the heart of London's Barristers area, not far from Lincoln's Inn where Collins, himself, studied law between 1846 and 1851.

Those present were privileged to witness a very dignified service conducted by the Reverend Robin Griffith-Jones, Master of the Temple Church; the Reverend Dr Peter Groves of St Mary Magdalen Church, Oxford; and the Right Reverend and Right Honourable Richard Chartres, Bishop of London. The music was conducted by Mr Greg Morris and beautifully enhanced by the choir of the Temple Church.

The sermon, eloquently delivered by the Bishop of London, was enlivened by numerous personal reminiscences. But perhaps the finest overall tribute to her life and works was delivered by Stephen Page, chief executive of her publishers Faber & Faber. His eulogy was followed by a moving reading by Sheila Mitchell from *Time to be in Earnest*, the autobiography of P. D. James.

The congregation consisted of the great and the good of the literary world. The Wilkie Collins Society was represented by our Patron, Faith Clarke, and Chairman, Andrew Gasson. A full list was published in *The Times* of Thursday 30 April 2015.

But the final memorial to P. D. James, crime writer extraordinaire, will remain - like that of Wilkie Collins - in the immortality of her books.

MEMBERSHIP

Our thanks to most members who have already paid their 2015 subscription of £16 (UK and Europe) or £28 for the rest of the world. Those still outstanding can be paid by cheque to Paul Lewis at the above address; by direct BACS payment (sort code 40-03-28; account number 11019988); or by Paypal.

COLLINS THE CAMPAIGNER

Accompanying this Newsletter is 'Collins the Campaigner', an article originally published in the Journal of the Society of Authors, *The Author*, VOL CXXVI, No. 1, Spring 2015. Written by Andrew Lycett, it is reproduced with his kind permission and that of the editor, James McConnachie. Andrew Lycett, of course, is the author of the excellent new biography *Wilkie Collins: a Life of Sensation* which is now available in both hardback (Hutchinson) and paperback (Windmill Books). He has recently been elected to the SOA Council.

The Society of Authors was established in 1884 for 'the maintenance, definition and defence of Literary Property' following a meeting held on 28 September 1883. Tennyson was elected President and Walter Besant became Chairman of the Committee of Management. Collins was an enthusiastic founder-member and honorary vice-president, along with Charles Reade, G. A. Sala and Margaret Oliphant. The Society was launched at a Lord Mayor's Banquet on 18 October 1884, at which 150 members were present. The Society's first objective was to obtain copyright for English authors in the United States while other aims included the promotion of a Bill for the Registration of Titles.

Collins attended the Society's annual dinners when he was well enough. His last appearance was as a steward at a dinner held on 15 July 1888 at the Criterion Restaurant, to honour visiting American authors. The Society was presented by Besant with a large collection of Collins's papers connected with International Copyright. In 1890 it republished in its journal '*Considerations on the Copyright Question, Addressed to an American Friend*' under the title 'Thou Shalt Not Steal' (*The Author*, June 1890, pp 31-35).

Today, the SOA is a valuable source of information for its members on a variety of subjects. It particularly offers exceptional advice to both established and prospective authors on publishers contracts. (www.societyofauthors.org; 84 Drayton Gardens, London SW10 9SB, 020 7373 6642).

ARTWORK AT TATE BRITAIN

A recent trip to Tate Britain in London the showed that the wonderful, full-size artwork by Frederick Walker which was used for posters advertising the play of *The Woman in White* when it opened at the Olympic Theatre in 1871 is now on permanent display. It is usually reproduced in black and white but the original gouache on paper measuring 2172 x 1289mm demonstrates the subtle use of colour. The Tate, itself, declares "It combines a Pre-Raphaelite-style beauty with black and white graphic design. Sweeping lines pull the viewer's eye to the woman's mysterious and inviting expression." It can be seen online at www.tate.org.uk/art/artworks/walker-the-woman-in-white-n02080 .

Tate Britain also has one of Charles Collins's most famous works *May in the Regent's Park* painted in 1851 from the family home in Hanover Terrace where he lived with Wilkie and their mother www.tate.org.uk/art/artworks/collins-may-in-the-regents-park-t03025.

THE INVISIBLE WOMAN

The Invisible Woman which has Tom Hollander playing a likeable Wilkie Collins and Ralph Fiennes playing a realistically over-the-top Dickens shows the infamous fire when Dickens burns his letters – including probably hundreds from Wilkie. The DVD can now be found for a few pounds on the internet and may be available with some online services.

UNWRITTEN BOOKS

The Private Libraries Association recently printed a short piece by Bryan Welch on 'Unwritten Books'. These are works where an intended sequel or second volume never actually appeared. He quotes examples such as Evelyn Waugh's autobiography *A Little Learning*; and *Journey to the Ends of Time, Volume one, Lost in the Dark Wood* by Sacheverell Sitwell.

In Collins's case, his unwritten book would have been the Second Series of *The Fallen Leaves* (1879). The 'Fallen Leaves' of the title are 'The people who have drawn blanks in the lottery of life.....the friendless and the lonely, the wounded and

the lost'. The novel was not well received and a planned Second Series, showing an unconventional marriage failing because of outside pressures, was never written. Collins's letters to a variety of correspondents – who seem to be fans anxious for a sequel - shows both his intentions and excuses. On 22 June 1880 he wrote:

The Second Series will be written - if all goes well with me - when our English system of publication sanctions the issue of the first cheap edition of "The Fallen Leaves". That is to say, the first Edition which really appeals to the people. I know "the General reader", by experience, as my best friend and ally when I have certain cliques and classes in this country arrayed against me - and, when I "return to the charge", I shall write with redoubled resolution, if I feel that I have the Great Public with me - as I had them (for example) in the case of "The New Magdalen". ([1924] to Louise Chandler Moulton)

The following year, on 8 August 1881 he continued:

Thus far, the second part of the story only exists in my "rough notes". I am waiting to write the work itself (for one among many reasons) until the "First Series" has been circulated in the third, and cheapest, form of publication, among a far wider circle of readers than any to which the book has yet appealed. You can hardly form an idea of the astonishment and indignation with which the character of "Simple Sally" has been received in certain prudish and prejudiced quarters. On this account, I am waiting (with some confidence, inspired by previous experience) for the Verdict of the People. ([1968] to Charles H. Willes)

In June 1883 he recorded that:

I have the materials by me for writing a sequel to "The Fallen Leaves". Various obstacles (with the enumeration of which it is needless for me to trouble you) have hitherto prevented me from continuing the story. ([2168] to Ezra Bower)

And in November 1885 he was still procrastinating with:

Obstacles of various kinds, which I will not trouble you by mentioning in detail, have thus far prevented me from writing the contemplated sequel to my story. ([2496] to Eleanor Selfe)

During this time Collins had written *The Black Robe* (1880), *Jezebel's Daughter* (1880), *Heart and Science* (1883) and *I Say No!* (1884) but the Second Series of *The Fallen Leaves* remains an 'Unwritten Book'.

THE MOONSTONE LEGACY TRILOGY

Wilkie Collins's classic story, *The Moonstone*, ends with "So the years pass, and repeat each other; so the same events revolve in the cycles of time. What will be the next adventure of the Moonstone? Who can tell?"

In May 2010, Pushkin Press published the first in the *Moonstone Legacy* trilogy which provided a continuation of the fabulous diamond's story by Diana de

Gunzburg and Tony Wild. The book took the form of a young adults' mystery adventure novel, partly set in Shalimar, a splendid Anglo-Indian mansion on the North Yorkshire Moors. In part one, fourteen year-old Lizzy Abercrombie's mother dies in a tragic accident on the full moon. But was it really an accident? Lizzy discovers that her death may be linked to a mysterious family curse. Determined to find the truth, her quest takes her to the Temple of the Moon in India, where she uncovers the terrible past of her ancestor George Abercrombie. The Temple of the Moon at Somnath is, of course, the setting of *The Moonstone*'s visionary final chapter and there is a nicely ambiguous ending for the first book.

We now have the whole trilogy published in a single volume as an eBook or in a Kindle edition. The second book is entitled *Dreamtime* and the third *The Age of Aquarius*. The three-volumes-in-one was ceremoniously launched on 29 January at the University Women's Club in the heart of Mayfair. There was an introductory speech by His Excellency Ranjan Mathai, the High Commissioner of India to the UK, followed by Professor Sara Russell of the Natural History Museum who provided the geological basis for the moonstone diamond. The evening concluded with a reading from the book by Terry Jones of Monty Python fame.

Diana de Gunzburg was born in Pakistan and is Anglo-Russian-Afghan. Her great-grandfather was the last person to be publicly hanged for insurgency by the British in the North West Frontier of Pakistan. Tony Wild explored the Indian subcontinent as a young man, and wrote popular histories for HarperCollins - *The East India Company: Trade and Conquest from 1600* (1999) and *Remains of the Raj* (2001).

The Moonstone Legacy is written mainly for younger readers in an easy to read style and the Epilogue to the third book once again ends with Wilkie's last line "What will be the next adventure of the Moonstone? Who can tell?"

Further details of *The Moonstone Legacy Trilogy* are available at www.moonstonelegacy.com.

LAST TRAIN TO ASPATRIA

The Maryport & Carlisle Railway was one of the many small and profitable railways that sprang up in the 19th century. It connected Maryport in Cumbria to the county town of Carlisle and was also used to take coal mined inland to Maryport for onward sea transport. In a book published in 1947 Jack Simmons identifies the line as the

one which Walter Hartright took on his journey to Limmeridge House in the opening chapters of *The Woman in White*.

The Maryport and Carlisle Railway makes one shadowy appearance in English Literature. The scene of Wilkie Collins's novel *The Woman in White* is laid at Limmeridge House, which may be placed, from the evidence in the text, somewhere near Allonby. Near the beginning of the novel Walter Hartright, travels down to Limmeridge from London by way of Carlisle, taking what is clearly the last train at night on the Maryport line.

The Maryport & Carlisle Railway, Jack Simmons, Oakwood Press, 1947 p.34 footnote.

Wilkie Collins describes the journey in the second part of the story in *All The Year Round*, 3 December 1859.

My travelling instructions directed me to go to Carlisle, and then to diverge by a branch railway which ran in the direction of the coast. As a misfortune to begin with, our engine broke down between Lancaster and Carlisle. The delay occasioned by this accident caused me to be too late for the branch train, by which I was to have gone on immediately. I had to wait some hours; and when a later train finally deposited me at the nearest station to Limmeridge House, it was past ten, and the night was so dark that I could hardly see my way to the pony-chaise which Mr. Fairlie had ordered to be in waiting for me.

The driver was evidently discomposed by the lateness of my arrival. He was in that state of highly-respectful sulkiness which is peculiar to English servants. We drove away slowly through the darkness in perfect silence. The roads were bad, and the dense obscurity of the night increased the difficulty of getting over the ground quickly. It was, by my watch, nearly an hour and a half from the time of our leaving the station before I heard the sound of the sea in the distance, and the crunch of our wheels on a smooth gravel drive. We had passed one gate before entering the drive, and we passed another before we drew up at the house.

From the description of the journey it is likely that Walter alighted at Aspatria station rather than Maryport which is more distant from Allonby and also by the sea. Aspatria to Allonby by cross country road is just under six miles. So an hour and a half by pony chaise at night over rough roads is about right.

The Maryport & Carlisle Railway opened fully in 1845 and was absorbed into the London Midland and Scottish Railway in 1923. Aspatria station reopened as an unmanned halt in 2000. The 28 minute railway journey from Carlisle to Aspatria can still be made today on Northern Rail. Though the pony chaise to Limmeridge House will not be there.

WILKIE AT WORK

A newly discovered letter has cast some light on Wilkie's working timetable when he was writing *No Name*. We know from other correspondence that he moved to The Fort House Broadstairs on 1 July 1862 having taken the house for four months to try to keep up with the demands of writing the novel for serialisation in London in *All The Year Round* and in *Harper's Weekly* in New York. The simultaneous publication in New York meant he had to work six weeks ahead of the publication date and on Friday 18 July he wrote to James Birtles, at the printer of *All The Year Round*, correcting part 25 – published on 30 August – and sending manuscript copy for part 26 published a week later.

This new letter is dated a few days earlier, Monday 14 July, to his friend the novelist and playwright John Palgrave Simpson (1807-1887). Inviting him to stay at The Fort House for a weekend Wilkie sets out his writing timetable – he works every day except Sunday until 3pm. After that he is free.

The dire necessity of getting on a little faster with “No Name” drove me from London – and here I am, with the sea on three sides of me and a garden on the fourth, working in blessed seclusion from all London interruptions. I make a holiday of every Sunday (as a concession to the principles of a brother-writer – Moses, author of “The Ten Commandments” &c &c) – and if you feel inclined this summer or autumn to try the Kentish Coast from Saturday to Monday, let me know a day or two beforehand – and you will find a bed here very much at your disposal – I only mention from Saturday to Monday because my Sunday holiday leaves me at the disposal of my friends. If you don't mind my being shut up till 3 P.M. the rest of the week is as much yours as Sunday.

Others invited for the weekend included George Russell, Charles Ward, and John Millais.

THE WOMAN IN WHITE WALK ON STRANGE MAPS

Paul Lewis's research and map of Walter Hartright's night time walk from Hampstead to London in *The Woman in White* was reproduced in the first issue of *The Happy Reader* mentioned in the previous WCS Newsletter. It is once again used to good effect - although without proper acknowledgement - by Frank Jacobs on the Strange Maps website. The entire walk with photographs of key points is to be found at bigthink.com/strange-maps/wilkies-walk-with-the-woman-in-white.

KENSAL GREEN CEMETERY

This year's open day for the Friends of Kensal Green Cemetery will take place on Saturday 4 July, 11.00am to 5.00pm. Together with their usual guided tours, the day will provide the perfect opportunity to visit Wilkie's grave, situated near the central chapel (Grave number 31754/ square 141/row 1).

A LUCKY WILKIE FIND

A few years ago one of our extraordinarily lucky members bought at a charity auction in Australia for \$30 a three-volume first edition in the original brown cloth of *Poor Miss Finch* (Richard Bentley, 1872). We can only imagine his delight when examining the book on returning home to find the title-page signed and dated February 1872 by Wilkie Collins. A pencil note opposite the signature states that the book was bought at the sale of Collins's books by auctioneers Puttick & Simpson, 20 January 1890. It is referred to in William Baker's *Wilkie Collins's Library: a Reconstruction*, item 118 on page 93. The book now re-appears as lot number 255 at the sale by Dreweatts Bloomsbury on 21 May 2015. As with most Collins firsts, this is a rare title but the high estimate of £2000-£3000 is at least partly justified by the Collins signature and dating.

ALLIANCE OF LITERARY SOCIETIES

The Wilkie Collins Society continues to be affiliated to the Alliance of Literary Societies. The Annual General Meeting is this year hosted by the Trollope Society and is being held at the King's Manor, York, on Saturday 30th May 2015, at 1.45 pm. In 2016 the AGM will be held at Haworth by the Brontë Society; in 2017 by the Siegfried Sassoon and Owen Societies in Edinburgh; and in 2018 by the Katherine Mansfield Society at Bath; 2019 would be hosted by the George Eliot Society in Nuneaton.

DAYDREAMS AND NIGHTMARES

Longstanding WCS member Katherine Haynes has been writing and publishing short stories for many years but this is her first collection. Within the pages of *Daydreams and Nightmares* are seven uncanny tales. Like Wilkie before her, the author draws on her background in law for 'A Good Try', while a modern-day version of Dickens's Cloisterham is the setting for 'The Lure of the Copse'. Here the brightest of days can be darkened by shadow, a dream turned to nightmare and both of these stories are concerned with black magic. Other tales concern murder, ghosts and visits from unearthly beings. Published by Phantasm Press in paperback, it is available from Amazon from £7.50.

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