



# *THE WILKIE COLLINS SOCIETY*

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## **NEWSLETTER**

**SPRING 2019**

### **WCS JOURNAL**

The latest issue of the WCS peer reviewed *Wilkie Collins Journal* is now available online. Our editor, Joanne Parsons, has put together with the assistance of guest editors Janine Hatter and Helena Ifill a Special Issue for Volume 16, 'Victorian Popular Fiction'. This number concentrates on Victorian journalism and in addition to the Introduction there are six essays and three Book Reviews. The *Journal* can be found at <https://wilkiecollinsociety.org/>. The current issue is available just to members. Please note that the log in details have been changed to **username: after** and **password: dark**, both in lower case. All previous numbers and Newsletters are available to non-members without the need for a password.

For the future, Joanne has planned two new special issues. The first, on Materiality in the work of Collins and his contemporaries, will be published later this year and next year there will be another on 'Neo-Victorian' interpretations on the work of Collins and his contemporaries.

### **THE ALLIANCE OF LITERARY SOCIETIES**

The WCS continues to be affiliated to the Alliance of Literary Societies which represents over 100 individual societies. The ALS holds its annual AGM weekend each spring. This year the meeting takes place from Friday 17 to Sunday 19 May in Nuneaton, hosted by the George Eliot Fellowship. There will be a Friday evening welcome at the Chilvers Coton Heritage Centre. The Saturday programme will be based at Nuneaton Town Hall on Coton Road, Nuneaton CV11 5AA and includes several talks, the AGM, a raffle and dramatic extracts. A trip to Astley is planned for the Sunday, including Astley Book Farm (the

biggest second hand bookshop in the Midlands). The George Eliot collections at Nuneaton Museum and Art Gallery and at Nuneaton Library are also available on the Sunday.

The conference fee to include talks and refreshments is £10 with a buffet lunch also available at £10. The programme and booking form are now available to download from the ALS website at <https://allianceofliterarysocieties.files.wordpress.com/2019/03/2019-spring.pdf>.

### **ADDITION TO WILKIE'S PP1**

As predicted in the collection of Wilkie's 'Parodies, Plagiarisms and Imitations' which accompanied the last Newsletter, a new addition has already come to light in the person of GK Chesterton. Apart from his literary endeavours, he was also known as an artist. Some of his Caricatures with the overall title of 'Villainous Plotting' were published in *The Odd Volume*, published in 1911 in aid of the Funds of the National Book Trade Provident Society. In particular he drew 'Count Fosco and Mr Quilp' which features a suitably large Fosco together with a suitably diminutive Quilp (from *Old Curiosity Shop*). See [www.wilkie-collins.info/](http://www.wilkie-collins.info/)).

In addition, he writes in *The Victorian Age in Literature* (H. Holt & Co.; London, 1913 and available online at [www.ecatholic2000.co/gk/victorianage.shtml](http://www.ecatholic2000.co/gk/victorianage.shtml)):

There gathers round these two great novelists [Dickens and Thackeray] a considerable group of good novelists, who more or less mirror their mid-Victorian mood. Wilkie Collins may be said to be in this way a lesser Dickens and Anthony Trollope a lesser Thackeray. Wilkie Collins is chiefly typical of his time in this respect: that while his moral and religious conceptions were as mechanical as his carefully constructed fictitious conspiracies, he nevertheless informed the latter with a sort of involuntary mysticism which dealt wholly with the darker side of the soul.... For the rest, Wilkie Collins is these two elements: the mechanical and the mystical; both very good of their kind. He is one of the few novelists in whose case it is proper and literal to speak of his "plots." He was a plotter; he went about to slay Godfrey Ablewhite as coldly and craftily as the Indians did. But he also had a sound though sinister note of true magic; as in the repetition of the two white dresses in *The Woman in White*; or of the dreams with their double explanations in *Armadale*. His ghosts do walk. They are alive; and walk as softly as Count Fosco, but as solidly. Finally, ***The Moonstone* is probably the best detective tale in the world.**

And at the end of Part V of *The Scandal of Father Brown* when discoursing on disguises, Chesterton writes:

Have you ever read "The Woman in White"? Don't you remember that the fashionable and luxurious Count Fosco, fleeing for his life before a secret society, was found stabbed in the blue blouse of a common French workman?

## **ONE HOT SUMMER**

Those concerned about climate change and our recent long hot summers may be interested in Rosemary's Ashton's *One Hot Summer Dickens, Darwin and Disraeli, and the Great Stink of 1858* (Yale Universities Press, ISBN 978-0-300-22726-0, heavily discounted at Amazon and the Book Depository). Although mainly concerned with the three main authors, the account gives various references to Collins and other contemporaries. These include *The Frozen Deep*; Dickens's separation from Catherine; the Garrick Club affair with Edmund Yates; and 'Derby Day' by Collins's friend W. P. Frith.

Although during 1858 Collins travelled around Britain, including Wales in early June and Broadstairs in August, he was in London for most of that sweltering summer. The temperatures may sound familiar to modern readers, possibly exceeding even our own in 2018, currently claimed to be the hottest on record. The thermometer reached 86° F on 14 June 1858, rising to a record 94° F in Hyde Park (near Collins's Marylebone) on 17 June with one source giving a brief 102° F at Greenwich. June 1858 was generally regarded then as the hottest month on record with temperatures about 8 degrees above average. There was some let up in July but temperatures were still in the 80s and the Thames was compared with the Ganges.

Collins was ambivalent about hot weather. Writing to his brother Charles in June 1856 he noted "Today, however, has been lovely – scorching hot summer weather at last" and to Anne Benson Proctor he wrote from Rome in December 1863 "the weather became the weather of one of our fine English summers. Day after day of blue skies and bright sunshine, and soft breezes." Nevertheless, in Chapter 3 of *The Woman in White*, perhaps recalling recent experience, he was prompted to write "The heat had been painfully oppressive."

By September 1864, however, he wrote to his mother "I am going tomorrow to Gadshill for a few days, taking my work with me. The oppressive atmosphere weighing on us, just now, as you know never agrees with me. I must see if the Kentish air will relieve my muddled head." Later in his life, by August 1880, he complained "Our weather here, has been very oppressive. Undeveloped thunderstorms, perpetually threatening, and only now and then fulfilling the threat, press a little heavily on sensitively-organised people (of whom I am one)"; and towards the end of his life in August 1887, writing to Sebastian Schlesinger, "I have been, and shall remain, wretchedly out of health. The heat of this summer has completely unnerved me."

## **WILLIAM COLLINS**

A small oil painting (9 x 12 inches) which looks very similar to the 'Visiting the Puppy' frontispiece engraving to Volume II of Wilkie's 1848 biography of his father, *The Memoirs of William Collins, R.A.*, was recently offered at auction. It was sold for £480 on 21 March

as lot 564 by fine art auctioneers, Brightwells of Leominster. The picture was noted as 'Attributed to William Collins RA (1788-1847)' but was accompanied by a more detailed description provided by WCS member and William Collins expert, Alan Bean.

There were a number of pictures relating to the theme of children admiring puppies in the artist's 1847 Studio Sale at Christie's (lots 111, 120 and 655). In his notebooks though, Collins only recorded one finished painting incorporating puppies, namely his early 1812 painting 'Children with Puppies', painted for Thomas Freeman Heathcote. In comparison with the painting at Brightwells, the 1812 work is a far more complex scene with three separate groups of children. In order to paint three groups of children in 'Children with Puppies' it is likely that Collins would have made preparatory sketches for each group. Accordingly, it is possible that the Brightwells painting represents one of a number of such sketches for the 1812 painting. Interestingly enough, the third boy in the right hand group in 'Children with Puppies' wears a battered hat which obscures the upper half of his face, similar to the boy in the current example.

The central group in 'Visiting the Puppy' is very closely related to the engraving by John James Hinchcliffe (1805-1875) which is the frontispiece illustration to Volume 2 of Wilkie Collins's 1848 biography of his father. On the basis that Wilkie Collins would have been intimately involved in all aspects of that publication including a choice of the illustrations, it seems possible that the work at Brightwells is the painting from which Hinchcliffe prepared his plate, and that it is indeed probably by William Collins. An early state of the engraving related to the subject, which has the title and artist's name only and not the engraver's, is in the British Museum, (ref 2006 u.3219).

The Lot 564 picture can be seen at [www.brightwells.com/antiques-fine-art-wine/past-results/antiques-fine-art-results/past-results-spring-two-day-2019](http://www.brightwells.com/antiques-fine-art-wine/past-results/antiques-fine-art-results/past-results-spring-two-day-2019) and can also be found at [www.wilkie-collins.info/books\\_memoirs.htm](http://www.wilkie-collins.info/books_memoirs.htm).

## **WILKIE COLLINS FIRST EDITIONS**

Sotheran's – which claims to be the world's longest established antiquarian bookseller – has been offering for sale a large number of Wilkie Collins first editions. It is very unusual to find such an almost complete collection in original cloth and generally fine condition, though that is reflected in the prices. All volumes contain the bookplate of John Martineau (1904-1982), a collateral descendant of the Victorian writer and sociologist Harriet Martineau (1802-1876). The collection was put up for sale by one of his descendants.

Many of the titles have been sold but some still remain and details can be obtained from Sotheran's, 2 Sackville Street, London W1S 3DP; 020 7439 6151; or [books@sotherans.co.uk](mailto:books@sotherans.co.uk). Ask for Oliver Clegg or Rebekah Cron.

Wilkie himself bought books from Sotheran as witnessed by three payments in his accounts: 19 November 1860 to Willis & Co., £8-13s-6d; 21 July 1864 to Willis & Co., £10-3s; 14 February 1872 to Sotheran & Co., £5-18s-6d.

The payments to Willis & Co were in fact to Willis & Sotheran, an earlier name for the firm and the addressee on the letter accompanying the cheque for £10-3s.

Sadly, we do not know what he bought for these sums. In 1872 Wilkie paid the firm a subscription for *Dramatists of the Reformation* edited by William Logan and James Maidment. But having read the first volume (of what would become 14) he wrote to Sotheran & Co on 1 November cancelling the subscription.

### **RADIO 4 EXTRA**

BBC Radio 4 Extra continues to revive Collins adaptations brought out of the archives. Most recently the 2001 dramatisation of *The Woman in White* in four episodes was broadcast on Radio 4 Extra and subsequently made available online. It was adapted by Martyn Wade, with Toby Stephens as Walter Hartright, Juliet Aubrey as Marian Halcombe, Emily Bruni as Laura Fairlie, Jeremy Clyde as Sir Percival Glyde, Alice Hart as Anne Catherick, Sean Baker as Mr Gilmore, Ioan Meredith as Pesca, and Edward Petherbridge as Frederick Fairlie. You can hear all four parts here <https://www.bbc.co.uk/programmes/b007jlgx>.

It is always worthwhile keeping an eye on the Radio 4 Extra programme schedule as we never know when *Basil*, *No Name* or one of Collins's short stories may reappear for a short while.

### **TELEVISION ADAPTATIONS - AWESOME ORSON**

A 1973 TV dramatization of Wilkie's story 'A Terribly Strange Bed' features as one episode (of 13 of course!) on a new DVD of *Orson Welles' Great Mysteries – Volume 1* published in February. Each of the mysteries is introduced by the great man (Welles not Collins!). The adaptation follows the original fairly well but is much less tense in the key bed-smothering scene.

'A Terribly Strange Bed' was Wilkie's first contribution to *Household Words* in the issue of 24 April 1852 for which he was paid £7-10s for the 7775 word tale. A workman might have earned £1 or £1-10s a week then. Wilkie republished it in his anthology *After Dark* in 1856 and it is found in numerous later collections of mystery or ghost stories in many languages.

A radio version starring Peter Lawford was broadcast as part of CBS Radio's Suspense series on 7 June 1954. Even earlier was a reading of the story, adapted for schools, on the BBC Home Service on 12 March 1946. Other readings have been broadcast on BBC radio, most recently by Robin Bailey on 14/15 October 2009. You can buy the DVD price £15 from <https://networkonair.com> search 'Orson Welles'.

## **COPYRIGHT ON STAGE**

Wilkie's copyright battles during his life are well-known. But a newly-found report shows the battles did not stop at his death. More than a year after he died, his executors brought two cases against pirate stage versions of *The Woman in White* and *The New Magdalen*. The High Court heard the cases on 12 December 1890. The Judge, Sir Arthur Kekewich (1832-1907), rejected the first application because Wilkie's own dramatization of *The Woman in White* had been made more than a decade after the story was published as a novel. That made it fair game for unauthorised dramatisers. But the Judge upheld the second claim as Wilkie had published his dramatic version of the book before the novel was published, thus retaining his copyright. (*The Legal News* 21 March 1891 XIV p.90).

Neither pirated version appears in the Lord Chamberlain's collection around that time so either or both may have been re-runs of the several pirated editions that had been performed during Wilkie's life.

A fascinating insight into the first pirate stage adaptation of *The Woman in White* was published by Karen Laird in 2015. Within three months of the novel's publication in three volumes *The Woman in White: A Drama in Three Acts* was staged at the Surrey Theatre in Blackfriars Road which was south of the Thames and well away from the normal theatreland of the West End. Probably written by J. M. Ware, the play ran for 24 performances from 3 to 30 November. Wilkie was aware of it. Just before it opened, he wrote to one of the senior people at the novel's publisher, Sampson Low.

They are going to dramatize the story at The Surrey Theatre – and I am asked to go to law about that. I will certainly go and hiss – unless the manager makes a “previous arrangement” with me. ([0381] to Edward Marston, 31 October 1860).

There is no evidence that any of those three options happened. The play got generally excellent reviews in, for example, *The Times* (8 November 1860, p.6) and the *Athenaeum* (10 November 1860, p. 638). The production went on the provincial theatre circuit including Bath, Bristol, and Edinburgh before Christmas.

Laird praises the way the story was adapted for the stage, beginning when Walter is ensconced in Limmeridge House and ending with Fosco's murder. She says Wilkie used similar abridgements in his official dramatization which was so successful in 1871, running for 120 performances at the Olympic. Karen Laird *The Art of Adapting Victorian Literature 1848-1920* (2015: Ashgate, Farnham, ISBN 9781472424396), pp. 147-177.

## **TAUCHNITZ**

The Leipzig based publisher Tauchnitz made its living by republishing popular English novels, in English, on the Continent of Europe for visitors to read. Unusually, it paid

authors for the right to do this. In exchange the Tauchnitz editions were not allowed into the UK and there are several letters extant which Wilkie wrote to the agent Williams & Norgate to allow a few copies through for his own use.

An anecdote about how fiercely some Customs Officers kept the editions out the UK has been recently discovered in the *Pall Mall Gazette*.

Few travellers leave the Continent without bringing at least an odd volume or two. Ladies are said to be the worst offenders. Beauty exercises a certain power even upon the grimmest of Customs officers. The Dover boat had just arrived. The passengers walked over the gangway until the decks were cleared. One person remained, occupying a lonely camp-stool on the lee side of the funnel. It was a lady, young and beautiful. She gave no sign. Her eyes were riveted to the pages of a volume which lay on her lap; the wind had loosened her hair, which fell over her shoulders in picturesque disorder. Page after page she read, unconscious of the glassy gaze of the official to whom she had become the centre of an absorbing interest. At last he came up and tapped her politely on the shoulder. She started violently, and with a beseeching look. 'Let me finish it, pray.' 'I must impound it, madam.' 'You must?' 'How much more have you to read?' 'Half-a Volume.' 'I suggest a compromise,' replied the officer. He took the volume, tore it in 'two pieces, and threw over the first half into the sea. 'You may keep the rest.' It was his sacrifice to beauty. The volume was a Tauchnitz edition of W . . . . . C . . . . . 's most thrilling romance. (*Pall Mall Gazette*, 25 April 1884, p. 11.)

It seems clear that the book concerned was *The Woman in White* published by Tauchnitz in two volumes on 6 September 1860, just three weeks after the novel was published in London. See Todd & Bowden (1988: New York), p130. Wilkie was very generous over the years in his praise of the Tauchnitz firm. In 1862 he wrote:

I am very glad to hear that *The Woman In White* has proved successful in your hands. It has largely increased my reputation here – and I am rejoiced to think that it has helped to justify your uniform liberality of conduct and feeling towards English writers. ([0453] to Tauchnitz, 28 January 1862).

Tauchnitz published 28 of Wilkie's books from 1856 to 1890. But only eleven payments from Tauchnitz are recorded in Wilkie's bank accounts between 1862 and 1881, totalling just over £659. It is a significant sum but less than 1% of the money which passed through his bank account from 1860 to his death.

### **A NEW SOURCE FOR *THE WOMAN IN WHITE*?**

WCS member John Bowen, who is Professor of English at the University of York, has discovered a letter that has great significance for both Dickens and Collins scholars (*TLS* 19 February 2019 [www.the-tls.co.uk](http://www.the-tls.co.uk) search 'Unmutual Friend').

Edward Dutton Cook, critic and author, was a neighbour of Catherine Dickens after she and Charles split up. In January 1879 Cook wrote to another critic, William Moy Thomas, about the events in 1858 that led to the split, based on accounts Catherine confided in him towards the end of her life.

“He even tried to shut her up in a lunatic asylum, poor thing! But bad as the law is in regard to proof of insanity he could not quite wrest it to his purpose.”

Those sentences are new evidence for things that have been suggested before but have often been dismissed. We know that Wilkie Collins was one of the very few friends in whom Dickens confided about his feelings for Ellen Ternan. So it is likely he knew that Dickens had tried to get his wife committed. In 1859 *The Woman in White* was published initially in Dickens’s periodical *All The Year Round*. At its heart is the incarceration of a woman in a lunatic asylum. Other sources for that plot line have been suggested – not least Edward Bulwer Lytton trying a similar ploy with his own wife – but this letter and John Bowen’s analysis gives us a new one.

## **WILKIE COLLINS’S BEST BOOKS**

Dr Jason Hall of Exeter University who edited *Jezebel’s Daughter* for Oxford World’s Classics was interviewed in the ‘Five Books’ series by Beatrice Wilford and gave his own ‘Best Books’ by Collins. These featured *The Woman in White* with “weird characters like Count Fosco, or Marian Halcombe”; the “quaso-mythological world of *Rambles Beyond Railways*; *The Moonstone* which “introduces Sergeant Cuff, a memorable literary detective”; *Poor Miss Finch* where “only in Collins novel: a character who is blue throughout”; and *Heart and Science* “Collins’s 1883 attempt to enter directly into the anti-vivisection debates”. The full interview can be found at <https://fivebooks.com/best-books/jason-hall-wilkie-collins/>.

## **BRAZEN POLYAMORY**

These are the words used by Emily Bartlett Hines to describe Wilkie’s unmarried relationship with two women throughout much of his adult life. In a very interesting essay, she describes Wilkie’s relationships with Caroline Graves and Martha Rudd in the context of society, his novels, and his life. Nicely illustrated by Sophie Margolin at <https://narratively.com> search ‘brazen polyamory’.

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**NEWSLETTER**

**SUMMER 2019**

### **A MOONSTONE BROOCH**

The Antiques Roadshow for 7 July featured a diamond brooch which had originally been taken from Seringapatam in southern India. In *The Moonstone* the fabulous yellow diamond “fell into the possession of Tippoo, Sultan of Seringapatam, who caused it to be placed as an ornament in the handle of a dagger, and who commanded it to be kept among the choicest treasures of his armoury.” The bloodthirsty scene where the diamond was looted by Colonel John Herculastle was described in ‘The Siege of Seringapatam (1799)’, Collins’s opening chapter of the novel. The brooch must also have been a choicest treasure as it was described as highly collectable and valued by the Antique Roadshow’s resident expert at £30,000.

The programme mentioned and must have been recorded towards the end of an Exhibition on Indian Jewellery at the Victoria and Albert Museum. This was accompanied by a V & A book, *Indian Jewellery* by Nick Barnard. Quoting from the blurb,

Indian jewellery is among the most opulent and finely wrought in the world and this book draws on over 100 exquisite pieces from the V&A’s superb collection, many never published before. Nick Barnard illuminates the social context and symbolic meanings as well as the varied techniques employed by craftsmen. He describes how jewellery was worn and by

whom, how stones were sourced and cut, how traditions of making and wearing varied in different parts of the country, and how the V&A's own collection itself was brought together by travellers and scholars over the years.

No mention, however, of a significant character in *The Moonstone* “the celebrated Indian traveller, Mr. Murthwaite, who, at risk of his life, had penetrated in disguise where no European had ever set foot before.”

## **A WILLIAM FRITH EXHIBITION**

The Mercer Art Gallery, Harrogate, is staging ‘William Powell Frith: The People’s Painter’ from 15 June to 29 September 2019 to mark the bicentenary of his birth. Frith (1819-1909) was a popular Victorian narrative painter, best known for *Derby Day* and *Ramsgate Sands*. He was a long-standing friend of Wilkie and a fellow student of Charles Collins. He participated in amateur theatricals, including Collins's 1849 production of Goldsmith's *Good Natur'd Man* which inspired the painting *Mr Honeywood Introduces the Bailiffs*. Frith was also a regular visitor to Dickens and attended *The Frozen Deep* at Tavistock House in 1857. Collins travelled to Italy with Frith and his family in 1875.

Frith records in *My Autobiography and Reminiscences* (1888, Vol. II, p. 333)

When I speak of Wilkie Collins, whom I have known all his life, I shall meet with no contradiction when I say he is one of the most popular novelists of the present day. There again you have a man who is as delightful in private as he is in public. That he is an admirable *raconteur* goes with out saying; of an imperturbably good temper, as he proved on one occasion at my own table, when a rude guest – of whom I was heartily ashamed – after declaring that popularity was no proof of merit, said to Collins by way of example “Why your novels are read in every back-kitchen in England.” This Collins heard without a sign of irritation.

Further information about the exhibition can be had at [www.harrogate.gov.uk/info/20152/mercer\\_art\\_gallery/1203/william\\_powell\\_frith\\_the\\_peoples\\_painter](http://www.harrogate.gov.uk/info/20152/mercer_art_gallery/1203/william_powell_frith_the_peoples_painter).

## **ALLIANCE OF LITERARY SOCIETIES**

The annual meeting of the Alliance of Literary Societies was held over the weekend of Friday 17 to Sunday 19 May in Nuneaton. It was hosted by the George Eliot Fellowship which presented a full programme of interesting talks

on the Saturday. Next year's meeting will be organised by the Walmsley Society in Robin Hood's Bay from 12 to 14 June. The location is in north Yorkshire about five miles south of Whitby where Collins stayed with Caroline Graves in August 1861. His intention there was to research *No Name* but he was so disturbed by the noise of a local brass band that he gave up and returned early to London via Aldeburgh.

### ***THE WOMAN IN WHITE* – SILENT FILM VERSIONS**

There were several silent film versions of *The Woman in White*. The version from July 1917 in the Thanouser Collection, also called *The Unfortunate Marriage*, was described in detail in the WCS Newsletter for Summer 2014 (you can still search for this on the WCS website). More recently a slightly later film version called *The Twin Pawns* has become available as Volume 132 in the 'Silent Gems Collection'. It dates from 1919 and although the storyline is attributed to Collins, the plot is several steps removed from his original.

Separated since birth, twins Violet and Daisy White are unaware of each other's existence. Violet, the idol of her indulgent father Harry has everything her heart could desire while Daisy, reared by her indigent mother, is poorly clad and underfed. This fragile child of the slums is not aware that John Bent possesses certain papers which confirm her true relation to Harry White. By hiding from Daisy's father, the truth of her existence, Bent is able to manipulate the twins to his own best advantage; they become his pawns. After hiding Daisy away in school, he substitutes her for Violet, whom he has forced into marriage, when the latter dies. Then he disposes of Daisy by declaring her insane and placing her in an asylum. It appears that Bent will win the game until Bob Anderson, who is in love with Daisy, comes to her rescue and checkmates the black knight.

The film features Mae Murray in the double role together with Warner Oland and Henry G. Sell in a production by Leonce Perret Pictures, produced by the Acme Pictures Corporation. The film currently appears to be distributed through Amazon but you can find it on YouTube – with Dutch titles, however – at <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=D3tsJ-wPTpg>.

### **MORE ON SCREEN ADAPTATIONS**

Victorian scholar Ellen Moody has written a long piece in her blog about the difficulties of adapting Wilkie's works, *The Woman in White* and *The Moonstone*,

for the screen. She watched five adaptations altogether of varying lengths and age and concludes

Collins's two best-known novels are just not adaptable because their fascination and depths comes from the highly complicated ironically juxtaposed subjective and nuanced narratives... [That] he is astonishingly contemporary in a lot of his perceptions... And lastly that at their core is a radical attack on sexuality as usually perceived and controlled, and violations of privacy, security, and any calm."

It is rather a long read but certainly well worth the time. [ellenandjim.wordpress.com/2019/07/07/wilkie-collinss-woman-in-white-the-moonstone-resist-adaptation/](http://ellenandjim.wordpress.com/2019/07/07/wilkie-collinss-woman-in-white-the-moonstone-resist-adaptation/)

### ***DRACULA***

Ellen Moody also notes in that blog:

I'm convinced that Collins's *Woman in White* was a strong influence on Stoker's sensational vampire horror tale: Collins's use of subjective structures, and many of his themes and motifs are taken over.

Another recent essay elaborates on that theme. 'The *Woman in White*'s influence on *Dracula*', written by Tyler Tichelaar can now be found at <https://thegothicwanderer.wordpress.com/2019/06/24/the-woman-in-whites-influence-on-dracula/>.

### **FRANK ARCHER'S DIARY**

The actor Frank Archer (1844-1917), whose real name was Frank Bishop Arnold, played the vicar Julian Gray in the dramatic version of *The New Magdalen* in 1873 and in a revival in 1885. Archer was Wilkie's favourite actor for the part. In 1874 Wilkie even considered withholding permission for an earlier revival because Archer was not available.

I have hesitated – solely on your account, feeling the serious loss to the piece of not including you in the cast. ([1493] to Archer 16 November 1874).

They remained friendly and Wilkie gave Archer a lot of help after he quit acting in 1888 and tried to develop a writing career. Unfortunately for Archer, that was

not a great success but by then he did not need to earn a living as in 1879 he had married the wealthy daughter of the Bedford brewer Thomas Jessop. Archer's diaries and notebooks record several meetings with Wilkie. However, the earliest reference to him was in a diary of 1862 when Archer was aged 17 and working as a warehouseman in a fabric wholesaler near St. Paul's cathedral. He records on 13 August 1862: "Begin "Woman in White" Wilkie Collins". The edition was presumably the one volume edition which had been published in 1861. Sadly, he gives no views or comments on the book.

Another diarist – a young woman who lived in Brereton near Rugeley in Staffordshire – records on 24 October 1860: "Annie read Woman in White aloud to me." Annie is almost certainly her sister. The reading must have been from one of the earlier three-volume editions before the final three-volume New Edition was published in November 1860. The diary has no further references to reading it or having it read to her.

How many more unrecognised mentions of Wilkie's bestseller must there be in diaries of the 1860s?

## GAME OF SPOILERS

Wilkie makes a surprise appearance in an essay about spoilers – revealing plot details of television serials before they have been broadcast. It was a big issue for the recent Home Box Office hit *Game of Thrones* and the writer notes it was something Wilkie warned against in the preface to the first edition of *The Woman in White* in 1860.

In the event of this book being reviewed, I venture to ask whether it is possible to praise the writer, or to blame him, without opening the proceedings by telling his story at second-hand...if he tells it at all, in any way whatever, is he doing a service to the reader, by destroying, beforehand, two main elements in the attraction of all stories – the interest of curiosity, and the excitement of surprise? (Preface to *The Woman in White* 1860, p. viii).

The essay then quotes a critic in *The Saturday Review* suggesting a compromise, pleading

[we hope] there is no objection to an occasional hint, a dark allusion ... to this mystery of mysteries, the [plot of] the Woman in White.

The anonymous writer of the essay says what followed was not quite what we'd recognise today as a "spoiler-free" review, but this was new territory for the Victorian reviews and their readers. See <http://theconversation.com/spoilers-making-people-angry-since-victorian-times-116317>.

### **ANOTHER WILKIE COLLINS**

In 1885 our Wilkie Collins heard from a young man called Wilkie Collins Barr whom we think lived in Pennsylvania. Barr had written to Wilkie to say he enjoyed *Armada* and asked for his autograph. Wilkie obliged with his reply:

Two of your names give you a claim to my autograph, which I ought to be the last person living to dispute. But there is another reason for my writing to you. I am especially pleased to hear that you like "Armada" – for, if I may venture to pronounce an opinion, I think "Armada" the best book that I have written.

This letter [3112], dated 27 May 1885, was printed on page 3 of the *New York Times* for 29 June 1885.

### **AND YET ANOTHER COLLINS**

A recent piece in the *Orlando Sentinel* recorded the death of a man called Wilkie Collins Nash II (also known as Buddy) who died on 5 May aged 80. He was born on 15 December 1938 in Indianapolis, Indiana. His father was Russell Collins Nash (1902-1963) and his mother Vivian Nash (née Flannagan). Buddy leaves behind two daughters, Carolyn Harrison and Regina Schodrowski; a sister, Colleen Shook; six grandchildren; and seven great-grandchildren.

Buddy's grandfather was also Wilkie Collins Nash (hence the II in his name). He was born in Indiana on 17 September 1878, served in World War I and died on 25 July 1934. He was listed in the 1920 Federal Census as a coal worker with a wife Daisy. Their son Russell Collins Nash (born 16 August 1902) was Buddy's father. Buddy's memorial service was on Saturday 18 May at 11 am.

### **A COMPLIMENT TO WILKIE IN *THE TIMES***

Back in June, there was a piece in *The Times* about Victorian male novelists. This prompted a reply from *Times* reader Dave Lees, "Camilla Long (Comment, last

week) invites us to name “a significant Victorian novelist who isn’t a raging misogynist”. The obvious answer is Wilkie Collins, who wrote many stories exposing the injustices perpetrated on Victorian womanhood.”

Three major examples which immediately come to mind are *The Woman in White* where Anne Catherick and Laura Fairlie run foul of Sir Percival Glyde; *No Name* where Magdalen and Norah Vanstone are disinherited by their wicked uncle Michael; and *Man and Wife* where Anne Silvester suffers at the hands of the villainous Geoffrey Delamayn and where Hester Detheridge reveals the helplessness of working-class married women. William Frith also described a wife, ill-treated at the hands of her drunken husband, who could well have been the model for Hester Detheridge. *Man and Wife* attacks both Irish and Scottish marriage laws as well as arguing the case for a Married Woman’s Property Act, finally passed in 1882, twelve years after the book was published.

### **HARPER’S EDITIONS**

Starting with *Antonina* in 1850, Harper Brothers became Collins’s official publishers in the USA and issued his works in various editions the most complete of which consisted of seventeen titles in their *Illustrated Library Edition*. This was published from 1873 to coincide with his reading tour to North America. The edition contains a facsimile inscription in Collins’s handwriting, “I gratefully dedicate this collected edition of my works, to the American People.” The signature sometimes confuses (probably amateur) booksellers into believing they have a signed copy and advertise it with an astronomical price. Harpers continued to issue titles in the same style complete with illustrations up to 1902 by which time they had become the *Moonstone Edition*. It appears, however, that *The Moonstone*, described on the dust jacket as “The most famous mystery story of all time”, survived beyond this date since a copy has been seen described with the same illustrated format in the *Sun Dial Library*. This series was issued by Garden City Publishing from 1929 with *The Moonstone* dated 1937. (<https://seriesofseries.owu.edu/sun-dial-library/>).

### **‘THE DUEL IN HERNE WOOD’ AND *THE SPIRIT OF THE TIMES***

‘The Duel in Herne Wood’ is one of several stories specially written between 1876 and 1887 for the Christmas issues of the New York newspaper *The Spirit of*

*the Times*. Most were republished in a variety of English and US magazines and were eventually included in *Little Novels* (1887) but with different titles. In the case of ‘The Duel in Herne Wood’, it was renamed ‘Miss Bertha and the Yankee’. The story in its original incarnation in *The Spirit of the Times* for December 1877 can now be seen online at <https://digital.library.villanova.edu/Item/vudl:570595>. Currently for sale online at ABE Books at a not so modest \$1,500 is Collins’s later story, ‘The Girl at the Gate’ first published in December 1884 and republished as ‘Mr. Lepel and the Housekeeper’ in *Little Novels*.

At the same time, Collins specifically recorded that three stories from *The Spirit of the Times*, ‘Fie. Fie! Or the Fair Physician’, ‘Love’s Random Shot’ and ‘The Devil’s Spectacles’ “have served their purpose in periodicals, but are not worthy of republication in book form. They were written in a hurry, and the sooner they are drowned in the waters of oblivion the better. I desire that they should not be republished after my death.” They can, however, be found in Julian Thompson’s 1995 *Wilkie Collins. The Complete Shorter Fiction*.

## **THE LADY DETECTIVES**

Various Collins stories have been dramatized and broadcast on Radio 4 extra, mainly his major works, *The Woman in White*, *The Moonstone* and *No Name*, as well as the occasional short story such as ‘A Terribly Strange Bed’ and ‘Who Killed Zebedee?’ We can now add to the list *The Law and the Lady* in which Valeria Woodville attempts to prove the innocence of her husband, Eustace, tainted with the Scottish Not Proven verdict for killing his first wife. The novel was dramatised by Roger Danes, featuring Abigail Docherty and Richard Conlon. It was originally broadcast in 2005 and more recently in 2018 on Radio 4 extra.

It is now available on CD (mainly distributed through Amazon at about £15) together with three other dramatisations as *The Lady Detectives*. The other stories are *The Redhill Sisterhood* by Catherine Pirkis in which Victorian sleuth Loveday Brooke investigates some nuns who seem to be forsaking their vows for burglary; *Mr Bovey’s Unexpected Will* by L. Meade where Victorian detective Florence Cusack investigates a man whose fate depends on his weight in gold; and *The Golden Slipper* by Anna Katherine Green in which New York socialite-cum-detective Violet Strange probes four rich women suspected of multiple thefts.

Anna Katherine Green (1846-1935) is best known for *The Leavenworth Case* (1878). Collins wrote to her publisher, George Putnam, in 1883:

Have I read “The Leavenworth Case”? I have read it through at one sitting. Need I say after that what I think of it? Yes – because I have a word to add about Miss Green’s future work. Her powers of invention are so remarkable – she has so much imagination and so much belief (a most important qualification for our art) in what she writes, that I have nothing to report of myself, so far, but most sincere admiration.

Nevertheless – for a personal but completely biased opinion - she’s not a patch on Wilkie!

## **A MISCELLANY OF BOOKS**

### **SHERLOCK HOLMES AND *THE MOONSTONE***

Another recently discovered candidate for Wilkie’s PPI (Parodies, Plagiarism and Imitation - see the WCS Newsletter for Winter 2018) is *The Further Adventures of Sherlock Holmes – The Moonstone’s Curse* by Sam Siciliano, one of a series of books using the great detective as a character. We do, however, meet Mr Murthwaite and an Indian, as well as Dr Watson and Inspector Lestrade. Quoting the blurb,

The aristocratic Charles Bromley arrives at 221B Baker Street to beg Sherlock Holmes for his help. Bromley believes that his wife is in danger, as she has refused an offer to sell the Moonstone, a fabulous diamond that has been in her family for generations but which is said to be cursed. When a jeweller is found murdered, it seems as if the Moonstone deserves its reputation. Then the diamond is stolen, and Holmes must try to unravel a mystery centuries in the making.

The novel is published by Titan Books at £7.99, paperback, (ISBN 9781785652523).

### **A MARY BRADDON COMPANION**

WCS members fond of sensation novels may like *Mary Elizabeth Braddon: A Companion to the Mystery Fiction* by former WCS Journal editor Ann-Marie Beller. Quoting from the cover introduction:

Mary Elizabeth Braddon (1835-1915) was an important figure in the development of crime fiction. She wrote more than 80 novels, numerous plays, poems, essays and short stories, and edited two magazines during her 55-year literary career. Her bestselling *Lady Audley's Secret* secured her reputation as a leading "sensation novelist." Though critics called her work immoral, Braddon's novels influenced the detective fiction of the late Victorian period. With entries on all her published writing, characters, relationships and influences, and themes and contexts, as well as numerous illustrations, a career chronology, and a chronological and alphabetical listing of all of her works, this companion to Braddon's mystery fiction is the definitive reference on this provocative but overlooked writer.

Braddon emulated Collins, not only in using substituted identity, but also setting criminal activities in everyday surroundings. In 1887 she acknowledged that she owed *Lady Audley's Secret* to *The Woman in White* and that "Wilkie Collins is assuredly my literary father." Collins also became a personal friend. In *Rough Justice* (1898) she introduced Detective Faunce whose novel-reading includes both Wilkie Collins and Charles Dickens.

The *Companion* is arranged alphabetically with several references to Collins together with his own separate entry plus one for *The Woman in White*. It is published by McFarland and is available through Amazon at £36.95, paperback, (ISBN 978-0786436675).

### ***SECRET RAMSGATE***

*Secret Ramsgate* by Andy Bull with 100 illustrations has just been published by Amberley Publishing at £13.49 (ISBN 9781445692555). There is also a Kindle edition at £12. The author reveals the hidden history of Ramsgate, from the landing of Roman invasion forces and St Augustine's mission, Thomas Becket's links with nearby Sandwich, the famous writers who lived in or who visited the town - including of course Wilkie Collins - and tales of remarkable characters, unusual events and buildings lost or hidden.

Wilkie regularly stayed in Ramsgate with Caroline Graves from the 1870s. When his morganatic family was old enough, he became Mr Dawson and was joined by Martha Rudd and his three children. The resort became the setting for scenes in *The Law and the Lady*, *Poor Miss Finch* and *The Fallen Leaves*.

### ***COLLABORATIVE DICKENS***

Also published in 2019 is *Collaborative Dickens. Authorship and Victorian Christmas Periodicals* by Melisa Klimaszewski. It is issued by Ohio University Press (Athens) in its 'Victorian Studies' series, hardback at £66 (ISBN13 9780821423653). The publisher introduces the text with:

From 1850 to 1867, Charles Dickens produced special issues (numbers) of his journals *Household Words* and *All the Year Round*, which were released shortly before Christmas each year. In *Collaborative Dickens*, Melisa Klimaszewski undertakes the first comprehensive study of these Christmas numbers. She argues for a revised understanding of Dickens as an editor who, rather than ceaselessly bullying his contributors, sometimes accommodated contrary views and depended upon multivocal narratives for his own success. Klimaszewski uncovers connections among and between the stories in each Christmas collection. She thus reveals ongoing conversations between the works of Dickens and his collaborators on topics important to the Victorians, including race, empire, supernatural hauntings, marriage, disability, and criminality. Stories from Wilkie Collins, Elizabeth Gaskell, and women writers such as Amelia B. Edwards and Adelaide Anne Procter interact provocatively with Dickens's writing.

Melisa Klimaszewski is also the author of the useful little *Wilkie Collins* in the 'Brief Lives' series from Hesperus Press, published in 2011.

### ***CHEMICAL CRIMES***

Published by Ohio State University Press (Columbus) is *Chemical Crimes: Science and Poison in Victorian Crime Fiction* by Cheryl Blake Price, hardback at £63.95. (ISBN 9780814213919).

[The book] delves into the dark world of Victorian criminality to examine how poison allowed authors to disrupt gender boundaries, genre, and the professionalization of science. ... From the *Newgate* and *Silver Fork* novels of the 1830s to the emergent genres of science and detective fiction of the 1890s, Price advocates for the classification of a new type of poisoner, one who combined crime with methodical scientific know-how: the chemical criminal.

Collins, of course, is mentioned and we have no further to look than *Jezebel's Daughter* where the villainous Madame Fontaine does her best to poison Mrs Wagner with the aid of her late husband's box of lethal chemicals.

## LARGE PRINT EDITIONS

There are now several Collins titles advertised as large print editions. The Large Print Bookshop lists six titles in Tiers 16pt: *The Evil Genius*, *The Two Destinies*, *The Law and the Lady*, *The Moonstone*, *The Dead Alive*, and *The Haunted Hotel*. Details are online at [www.largeprintbookshop.co.uk/index.php](http://www.largeprintbookshop.co.uk/index.php).

Amazon also lists similar editions, sixteen in all, but do not state the size or font. The other approach is to use a Kindle (other reading devices are available) where all Collins titles are available to download free of charge from Amazon's Classics and where the font size can be easily adjusted while reading.

## WILKIE'S MEMOIRS OF WILLIAM COLLINS

Adrian Harrington Rare Books currently has in its half price summer sale a first edition copy of Wilkie's first published book, a biography of his father, *Memoirs of the Life of William Collins Esq., R.A. With Selections from his Journals and Correspondence* at what appears to be the quite sensible price of £125 – decent copies usually appear at prices between £500 and £1,000. Search under 'authors' at <https://www.harringtonbooks.co.uk/> for a photograph and description.

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As a final thought after such a miscellany of books, if you want to know what Wilkie himself read, consult Professor Baker's 2002 *Wilkie Collins's Library. A Reconstruction* where you will find everything from Aldeburgh - an 1861 guide – to William Winter - the theatre critic. (Greenwood Press, Connecticut).

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## *THE WILKIE COLLINS SOCIETY*

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

**NEWSLETTER**

**WINTER 2019**

### **PETER FIENNES AT THE DICKENS FELLOWSHIP**

Members will be able to hear a talk by Peter Fiennes – ‘Footnotes: In the footsteps of Dickens and Collins’ - at the first meeting of the Dickens Fellowship for 2020. This will take place at 6.30pm on Tuesday 21 January at Lumen URC, 88 Tavistock Place, London WC1H 9RS.

### ***FOOTNOTES: A JOURNEY ROUND BRITAIN IN THE COMPANY OF GREAT WRITERS***

*Footnotes*, written by Peter Fiennes, is a series of twelve walks around Britain following in the footsteps of well-known authors. His original premise was “to travel around Britain in the footsteps of a succession of (mostly) famous writers, without leaving any gaps, and without straying from their recorded paths, passing from one to the next like a baton in a relay, or a snowball swelling as it rolls, picking up people and debris along the way.” This idea changed to become a journey “from childhood to death.”

Wilkie appears in three sections, the first two concerning his walking tour of Cornwall in 1850 with the third in the company of Charles Dickens and their trip to the Lake District and Doncaster. The former relates to *Rambles Beyond Railways* published in 1851 while the latter to ‘The Lazy Tour of Two Idle Apprentices’ which appeared in *Household Words* from 3-31 October 1857.

Fiennes text is a mixture of biography, paraphrased extracts from Wilkie's text and a current view of the places mentioned.

Fiennes' fellow travellers also include Enid Blyton (Isle of Purbeck, Swanage, Weymouth); Ithell Colquhoun (Lamorna Cove); Celia Fiennes (Glastonbury, Wells, Bath, Bristol, Gloucester, Hereford); Gerald of Wales (Hereford, Hay on Wye, Newport, Cardiff, St David's, Snowdonia); Somerville & Ross (north Wales); JB Priestley & Beryl Bainbridge (Stoke, Liverpool, Manchester, Blackpool, Bradford, Newcastle, York, Hull); Charles Dickens (Lake District, Doncaster, London); and Johnson & Boswell (Edinburgh, Skye, Aberdeen).

*Footnotes: A Journey Round Britain in the Company of Great Writers* is published by Oneworld Publications in both hard and paperback (ISBN 978-1-78607-629-8).

### **A NEW EDITION OF *THE MOONSTONE* - AND AN OUP OFFER**

Oxford University Press have announced a new edition of *The Moonstone* using the 1871 corrected edition and which will consider the large amount of new material now available. The OUP blurb states that the introduction by Francis O'Gorman - professor of Victorian literature and head of the school of English at the University of Leeds

Sees the novel as a bravura exploration of mistaken judgements, a plot that strikingly reflected Collins's own private life, and a dazzling meditation on what can, but importantly, cannot be merely made into sense. Additional materials presented in three appendices include a cartoon reaction to the conclusion of the novel in 1875; a detailed review of the dramatized version in 1877; and the long letter of advice that Collins received on how to manage the end of the novel.

OUP are also giving away five free copies of the **previous** edition, so excellently edited by John Sutherland back in 1999. Copies will be available to the first five emails to Andrew Gasson at [apogee@apgee.co.uk](mailto:apogee@apgee.co.uk).

### ***ANCIENT ROME AND VICTORIAN MASCULINITY***

*Ancient Rome and Victorian Masculinity* by Laura Eastlake which was originally issued in book form has now been published to Oxford Scholarship Online. The book examines Victorian receptions of ancient Rome from the French Revolution to the First World War, with a specific focus on how those receptions were deployed to create useable models of masculinity. Chapters include topics on education, politics, empire, and late Victorian decadence with reference to authors like Wilkie Collins, Anthony Trollope, H. Rider Haggard, Rudyard Kipling, and others. (ISBN-13: 9780198833031).

### **SEASONS OF DARKNESS**

*Season of Darkness* by Cora Harrison is yet another new novel featuring Collins as a character. (Severn House Publishers, ISBN-10: 0727888765). Quoting a review from Kirkus, “Maid Isabella Gordon went missing shortly after hinting to her friend and fellow maid Sesina that she knew a secret a certain someone would pay handsomely to keep hidden. All too soon, Isabella’s corpse is fished from the river, and Inspector Field, the real-life inspiration for Inspector Bucket in *Bleak House*, is called to investigate. Since Field’s friend Charles Dickens still remembers Isabella as a notably non-compliant tenant of Urania Cottage, a home for unfortunate young women largely underwritten by Dickens, the celebrated novelist promptly interjects himself and Wilkie Collins into the case. The pair, guided largely by Dickens’ ebullient certainty that “I’m always right when I put my mind to a matter,” decide for highly plausible reasons to focus their suspicions on Isabella’s pre-Urania years for clues to her killing. Despite a plot twist borrowed from one of Agatha Christie’s last novels, the results are never exactly surprising, but the Victorian atmosphere, filtered alternately through Sesina and Collins, is thick enough to cut with a knife. The real triumph is Harrison’s Dickens: sublimely conceited, short-tempered, self-dramatizing, often bombastic, and perfectly matched with the infinitely less self-assured Collins.”

### **A QUAIN AND CURIOUS VOLUME**

*A Quaint and Curious Volume: Tales & Poems of the Gothic* has an introduction by Sarah Perry, author of *The Essex Serpent*. The compilation includes works by Edgar Allan Poe, Christina Rossetti, Mary Shelley and, of course Wilkie whose contribution is the ever popular ‘The Dream Woman’. There are also extracts from classic gothic novels such as *Frankenstein*, *The Castle of Otranto* and *Northanger Abbey* and relatively unknown stories such as ‘The Yellow Wallpaper’ by Charlotte Perkins Gilman. (Harper Collins, ISBN: 97800008351823).

### **OPENING DOORS FOR YOUNG READERS**

*Opening Doors to Quality Writing* by Bob Cox “introduces teachers to engaging strategies which use literary heritage texts as the stimulus for excellent learning” for ages 10 to 13. Interestingly enough the first entry is ‘Night Encounter – *The Woman in White*. (<https://www.crownhouse.co.uk/publications/opening-doors-to-quality-writing1>).

### **PICTURE WORLD**

Forthcoming during 2020 will be *Picture World: Image, Aesthetic, and Victorian New Media* by Rachel Teukolsky, associate Professor of English at Vanderbilt

University. Her new book will analyse the ways that new forms of visual culture worked to shape key Victorian aesthetic concepts. Chapters consider different kinds of emergent visual media in the nineteenth century, including pictorial newspapers, photographs, stereoscopic views, illustrated magazines, and advertising posters.

### **SENSATIONAL THINGS**

A very academic study of Wilkie is *Sensational Things – Souvenirs, Keepsakes and Mementos in Wilkie Collins’s Fiction* by Sabina Fazli (Heidelberg: 2017). It does just what it says in the title. Fazli analyses the significance of objects in seven of his books from *After Dark* to *The Woman in White*. She includes the significance of hair in *Hide and Seek*, photography in *The Law and the Lady*, and keys in *The Dead Secret* which is nicely illustrated by the cover of the 1871 Smith Elder yellowback edition showing Sarah Leeson ‘furtively’ dropping a key into a well. There are also several references to the importance of letters in Collins’s fiction. Now on offer at Amazon around €10 – search ISBN 9783825369132.

### **LO SCRIGNO DI MR WRAY**

WCS member Mariaconcetta Costantini continues to contribute, as she puts it, “to circulating Collins's work among Italians” with her edition of *Mr Wray’s Cash Box*. Her fine edition of *Lo scrigno di Mr Wray, ovvero la maschera e il mistero* translated by Emilia Carmen Cavaliere is published by Croce Libreria. With a lovely cover using ‘The Skating Minister’ by Henry Raeburn and an introduction and notes by Mariaconcetta this edition is €17.90 from the publisher or search Amazon using ISBN 9788864023717.

Mariaconcetta is Professor of English Literature at D'Annunzio University of Chieti-Pescara. Her previous works include the collection of essays *Armada! Wilkie Collins and the dark threads of life* which she edited, published by Aracne in 2009 and *Sensation and Professionalism in the Victorian Novel* (Bern: 2015) which contains many references to works by Collins.

### **WILKIE AND THE AUTOGRAPH HUNTER**

There are several examples in the collected letters (*The Public Face*) of Wilkie’s generous replies to autograph collectors. These usually read along the lines of “I contribute with pleasure to your collection of autographs. Truly yours, Wilkie Collins.” In earlier Newsletters we have noted examples of Wilkie’s handwriting in contemporary journals. Another example has come to light, combining both aspects, in the monthly illustrated magazine, *The Cosmopolitan*, for January 1893 (Vol. XIV, p. 305).

Wilkie features in an article entitled ‘The Confessions of an Autograph Hunter’ by Charles Robinson in which the author describes “the ruses to which he will resort in order to accomplish his diabolic purpose” of extracting autographs from well-known personalities. Robinson’s method was “to ask for information on some topic of supposed interest to the person addressed, and endeavoured, as far as possible, to select subjects which would call for interesting answers” but of course, never hinting that he was angling for their autograph.

Robinson claimed that “His first victim was Wilkie Collins whom he ventured to address on the subject of his *Woman in White*, dwelling at length on Marian Halcombe, the brave woman of the story.” The article then includes a copy of Wilkie’s signature. The date, however, doesn’t make sense since Wilkie had died in 1889. The letter in question is the one written by Robinson’s father, Nugent, who actually corresponded with Wilkie in 1860 [letter 0370]. He received a reply dated 28 August “acknowledging your very kind expression of interest in my story.”

### **THE HANDS THAT DID THE WRITING**

1893 was obviously a good year for Wilkie as he also featured in a two-part article, ‘Hands’, in Vol. V of *The Strand Magazine* for January to June. Along with several other examples, the article shows a plaster cast of Wilkie’s hands:

Highly gruesome, but not less fascinating, are the hands of the late Wilkie Collins. ... In this connection, a gentleman who had known the novelist in life, on being shown the cast, exclaimed: Yes, those are the hands, I assure you: none other could have written the “*Woman in White*.”

The article features on pp. 119 to 123 and 295 to 301 in Vol. V of *The Strand Magazine: An Illustrated Monthly* for January to June. 1893. The magazine, of course, is better known for the appearances of Sherlock Holmes. Sir Arthur Conan Doyle acknowledged in his own notebooks that Collins was one influence that helped create his detective. Holmes emulates many of the features of both Sergeant Cuff in *The Moonstone* (1868) and the pipe-smoking Old Sharon in ‘My Lady’s Money’ (1877). In this latter story, Felix Sweetsir’s ‘Exhaustive System of Reasoning’ is remarkably like Holmes’ dictum that ‘when you have eliminated the impossible, whatever remains, however improbable, must be the truth.’ The notion of a ‘three-pipe problem’ was introduced by Uncle Joseph in *The Dead Secret* (1857).

### **COLLINS AT AUCTION**

The Heritage Auctions online sale of 5 September featured several early editions of Collins together with an 1888 autograph letter about *The Legacy of Cain*. Most

items were early US editions including *No Name*, *The Queen of Hearts*, *The Woman in White* and *The Moonstone*. The high spot, however, was a first English edition of *After Dark* (1856) with a presentation inscription to W. S. Herrick. Collins noted in his preface “I must also gratefully acknowledge an obligation of another kind to the accomplished artist, W. S. Herrick, to whom I am indebted for the curious and interesting facts on which the tales of “The Terribly Strange Bed” and “The Yellow Mask” are founded.” Herrick was a noted portrait painter who added his ownership signature to Volume II. The copy sold for the mighty sum of \$13,750 which included a 25% buyer’s premium.

On 24 September Sotheby’s held a more traditional auction of the unrivalled Charles Dickens Collection by Lawrence Drizen. This included the dramatic version from 1866 of *The Frozen Deep* with numerous additions and corrections in Collins’s hand which sold for the spectacular sum of £70,000 plus buyer’s premium. The sale also included two copies of the 1867 dramatic version of *No Thoroughfare* which went for the more modest £1,200 together with the 1890 book edition of *The Lazy Tour of Two Idle Apprentices*.

### **WOMAN IN WHITE BRACELET SELLS FOR £20,000**

A Victorian bracelet – loosely connected to Wilkie’s novel *The Woman in White* – was sold for £20,000 on 30 October 2019. The gold bracelet depicts four members of the Nottidge family who became notorious in the mid-19<sup>th</sup> century for incarcerating the perfectly sane Louisa Nottidge (1802-1858) in an asylum in 1846. Earlier she and three sisters had travelled to live with the religious cult Agapemone in Somerset. Her sisters married priests of the cult but Louisa did not and was abducted – or ‘rescued’ as they saw it – by her brother and brother-in-law and sent to Moorcroft House lunatic asylum in Hillingdon. She escaped, was recaptured, released again and then successfully sued her family for false imprisonment. She returned to Agapemone where she died in 1858. Her story, widely covered in the press at the time, was said to be one inspiration for *The Woman in White*.

The bracelet exceeded its estimate of £8,000 to £12,000 and the hammer fell at £16,000 which, with 25% buyer’s premium, totalled £20,000 for the winning bid. [www.woolleyandwallis.co.uk/departments/jewellery/jw301019/view-lot/1485/](http://www.woolleyandwallis.co.uk/departments/jewellery/jw301019/view-lot/1485/) And for more on the Nottidge family see the WCS Newsletter for Spring 2012.

### **EWANRIGG HALL AND LIMMERIDGE HOUSE**

Also for sale at auction (eBay this July) was a letter dated 1773 from Bridget Christian to Ewanrigg Hall, the likely model for Limmeridge House in *The Woman in White*. The house was the ancestral home of the Christian family

(Fletcher Christian of mutiny fame) and was originally built around 1688 and rebuilt in stone about 1753 with a large drawing room, a breakfast room, library and eight good-sized bedrooms. It had views across the Solway Firth and the Scottish mountains. Collins must have noted the location for future use during his walking tour of Cumberland with Dickens in 1857.

## **QUOTATIONS FROM COLLINS**

Also for sale on eBay over recent weeks have been various household items such as mugs and storage tins over-printed with quotations from Collins. These included “No sensible man ever engages, unprepared, in a fencing match of words with a woman” from *The Woman in White*; and “My hour for tea is half-past five, and my buttered toast waits for nobody.” These items are produced by Stamp Press and some are now available through Amazon.

Not included in the ebay quotes, but highly appropriate for this festive time of year, is “My Weight has been the grand misfortune of my life” from 'The Fatal Cradle' (1861); a personal favourite is “It is the grand misfortune of my life that nobody will let me alone” by Mr Fairlie in *The Woman in White*. More Wilkie quotations can be found at [www.wilkie-collins.info](http://www.wilkie-collins.info).

## **CHRISTMAS GHOSTS**

Writer and artist Leanne Shapton, who recently published a collection of ghost stories, collected nine short quotes describing ghosts for *The New York Times* (27 December 2019) including this description by Walter Hartright of Anne Catherick in that famous meeting on the high road

She held a small bag in her hand: and her dress — bonnet, shawl and gown all of white — was, so far as I could guess, certainly not composed of very delicate or very expensive materials. (*The Woman in White*, Chapter IV).

## **THE LIGHTHOUSE IN NEW ZEALAND**

WCS member Annabel Gormack writes about the amateur production of Wilkie’s play *The Lighthouse*, which she directed for the Christchurch Dickens Fellowship Players at Hagley House, Christchurch, New Zealand on Saturday 2 November 2019.

Having a few years ago studied and performed Wilkie Collins’s *The Frozen Deep*, our branch decided to have a go at the first play Collins wrote, *The Lighthouse*. This play was the first occasion on which he and his friend Charles Dickens collaborated to produce a dramatic work, performed for an invited audience at the “smallest theatre in the world” at Dickens’s home,

Tavistock House, in 1855. Dickens threw himself wholeheartedly into the production and of course took the leading role of Aaron Gurnock.

Our crew were no less enthusiastic, co-operating to find or make costumes, stage sets, sound effects and props. We held several rehearsals, with much hilarity on occasion. However, on the day, our cast performed in great earnest, faithfully recreating the atmosphere at the Eddystone Lighthouse where three lighthouse keepers are waiting out a storm with food supplies exhausted. Their only hope of rescue lies with their brave family and friends ashore who must put out to save them before they perish. A break in the storm allows the rescue attempt to proceed. Meanwhile Aaron Gurnock, played by Graeme Yardley, has confessed a dreadful secret to his son and fellow lighthouse keeper, Martin Gurnock (John Sullivan). Martin is in despair at hearing his father's tale of supposed murder of an innocent woman and the disposal of her body. Martin feels he cannot wed his bride-to be, Phoebe Dale (Ros Calvert). Nor can he face his soon-to-be father-in-law, Jacob Dale (Peter Lewis) who is the third of the lighthouse keepers trapped together.

Enter the crew from shore, Capt. Furley (Vanessa Grenfell), Sailor (Rose Oakley) and Fishermen (Relda & Henry Oakley). Along with them comes brave Phoebe who cannot understand Martin's distant attitude towards her. While the keepers are enjoying their first good meal in a long time, she sings to them 'The Song of the Wreck', which was performed by Dickens' daughter Mamie in the first production. We were doubly fortunate to have the kind permission of Dr Caroline Radcliffe from the University of Birmingham, UK, to use her adaptation of this song and to have a soprano in Ros Calvert (who played Phoebe Dale) to sing it. All is made well with the arrival of Lady Grace, played by Pauline Francis-Fox, who is shipwrecked on the rocks just below the lighthouse and reveals herself to be the woman who was attacked and left for dead at Aaron Gurnock's farmhouse full seven years before. Aaron had no part in the attack but helped her attacker hide her body in a sea cave. The incident has haunted him ever since but Lady Grace did not die, she was rescued from the cave and taken to France. Now she claims the right to forgive Aaron and the wedding of Martin and Phoebe can proceed. All's well that ends well.

Our cast received compliments from the audience who felt that Collins's script was clear and dramatic and swept you along in spite of 21<sup>st</sup> century sensibilities about the plausibility of the plot! We all felt it was much easier to follow than Dickens's early efforts as a playwright, all of which we have attempted in previous years. It is fair to say that there are many Collins admirers amongst our company and *The Lighthouse* may well have added a few more. It was great fun for myself and my right-hand woman, Kathleen Campbell, to produce. To cap off the production two of the cast, Pauline Francis-Fox and Vanessa Grenfell, had produced a delicious 'lighthouse' cake which we enjoyed at afternoon tea following the performance. We send a big thank you to the Wilkie Collins Society, UK, for their support and for allowing us to use their published script for our performance.

### ***THE WOMAN IN WHITE BY THE SKIPTON PLAYERS***

Dramatisations of *The Woman in White* continue to appeal to audiences. In October the Constance Cox adaptation was enjoyed by audiences at Skipton Little Theatre. "*The Woman in White* has lost none of its power in the century-and-a-half since it was written" said one preview. WCS member Barbara Speak has written this review for the Newsletter.

On Saturday 5th October I went to see the Skipton Players' production of *The Woman in White* at the Skipton Little Theatre in North Yorkshire. The theatre is quite small with a seating capacity of just 70 so the atmosphere is both intimate and friendly. In this production all the scenes took place at Limmeridge House so changes were made to the storyline in order to accommodate this. As a faithful adaptation of the *Woman in White* it was far from perfect but the actors did a great job of portraying the characters and, despite the limitations of the theatre, the story came through strongly and was certainly very well received by the audience.

## **FRAUDS**

References to Wilkie Collins are found in many odd places. During some research into Victorian frauds he was found mentioned in *Guilty Money* by Ranald Michie (2009) who cites six of Wilkie's books.

The first two are used to support Michie's view that early in the nineteenth century the City of London was seen in a favourable light. He cites *A Rogue's Life* (1856) which 'omitted any potential areas of wrongdoing associated with the City' (p. 35). In *No Thoroughfare* (1867) Michie says 'the principle character was a respectable City merchant'. (p. 62). His next quotation is from *The Moonstone*, which has a very modern ring.

The upshot of it was, that Rosanna Spearman had been a thief, and not being of the sort that gets up Companies in the City, and robs from thousands, instead of robbing only from one, the law laid hold of her, and the prison and reformatory followed the lead of the law. (*The Moonstone*, first period, Chapter 4).

Ten years later in *The Haunted Hotel* (1878) Henry Westwick recommends to his old nanny that she invests her unexpected £400 legacy into a hotel in Venice where 'the Directors have every reason to believe that ten per cent or more will ultimately be realised to the shareholders' which also sounds rather like a modern fraud. The nurse was dismissive of only earning three or four percent in Government bonds, known as 'the Funds'

'If you put your hundred pounds into the Funds, you will get between three and four pounds a year.' The nurse shook her head. 'Three or four pounds a year? That won't do! I want more than that'. (*The Haunted Hotel*, Chapter XII).

That exchange is but a sub-plot to the story of an underlying insurance fraud in which Lord Montbarry was murdered to secure for his widow a £1,000 life insurance pay out.

Ten years on, in *The Evil Genius* (1886), Captain Bennydeck took the opposite view when he invested a legacy from his father – the money for a house he had sold.

My idea is to invest it in the Funds, and to let it thrive at interest, until I grow older, and retire perhaps from service in the Navy. The later years of my life may well be devoted to the founding of a charitable institution, which I myself can establish and direct. (*The Evil Genius*, Chapter XXXII).

Wilkie based his final book, *Blind Love* (1889), on a true City fraud. But it is his depiction of retired City merchant Mr Henley which Michie comments on. Wilkie warns he was a ‘heartless man’ and

the successful speculations, by means of which Mr. Henley had accumulated his wealth, had raised against him enemies, who had spread scandalous reports which had never been completely refuted. (*Blind Love* First Period, Chapter 6).

Wilkie has Henley investing his money in a ‘large landed property on the north of London’ including a farm near Muswell Hill. Michie says ‘This acquisition of landed estates by the nouveau riche of the city brought them into growing conflicts with the upper echelons of the landed elite (p. 121).

Strangely Michie omits Wilkie’s first foray into fraud. In the 1856 story ‘A Paradoxical Experience’ (*Household Words* 13 November 1858, pp. 516-522 and later published as ‘Brother Morgan’s Story of Fauntleroy’ in *The Queen of Hearts* 1859) Wilkie wraps the story around the real life fraudster Henry Fauntleroy who was a partner in his family banking business which ran into difficulties in 1824 following the failure of firms to which it had lent money. To try to rescue the bank, Fauntleroy forges documents but is caught. The bank closes and all its customers lose their deposits. So far so true. But Wilkie asserts a good side to Fauntleroy who some years earlier had helped a young man start his business and now contrives to warn him of the collapse allowing him to withdraw his entire capital of some £1,500 (worth around £150,000 today) literally at the last minute before the bank pulled down the shutters. On 30 November 1824 Fauntleroy became the last person to be hanged for forgery.

## **COLLINS FAMILY SERVANTS**

Wilkie Collins appears in four censuses from 1851 to 1881 along with various members of his family and servants. One is Harriet Montague, a ‘house servant’ at 12 Harley Street, born in London and aged 16 on census day, 7 April 1861. At one time she was misidentified as Harriet Graves, the daughter of Caroline Graves (who incidentally was wrongly recorded in the same census as Caroline Collins, Wilkie’s wife). But Harriet Graves was in fact at a boarding school in Farnham on Census night (see Paul Lewis, ‘Educating Elizabeth Harriet Graves’, Wilkie Collins Society, May 2010).

Harriet Montague had presumably replaced the recently dismissed maid Wilkie mentioned a few months earlier who was the junior servant to Mary Wilding, aged 26, also listed as ‘house servant’ in the 1861 census.

We have another servant – a hybrid white-haired young person engaged to help Mary – going! The hybrid and Mary don’t agree. I am sorry to lose the hybrid. She sees me into the water-closet and out of it regularly – and tries the door every time I make water. I have reason to believe that the hybrid must have seen My Person! ([0368] to Charles Ward, 14 August 1860).

Harriet Montague was baptised on 20 July 1844 at St Mary Abbots Church in Kensington. Her parents are listed as Mary and William, a labourer. They lived in Upper Uxbridge Street in Kensington where presumably Harriet was born. William and Mary were both born around 1812 in Middlesex, he in Ruislip and she in West Drayton. In the 1851 census they had six children with them from John aged 14 to Emma aged 1. They lived at 4 Uxbridge Street with another family of eight – coachman Thomas Hoclee and his wife Ann. This census, taken on 30 March 1851, gives Harriet’s age as 7. By 1861 when Harriet was Wilkie’s junior house servant, the census shows Mary as a widow, living in Silver Street, Kensington with her 23 year old son George. She gave her occupation as laundress, his as painter. By 1871 Mary was back in Uxbridge Street at number 35 working as a seamstress and living with her youngest child Emma aged 21. Emma, like her sister Harriet was a domestic servant. No further records of Harriet Montague have been traced. But even these few details give a brief insight into the family and early life of one domestic servant who knew Wilkie at that time in Harley Street.

### **MUTUALLY ASSURED FURSTRUCTION**

The most obscure reference to Wilkie was in an article by the New York writer and lawyer Tyler Grant in the USA edition of *The Spectator* late in 2019. He wrote a humorous piece suggesting the USA government should kidnap all pandas residing in America to force China to the negotiating table. He said it was low risk as China would not ‘go to war over a panda – mutually assured furstruction, as Wilkie Collins would have written’.

This can only be a reference to Wilkie’s prescient letter in 1870 to his friend Emil Lehman expressing his horror at the start of the Franco-Prussian war

“what is to be said of the progress of humanity? Here are the nations still ready to slaughter each other, at the command of one miserable wretch whose interest it is to set them fighting! Is this the nineteenth century? or the ninth? Are we before the time of Christ or after? I begin to believe in only one civilising influence – the discovery one of these days, of a destructive agent so terrible that War shall mean annihilation, and men’s fears shall force them to keep the peace.” ([1013] to Emil Lehmann, 7 August 1870).

Where Tyler Grant came across this foretelling of the mid 20<sup>th</sup> century Cold War, when the phrase MAD or Mutually Assured Destruction was coined, or how he expected his readers to recognise it remains a mystery! Read the whole piece by searching online for ‘America should kidnap pandas.’

### **COLLINS IN CBS RADIO MYSTERY THEATER**

Pierre Tissot Van Patot from Holland has recently discovered the CBS Radio Mystery Theater of ‘old time radio shows’ from the ‘golden age of radio’ - mainly the 1970s. There are 1,399 shows in all but those of particular Collins interest are episode 120 which features ‘The Dream Woman’ and episode 256 with ‘Mad Monkton’. The sound quality is rather poor but they can be downloaded for free from <http://www.cbsrmt.com>.

### **COLLINS ON RADIO 4EXTRA**

As predicted in our Spring Newsletter, Collins has made two recent repeat appearances on Radio 4 Extra – with excellent sound quality. The first was the broadcast of *No Name* (1862) in six episodes which was transmitted in October. This adaptation was originally broadcast in January 2008 with a cast including the late Jack May as Captain Wragge and John Moffatt as the Vanstone family solicitor, Mr Pendril.

More topically, in five episodes from 3 to 7 December we heard ‘A House to Let’, originally the Extra Christmas Number of *Household Words* for December 1858. This was written in collaboration with Dickens; Collins contributed the short story, ‘Trottles Report’ together with parts of the opening and closing framework narratives.

### **SUBWAY NOOK**

Rivka Galchen, a Canadian-American novelist and writer, explained in September in the *Los Angeles Times* that the subway was as good as her bath for reading novels with no one to disturb her:

I recently reread Wilkie Collins’ “The Moonstone,” a solid week’s worth of subway rides. The epistolary form of the 1868 novel matched the punctuated reading of the subway nook.

Paul Lewis  
Andrew Gasson

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# ***THE WILKIE COLLINS SOCIETY***

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**NEWSLETTER**

**SPRING 2020**

## **150TH ANNIVERSARY OF DICKENS'S FUNERAL**

There were no clouds in the sky on Tuesday 14 June 1870, the light wind was from the West, and the temperature was a mild 15C. Just as well for the mourners including Wilkie Collins who waited in their thick black clothes at Charing Cross station for the arrival at nine o'clock of the train from Higham in Kent.

On the train with perhaps four or five close family members was the coffin of Charles Dickens. He had died of a stroke four days earlier at his home in Gad's Hill. There is a plausible case that he had been taken there on 7 June by carriage from the house of his mistress, Ellen Ternan, after he fell ill there and that she was present at his death on 10 June.

The details of the private funeral in Poet's Corner at Westminster Abbey are only known through Wilkie Collins. He wrote that afternoon to William Stebbing the leader writer of *The Times*

I have just come from Dickens's funeral. Forster is perfectly incapable of calling on you – and has asked me to call in his place.

Shall I supply you with the names of the persons present – and all else that is to be told? And will you have the necessary article written from the facts?

I am far from well – or I would offer to do it myself

Wilkie Collins

Will the facts be in time – if you have them before two o'clock?

([0993] to William Stebbing, 14 June 1870)

They clearly were in time as Stebbing wrote a 1,000 word account for next day's paper (*The Times*, 15 June 1870, p. 12c.)

His report 'Funeral of Mr. Charles Dickens' mentions 'the mourners – 14 in number' but near the end of the column lists just 13 people in the three mourning coaches. In 'The Mysterious Mourner' *Dickens Quarterly* Vol. 25, No. 2, June 2008, Robert Garnett suggests that the missing mourner is in fact Ellen Ternan and that Wilkie played a part in keeping her name out of the public account but failed to realise the numerical discrepancy.

In May and June 1870 Wilkie had been hard at work writing his novel *Man and Wife*. On 9 June, the day Dickens died, it was done. The next day, Friday, Wilkie gives this account to his solicitor William Tindell of how he heard the news

I finished "Man and Wife" yesterday – fell asleep from sheer fatigue – and was awakened to hear the news of Dickens's death. ([0990] to William F. Tindell, 10 June 1870).

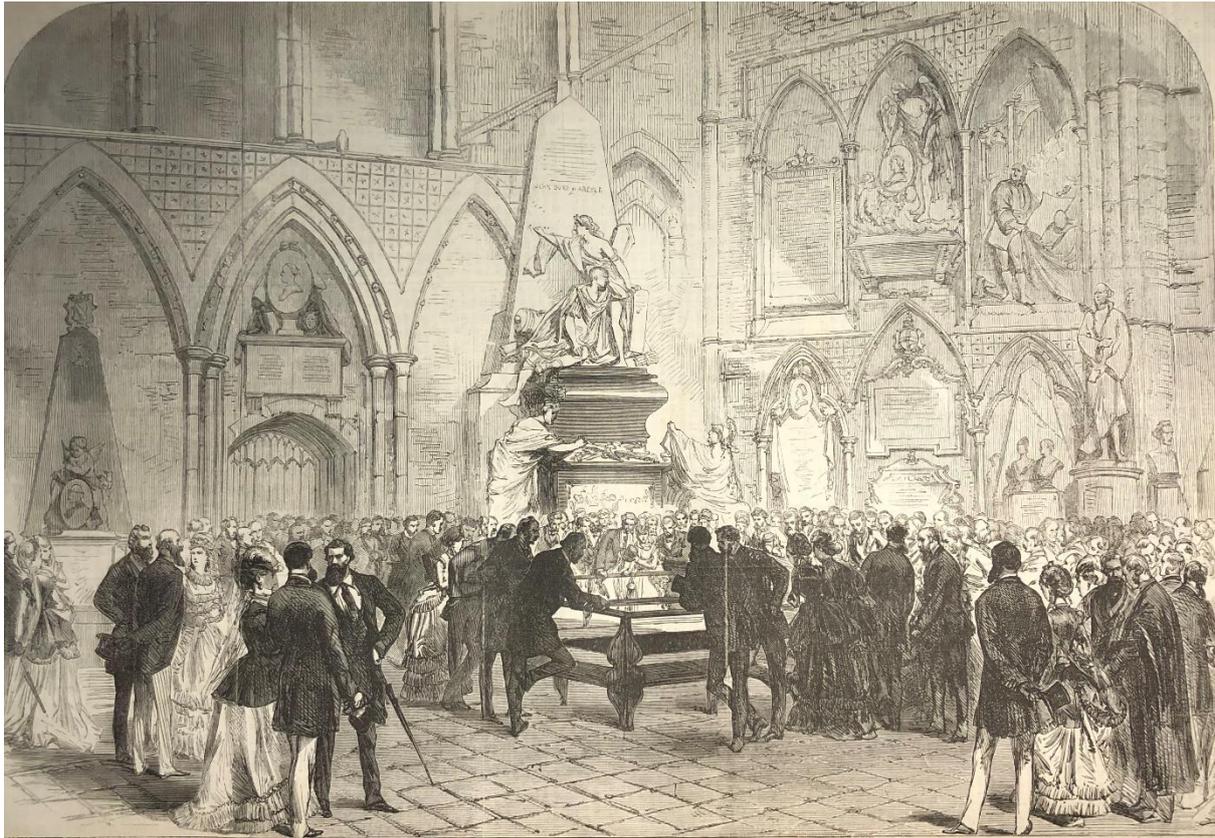
The following day Wilkie was busy with his work, approving the plain, dark red binding for the three-volume edition of the novel, agreeing to an initial print run of 1,000, and discussing with Tindell how to promote the book. At the end of that letter he said he was "sadly fagged and out of spirits." ([0992] To William F. Tindell, 11 June 1870).

At the time he was correcting and returning proofs for the serial publication in London and New York, writing a dramatic version of the story to maintain his copyright in the stage play, and already correcting proofs for the book edition. So it is not surprising that two days after the funeral he wrote at 5.30 pm to Tindell to say how difficult it was to keep up especially as the publisher's printer was being incompetent about the proofs. He began the letter with this striking and much quoted phrase

The day of Dickens's Funeral was a lost day to me. ([0995] to William F. Tindell, 16 June 1870).

Some critics have said it showed he didn't care. But he did. He was just exhausted – with work as well as grief.

Events to commemorate the 150th anniversary of Dickens's death and funeral have been cancelled due to Covid-19. We shall just have to remember that day privately with this eye-witness account in *The Times* based on Wilkie's notes.



The grave of Charles Dickens in Poets' Corner, Westminster Abbey  
*Illustrated London News*, 25 June 1870, p. 652.

The service was most impressively read by the Dean, all but the lesson, which was read by the Senior Canon. There was no anthem, no chanted psalm, no hymn, not even an intoned response or "Amen;" but the organ was played at intervals during the mournful ceremony. The earth was cast into the grave by the Clerk of the Works; the service ended, the mourners – 14 in number, with perhaps as many more strangers who accidentally chanced to be present – gathered round the grave to take a last look at the coffin which held the great novelist's remains, and to place wreaths of *immortelles* and other flowers upon the coffin-lid, and the service was at an end.

RIP Wilkie's great friend Charles Dickens, 150 years on.

### **WILKIE TO GEORGINA HOGARTH**

An interesting article by Gail David-Tellis in the Winter 2019 issue of *The Dickensian* looks at the rift between Dickens's daughter Mamie and his estranged wife's sister Georgina Hogarth. The article 'Breach of Code' (pp. 223-235) examines the extraordinary lengths taken by Dickens's family to continue to keep the name of his mistress Ellen Ternan out of any public or legal document.

It seems that an apparently fairly routine letter from Wilkie to Georgina in fact referred to a nervous breakdown she had relating to a loan which Mamie obtained from Ellen in June 1886

but which referred to her in the thin disguise of Helen Ternan. The day after the deal was finally signed Wilkie wrote

My dear Georgina,

I only heard yesterday evening from Charles Kent that you have been ill and that you are leaving (or have already left?) London for change of air. To say that I am indeed sorry, and that I most sincerely hope to hear a more cheering report from the regions of purer air, is only to tell you what you know already. While it is an effort to you to write, pray don't think of answering me. I will wait till you can tell me that you feel like yourself again.

Always affectly yours

Wilkie Collins

([2573] to Georgina Hogarth, 11 June 1886).

That is just one of nineteen known letters from Wilkie to Georgina dating from shortly after Dickens's death in 1870 to shortly before Wilkie's own death in 1889.

### **THE DROOD MYTH REAPPEARS**

The *Brisbane Times* recently perpetuated the myth that Wilkie Collins wrote a sequel to *Edwin Drood*, the half-completed novel Dickens left when he died. In an article entitled 'Turning Pages: Of fathers and sons and their novels' (29 November 2019) Jane Sullivan writes:

What, for example, did Charles Dickens Jnr feel about his famous father? He took over Dad's magazine *All The Year Round* after his father's death, wrote a series of dictionaries, teamed up with Wilkie Collins to write a sequel to his father's half-finished novel, *Edwin Drood*, and wrote introductions to later editions of father's novels. No genius, but he had a busy and successful career.

In fact Wilkie was appalled at the suggestion that he had finished *Edwin Drood* with a sequel. He wrote in 1878

I can only suppose that another false report of my having finished "Edwin Drood" has been set afloat in America. I was asked to finish the story, soon after Dickens' death – and positively refused. Any assertion or newspaper report which associates me in any way with any attempted completion of the story is absolutely false. ([3185] to George Barnett Smith, 4 December 1878)

In fact an American writer Henry Morford anonymously published *John Jasper's Secret* in Philadelphia in 1871/1872, which claimed in a preface to be a sequel to *Edwin Drood*, composed by unnamed authors with knowledge of Dickens' intentions. It was republished anonymously in London in 1872, with no preface and no mention of Dickens or Collins. In 1878 that story was translated into French by Bernard Derosne as *Le Crime de Jasper* proclaiming on its cover and title page it was by "Charles Dickens & Wilkie Collins". Some years earlier Derosne had translated two of Wilkie's novels into French for the publisher

Hachette. The claim was repeated in a report of the French translation in the ‘Sayings and Doings’ column of *Harper’s Bazar* in New York.

*The Mystery of Edwin Drood*, left unfinished by Charles Dickens, has been completed by Wilkie Collins, and is first published in Paris, under the title, “*Le Crime de Jasper*, par Charles Dickens et Wilkie Collins.” It is issued without explanation of any kind, being simply a continuation of *Edwin Drood*, taken up at the point where Dickens left it. Why it is published in the French language at Paris is not stated; but the British copyright law does not prevail in Paris – which may be the explanation. (*Harper’s Bazar*, Vol. XI, 14 December 1878, p. 799c).

Wilkie wrote to the editor demanding that he “publicly contradict this report” adding

The writer of the paragraph in question, accounting for the publication of the spurious “Edwin Drood” in French, further adds that “British copyright law does not prevail in Paris” – thus associating me, by implication, with a meanly-planned evasion of the law of my own country, in relation to the unfinished work of one of my oldest and dearest friends!  
([1807] to the Editor of Harper’s Bazar, 18 December 1878).

Wilkie also brought a legal action against Derosne in Paris, and asked Dickens’s sister-in-law Georgina Hogarth to sign a statement for the court against this “outrage offered to Dickens’s reputation” ([1831] to Georgina Hogarth, 18 March 1879).

What happened to the case is not known, but the myth persisted. In 1898 an edition of *John Jasper’s Secret* was published in New York by R. F. Fenno stating on the title page it was by “Charles Dickens, Jr. and Wilkie Collins” and with just “Wilkie Collins” and his portrait in gilt on the spine.

## **DERBY**

The *Derby Telegraph* recently published a piece about its Mechanics Institute, built in 1837, a space in which Wilkie once performed. See [www.derbytelegraph.co.uk](http://www.derbytelegraph.co.uk) search ‘wilkie collins’.

Wilkie met Dickens in 1851 when he was invited to take the part of the valet Smart in *Not So Bad as We Seem*, a comedy in five acts by Sir Edward Bulwer Lytton. Dickens used the play to raise funds for the Guild of Literature and Art which he founded to help writers and artists who fell on hard times. The amateur performance was seen by Queen Victoria and other dignitaries in London on 16 May 1851 and after further London performances it went on a short tour in late 1851 to Bath, Bristol and Reading, ending with Manchester and Liverpool in February 1852.

That summer the production was taken on another tour, beginning in Nottingham on Monday 23 August. Dickens, Wilkie and the whole troupe arrived in Derby from Nottingham on 24

August staying two nights at the Royal Hotel before and after the performance at the Mechanics Institute on Wednesday 25th (Pilgrim VI p. 731).

Collins wrote to his mother from the hotel that morning.

My throat is very much better – almost well – It was less hurt by all the speaking on Monday night than I had feared it would be. Richardson pronounced the ulcer to be much better, when I saw him on Sunday morning. I hardly feel it at all, today.

Not a good audience at Nottingham – except for the Farce. The Comedy went very heavily until the drunken scene. But it is immensely improved by the compression – the story is cleared of obscurities – and the situations at the end of each act are far better.

Here, the parsons have been preaching against us. One reverend gentleman, we hear, solemnly adjured his flock, all through last Sunday evening's sermon, not to compromise their salvation by entering our Theatre. Considering that we do not act on Sunday evening, and that congregations are to let on week days, these parsonic prohibitions seem slightly unreasonable. However, we have a very fair audience of sinners and shall make money in spite of the saints. ([0132] to Harriet Collins, 25 August 1852).

The farce which finished the bill was *Mr. Nightingale's Diary*, written by Dickens and *Punch* editor Mark Lemon, in which Wilkie played a pub landlord called Lithers.

Dickens wrote that day to Miss Burdett Coutts about his 'compression' of Lytton's play.

The comedy you don't approve of, goes very well now. I have reduced it into three acts. I wish you could see my farce. It is very droll and pleasant, and puts all the people into such good humour that they cannot express it sufficiently. (Pilgrim VI p. 746).

After Derby the tour went to Newcastle, Sunderland, Sheffield, and again to Manchester and Liverpool. On 1 September Wilkie wrote to his mother from Manchester before the first of two performances there

I have just ten minutes before Rehearsal to write and tell you that my sore throat of a week since, has become as smooth again as I could possibly desire. I have a cold in the head now – but I am used to that, and think it of no consequence whatever.

The Comedy has been brilliantly successful everywhere. Tonight we try the two new Plays. I will bring back a newspaper report of the performance if I can possibly get one. ([0133] 1 September 1852 to Harriet Collins).

The two new Guild plays for Manchester and Liverpool – which had seen *Not So Bad as We Seem* in February – were Charles Matthew's comedy *Used Up*, in which Wilkie acted the part of James, and J. R. Planché's *Charles XII*, in which he played the burgomaster Triptolemus Muddleworth. It was enthusiastically received in the *Manchester Guardian* (4 September 1852 p. 7d-e).

Peters says in her biography of Wilkie that the Manchester performance of *Not So Bad as We Seem* and Dickens's farce in February gave Wilkie "stage-fever that stayed with him for the rest of his life". (Peters, *The King of Inventors*, 1991, p. 111). The poster for the first Manchester performance on 11 February 1852 can be seen online in the V&A collection at <http://collections.vam.ac.uk/item/O1159790>.

## WILKIE THE ARTIST

There has recently come to light an early sketchbook which once belonged to Wilkie. It is signed William W. Collins and dated Nov<sup>r</sup> 25, 1839 inside the front cover together with the printed names W. W. Collins and W. Ross. The year would date it from Wilkie's time at the Reverend Cole's school at Highbury in North London when he was fifteen years old. The sketchbook is quite small at 14.5 x10 cm and contains 24 leaves. The contents consist of one sketch in ink of Naples (whence Wilkie had recently returned with his family) plus numerous drawings in pencil ranging from sophisticated to childish. The final page has poems transcribed in pencil in Wilkie's hand. Ross remains unidentified but has initialled three of the sketches. The conjecture is that he was possibly a schoolmate of Wilkie who gave him the sketchbook which Ross continued to use.

Wilkie did sketch at this time. He wrote to his mother from school

When I see you on the 18th which you mention as the day on which we are to meet, I really hope that I shall see Poor Papa "himself again", for our holidays would be most miserable if he was as unwell then, as he was last Midsummer. Give him my best love and tell him that I hope he will be able to pass his opinion upon a whole host of works of art, fecit his son.  
([0008] to Harriet Collins, 6 December 1839).

We know that later Wilkie dabbled in painting for his own amusement and succeeded in showing *The Smuggler's Retreat* at the 1849 Summer Exhibition of the Royal Academy. He also reviewed the 1851 Exhibition for *Bentley's Miscellany* (1 June 1851) and in the same journal gently satirized the Academy in 'A Passage in the Life of Mr Perugino Potts' (February 1852). He also wrote a comic account of a painting trip for *Bentley's*. 'A Pictorial Tour to St. George Bosherville' (May 1851) is an amusing account of a disastrous painting trip to an obscure French town. It seems to be based on an event during his holiday in Normandy with his friend Charles Ward in 1847. Ward is cast as a serious painter, Mr Scumble, while Wilkie is the dilettante. All three pieces can be read at [www.wilkiecollins.com](http://www.wilkiecollins.com). Ward in fact went on to work at Coutts and become Wilkie's banker. Several of Collins's later friends were members of the Royal Academy, including Augustus Egg, William Frith, Rudolf Lehmann, Edward Ward and Thomas Woolner.

The whereabouts of *The Smuggler's Retreat* are unknown but there are four of Collins drawings in the Morgan library. One of these from 1841 is illustrated in Catherine Peters' biography, *The King of Inventors*. There is also a sepia ink and wash sketch in the Robert

Lee Wolff Collection (held at Texas) which is illustrated in *The Book Collector* for Autumn 1965, pp. 336-337.

### ***LA FEMME EN BLANC***

WCS member Pierre Tissot has tracked down the review of the French translation of *The Woman in White* which was sent to Wilkie by Louis Dépret, the Parisian critic who wrote it. Wilkie replied

Sir,

I have been absent from London – or I should sooner have thanked you for your kind letter, and for the copy of Le Nord which accompanied it.

I have read your Review of “La Femme en Blanc”, with great interest and great pleasure. It is written in a spirit of just and generous consideration towards the author and the work, of which, I assure you, I am heartily sensitive. You have added in no small degree to the obligations which I am glad to owe to French critics and to French readers.

Pray accept the expression of my thanks and the assurance of my sincere esteem.

Very faithfully yours | Wilkie Collins

([0542] to Louis Dépret, 11 July 1863).

In fact Wilkie’s letter was only a few days late. But the review was a couple of years late as *La Femme en Blanc* translated by Emile D. Forgues was originally published by J. Hetzel in 1861. Unusually, Wilkie wrote a preface especially for the French translation ending with a stirring tribute to French novelists. It contains more details of the genesis of the story than the English preface and was later used by Dépret in a chapter on Wilkie Collins in his book *Chez les Anglais* (Hachette, Paris 1879).

Read more about the Preface, including the text and an English translation, at <http://www.paullewis.co.uk/wilkie/WiW/frint.htm>

*Le Nord* was a weekly newspaper published in Paris and Brussels from July 1855. Dépret’s long review of *La Femme en Blanc* appeared in the Paris edition of *Le Nord – Journal International*, 26 June 1863. It filled four columns leading the ‘Varieties’ section of the unpaginated four-page broadsheet. A copy is in the Bibliothèque Nationale de France in Paris.

The long review ends with praise for the book both for English and especially foreign readers who demanded more.

In short, we can easily explain the success that the *Woman in White* has obtained in England....But its success in other countries is because of its true and more lasting merits, that is to say the possession of an expressive and learned form, and the power to create characters who seize our spirit, please our heart and live in our memory.

### ***THE LIGHTHOUSE AND THE RED VIAL***

The WCS/Francis Boutle publications of *The Lighthouse* and *The Red Vial*, both co-edited by Caroline Radcliffe and Andrew Gasson, were reviewed on 3 February 2020 by Julian Waite in the journal, *Nineteenth Century Theatre and Film*. See <https://journals.sagepub.com/doi/full/10.1177/1748372719900430>

### ***THE LIGHTHOUSE (THE FILM)***

Caroline Radcliffe, from the Department of Drama and Theatre Arts at the University of Birmingham, recently wrote a review of the new film *The Lighthouse* - "Wilkie Collins and Charles Dickens beat director, Robert Eggers, to The Lighthouse". There certainly are strong similarities - "two men in charge of maintaining the light ... an utterly bleak rock, at the mercy of the elements ... the risk of starvation ... a crime committed long ago."

Caroline loved it for its amazing acting and the incredible visual/sound score and wondered if Eggers had read the Collins version. Her co-editor of *The Lighthouse* would certainly agree that far but found the film a truly unpleasant experience of descent into madness. However, you can read Caroline's complete and enthusiastic review at [www.birmingham.ac.uk/research/perspective/the-lighthouse.aspx](http://www.birmingham.ac.uk/research/perspective/the-lighthouse.aspx) and you may possibly still find the film when cinemas re-open after the current crisis.

### ***NEW WOMAN IN WHITE UNABRIDGED READING***

*Radio Times* (6 March 2020) revealed that British rising star Billy Howle, who has appeared in pictures such as *On Chesil Beach*, *MotherFatherSon*, *Dunkirk*, and the most recent Star Wars film *The Rise of Skywalker*, has been recruited to read an unabridged version of *The Woman in White*. It is only available on Audible, the read aloud version of Kindle.

It is priced in a variety of confusing ways but you can buy the whole thing from [audible.co.uk](http://audible.co.uk) for £29.99 or get it free or cheaper through Amazon or with a monthly commitment to Audible. The reading in the sample available online sounds a bit stilted. How I would feel after 24½ hours of it I am not sure! *The Moonstone* read by Peter Jeffries is also available as is another unabridged version of *The Woman in White* read by Tim McInnerny.

There are also 38 readings of Collins's works on LibriVox which rather grandiosely describes itself as "Acoustical liberation of books in the public domain". These include two versions of both *The Woman in White* and *The Moonstone*, most of the other full length novels and shorter works such as *The Dead Alive* and *The Dream Woman*. There are also foreign language readings.

The books can either be listened to online or downloaded and subsequently recorded to CDs for use on a normal CD player. The readers are all volunteers rather than professional actors. So although the sound quality is generally quite good the recordings vary greatly in quality from good 'Standard English' through strong American to sometimes less comprehensible, foreign accents. Nevertheless, Librivox provides a great resource not only for Collins titles

but also a huge range of other out of copyright authors. They can be found at <https://librivox.org/search>

### **ELIZABETH INCHBALD'S *A SIMPLE STORY***

A recent article by Benjamin Ivry in the *Catholic Herald* praises *A Simple Story* by Elizabeth Inchbald. Ivry summarises the plot

An amorous young woman identified only as Miss Milner is smitten with her guardian Dorriforth, a Catholic priest, who renounces holy orders in order to wed her. A good deal of novelistic misery ensues, involving infidelity and inter-family strife.

(‘The Mother of the English Catholic novel’ *Catholic Herald*, 28 November 2019 available online at [catholicherald.co.uk](http://catholicherald.co.uk) - search ‘inchbald’)

As Ivry points out it was a book admired by many including Wilkie Collins who praised it in his essay ‘Books Necessary for a Liberal Education’

Read, my good public, Mrs Inchbald’s ‘Simple Story,’ in which you will find the character of a young woman who is made interesting even by her faults – a rare triumph, I can tell you, in our Art. (*Pall Mall Gazette*, 11 February 1886, p. 2).

And again in a letter a year later

I very sincerely admire Mrs Inchbald’s “Simple Story” – but I have never written an essay on that subject.

I alluded to the book, as an admirable novel well worth reading ([2752] to Sydney Smith, 23 September 1887).

### ***DRACULA FOR DOCTORS***

Long-standing WCS member, Katherine Haynes, who recently published her *Grace Poole* in 10 parts, has sent us the following review of *Dracula for Doctors: Medical Facts and Gothic Fantasies* by Fiona Subotsky (Cambridge University Press 2020) ISBN: 978-1-911623-29-8, £24.99

Scholars have long been aware that Bram Stoker probably used *The Woman in White* as a template for his own *Dracula* and possibly also drew on a plot point in *Man and Wife* for his 1908 romance *Lady Athlyne*. Now comes a fascinating work which looks at the roles played by doctors, medicine and science in not only *Dracula*, but other gothic and sensational novels.

In her introduction Fiona Subotsky mentions not just that she is from a family of doctors, but that she was unfortunate enough to be bitten by a bat while on holiday as a teenager. No wonder she was drawn to the dark side and later married ‘Milton Subotsky, the Amicus horror film producer, who sometimes borrowed my medical and psychiatric textbooks for the

sets of his movies such as *The Psychopath* and *The Asylum*. We were both always reading stories, in case they were suitable for scripts, as his films were often of the “portmanteau” type.’

Fiona’s text is conveniently laid out in twenty chapters, most of which are then divided into headed sections and have notes after them. Hence we start with ‘Body and Mind’ and conclude with ‘Sex and Death.’ In Chapter Two it is suggested that the nineteenth century asylum came to replace the castles and abbeys of earlier gothic works. This idea is explored further in Chapter Five: ‘The Gothic Asylum,’ which mentions *Armada*, *The Woman in White*, and *The Rose and the Key* by Sheridan Le Fanu (sometimes known as the Irish Wilkie Collins).

Fiona quotes from Bulwer-Lytton’s *Pelham* in this same chapter. As with the case of Louisa Nottidge (see WCS Newsletter for Winter 2019) Lytton has his wife Rosina Doyle Wheeler committed to an asylum. This caused such an outcry among her friends, however, that Rosina was released after only a few weeks.

Other works by Collins cited include; *Jezebel’s Daughter*, *The Moonstone* and – in Chapter 16: ‘Vivisection or Animal Torture?’ – *Heart and Science*.

As well as quoting from works of fiction, Fiona has also consulted histories of mental hospitals, various papers and articles about the management of asylums, the patients, and the doctors who ran them. Flicking through the pages, one can find mention of such topics as; ‘The Sounds of the Asylum,’ ‘Pestilence,’ ‘Bloodlessness,’ ‘The Localisation of Brain Function,’ ‘Religious Protection,’ ‘Hypnosis in Fiction,’ ‘Evil Cats,’ ‘Alcohol: a Traditional Panacea,’ and ‘Sexy Vampires,’ so something for everyone!

### **SECRET BROADSTAIRS**

Andy Bull who published *Secret Ramsgate* in 2019 has now written *Secret Broadstairs*, published this February by Amberley Publishing (ISBN13 9781445695952). Broadstairs is situated in the Isle of Thanet about five miles from Ramsgate. Quoting from the blurb, the author “delves into the fascinating history of Broadstairs, including characters associated with the town such as the scandalous eighteenth-century politician Charles Fox, Charles Dickens, Wilkie Collins and Oscar Wilde, as well as the creators of Billy Bunter and The Clangers.”

Collins first stayed in Broadstairs in July and August 1858, using it as a base to sail to Dunkirk with Henry Bullar and Edward Pigott. The following summer he rented the isolated Church Hill Cottage for six weeks while writing *The Woman in White* and again visited Broadstairs in July 1861. From July to October 1862 Collins rented the more prestigious Fort House during the serialisation of *No Name*.

### **A GOOD READ**

With many people self-isolating at home and more time to spend reading, Wilkie’s books have inevitably turned up on numerous reading lists. *The Woman in White* and *The*

*Moonstone* are almost always mentioned but seldom seen are any others of the 30 novels, 60 short stories, dozen plays, or 100+ pieces of journalism which he wrote.

For Wilkie fans now is surely the perfect time for us to fill those gaps in our reading of Wilkie's oeuvre. All of his books, some of his plays, and much of his journalism can be found online. A lot is listed at [www.wilkiecollins.com](http://www.wilkiecollins.com) though some of the links may be out of date. Bookfinder.com or Amazon will find cheap editions of the books and many firms are still delivering.

For those with a Kindle, almost all of Wilkie's titles can be downloaded at no charge from the Free Classics section.

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# *THE WILKIE COLLINS SOCIETY*

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## **NEWSLETTER**

**SUMMER 2020**

### **Diligence to Boulogne**

An extraordinary ink drawing has come to light showing Wilkie Collins and his friend the artist Edward Matthew Ward in the diligence (a type of carriage) from Paris to Boulogne. The hitherto unknown drawing surfaced at an auction in February in what appears to be a Collins family album of drawings and watercolours. Some are undoubtedly by William Collins, one is by Charles and others are by various hands.



(Photo courtesy Jonathan Peachy)

Wilkie is depicted with three other passengers in the top seats (second from the left) apparently holding a whip. Ward is the middle one of three passengers in the lower section. The drawing undoubtedly dates from the 1840s. The clues are Wilkie's appearance and designation as W. W. Collins, plus the fact they took a coach not a train – no railway reached Boulogne until 1848 and the line to Paris came sometime after that. The 162 mile journey would take nearly 24 hours including meal stops. In the 1840s Wilkie visited Paris several times – as shown by his letters – but usually with Edward Ward's older brother Charles. This is the first evidence of a trip with Edward Ward. Wilkie wrote to his mother on 6 October 1845 from Hotel de Tuileries, Rue de Rivoli, Paris

I have just received – my excellent parent – your delightful communication of the 2nd inst. Many thanks for your expressions of affection and your announcement of the departure of the cheque...I have definitely fixed to depart by the 2 o'clock (P.M.) Diligence for Boulogne, on the 13th – and hope to be in Devonport Street on the evening of the 14th. My official labours will, therefore, commence on the morning of the 15th. By this plan, I attain the utmost extension possible of my stay in Paris – a very pleasant and necessary achievement, considering that the Italian Opera has begun and that "Pâtés de Foies Gras" are daily expected at the principal Restaurants.

Wilkie's previous letter had asked Harriet for money. On 3 September he had been given £35 which had run out. A cheque to him for £10 was drawn on 4 October. He was delaying as long as possible his return to work at Antrobus, the tea merchant. However, at this time he was alone in Paris. The letter continues

You need cherish no feelings of commiseration for my solitary state. The privilege of being able to consult my own tastes and inclinations without the slightest reference to anyone else, quite counterbalances the inconvenience of my being – like a late royal Solomon – "all alone by myself".

In a postscript dated the next day he adds "The £10 - - has arrived, and I am grateful."

Although it is certain the drawing dates from this decade the exact trip has not been identified. In 1847 he visited Normandy and later Paris with Charles Ward and wrote an account of the trip for *Bentley's Miscellany* ('A Pictorial Tour to St. George Bosherville' May 1851, vol. IX, pp. 493-508). He mentions the 'diligence' several times in that narrative. The periodical can be read online at

babel.haithitrust.org. The WCS published a reprint of the story in 1996 which can be ordered from the society website, price £2.50.

The collection of 33 pictures and drawings can still be seen at the auction house website [www.reemandansie.com](http://www.reemandansie.com) search 'William Collins'. It was lot 975 on 12 February 2020.

### **AN ITALIAN OBITUARY**

In the series 'Gallery of Contemporaries', an obituary of Collins has been found in the Milan newspaper *L'illustrazione Popolare* for 6 October 1889, appearing shortly after Collins's death. (Vol. XXVI, No. 40, Milan, pp. 625-626). The following is a very free translation:

Wilkie Collins is one of the most popular English writers in Italy. Who does not remember the solution to the mystery of his novel *The Woman in White*? In London it created a mania, where the people were speculating on the solution to the plot.

The rich and famous Wilkie Collins died on the 24 September aged 65. He was born in London in 1824, son of the painter William [Collins] who sold his pictures for their weight in gold to the most illustrious Englishmen. Together with his father, the young Wilkie made a tour of Italy after which at the age of 26 he wrote his first novel, *Antonina*, devoted to an episode in the capture of Rome by Alaric.

This, however, was not his first book. Two years before he had written a biography of his father who died in 1847. His principle novels are *The Woman in White*, *The Law and the Lady*, *The Frozen Deep*, *Poor Miss Finch*, *Man and Wife*, 'The Yellow Mask', *The New Magdalen*, *The Black Robe*, *I say No*, *The Dead Secret*, *The Evil Genius*, etc. Following their translation into Italian, these continue to be avidly read; they are published by Fratelli Treves which is currently publishing *The Legacy of Cain* by Collins. Wilkie Collins also tried the theatre where he achieved moderate success with his drama *Black and White*.

He did not have the imagination of Walter Scott or the meticulousness of Dickens which brought to life both the passions of his characters and even inanimate objects; but Collins appreciated that the spontaneity of style and the weaving of the plot would entertain and move his readers.

We would like to offer our readers a small but little-known masterpiece by the famous novelist which will begin in our next issue and take up just five or six numbers. Our readers can judge for themselves how such a moving drama might be accomplished in just a few pages.

The masterpiece was in fact the novella ‘Gabriel’s Marriage’ (originally published in *Household Words* for 16-23 April 1853, and reissued in *After Dark* (1856). The story was published as ‘Le Nozze di Gabriele’ in *L’illustrazione Popolare* in six weekly parts from 13 October to 17 November 1889.

## **WALTER BESANT**

Published in the Liverpool English Text and Studies is *Walter Besant: The Business of Literature and the Pleasures of Reform* by Kevin A. Morrison, professor in the School of Foreign Languages at Henan University, China. (978-1-789-62035-1, £80). Quoting from the Liverpool University Press blurb:

In the 1880s and 1890s, Walter Besant was one of Britain’s most lionized living novelists. Like many popular writers of the period, Besant suffered from years of critical neglect. Yet his centrality to Victorian society and culture all but ensured a revival of interest. While literary critics are now rediscovering the more than forty works of fiction that he penned or co-wrote, as part of a more general reevaluation of Victorian popular literature, legal scholars have argued that Besant, by advocating for copyright reform, played a crucial role in consolidating a notion of literary property as the exclusive possession of the individuated intellect.

Walter Besant was also a social reformer and founder of the Society of Authors in 1884. Collins was also an enthusiastic founder-member and honorary vice-president.

In 1889 Besant wrote the conclusion to *Blind Love*. Collins realised that August that he was too ill to finish *Blind Love*, then being serialised in the *Illustrated London News*. Collins suggested A. P. Watt should approach Besant, a long-standing friend and popular novelist: “if he has the time I think he will do it...he knows that I would do the same for him if he were in my place.” Besant agreed to complete the novel and received Collins's working notes. He was surprised to find they represented a detailed scenario with fragments of dialogue already inserted. Besant was “careful to adhere faithfully and exactly to the plot, scene by scene, down to the smallest detail as it was laid down by the author.” He later persuaded Andrew Chatto, to allow him “to write a preface stating my share in the book...to give the real facts of the case.”

## **COLLINS IN THE TIME OF THE COVID**

Wilkie was no stranger to illness but fortunately never came in contact with anything like the present pandemic and by and large avoided contagious diseases such as cholera and typhoid. Nevertheless, he was frequently forced to remain at home – ‘self-isolating’ in modern parlance - when badly affected by what he usually described as ‘rheumatic gout’.

Wilkie would in fact have come into contact with cholera when touring Italy with William, Harriet and Charles between 1836 and 1838. The family was forced to leave Naples in a hurry because of a cholera epidemic during 1836.

Parts of *Antonina: or the Siege of Rome* are based on Wilkie’s four months in the city and one of the themes, apart from starvation, is the plague. He describes “the plague-tainted atmosphere” and the wind “plague-laden from the east” and “caught the infection of the recklessness and despair which had seized his fellow-sufferers from one end of Rome to the other.” They weren’t in quarantine (a word derived from Italian for 40 days isolation) but “Time flowed on - the monotonous hours of the day waned again toward night; and plague and famine told their lapse in the fated highways of Rome.”

Via his friends, Collins would have been aware of other highly contagious fevers. His solicitor, Edward Benham, died of smallpox and fever in 1867 and Holman Hunt came back from abroad with typhoid in 1882. Typhus makes an appearance in *The Woman in White* when Marian Halcombe, caught outside in the rain, survives the fever after eavesdropping on Fosco and Glyde.

## **WILKIE IN DICKENS’S PERIODICALS**

The excellent online editions of *Household Words* and *All the Year Round* have solved a problem that had previously stopped their search function from working. I am delighted to say it is now back in order at [www.djo.org.uk](http://www.djo.org.uk). So you can now search by author or for words in the text and find Wilkie’s contributions to the two periodicals. If there are items you have not read this is an excellent place to start. Try the first female detective story – the ‘Diary of Anne Rodway’. Or read *The Dead Secret* as originally published in 24 parts. Or the ‘Lazy Tour of Two Idle Apprentices’ by both Collins and Dickens. Or

just read his early contributions to *Household Words* in chronological order. As well as these, you can also search for his brother Charles's contributions. This free online resource is provided thanks to the work of Professor John Drew at the University of Buckingham.

## **RICHARD JEFFERIES**

The Victorian author Richard Jefferies (1848-1887) was a fan of Wilkie Collins. In a short book *Reporting; Editing & Authorship. Practical Hints for Beginners in Literature* that he published himself in 1873 he wrote

after Wilkie Collins' "Woman in White", there came out a host of women in various colours. And all of these seemed to be read. The great authors had created a taste which the lesser rushed to gratify to the utmost. Noted authors' works should be studied for their several excellences. Ouida for the exquisite painting of scenery and delineation of beauty in every form: Wilkie Collins for the method of writing, of telling a story: and for the effect, special knowledge of a special subject will produce even in novel writing: Miss Braddon to catch the indescribable tone of the hour, the taste of the public.

But later he was warned off imitating Collins by the editor of the *Pall Mall Gazette*, Frederick Greenwood. In a letter dated 10 March - probably written in 1877 - Greenwood wrote about an unidentified piece Jefferies had sent him

On reading this, I feel obliged, as your anxious but possibly enough mistaken friend, to warn against the style you have adopted in these papers. I will take the liberty of saying that this so well-marked style, an entirely new fangled one, was never before adopted (till you took it up) by any single writer who was not more or less of a literary imposter. It originated, I believe, in *Household Words*, or in *All the Year Round*. It has been used by nobody so much as by Mr Wilkie Collins in Mr Wilkie Collins' worst days, and he always was a bad writer—a thoroughly and contemptibly bad writer, according to my standard at any rate, and now, just when the style has sickened even those who once found some sort of fascination in it, you abandon the straightforward, simple, and in all respects most appropriate English of your Gamekeeper to take up with this tricky flashy manner. You see by the bad language I myself am using that I detest this style, which has no ancestry, and not a single respectable connection. Do please go back to your original manner.

We are grateful to Jean Saunders, Hon. Secretary of the Richard Jefferies Society, for this information.

## **WILKIE'S RELATIONSHIPS**

There is nothing new in this account of Wilkie and his two lifelong loves – Caroline Graves and Martha Rudd – but Emily Hines takes an interesting approach to Wilkie's relationships <https://bit.ly/3IHWLMC>. It was originally published for the 150th anniversary of Caroline's short-lived marriage to Richard Clow on 29 October 1868. Hines lives in Memphis Tennessee and is a freelance editor and writer.

## **THE COP STORY**

This interesting mention of Wilkie Collins is from the US website [vulture.com](http://vulture.com) - see [bit.ly/3bD28bj](http://bit.ly/3bD28bj)

Cops have been main characters in fiction for more than a century. Dickens's Inspector Bucket, the only figure with the cultural mobility to tie together all the plots in *Bleak House*, led to Wilkie Collins's Sergeant Cuff, who led to Dick Tracy, Perry Mason, and the boom in police procedural novels and radio shows in the 1930s and '40s. The police story as a narrative status quo didn't start on TV, but TV has perfected it, metastasized it, and franchised it into ubiquity.

Sergeant Cuff was of course the rose-growing detective in *The Moonstone*. His character was based on the real-life Inspector Whicher who solved the Road murder case, identifying Constance Kent who was acquitted but many years later confessed; his appearance relied on another Scotland Yard detective, Inspector Walker.

## **THE DUCHESS AND WILKIE – A ROYAL ACCOLADE**

You may know her as Camilla, Duchess of Cornwall but in Scotland she is known as the Duchess of Rothesay from the title Prince Charles adopts when he is in that country. It was in her Scottish guise that she told the *Aberdeen Press and Journal* that among her top five novels for holiday reading was *The Woman in White*.

'The Duchess of Rothesay has exclusively invited *Press and Journal* readers to enjoy a "welcome bit of escapism" with a new reading list featuring some of her favourite books' wrote Kieran Beattie in the issue of 21 August. 'Her first recommendation is *The Woman in White* by Wilkie Collins. Penned in 1859, it is considered among bibliophiles to be one of the first mystery novels ever written, and is celebrated as an early example of detective

fiction. Camilla described it as “a menacing and mysterious tale spun by this great Victorian writer, with a penchant for drama”.

Among her other choices were Edna O’Brien’s *The Girl* and the 1849 novel by Alexandre Dumas *The Queen’s Necklace*. See [pressandjournal.co.uk](http://pressandjournal.co.uk) search ‘wilkie collins’.

## SHADY PLACES AND HAMPSTEAD

Richard T. Kelly invoked *The Woman in White* for a piece about places that inspired the Gothic novel in *The Shady Places of North London (Ham and High, 23 June 2020)*.

In 1860, Wilkie Collins gave readers the unforgettable scene of his hero Walter Hartright picking across Hampstead Heath in darkness only to be startled by “the figure of a solitary woman, dressed from head to foot in white.” That moment on the page still startles today and, back then, it certainly inspired Bram Stoker, who went on to invent the “Hampstead Mystery” section of *Dracula* in which vampiress Lucy Westenra haunts the Heath and nips at the throats of little boys who tell the police childish tales of a “bloofer lady”. For me and millions of readers, these stories suggested that Hampstead and Highgate were natural sites for dark, dangerous, even diabolical doings. See [hamhigh.co.uk](http://hamhigh.co.uk) search ‘wilkie collins’.

Also in *The Woman in White*, Anne Catherick claims that she was born in Hampstead. This part of London features significantly in several other works by Collins. In *Armadale*, the Vale of Health is the probable location for Dr Downward’s sanatorium, where Lydia Gwilt attempts to murder Allan Armadale. Fairweather Vale is ‘a new neighbourhood, situated below the high ground of Hampstead on the southern side’. Miss Gwilt lodges at ‘Fairweather Vale Villas’. Mr Bruff, the Lawyer in *The Moonstone*, lives in Hampstead. It is in his house ‘as the clock of Hampstead church struck three’ that Rachel Verinder tells Franklin Blake she saw him steal the diamond. In *Blind Love*, the villainous Dr Vimpany lives in a cottage near the Heath at 5 Redburn Place and Lord Harry is found with his throat cut in a lonely spot on Hampstead Heath.

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### **NEWSLETTER**

**WINTER 2020**

With most of the world under politically directed lockdown, there has been rather a dearth of Collins activity over the last few months. So now might be a good time to look at what he thought about epidemics, doctors and politicians. But first, a warning from Wilkie. Since very few of us are in a position to venture abroad, we can remind you of a cautionary note from *The Black Robe*:

'I hope you won't pay the rheumatic penalty of a winter residence in England'

### **EPIDEMICS**

Collins was no stranger to epidemics and where necessary engaged in some nineteenth century 'social distancing'. Beginning when as a young boy he travelled with his family to Italy in 1837, he later recalled in a letter to R. H. Dana (17 June 1850).

The "Cholera" was then, beginning its ravages in Italy – Wordsworth was bound for Naples, like ourselves; but the reports that the pestilence had broken out in that city "gave him pause". I remember being quite astonished at the earnestness with which he entreated my father to do as he intended to do, and not only abandon all idea of going to Naples, but leave Rome at once for England. My father tried in vain to combat his apprehensions – the very idea of the Cholera seemed to fill him with horror – he left Italy, as he had determined to leave it, and we went on, as we had determined.

Later in the year, however, the Collins family was also obliged to leave Naples in a hurry because of the cholera and spent a month during October 1837 in Ischia. In a letter to his mother on the first of September 1856 Collins wrote from Boulogne:

There has been an epidemic – (malignant sore throat) among the children here ever since June which the townspeople kept secret, of course, as long as they could, for the sake of their own interests. Being far out of the town we only heard vaguely about the disease, until last Saturday week, when Dickens received a letter from Sir Joseph Oliffe – Physician to the Paris Embassy – entreating him to send all his children away from Boulogne. None of them were ill – our situation here being so healthy and so well away from the town – but Dickens, as a measure of precaution, instantly took Oliffe's advice – knowing the reliability of the man who offered it. All the boys were sent to London under their mother's care – those at school here as well as the youngest.

Later on, Collins would have known that on Tuesday 27 February 1872 a Thanksgiving Service was held at St Paul's Cathedral for the survival of Albert Edward, Prince of Wales. The thirty-year-old heir to the throne had almost died from typhoid fever the previous December. Victoria appeared in public for the first time since her husband Albert had died ten years before.

Becoming more topical, 'plague' was also a feature of Wilkie's vocabulary but used in connection with this time of year. In correspondence with Mary Frith on 27 December 1870 he noted

Many thanks for your kind note. Even at this festive season when the Plague of Plum pudding extends its ravages from end to end of the land, and lays the national digestion prostrate at the feet of Christmas.

Obviously, his views did not change since writing to his good friend Sebastian Schlesinger on 29 December 1883

Here is another year coming to an end, dear Sebastian – and here is your infirm old friend still keeping alive, in deference to the interests of his Insurers in the United States. There is every temptation to die. We have not seen the sun for three weeks, in London – the plague of Christmas Cards is on the increase.

## **POLITICIANS**

And some cynical comments on our leaders:

Lord B. is the greatest impostor of modern times. In politics a glib tongue and no scruples will do wonders. But literature under false pretences, betrays the pretender. I sincerely believe that man to be the very worst novelist that has ever appeared in print. (Referring to Lord Beaconsfield (Disraeli) in a letter to George Maclean Rose, January 1881).

"Which of our political parties deserves the confidence of the English people?" In plain terms, on his sides Randal answered: "The party that lowers the taxes." Those words acted on the

discussion like water on a fire. As members of Parliament, the two contending politicians were naturally innocent of the slightest interest in the people or the taxes; they received the new idea submitted to them in helpless silence. From *The Evil Genius*.

## **DOCTORS AND MEDICINE**

And some equally disparaging comments on the medical profession:

The doctors had no immediate fear of his death. He proved the doctors to be mistaken, and took the liberty of dying at a time when they all declared that there was every hope of his recovery. *Jezebel's Daughter*.

The doctor who is not honest enough to confess it when he is puzzled, is a well-known member of the medical profession in all countries. *Jezebel's Daughter*

He is at the head of his profession.....and he knows no more about it than I do. The great physician has just gone away with two guineas in his pocket. One guinea for advising me to keep her quiet; another guinea for telling me to trust to time..... *The New Magdalen*.

The medical profession thrives on two incurable diseases in these modern days - a He-disease and a She-disease. She disease - nervous depression; He-disease - suppressed gout. Remedies, one guinea if *you* go to the doctor; two guineas if the doctor goes to you. *The New Magdalen*

## **WILKIE AT DINNER**

On Monday 25 January 1858 Wilkie Collins sat down to dinner in the *Household Words* offices with Dickens, his sub-editor W. H. Wills, and three other contributors to the weekly periodical. He had been on the staff there at £5-5s a week since October 1856. John Hollingshead, a new writer on *Household Words*, described the scene.

It was the day in January 1858, on which the Princess Royal was married. London was crowded with visitors and at night the whole town was illuminated. The party consisted of Wilkie Collins, Mark Lemon, Mr Wills, the honourable Mr Townshend, Charles Dickens and myself. The master, dressed in a velvet smoking coat as part of his dress suit, received me in a very friendly manner and made me a companion in five minutes. I noticed, as I thought then, a slight lisp, the deep lines on his face almost furrows and the keen twinkling glance of his eyes.

The room we dined in was on the upper floor...Our dinner was simple and good. We began with oysters brought in fresh from Old "Rule's" in Maiden Lane near to where Congreve lived when Voltaire visited him...The principle dish was a baked leg of mutton, the bone of which had been taken out, and the space supplied with oysters and veal stuffing. I always understood that this was an invention of Dickens, who, without being a gourmand, was fond of eating and drinking. As I was helped twice to this novel delicacy, I remembered some of the master's

descriptions of humble but savoury dishes in two or three of the Christmas books. He saw I was enjoying myself and appeared to be delighted.

The conversation, if not remarkable, was amusing. The Hon. Mr Townshend was a man of title and property, and a minor poet. He was quiet and refined. Wilkie Collins discoursed pleasantly about food and thought there was little or nothing in cookery – although he knew and understood French and Italian dishes – that could beat a well-made, well-cooked apple pudding...Mark Lemon was a fat, cheery man, not very refined, with eyes not as keen as Dickens's, but with a similar twinkle. Wilkie Collins wore glasses and was very quiet and amiable. Theatrical matters were touched upon. (John Hollingshead *My Lifetime*, London 1895, II, pp. 98-99).

There is no mention of this dinner in Wilkie's own letters. But a week later he declined meeting the Icelandic poet Grímur Thomsen on the grounds that

I have had a sad accident to my ankle – a severe sprain which has quite crippled me, and which still keeps me an invalid in the doctor's hands. In consequence of this misfortune, I shall miss the pleasure of making Mr Grímur Thomsen's acquaintance. I have written to him to apologise for myself and to tell him how unfit I am now, even for the pleasantest society. (to Hans Christian Andersen, 1 February 1858)

Wilkie had sprained his ankle (he always spelt it 'anle') on his walking tour with Dickens in Cumberland in September 1857. But according to Hollingshead's account he was fit a week earlier to go to a dinner on the top floor of the *Household Words* office. The ankle may have been a handy excuse not to meet Andersen's fellow countryman.

### ***NEW MAGDALEN – A NEW EDITION***

A lovely new edition of *The New Magdalen* has been published by Persephone Books of London. A paperback with a wrapper and with endpapers based on a woven silk design dating from 1871. A bookmark in the same design is included. It is not annotated but has an interesting Preface by the English film director James Bobin (*Alice Through the Looking Glass* (2016) and *The Muppets* (2011)). Bobin has also work on *Da Ali G Show* and claims co-authorship of the character of Ali G, Borat, and Brüno. A long-time fan he and his wife named their youngest son Wilkie. The Preface begins with an anecdote from Wilkie's own 'Reminiscences of a Story-teller' published in the *Universal Review* in 1888. In it he recalls sitting on a train while opposite him a young lady secretly reads *The New Magdalen* while her father, a vicar, sleeps. A few details in the preface are not quite right but overall it is a nice introduction. *The New Magdalen* by Wilkie

Collins is priced at £13 and available from [PersephoneBooks.co.uk](http://PersephoneBooks.co.uk) ISBN 9781910263280.

### **THE NEW MAGDALEN – THE FILM**

A film adaptation of Collins's 1873 novel and play *The New Magdalen* is in production in France. Called *La place d'une autre* the plot summary will sound familiar to Wilkie fans:

The script centres on Nélie, who escaped a miserable existence by becoming a nurse on the front in 1914. One day, she takes on the identity of Rose, a well-to-do young woman who died under her eyes. Nélie, pretending to be the dead woman, visits Madame de Lengwil (Azéma), an extremely rich woman she begins to work for as a reader. The lie works a charm, exceeding her expectations. Nélie does not only find a roof over her head, but also what she has been missing her entire life: love. But one day, the dead woman resurfaces..."

Filming began in Nancy on 22 October, moved to Alsace, and will end in December in the Vosges. Adapted by Aurélia Georges and Maud Ameline and performed in French, it will be distributed internationally and hopefully a subtitled version will be made available. No release date has as yet been set. More details can be found at [www.cineuropa.org/en/newsdetail/395159](http://www.cineuropa.org/en/newsdetail/395159).

The original two volume novel has a plot that is easily adapted for stage and screen. Wilkie's stage version of the 1873 story was probably his most widely produced play. It ran for 113 performances from 19 May to 27 September 1873 at the Olympic theatre in London with Ada Cavendish as Mercy Merrick and Frank Archer as Julian Gray. A provincial tour followed. The play was revived in London in 1875 at the Charing Cross theatre and again in 1884 at the Novelty theatre. It was also widely performed in America opening in New York with Carlotta Leclercq as Mercy Merrick – a performance attended by Wilkie in person during his 1873-74 American reading tour. It was later performed in Boston and around the USA and was even produced in Australia.

### **WILKIE ON THE RADIO**

BBC Radio 4extra is one of our favourite radio stations as they frequently repeat dramatisations of Collins's novels and short stories – so well worth checking on their programme schedules. This time, on 5 December, they repeated 'The Man in White' first broadcast in July 2010. Written as a (not very funny) comedy by Martyn Wade, it features Wilkie as a character while suffering from writer's block. Presented in a rather confused way, it nevertheless throws in quite a few biographical snippets, dwelling on laudanum in the guise of the real life Battley's

Sedative Solution. It also mentions Wilkie's 'gout in the eyes', his living in Albany Street, together with his dislike of marriage. There were also direct quotations from the crossroads meeting in *The Woman in White* and his writing technique from the much later 'How I write my Books'. No epic drama but you may still be able to find it on BBC Sounds.

## **WHO READ WILKIE'S BOOKS?**

Wilkie Collins was always curious about who read his books and he wanted them to reach as wide an audience as possible. A finely bound edition of *My Miscellanies* (1863) has given us an insight into one his readers.

On 4 February 1881 retired cotton spinner Robert Taylor took his first edition of *My Miscellanies* (1863) by Wilkie Collins and inscribed in a neat copperplate hand at the top of the first page in both volumes:

Robert Taylor, Polefield Cottage, Prestwich near Manchester. February 4 1881.

Living with him were two of his daughters. Miriam, then aged 29, who was his housekeeper, and Mary Hague (named after her grandfather), 21, who would soon marry, as well as his elder son, James, who at the age of 26 was 'out of employ'. The cotton industry was going through a difficult time.

Robert Taylor (1825-1889) was an almost exact contemporary of Wilkie Collins. Born in Oldham, Lancashire he was a cotton man through and through. His father James was a cotton twiner and he got Robert work as a book-keeper in a mill – hence his neat hand – before he moved on to become a cotton spinner. Spinners worked autonomously in the mills employing their own men and women – Robert himself employed 21 hands in a mill in Oldham at the time of the April 1861 census.

In 1848 he had married Mary Hague, then aged 19 or 20, the daughter of a well-known Oldham butcher. They had five children, the last two of whom took Mary's family name as their middle one. In the winter of 1867 Mary died in her late thirties of lung congestion. His second daughter Miriam, then 16, took on the role of looking after the household. Shortly after his wife's death Robert moved with Miriam and the two youngest children Mary Hague and Robert Hague, to work in a mill in north Wales. The April 1871 census describes him as a Master Cotton Spinner living with Miriam, 19, and the two younger children aged 11 and 9.

His eldest daughter, Amelia Jane, and elder son James had stayed in Oldham to live with their aunt Betty Drake. In 1872 Amelia Jane married a solicitor and the marriage was witnessed by her father and both her sisters. Aunt Betty died in February 1873 potentially leaving James homeless and shortly after that Robert Taylor returned with his children to his roots in Lancashire.

In January 1880 Robert Taylor's youngest son, Robert Hague Taylor, then aged 17, was convicted of stealing watches from a jeweller on two occasions and served six months in jail. Shortly after completing his sentence in August 1880 the now 18-year-old emigrated to Michigan in the USA for a fresh start. He became a Federal Customs Inspector.

In 1883 Robert's youngest daughter Mary Hague also married a solicitor and early in 1884 she presented Robert with his first grandchild, Phyllis Mary. In November that year the out of work James followed his brother to America almost certainly taking with him his father's inscribed copy of *My Miscellanies*. He lived with his brother in Michigan until his unexpected death in 1903, aged 48, from heart disease. The book stayed in the family.

Back in England, Robert was now left alone with his daughter, Miriam, and he moved with her in the mid-1880s to 51 Liverpool Road, Irlam, south west of Manchester where he died of a stroke on 4 April 1889. He was surrounded by his three daughters and the only grandchild he would ever see – the five year old Phyllis Mary. He was 63.

His first grandson, who had been born just a few months earlier in Michigan, kept the family names as Robert Hague Taylor Jr. He died in 1921 at the age of 33 from heart disease so when his father died in 1935 aged 72 the name Robert Taylor came to an end.

At some point after Robert Hague Taylor's death in 1935 the two volumes of *My Miscellanies* were acquired by a book collector and, with around 25 other first editions of Wilkie's works, expensively rebound by Henry Stikeman in New York, in the 1940s or 50s. After the collector's death they were sold in 2007 by a US auction house and brought back to England by a London dealer, from whom they were acquired in 2020.

Such was the fate of one of Wilkie's early readers Robert Taylor, Master Cotton Spinner of Oldham, Lancashire and his first edition of *My Miscellanies*.

## WHODUNNIT?

Because of his well-deserved reputation with *The Moonstone*, Wilkie Collins is often invoked when detective fiction is discussed. Here are some recent examples:

This review of the latest success on Sky: *The Undoing* <https://www.theguardian.com/tv-and-radio/2020/nov/27/the-undoing-perfect-whodunnit-gripping-more-than-one-nation>

A centenary tribute to Agatha Christie <https://theboar.org/2020/11/100-years-of-agatha-christie>.

He was also mentioned in passing in this essay on favourite detectives (not one of Wilkie's but he is still mentioned!) <https://theconversation.com/my-favourite-detective-kurt-wallander-too-grumpy-to-like-relatable-enough-to-get-under-your-skin-149277>.

He features in this guide to reading Gothic literature <https://www.publicradiotulsa.org/post/gothic-lit-2020s-perfect-october-read#stream/0>.

Finally, why are today's baddies so essentially misunderstood instead of evil like Count Fosco? <https://www.smh.com.au/culture/books/turning-pages-creating-better-baddies-20201109-p56csl.html>.

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## ***THE WILKIE COLLINS SOCIETY***

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### **NEWSLETTER**

**SPRING 2021**

#### **WILLIAM COLLINS, R.A. – WHEN WAS HE WAS BORN?**

The date of birth of Wilkie Collins' father, the portrait and landscape painter William Collins, has generally been given as September 1788. This indeed is the date given by Wilkie in his biography of his father. After some painstaking research by Paul Lewis, it has now been shown conclusively that the correct year should be 1787. The full details of Paul's investigation are set out in the enclosed pamphlet – 'When was William Collins R.A. Born?'.

#### **WILKIE AND THE 'DOOK'**

The recent passing of HRH the Duke of Edinburgh reminds us that Wilkie was no stranger to funerals, both personal – mother, father, brother, uncle and many friends including Dickens - and public. Almost 200 years ago he wrote to his lifelong friend, Charles Ward, on 16 September 1852 about the forthcoming funeral of the Duke of Wellington who had died on 14 September that year:

Oh the "Dook" the "Dook"! How they will write about him! how they have written about him already! What sort of funeral will it be I wonder? Military I suppose. If they don't keep it simple, and free from all the damnable tomfooleries of plumes, black velvet, and undertakers – it will be a public failure with all of the public who are worth making an impression on.

#### **WCS JOURNAL**

The current issue of the *Wilkie Collins Journal* is now available on our website. It explores Collins's influence on neo-Victorianism: his legacy and afterlives in

the literature and culture of the twentieth and twenty-first centuries. Our hard-working editor, Joanne Parsons, for this issue together with guest editors Claire O'Callaghan and Jessica Cox has assembled contributors from around the globe with scholars from England, the USA and Australia.

Although previous content of Journals and Newsletters is available to all, this current issue requires the **new** username **Wilkie** and password **KirkBeetz81**.

### **PICCADILLY NOVELS FROM CHATTO & WINDUS**

If any member has any of the Piccadilly Novels editions of Wilkie's books, Paul Lewis would like to hear from you. They were published by Chatto & Windus between 1875 and 1895 in green boards with a black impressed design with a large circle on the cover. The spine has both the title and Wilkie Collins in gilt. The books measure approximately 197 x 125mm and are not to be confused with the smaller versions also published by Chatto that are roughly 175 x 115mm. They generally have a Chatto & Windus catalogue at the end. If you do have any Piccadilly editions, could you email [paul@paullewis.co.uk](mailto:paul@paullewis.co.uk) or write to his address above as we would like to get some bibliographic details from you for a current research project. Many thanks to those members who have already been in touch following Paul's email.

### **'MRS BADGERY'**

One of Wilkie's nicely observed domestic pieces is 'Mrs Badgery'. Originally published in *Household Words* over 160 years ago (26 September 1857, Vol. XVI, pp. 289-293). It is the story of how a bachelor, on moving into his new house, is persecuted by the constant presence of the widow of its former occupant.

It was reprinted in the Tauchnitz collection *Novels and Tales from Household Words* (1857) and in *My Miscellanies* (1863). It was then included in *Alicia Warlock (A Mystery) and Other Stories*, the collection of Collins's tales published by William F. Gill of Boston in 1875. Gill had renamed 'The Dream Woman' after its main character, Alicia Warlock. As well as 'Mrs Badgery', there are six other stories by Collins.

It has not been republished since so it was a pleasant surprise to come across it in an issue of *The Spectator* dated 10 December 2015 with two nice original illustrations by the American artist Carolyn Gowdy. One shows a figure clearly intended to be Wilkie. You can read it without a subscription at <https://www.spectator.co.uk/article/mrs-badgery>. You can also hear the story read on Radio 4 Extra – search for ‘Badgery’ on BBC Sounds.

### **A TERRIBLY STRANGE OMISSION**

'A Terribly Strange Bed' has proved one of Collins's most enduring short stories and has been a frequent inclusion in both nineteenth century and modern anthologies.

It is the story of a young man breaking the bank in a low-class gaming house in Paris after which he accepts accommodation rather than risk taking his large winnings home late at night. The canopy of his four-poster bed is attached to a screw by which it can be lowered from the room above to suffocate unsuspecting victims. Unable to sleep, Faulkner discovers the danger, escaping to return with the police. The same plot was used for 'The Inn of the Two Witches' (1913), a tale by Joseph Conrad who claimed never to have read Collins's story.

It was originally published on 24 April 1852 (pp. 129–137) as Collins's first ever contribution to *Household Words* and later included in *After Dark* (1856). In the USA it was included in *The Frozen Deep*, published by William Gill of Boston in 1875 but interestingly its first publication in the USA was in *Harper's New Monthly Magazine* for July 1852, Vol. V, No. XXVI, pp. 202-210. This seems not to have been previously noted, perhaps because it was omitted from the cumulative index for the first 40 volumes. The index, however, does include for August in Vol. V another contribution by Collins, 'The Midnight Mass', a translation of a Balzac short story originally published in *Bentley's Miscellany* in June 1852.

### **'THE TWIN SISTERS'**

Another relatively unknown short story by Collins is 'The Twin Sisters'. It represents Collins's earliest attempt at fiction with a contemporary setting, originally published in *Bentley's Miscellany* for March 1851. It introduces the

themes of 'love at first sight' which re-appears in *Basil* (1852) and 'identity' which features in much of his subsequent work.

Thought not to have been republished, it has now been located in the obscure *The Saturday Evening Post* of Philadelphia on Saturday May 10, 1851 (Vol. XXX, No.1554). It occupies the first three columns of the front page with the by-line 'The Twin Sisters. A True Story. By W. Wilkie Collins, Author of "Antonina" – taken from Colborn's New Monthly Magazine.'

It is the story of a Mr Streatfield who falls in love at first sight with a girl he sees on a balcony. He effects an introduction, proposes and is accepted. But on the eve of the wedding he meets the twin sister and realises he has proposed to the wrong girl..... You can read the conclusion in Julian Thompson's *Wilkie Collins: the Complete Shorter Fiction*.

## **PICTURE WORLD**

A new book discussing in detail all aspects of Victorian illustration is *Picture World: Image, Aesthetics and Victorian New Media* by Rachel Teukolsky, Associate Professor of English at Vanderbilt University. Quoting from the publisher's blurb:

The modern media world came into being in the nineteenth century, when machines were harnessed to produce texts and images in unprecedented numbers. In the visual realm, new industrial techniques generated a deluge of affordable pictorial items, mass-printed photographs, posters, cartoons, and illustrations. *Picture World* shines a welcome new light onto these critically neglected yet fascinating visual objects. Each chapter pairs a new type of picture with a foundational keyword in Victorian aesthetics. 'Character' appears differently when considered with caricature, in the new comics and cartoons appearing in the mass press in the 1830s; likewise, the book approaches 'realism' through pictorial journalism; 'illustration' via illustrated Bibles; 'sensation' through carte-de-visite portrait photographs; 'the picturesque' by way of stereoscopic views; and 'decadence' through advertising posters. *Picture World* studies the aesthetic effects of the nineteenth century's media revolution: it uses the relics of a previous era's cultural life to interrogate the Victorian world's most deeply-held values, arriving at insights still relevant in our own media age.

Collins is mentioned mainly in connection with *The Woman in White* in the chapter on 'Sensation, Cartomania and the Photographed Woman' where the novel is used to illustrate "the themes of female visibility, portraiture and

copyism” and “the constraints of Victorian female gender roles made feminine conformity into both a desirable mandate and a fraught cage, states of being that the novel dramatizes via the divergent femininity modelled by its two female protagonists – one a formulaic beauty and the other an extraordinary heroine.” There is a colour illustration of the famous crossroads meeting of Hartright with Anne Catherick. This is taken from the front cover of the Chatto & Windus 1889 yellowback edition. Earlier in the chapter, there is a reproduction of the 1861 cover to the sheet music for ‘The Woman in White Waltz’ by C. H. R. Marriott.

The 480 pages of *Picture World* have 156 illustrations, many in colour, and is handsomely produced by Oxford University Press (ISBN: 9780198859734); £45 from the Book Depository; also available as a Kindle ebook at £29.17.

### **WILKIE COLLINS MERCHANDISE - WHERE IS IT NOW?**

There were numerous publicity triumphs too, all through 1860, for every possible commodity was labelled ‘Woman in White.’ There were ‘Woman in White’ cloaks and bonnets, ‘Woman in White’ perfumes and all manner of toilet requisites. ‘Woman in White’ Waltzes and Quadrilles.

Teukolsky in *Picture World* repeats this familiar description of *Woman in White* merchandise. The sole source for this often-quoted paragraph appears to be *Wilkie Collins, Le Fanu and Others* by S. M. Ellis (London: Constable, 1931). The waltzes and quadrilles certainly exist; but has anyone ever seen any of the actual merchandise? Is this just a Collins myth? Andrew Gasson has been looking for references or examples in museums and collections for years with no success. Do let him know with details for inclusion in a future Newsletter if you’ve ever seen any of the bonnets, cloaks or perfumes - or even a reference to the merchandise earlier than Ellis.

### **CORNWALL - CONTEMPORARY REVIEWS**

Following ‘Cornwall then and Now’, the second part of which accompanied the Winter 2020 Newsletter, we’ve been looking at contemporary reviews of *Rambles Beyond Railways*. Although Norman Page’s *Wilkie Collins: The Critical Heritage* dismisses *Rambles* as too unimportant a book to include, there was a surprising number of reviews in important journals and newspapers at the

time. The first three listed below give *Rambles* extensive coverage with around 2,500 words:

***The Athenaeum***, No. 1216, 15 February 1851, pp. 185-186.

While Mr. Collins's 'Notes on Cornwall' are writing-table results, in which the freshness of the Land's-End breezes are mixed up with midnight oil, and with the labour of sentences not unfrequently got up for what artists call "effect" Mr. Collins in some of his descriptions reminds us not unfrequently of his father's skill in representing on canvas the beautiful coast scenery of our country,—while at other times we are sensibly reminded of the skilful novelist rather than of the observing traveller ... Mr. Collins is evidently of opinion that a man must have seen Cornwall to enjoy the beauties of English scenery.

***Colborn's New Monthly Magazine***, Vol. 91, March 1851, No. 363, pp. 310-313

Mr Wilkie Collins, and his artistic friend, Mr H. C. Brandling, are excellent companions to follow on a peripatetic excursion in a district of such varied beauty and interest.

The ***Literary Gazette and Journal of Belles Lettres***, 1 March 1851, No. 1780, pp. 159–161.

The illustrations by Mr. Brandling, our author's fellow-traveller, are very pleasantly and faithfully executed, and cannot fail to be of material assistance to all who may incline to follow these 'Rambles.' Mr. Collins is the 'Eóthen' of Cornwall; and we hope that, like that eastern hero, he may beget a whole generation—of *home* tourists.

***Bentley's Miscellany***, Vol. XXIX, June 1851, pp. 668-669

In this new work Mr. Collins speaks to us "of the remotest and most interesting corners of our old English soil;" he tells us "of grand and varied scenery; of mighty Druid relics; of quaint legends; of deep, dark mines; the venerable remains of early Christianity; and the pleasant primitive population of the county of Cornwall ... curiosities which, if they existed in France, would long since have attracted the butterfly world from their haunts in Belgravia.

The full text of the above reviews can generally be found by searching for the journal online. In addition, advertisements in these various periodicals quote extracts from *John Bull*, the *Morning Post*, the *Morning Herald*, *Observer*, *Weekly News*, and *Britannia*. Not bad for an unimportant little book which ran to a second edition in January 1852 and subsequent issues in the 1860s and 1870s in both England and America.

## **DICKENS & CO.**

Dr Jeremy Parrott, a private scholar and researcher who lives in Szeged in Hungary, has been producing some entertaining and informative short videos

which are on YouTube (search for Dickens & Co). They are based on his extensive Dickens library and collection. Many of them include a passing mention or more of Wilkie. The latest is Dickens and Opium. Dickens's Favourite Novel shows his skills off to the best. There are more than a dozen of them to be found by scrolling down the list.

If Jeremy's name seems familiar, he is the discoverer of the marked-up set of Dickens's periodical *All The Year Round* with the name of the contributor written in pencil by each piece. The WCS published some of the newly identified Wilkie pieces in 2017. You can still buy these through [wilkiecollinssociety.org](http://wilkiecollinssociety.org). Parrott's complete index with biographies of almost all the contributors – many very obscure – is awaiting publication. It reveals – among many other things – that Charles Collins was a prolific contributor to *ATYR* rather than the occasional one which most scholars had assumed.

### **DICKENS, DIPHTHERIA AND A NEW LETTER**

The *Times* of 28 December 2020 notes the contents of a newly discovered Dickens letter, uncovered by the Dickens Letters Project and dated 24 August 1856. It describes how the Irish doctor, Sir Joseph Olliffe who was physician to the British embassy in Paris, warned Dickens about an outbreak of diphtheria in Boulogne during the summer of 1856. Olliffe's advice possibly saved the life of Dickens's family when they were sent them home to England. Not in the current pandemic league, but the disease did kill 366 people.

Wilkie at this time was staying with Dickens at the Villa des Moulineaux, Boulogne. He was working on his short story 'The Family Mystery' which was published in the *National Magazine* in November 1856 and reissued in *The Queen of Hearts* (1859). Interestingly enough, in a letter home to his mother dated 19 August 1856, Wilkie makes no mention of the local epidemic.

### **THE INVISIBLE WOMAN**

Wikipedia now has a page devoted to *The Invisible Woman*, the 2013 film telling the story of Dickens's affair with Ellen Ternan. It was directed by and stars Ralph Fiennes as Charles Dickens and featured Tom Hollander as Wilkie Collins. The page gives a detailed plot summary, extracts from reviews and interesting box office statistics. Apparently in the UK it earned \$1,374, 682.

### **DICKENS WORLD ON RADIO 3**

The series 'Words and Music' on BBC Radio 3 featured on Christmas day 2020 'Dickens's World'. The programme included works by Beethoven, Hayden, Michael Nyman and others. The music was interspersed with readings by actor Sam West from several of Dickens's letters, including one to Wilkie from Gad's Hill dated 14 October 1862. This concerned Collins's ill health and Dickens's offer to help him with the conclusion of *No Name* then being serialised in *All the Year Round*. Apart from letters to Dickens's family, other letters were to Mrs Gaskell, William Macready and Daniel Maclise. Topics included the Staplehurst Rail crash, observations on his first trip to America in 1842 and reflections on the British government and class system.

### **RADIO 4 EXTRA**

We were treated to two recent Collins repeats on Radio 4 Extra. *The Woman in White* was serialised in four parts from 8-11 February 2021. This particular adaptation, originally broadcast in 2008, featured Toby Stephens as Walter Hartright, Juliet Aubrey as Marian Halcombe, Emily Bruni as Laura Fairlie, Jeremy Clyde as Sir Percival Glyde, Alice Hart as Anne Catherick, and Philip Voss as Count Fosco.

The second offering was 'Mad Monkton' broadcast on 1 and 2 January this year. It dated from an original World Service adaptation way back in 1976 and featured John Castle, Gary Bond, Lewis Stringer and Geoffrey Matthews. Harking back to Cornwall, Collins probably took the final scene where the ship is sunk in an instant, overwhelmed by a freak wave, from the legend of Forrabury Church near Boscastle. The bells were lost at sea in a similar fashion when the religious pilot was ridiculed by the captain for giving thanks for a safe voyage. Forrabury has ever since been known as the church with no bells although legend says their muffled sound can still be heard on stormy days.

A listing of all Collins adaptations on Radio 4 Extra can be found by simply searching 'Wilkie Collins' on BBC Sounds, although most are not currently available for listening. It shows, however, that over the years the BBC has given quite extensive coverage of Wilkie's works. There is also a good deal of material on Charles Dickens.

## **A VERY BRITISH MURDER ON BBC4**

‘A Very British Murder’, presented by Lucy Worsley and originally made, in 2013 was recently repeated on BBC4. The episode of particular interest, ‘Detection Most Ingenious’ concentrated on the Victorian Age. It began with the Rugeley Poisoner, William Palmer, moved on to the newly formed Detective Police together with Charles Dickens and then looked at the Constance Kent murder with filming from within the actual house in Road. This naturally led to a detailed discussion of *The Moonstone*, “The first and greatest of English detective novels” - Worsley quoting T. S. Eliot. Collins was given much credit for sensation fiction and for setting the ‘rules’ for modern detective fiction, including the country house murder and the private detective. Another BBC presenter and Collins scholar, Matthew Sweet, was interviewed, stressing the importance of Franklin Blake’s cigars and his attempt to give up smoking. Mary Braddon also received due attention with interviews with her biographer, Jennifer Carnell. Overall, the programme is well worth watching and may be still available on BBC iPlayer.

## **WHICH WILKIE NOVEL?**

A member in New Zealand has found a reference to Wilkie Collins in a detective story published there in 2000. She asks which novel might it have been? Annabel Gormack writes:

Being partial to a good detective story and having discovered a new author of such novels at the local community library, I was intrigued to find a reference to Wilkie Collins. Edmund Bohan has written biographies of some of New Zealand’s foremost nineteenth century citizens, among them Edward Stafford and Sir George Grey. In the Inspector O’Rorke series of detective novels, his setting of events in Victorian Christchurch and Wellington and his mingling of known personalities and fictional characters increases the appeal to New Zealand readers. The stories themselves rattle on at a good pace.

In *The Matter of Parihaka* (published by Hazard Press, Chch, NZ in 2000), we are transported back to the year 1882. The Inspector is called upon to conduct an enquiry into certain events that took place after the infamous sacking of the township of Parihaka by government forces in November 1881. The Maori leaders Te Whiti o Rongomai & Tohu Kākahi were earlier imprisoned as were many of their followers, after showing passive resistance to the ever-expanding settler population and the government confiscation of Maori land in the Taranaki region.

When the Inspector relaxes after a hard day's investigation, he draws from his document case "a new and hitherto unopened novel by his favourite novelist, Mr Wilkie Collins." Given that the novel is set in June 1882, which one would that be?

Paul Lewis adds: Annabel, this needs a bit of detective work in itself! First, this novel was written in the year 2000 so is not a contemporary account and it is possible that Bohan got it wrong. No Wilkie novel was published in 1882. *The Black Robe* was published in book form in April 1881 and his next, *Heart and Science*, in May 1883. I am not aware of a New Zealand publication of *The Black Robe* or indeed any Wilkie works at this time. We must conclude it was *The Black Robe* published in London and perhaps rather belatedly sent to O'Rorke. Passenger ships took three months to travel to the opposite side of the world then, though mail clippers may have done the journey in a few weeks less. He says the book was unopened. When Victorian books were printed the printed sheets of 16 pages were folded and bound but not always cut, so one of the pleasures of a new book was 'opening' the pages. That was done with a flat thin bone knife which did not tear or cut the paper as a metal knife would. O'Rorke had clearly been preparing for this pleasure for some time!

Just to confuse things, Andrew Gasson adds that the book could have been an Australian import. *Heart and Science* was published by George Robertson of Melbourne, appropriately located in Little Collins Street. *The Black Robe* had been serialised in the Melbourne *Leader* from 13 November 1880 to 7 May 1881. Possibly this had been reissued in book form.

## **PENGUIN PODCAST**

To mark 75 years of Penguin Classics the publisher is launching a podcast series. *On The Road with Penguin Classics* is intended to inspire new readers to discover old titles. Hosted by author and editor Henry Eliot, Season One went live across podcast platforms on 28th January. The first episode featured actress Olivia Vinall, who starred in the BBC TV adaptation of *The Woman in White*, travelling to the Cumbrian coastline with Eliot to explore the Wilkie Collins classic. There are five other episodes which can all be found at [podcasts.apple.com](https://podcasts.apple.com) search for 'penguin classics'.

## **INDIA AND THE FILM THAT NEVER WAS**

Talk about tantalising! thehindu.com revealed that the Indian film director Guru Dutt (1925-1964) was going to make a film of *The Woman in White*. The website reports “Guru Dutt was planning to adapt Wilkie Collins’ seminal work of detective fiction *The Woman in White* into a film called Raaz with Sunil Dutt and Waheeda Rehman. He abandoned the film after shooting two songs by R. D. Burman (It would have been Pancham’s debut).” Search ‘wilkie collins’ at thehindu.com.

Interestingly enough, In November 1883, Collins was delighted to hear that *The Woman in White* was about to be translated by an Indian novelist into Bengali.

## **WILLIAM DAWSON**

When Wilkie brought Martha Rudd to London from her village of Winterton in 1868 and set her up in an apartment at 33 Bolsover Street, he had to add a veneer of respectability – or perhaps deniability – over her. After all, she would bear him two children there and a third not far away over the next six years. So he invented a new persona for himself as William Dawson, barrister, and Martha was to be known as his wife. Although they never married their three children all bore the surname Dawson and she also bore that name in all public records from that time. Wilkie himself was technically a barrister having eaten the required number of dinners at Lincoln’s Inn and was admitted or ‘called to the Bar’ on 20 November 1851. No source for the name he used has been found.

Until, perhaps, now. During some recent research it emerged that there was a barrister called William Dawson who was also a member of Lincoln’s Inn. He was called to the bar more than a hundred years before Wilkie, on 6 July 1738. “William Dawson, son of Wm. D., of Manchester, gen.” the entry reads. He is the only one of that name in the five volumes of Lincoln’s Inn barristers. When Wilkie was a student – or rather a dinner-eater – at Lincoln’s Inn that collation of the Admission Registers had not been published – that did not happen until 1896. But it is possible he saw the name somewhere. It may simply be a coincidence that he picked that name for his other self. But until a better theory emerges, that is one contender. The Registers were put online in 2017. To find them, search ‘digitised records Lincoln’s inn’.

## WHO READ WILKIE?

In a fairly ordinary edition of *Armada*, published by Smith, Elder & Co. in 1871, there is a bold signature at the top of the dedication page Walter E. Birchenough. Inside on the endpaper in a mauve stamp in capital letters FODEN BANK COTTAGE, | MACCLESFIELD.

Walter Edwin Birchenough (1856-1912) was the son of John Birchenough (1825-1895) a silk manufacturer and his wife Elizabeth née Taylor. He was baptised in the Macclesfield parish chapel on 27 August 1856. In 1871 he was a boarder at a possibly short-lived school run by Classics scholar Francis Rigg at 32 Queen's Road, Ormskirk. There he was one of 19 boys, including Nathaniel Gould, who would emigrate to Australia and become a prolific author of horse-racing novels under the name Nat Gould.

If Birchenough owned the book new when it was published the signature is mature for a 14 year old. But it is identical to that eight years later on the licence for his marriage to Emily Gertrude Godwin on 6 August 1879. By then he was also a silk manufacturer, working as a partner with his two brothers and his father. He left the partnership on 12 October 1892, perhaps thrown out by his father. Walter had joined the army as a volunteer officer in the 5<sup>th</sup> Volunteer Battalion of the Cheshire Regiment. He rose to the rank of Captain by 1881 and was later made Hon. Major. He was awarded the Volunteer Officers' Decoration by the Queen in December 1895.

He lived at Foden Bank Cottage from at least 1881 to his death there aged 55 on 20 June 1912. Local papers reported that he was found in bed with his throat cut. The coroner said he had been taking drugs to cure insomnia which led to severe depression. The verdict was suicide while insane. He left £1871-3s-10d. Photographs of his brother Sir Henry Birchenough, Bt. (1853-1937) and his only son, Revd. Godwin Birchenough (1880-1953), the executor of the will, can be found in the National Portrait Gallery.

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## ***THE WILKIE COLLINS SOCIETY***

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

### **NEWSLETTER**

**SUMMER 2021**

#### **WHERE WAS WILLIAM COLLINS BORN?**

Last month we revealed that Wilkie Collins was mistaken in saying his father William Collins was born on 18 September 1788 after newly found baptism records showed it was in fact September 1787. That correction has now been made on the Royal Academy website and will be made in the *ODNB* later this year. Now, further checks have shown that Wilkie was also wrong about where William was born.

In Wilkie's biography of his father, *Memoirs of the Life of William Collins, Esq., R.A.*, Wilkie writes "William Collins was born in Great Titchfield-street, London", but the records of ratepayers in Westminster show that William's father, William Collins senior, lived at 47 Great Marylebone Street from 1778 to 1787 and then moved to 4 Adams Street East where he lived in 1788 and 1789. The only year in which William senior paid rates in Great Titchfield Street was 1791 when he lived at no. 23. It is also unlikely that William's younger brother Francis James Collins, known as Frank, was born in Gt Titchfield Street, as his birthdate was 4 February 1790.

What is clear is that William Collins senior had an unsettled period before he moved to 19 Bolsover Street in 1793. He remained there until 1801 and recorded it as his business premises in two publications in 1793 and 1796 and is listed there in *Holden's Triennial Directory* 1799 p. 142 as 'booksellers and printsellers'.

After Bolsover Street and another unsettled year William Collins senior moved to 118 Great Portland Street in 1804. He ran his picture framing and print seller's business from that address until his death in 1812. The family remained there until 1816 when William Collins junior's growing fortunes as a painter enabled him to move his mother Margaret and brother Frank to 11 New Cavendish Street where, after a wedding in Edinburgh in 1822, he brought his new wife Harriet née Geddes. Wilkie was born there in 1824.

A further reference in *Memoirs* to an elder daughter born before William who "died a month before his birth" – that is in August 1787 or perhaps 1788 – remains unproven. No record of such a person's death or indeed birth appears in the Parish records of St Marylebone where all William's known addresses are located.

### **CHARLES ALLSTON COLLINS AT SCHOOL – A MYTH DISPELLED**

Wilkie's brother Charles is listed as an old boy of Stonyhurst College in Lancashire. It is not true! The idea that he might have been sent to a Catholic school by his evangelical Anglican parents seems far-fetched. But a quick Google search will find several biographies and websites making that claim. And a search for 'Old Stonyhursts' will find a list of the alumni with Charles included in it. He may have been confused with another pre-Raphaelite artist James Collinson (1825-1881) who was from a Catholic family. But the archivist at Stonyhurst College has confirmed to WCS member Alan Bean that Charles did not attend the school, although a James Collins did so in the early 1840s. As far as we know, Charles was educated at home – see S. M. Ellis *Wilkie Collins, le Fanu and Others* (London: 1931, p. 55) and then on 13 January 1844, just a fortnight before his 16<sup>th</sup> birthday, he was admitted to the Royal Academy Schools sponsored, of course, by his father William Collins.

### **TWO MYSTERIES OF WILKIE IN THE TEA FACTORY**

Longstanding member, Angela Richardson, has raised two queries concerning Wilkie's time spent with Antrobus & Co.

### **Mystery number one**

What is the evidence that Wilkie loved or loathed his placement, as a 17 year old, in a tea merchant's office after he had finished school?

'The prison in the Strand' writes Catherine Peters in her biography, of the five years Wilkie spent at the offices of Mr Antrobus, tea provider to royalty. She believed he hated it. Whereas William Clarke, in his *Secret Life* considered it was a licence to write, with Dickens's publishers Chapman & Hall also in the Strand at number 186. They had published *Pickwick Papers* and while Wilkie was working there, also serialised Dickens's *Barnaby Rudge* and *Martin Chuzzlewit* in their monthly magazine *Master Humphrey's Clock*. Wilkie was first published during this time and wrote his first novel and began the second, at his desk in the office.

Which interpretation do you prefer? Here are two more conflicting pieces of evidence.

Wilkie's letters during the period 1841-46 are full of boisterous good humour and he is amusingly disrespectful about his boss, teasing his parents about the friendship they formed with Mr Antrobus. But only a year after he began his internship in the tea factory, his father, William Collins, writes to his main patron, Sir Robert Peel, seeking another position for Wilkie, this time in the civil service. Did he have regrets?

### **Mystery number two**

How did the son of a Royal Academician come to the notice of the head of a tea establishment?

All the biographers like the idea that it was the Collins family friend Charles Ward who brokered the introduction. Ward was working at Coutts bank, almost next door to the Antrobus office and where Sir Edmund Antrobus, cousin or nephew, to the younger Mr Antrobus, was a director. Both 'the Antrobi', as Wilkie called them, were involved in the tea trade.

There is another, hitherto unresearched, contender for the introduction: Mr Thomas Uwins, RA (1782-1857). William Collins knew him well and they led very similar artistic lives. Both painted in the UK as well as Italy; they had the same patrons; they both covered the King's visit to Scotland in 1822 and Uwins followed Collins as Librarian to the Royal Academy.

Uwins also knew the Antrobus who employed Wilkie, as he tells his brother in a letter in 1825: "of the singular and favourable circumstances – Antrobus, nephew to the baronet ... has renewed acquaintance in a most friendly way". He saw him as a possible patron but it was William Collins who scooped the commission, and 200 guineas, for portraying the Antrobus children in his landscape 'Aberystwyth'.

I'm putting my faith in the trinity of father, friend and his friend to solve this mystery. Though the geographical and corporate connection between Coutts Bank and the Antrobus tea factory, is undeniable, I doubt an employee could approach a Director to seek such a favour. It is far more likely that Collins and Uwins would discuss the matter as equals in the RA Library and put the 'old boy' network to work.

### ***THE NEW MAGDALEN – DRAMA IN THE NETHERLANDS***

WCS member, Pierre Tissot van Patot, who lives in the Netherlands, is continuing his detailed research into Wilkie Collins's books and plays. He writes the following about his latest discoveries concerning the dramatic versions of *The New Magdalen*:

Wilkie Collins published his novel *The New Magdalen* in 1873. In the Netherlands the story was translated and first serialised in *Stuivers Magazijn* by the publishers Gebroeders Belinfante as *De boetvaardige Magdalena* from January 1873. The story was well-known in The Netherlands because many people read the magazine. Wilkie Collins created a play from the story that was very successful in both England and the USA. The play was first performed at the Olympic Theatre in London on 19 May 1873 and remained popular for many years.

The text of the play was used by theatres in several European countries and the play was performed in France, Germany, Scandinavia, and Russia. The text was published in France as *Madeleine, Piece en Quatre Actes dont un Prologue* by R. Du Pontavice de Heussey (Paris: Paul Ollendorff, 1887). Wilkie Collins gave the text to the group from the Royal Theatre in Den Haag who performed the play as *De Boetvaardige* from 15 September 1873. In later years, the play was used by various companies in Amsterdam and Rotterdam. The Dutch text was never published.

W. N. Peijpers, an author from Rotterdam, created a second play based on the book. This text was also never published and seems to be lost. It is the only version with 5 acts. From December 1873 the play was performed a few times in Amsterdam.

In 1895 the Gebroeders Van Lier staged the play again in their Grand Theatre in Amsterdam. This was a large commercial theatre with various acting groups. A handwritten text of this performance is preserved. It is interesting to compare it with the original English version that was published in 1873. Many lines were faithfully translated so that this version was clearly based on the original translation from 1873. The prologue is now called Act 1, so that there were 4 Acts. The earlier performances had a prologue. Many of the stage instructions were also translated from the original text. Some parts of this version are almost identical to the original, but others are very different. It is very likely that the original translation from 1873 was changed a few times.

The title on the cover is *Een Zondares* which was used for the new production in 1895. On the title page the play is called *Mercy Merrick*. Extensive changes were made to this text. More than 10% of the text was deleted, but fortunately most of the original lines can still be found. Perhaps the original version of the play was too long. According to the advertisements, this version was adapted by 'A.J.G.' although this name is not present on the manuscript. Also the name of Wilkie Collins is not given. This version of the play was performed almost 100 times in The Netherlands and Belgium between 1895 and 1905.

## WILKIE'S LESSER KNOWN CLASSICS

### *Crimereads*

“How does anyone read Wilkie’s best stuff and not immediately go seek out the rest?” comments crime writer Steve Goble at crimereads.com. “Most mystery lovers know of Wilkie Collins, beloved for his classics “The Woman in White” and “The Moonstone,” old-fashioned tales meant to be savored page-by-page by the fire late at night. Beyond that, however, one might accuse readers of what amounts to criminal neglect.” His article goes on to look at *Basil, No Name, Jezebel’s Daughter* and *The Evil Genius*. You can find him @Steve\_Goble on twitter or on stevegoble.com.

### *American Thinker*

“Since Edgar Allen Poe's *The Murders of the Rue Morgue* and *The Woman in White* by Wilkie Collins, there have been many famous fictional detectives, some of whom have achieved legendary status”. Thus writes Michael Curtis in ‘Deciphering a Duo of Detectives’ on the website americanthinker.com. It is the start of his survey of four famous modern fictional detectives. Sadly, Wilkie is only mentioned once but if you are into detective fiction it is a pleasant read.

### **‘VOLPURNO’ – HAVE YOU SEEN IT – AND ‘QUI EST LE VOLEUR’**

Wilkie’s first identified publication in 1843 – long thought to have been ‘The Last Stage Coachman’ was correctly identified as ‘Volpurno’ during 2008. It was found in New York’s *The Albion, or British, Colonial, and Foreign Weekly* in the issue for 8 July 1843. It was republished in the same month in two other broadsheets, in both Philadelphia and New York and again later that year using the entirely different title of ‘A Maniac Bridegroom’.

But where was the English publication which almost certainly preceded that in the US newspapers? It is still unidentified over the last thirteen years so if you are researching English journals and newspapers of the period, see if you can find it and claim a place in Collins studies.

Another example of a Collins story crossing back and forth across both the Atlantic and the Channel is ‘The Biter Bit’. It was originally published anonymously in the *Atlantic Monthly* for April 1858 (Vol. I, No. VI) with the

title ‘Who is the Thief?’ It was almost immediately reissued in 1858 in Volume IV of the Bruxelles *Revue Britannique*, as ‘Qui est le voleur’ also without acknowledgement to Collins. The short story did not appear in England until its inclusion the following year in Collins’s second collection of short stories *The Queen of Hearts*, now with the revised title ‘The Biter Bit’. Since then it has been widely reprinted including a Swedish translation in 1912 and in *Ellery Queen’s Mystery Magazine* in 1949 where it is regarded as the first humorous detective story.

### **MRS INCHBALD, MESMERISM AND ANIMAL MAGNETISM**

The latest issue of *The Dickensian* (Spring 2021, No. 513, Vol. 117, Part 1) features an article by A. J. Larner on ‘Dickens and Mrs Inchbald: a Bicentenary Appreciation’. Mrs Inchbald was probably best known for a *Simple Story*, a romance written in 1791 of which Collins wrote in September 1887 “I very sincerely admire Mrs Inchbald’s “Simple Story ... an admirable novel well worth reading...” [2752]. Mrs Inchbald was also the author of *Animal Magnetism*, a farce based on the ‘science’ of mesmerism.

Dickens used the play as an accompaniment to several of his theatrical productions from 1848 onwards, no doubt influenced by his practical interest in the subject and his friendship with one of its chief exponents, John Elliotson. In particular, it was used as the supporting play to the first two performances of Collins’s *Frozen Deep* at Tavistock House on 5 and 6 January 1857.

Collins described Elliotson as “one of the greatest of English Physiologists” and used a case history in his *Human Physiology* as his inspiration for the attempt to find the missing diamond in *The Moonstone*. You can read about John Elliotson in *The Mesmerist: The Society Doctor Who Held Victorian London Spellbound* by Wendy Moore. It is published Orion at £14.99 but discounted to £6.97 on the Book Depository.

### **THE WOMAN IN WHITE - THE FILM THAT NEVER WAS**

Elliott Kastner was a Hollywood film producer whose name is found on dozens of major films including *Where Eagles Dare*, *The Long Goodbye*, and *The*

*Missouri Breaks*. He was based in Pinewood for much of his life and died in London in 2010 aged 80.

His studio contents have recently been sold, mainly to the British Film Institute, but one Wilkie-related gem is a complete screenplay for a film of *The Woman in White*, written in 1978 by the screenwriter Tom Clarke (1918–1993). The 260-page script was never produced but among the documents is a budget for ‘below the line’ costs – in other words everything except the fees for the producer, director, and actors – of £1.2 million. Clarke also adapted the screenplay into six parts for a TV series and Kastner showed it to the BBC at a meeting with Shaun Sutton in July 1978. It was not proceeded with. However, in April 1982 the BBC broadcast its own five-part adaptation of *The Woman in White* and Kastner at once consulted lawyers about lodging a claim for compensation for the BBC’s “most unprofessional and unprincipled action” in being “inspired” to do it by that meeting. It is not known if such a claim was made or, if so, how the BBC responded.

### ***WINTER OF DESPAIR***

*Winter of Despair* follows Cora Harrison’s *Season of Darkness* from 2019 which used as characters Wilkie Collins, Charles Dickens and Inspector Field. Her latest offering now also includes Charles Collins as the prime suspect in the murder of a Victorian blackmailer as well as frequent appearances of Harriet Collins in the family home in Hanover Terrace. Quoting the publisher’s blurb

Wilkie Collins must prove his brother is innocent of murder in the second of the compelling new Gaslight mystery series. November, 1853. Inspector Field has summoned his friends Charles Dickens and Wilkie Collins to examine a body found in an attic studio, its throat cut. Around the body lie the lacerated fragments of canvas of a painting titled *A Winter of Despair*. On closer examination, Wilkie realizes he recognizes the victim, for he had been due to dine with him that very evening. The dead man is Edwin Milton-Hayes, one of Wilkie's brother Charley's artist friends. But what is the significance of the strange series of faceless paintings Milton-Hayes had been worked on when he died? And why is Charley acting so strangely? With his own brother under suspicion of murder, Wilkie Collins and Charles Dickens set out to uncover the

truth. What secrets lie among the close-knit group of Pre-Raphaelite painters who were the dead man's friends? And who is the killer in their midst?

Another main character and one of the narrators is Sesina, a servant at Hanover Terrace where the novel is mainly set. This is an unlikely situation for her as she was one of the girls thrown out for bad behaviour from Urania Cottage, Charles Dickens's home for 'fallen women'. The book tries, not very successfully, to reproduce a Victorian atmosphere by including a good deal of detail but like most modern fiction which includes Wilkie as a character presents a rather unexciting read. We'll not reveal the rather preposterous dénouement! Nevertheless, *Winter of Despair* is published by Severn House at £22.99 but advertised on Amazon much more cheaply.

### **FOSCO IN FICTION**

Modern authors do seem to like using names of earlier authors' characters. Fosco is a good example, featuring in Dan Vyleta's *Pavel and I* from 2008. The novel, which has no other connection with Collins, was recommended in an episode of the BBC's 'A Good Read', introduced by Harriett Gilbert and repeated from 2012.

An earlier example with Fosco from 2004 but even more remote from Collins is *Brimstone*, the fifth instalment of the Special Agent Prendergast series. It is written by American authors Douglas Preston and Lincoln Child who obviously like including references to other literary works. Another example, in this case, is the entombing of Prendergast beneath Fosco's home which alludes to Poe's 'A Cask of Amontillado'.

### **WHO READ WILKIE?**

Here is another in our series of 'Who read Wilkie'

*No Name* was first published in book form as a three-decker on 31 December 1862 although designated 1863 on the title-page. Following the success of *The Woman in White*, all but 400 of the first edition of 4,000 copies were sold by the end of the first day. A second edition – really an impression – was published in February 1863. Collins later admitted in a letter to William Tinsley that "This

proved to be over-printing. The 500 copies hung on hand, and diminished, instead of adding to, the profits.” (11 July 1868 [0845]).

An interesting example of this second edition – also in three volumes – has recently come to light. There is no clue to the first owner but the book has the pictorial bookplate of Maurice Baring in each volume with the words “Here goes a ship with a cargo of books to the city of dreams,” a title subsequently used by Antonia Fraser for her centenary appreciation of Baring in the *Times* of 27 April 1974. Each volume has the additional bookplate of ‘Hugh et Antonia Fraser’ and Volume I also has the presentation inscription "Laura Lovat, from Maurice Baring - 1922."

Maurice Baring (1874-1945) was an English novelist, poet, dramatist and man of letters. He died at Laura Lovat’s home in Scotland where he had lived for his last five years. Laura Lovat (née Lister, 1892-1965) was the wife of Simon Fraser, 14<sup>th</sup> Lord Lovat and author of *Maurice Baring: A Postscript* (Hollis & Carter; London, 1948). Laura Lovat’s second son, Sir Hugh Fraser, was the first husband of Lady Antonia Fraser (b. 1932), the noted English historical novelist and biographer who subsequently married Harold Pinter. Sir Hugh Fraser (1918-1984) was a distinguished Conservative MP from 1945 and amongst other offices served as Secretary of State for Air from 1962-1964.

### **JANE AUSTEN’S LOST NOVEL**

WCS member P. J. Allen has published an edition of a lost novel by Jane Austen called *Two Girls of Eighteen*. Published in 1806 but apparently suppressed, Peter has transcribed the text from one of the two surviving copies. He has also written a long introduction where he explains why he is certain this is a work by Austen and how it fits in with her work and her life supported by copious notes both in the introduction and the text. A fascinating read. Published by Matador, at £25 from [troubadour.co.uk](http://troubadour.co.uk) or search ISBN: 9781800460140.

Peter Allen, by the way, is also a book dealer operating under the name of Robert Temple Antiquarian Booksellers. His bibliographic descriptions of nineteenth century works are unsurpassed for detail and accuracy and many can be found in the archives on his website.

## **THE ALLIANCE OF LITERARY SOCIETIES**

The WCS continues to be affiliated to the Alliance of Literary Societies. In ‘normal’ times it arranges an annual meeting with the theme of a particular author, currently postponed for obvious reasons. The Alliance has, however, continued to issue its annual journal, *ALSO*, the latest issue of which has just been published. The theme for this year is ‘Parody: the Writer in Lockdown’ and as usual is freely available for WCS members to download from <https://allianceofliterarysocieties.files.wordpress.com/2021/08/also-2021-final.pdf>.

## **FRIENDS OF KENSAL GREEN CEMETERY – A ZOOM EVENT**

The Friends of Kensal Green Cemetery – where Wilkie is buried of course – have arranged a talk by Alfred Hawkins, Assistant Curator of Historic Buildings at HM Tower of London and the Banqueting House, Whitehall which are cared for and operated by Historic Royal Palaces. The event takes place by Zoom on Wednesday 11th August at 6:30pm.

The Chapel Royal and Royal Peculiar of Saint Peter ad Vincula or ‘Saint Peter in Chains’ is located within the Inner Ward of the Tower of London World Heritage Site. Constructed in 1520, this working chapel serves the spiritual needs of the Tower community and is best known as the resting place of three queens of England and two catholic saints: Anne Boleyn, Catherine Howard, Lady Jane Grey, St. John Fisher and St Thomas More.

This talk observes the history of the chapel at the Tower, which can be traced to the 9th century, and discusses recent archaeological excavations which have unearthed new evidence concerning its development and use as the spiritual heart of England’s most famous fortress.

Tickets are £5 and can be purchased at <https://kensalgreen.co.uk/booking.php>.

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## ***THE WILKIE COLLINS SOCIETY***

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### **NEWSLETTER**

**WINTER 2021**

#### **COLLINS NUMBER ONE FOR THE DUCHESS OF CORNWALL**

‘The Crown Chronicles’ – an online digest of all things royal - reveals that Camilla, Duchess of Cornwall recently “Released a second reading list for fellow bookworms.” At Number 1 came *The Woman in White*, “a menacing and mysterious tale spun by this great Victorian writer with a penchant for drama,” ahead of *Girl* by Edna O'Brien; the Roy Grace Series by Peter James; *The Queen’s Necklace* by Alexander Dumas and *The Island* by Victoria Hislop. Search [thecrownchronicles.co.uk/category/film-tv-books/](http://thecrownchronicles.co.uk/category/film-tv-books/).

To mark World Book Day (23 April) the Duchess of Cornwall was asked about the importance of books and World Book Day, to which she replied: “I think it’s lovely that we have a special day to celebrate books. After all we have special days to celebrate everything else and books are very important things in our lives.”

According to *Vogue* (March 2020) which publishes a fine photograph of her, Kate, Duchess of Cambridge, also enjoys classic fiction. Apparently, she keeps on her desk amongst others works by Jane Austen, Charles Dickens, Thomas Hardy and George Eliot. But alas no Wilkie.

Wilkie, in fact, hardly mentions royalty in his stories and letters but may have had mixed views. In ‘A House to Let’, ‘Trotter’s Report’ questions “Why don’t

you get into a habit of expressing yourself in a straightforward manner, like a loyal subject of our gracious Queen Victoria.” On the other hand, corresponding with his literary agent A. P. Watt in June 1887 [2729] he writes “I don’t know which I am most weary of – the Jubilee [of Queen Victoria] or the heat”

## **WILKIE’S INHERITANCE**

Detailed study of the Collins family bank accounts at Coutts reveals how important inheritance was to Wilkie. It is now thought that in his lifetime Wilkie Collins earned about £62,000 from his books, stories, and plays. But another £10,000 came to him from inheritance.

In 1840 his mother Harriet inherited £5075 from her aunt Mary Maria, the sister of her mother. This legacy gave Harriet an income of £147 a year from 1840 to her death in 1868. The capital sum was then split equally between her two sons, Wilkie and Charles. They cashed in the investments and Wilkie used £800 to pay off a loan he had taken out to buy the lease of his new home at 90 Gloucester Place during 1867. Most of the rest he invested and over the years those investments – which he finally sold in 1878 – made him £371. He and Charles also inherited £170 each in cash.

When Wilkie’s father, William, died in 1847 he left £11,615 held in trust so that Harriet benefited from the income of about £340 a year. Harriet also had £9.50 a year from some railway shares as well as the income from Mary Maria’s trust. Her income from 1847 to her death in 1868 was around £495 a year. For comparison the average wage over that time was £37.75 a year.

When she died, William’s legacy remained in trust and Wilkie and Charles shared the income from it. But when Charles died all of it passed to Wilkie and it brought him in around £340 a year. Over his lifetime these dividends totalled £6750. Altogether his inheritances boosted his lifetime income by around £10,000. *To convert money to present day values multiply by 100. [NB these paragraphs update and correct the note sent in the email to members dated 11 October.]*

## **WILKIE'S AUNTS**

Further analysis of the bank account of Wilkie Collins has revealed that he made regular payments to two of the sisters of his mother, Harriet, after her death in 1868.

Mary Christina Dyke was one of Harriet's youngest sisters. Wilkie made quarterly payments to her from 30 June 1869 for the rest of his life. They began at £6 but in 1873 increased to £8 a quarter. Altogether he paid her £600. In his will he left her an annuity of £20 a year. She died in 1896.

Collins also made quarterly payments to another of Harriet's sisters, Catherine Esther Gray. He made a payment of £5 a quarter to Catherine from 30 April 1868 which increased to £8 in 1875 but fell to £6 in 1880. The payments stopped when Catherine died in 1882. But they were revived from 1 August 1883 – now for £8 a quarter – to one of Catherine's four daughters, Marion Gray. They continued for the rest of Wilkie's life. He paid Catherine a total of £358 and Marion £192. He also left Marion an annuity of £20 a year in his will. She died in 1900.

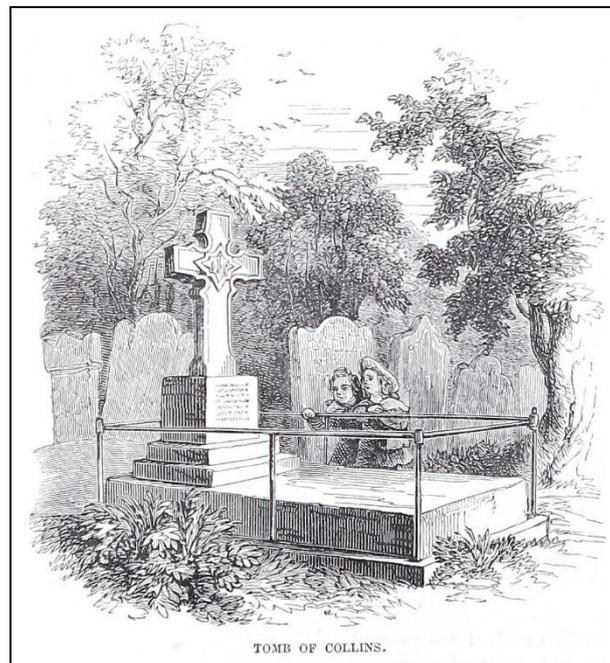
It is not clear why Wilkie made these payments to two of his aunts and then his cousin. They may have been requested by Harriet before she died – she may even have left what we now would call a letter of wishes. Harriet left no will so the administration of her estate – listed as less than £200 – was granted to her two sons, Wilkie and Charles. After her death two payments of £50 each were made from her account to her two youngest sisters Emily Elizabeth Clunes and Mary Christina Dyke. No payment is recorded to her sister Catherine but she left £50 to Jane Ward the married daughter of her sister Margaret Sarah Carpenter.

## **THE GRAVE OF WILLIAM COLLINS**

The grave of Wilkie's father, William Collins RA, has been identified by WCS member Alan Bean. He was buried on 23 February 1847 in the churchyard of St Mary's Paddington in the same grave as his mother Margaret and brother Frank, who had both died in 1833. Present at the burial were William's widow, Harriet, along with their two sons Wilkie and Charles. Two other artists, Thomas Uwins RA and Charles Leslie RA, were also present with William's

physician Dr. Richardson, his friend John Bullar, and the vicar Revd. William Charles Howell.

Almost all the south part of churchyard was destroyed for the Marylebone flyover in the 1960s and the remains of 450 people were moved to a cemetery in Mill Hill. But William's grave was not among them as he was buried to the north of the church in what is now St Mary's Gardens, a public space created in 1893.



A drawing of the gravestone erected by his family after his death, is found on p. 44 of the *Art Journal* of 1859 in an article called 'Tombs of English Artists'. The marble cross which stood on top of it has gone but the rest of the gravestones and traces of the inscription are still there. A photograph of the grave as it is now and an older slightly fuzzy one with the marble cross can be seen online <https://www.findagrave.com/memorial/10145442/william-collins>.

## **BACH AND ARMADALE**

WCS member Steven Isserlis has managed, as he put it, "to smuggle Wilkie" into his new book about Bach. *The Bach Cello Suites: A Companion* was published earlier this month. In Part 5 he writes

“...it’s important to remember that for Bach, music and religion seem to have been inextricably linked – different aspects of worship that permeated his entire existence: Soli Deo gloria. Not for him the sort of Christianity so admirably described by the Victorian novelist Wilkie Collins in his novel *Armadale*:

I have noticed that the Christianity of a certain class of respectable people begins when they open their prayer-books at eleven o’clock on Sunday morning, and ends when they shut them up again at one o’clock on Sunday afternoon. Nothing so astonishes and insults Christians of this sort as reminding them of their Christianity on a week-day. (Chapter X. Miss Gwilt’s Diary).

Bach’s religious conviction was on an utterly different plane.”

The book is published by Faber & Faber ISBN 978-0571366248 and Steven’s recording of the Cellos Suites is available on CD.

### ***MR WRAY’S CASHBOX IN ITALIAN***

Wilkie’s short Christmas book for 1852, *Mr Wray’s Cashbox*, is now available in Italian as *Lo scrigno di Mr Wray, ovvero la maschera e il mistero*. Translated by Emilia Carmen Cavaliere and edited by Mariaconcetta Constantini, it is published in Rome by Libreria Croce. (ISBN: 88-6402-371-2 EAN: 9788864023717). A review is available online by Francesca Vinci in *Victorian Popular Fictions*, Volume 2: Issue 1 (Spring 2020).

### ***LITTLE NOVELS ON RADIO 4EXTRA***

Listeners to Radio 4Extra were treated to five of Wilkie Collins’s short stories, one each weekday from 15 to 19 November. Each tale was dramatised by John Arden and featured the actor Ronald Pickup as the Wilkie Collins narrator. The five stories were ‘Mr Policeman and the Cook’, originally published as ‘Who Killed Zebedee?’; ‘Miss Jeromette and the Clergyman’, originally ‘The Clergyman’s Confession’; ‘Mr Marmaduke and the Minister’, originally ‘The Mystery of Marmaduke’; ‘Miss Bertha and the Minister’, originally ‘The Duel in Herne Wood’; and ‘Miss Morris and the Stranger’, originally ‘How I Married Him’.

The stories had originally appeared in the New York periodical *The Spirit of the Times* to which Collins contributed for the Christmas number each year from

1876 to 1887. They were five of the total of fourteen published in *Little Novels* in 1887. Unlike Collins's earlier collections of short stories, *After Dark* (1856) and *The Queen of Hearts* (1859), there was no connecting narrative but most of the tales revolve around the themes of love and marriage, frequently across social barriers and class.

### **1917 WOMAN IN WHITE**

A 104-year-old nitrate print of a 1917 film based on *The Woman in White* was found in October in a garage by the UCLA Film & Television Archive. It is called *The Unfortunate Marriage* and will be carefully unwound, protected, and stored safely. More at [www.cinema.ucla.edu](http://www.cinema.ucla.edu). There is already a digitised version of this film available on DVD, though of course the newly found print may have differences. The current version was taken from a copy in the Library of Congress and can be purchased for \$24.99 (plus \$15 airmail to UK) through [www.thanouser.org/DVD-7-8-9.htm](http://www.thanouser.org/DVD-7-8-9.htm). Thanouser says the film was originally called *The Woman in White* but was re-released in 1920 as *The Unfortunate Marriage*. You can search for the title or Wilkie Collins at the movie database [imdb.com](http://imdb.com). Copies also appear from time to time for sale on ebay.

### **A RECORD PRICE FOR THE WOMAN IN WHITE**

A first edition of Wilkie's most famous novel *The Woman in White* fetched what we believe to be a record price of \$36,000 – at least that is where the hammer fell but with 25% premium the buyer will have paid \$45,000 (about £34,000). The three-volume novel was in good condition and in its original purple cloth. Each volume has a red clamshell case. The sale was on 14 October 2021 at Heritage Auctions based in California. The previous record was probably held by a copy sold in 2004 for an inclusive \$30,000 in the Sotheby's J. Insley Blair sale.

### **THE MOONSTONE AT AUCTION**

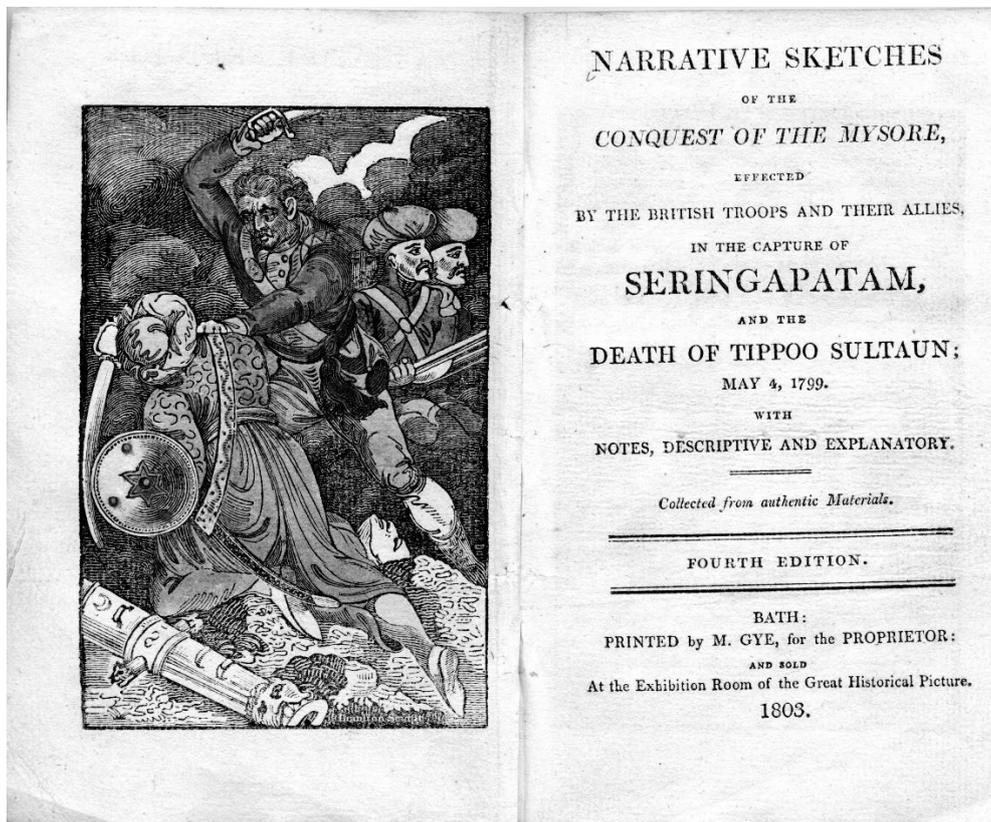
The previous month, on 14 September, Christies of New York held the first part of 'The Exceptional Literature Collection of Theodore Baum'. A copy of the less sought after first US edition of *The Woman in White* sold for a hammer price of \$2,500 against an estimate of \$3,000-\$5,000. In the same sale, lot 22, a first English edition of *The Moonstone*, failed to sell against an estimate of

\$15,000-\$25,000. Despite its rarity in original cloth, this was probably due to its poor condition with faded and worn cloth and the half-title to Volume I replaced with a facsimile. Had it sold for something near the estimate, this would still have paled into insignificance compared with a nice but by no means perfect copy of *The Moonstone* sold in the 2004 Insley Blair sale for an amazing inclusive sum of \$125,600 against an estimate of \$25,000-\$35,000.

In other respects, the Baum sale certainly was exceptional with a copy of *Pride and Prejudice* selling for \$112,500, *Great Expectations* for \$162,500, a presentation copy of *Dracula* for \$275,000 and *Frankenstein* for \$1,170,000. Wilkie would probably feel rather neglected. For those who wish to drool over unattainable treasures, search online for Christies, Part I of the Baum Collection. Part 2 with twentieth century offerings took place online between 2 and 17 September.

## THE STOLEN JEWEL

Wilkie readers will remember the opening chapter of *The Moonstone* which begins with 'The Storming of Seringapatam' and the theft of the Moonstone diamond by John Herncastle who killed three local Indian guards in the process. The cursed stone is of course at the heart of the story and like many of Wilkie's tales there is truth in the fiction.



It has emerged in recent weeks that the British Government is trying to stop the export of a gold-jewelled tiger's head which was taken after Tipu Sultan was defeated at Seringapatam in 1799. It was one of eight jewelled gold finials on his throne, made between 1787-93. After Tipu Sultan's defeat and death in 1799, the throne was broken up and brought back to England by the British Army's Prize Agents. Parts of the throne were presented to King George III. The finial, which has only recently come to light in private hands, is said to be worth £1.5 million but an export licence has been withheld until February or possibly June next year to allow a British institution to raise the money to acquire it. It had better be well guarded!

### **WHO READ WILKIE?**

One of the fascinations of collecting early editions is discovering the lives of previous owners. On the title page of a Smith, Elder yellowback dated 1872 is the ownership inscription "Thomas Weeding Weeding, Gravesend, 1<sup>st</sup> May 1873". Thomas Weeding was originally known as Thomas Weeding Baggallay but under the terms of a relative's will changed his name to Thomas Weeding Weeding by royal licence, announced in *The London Gazette* on 14 July 1868.

Baggalay/Weeding (1847–1929) was born in London at St Pancras. He qualified as a solicitor in 1870 and became a Justice of the Peace in 1878. He served Surrey County Council for more than thirty years, as deputy clerk from 1891–1904 and Clerk from 1904–1927. With his wife Alice Maude Elizabeth, they had two sons and two daughters. Both sons were killed during the first World War.

Weeding's other claim to fame is a short career as a wicket keeper for Surrey County Cricket Club. He played eight games as an amateur between 1865 and 1874 with a highest score of 82. He was tall at the time at 6'3" and tall for a wicket keeper even now. Further details of his short career can be found in *A Century of Surrey Stumpers* by David Sawyer, 2001.

It is worth returning to the yellowback copy, itself. *The Woman in White* must have engaged Weeding's legal mind for quite a while. No doubt using his professional training and dated 18.6.74, Weeding has appended to the volume his own detailed chronology of the story together with a construction of the Fairlie family tree.

Weeding died from a fall in December 1929 at Kingthorpe, Addlestone, Surrey, recorded in the *Thanet Advertiser* for 3 January 1930. A stern looking portrait by William Carter can be seen at [artuk.org/discover/artworks/thomas-weeding-weeding](http://artuk.org/discover/artworks/thomas-weeding-weeding). His name is still visible on a 1904 sign in south London's Mitcham Lane, warning against bill stickers.

## **WRITERS AND LETTERS IN THE *NEW YORKER***

An article on the American writer Philip Roth in the *New Yorker* magazine (29 March 2021) claimed

Many literary figures have dreaded the spectre of the biographer. Charles Dickens, Wilkie Collins, Walt Whitman, Henry James, and Sylvia Plath are but a few who put their letters and journals into the fire.

WCS member Susan Hanes, who wrote *Wilkie Collins's American Tour* (London, 2008), asked if this was true.

There is no evidence that Wilkie Collins systematically burned his manuscripts, almost all of which survive even for stories he specifically said he did not want to be republished. One of his diaries and some of his notebooks are extant though there are few letters to him, so perhaps he did destroy those. He certainly wrote about letters being burned in several of his stories.

For example, Wilkie wrote in the 1854 Christmas Number of *Household Words* in the 'Fourth Poor Traveller' (later reprinted as 'The Stolen Letter' in *After Dark*)

My experience in the law, Mr. Frank, has convinced me that if everybody burnt everybody else's letters, half the Courts of Justice in this country might shut up shop

Charles Dickens did burn almost every letter written to him on his infamous bonfire at Gad's Hill on 3 September 1860 and then continued to do so for the rest of his life. But he could not burn the letters he had sent and around 12,000 have been published in the Pilgrim edition and document his life and his thoughts. Since 2002 newly found letters are at the excellent Dickens Letters project [www.dickensletters.com](http://www.dickensletters.com).

Wilkie helped Catherine Dickens publish the first edition of Dickens's letters and he did recommend that a few be destroyed. But Wilkie looked after letters he had written to his mother and brother Charles, which he inherited on their deaths, and carefully kept and labelled them. More than 3350 of Wilkie's letters are known and documented and are an invaluable biographical source.

However, among them there are no known letters to either of Wilkie's two lifelong companions – Caroline Graves, or Martha Rudd who was the mother of his three children, or to any of those children. So some letters clearly are missing and have most likely been destroyed. But that is probably an issue of privacy, tidiness, or carelessness rather than fear of biography. Indeed, on many occasions Wilkie gave information to journalists and writers about his life – largely because he preferred what they wrote to be accurate.

If Wilkie had wished to avoid biography he would be a very disappointed man. Depending how they are counted – starting with the unfinished biography by Dorothy L. Sayers and the groundbreaking work by Kenneth Robinson in 1951 – there are certainly more than a dozen biographies and more than double that number if literary analysis, letters, chronology, and guides are added.

More on Dickens's bonfire and Wilkie's view on burning letters at [wilkiecollins.com](http://wilkiecollins.com) menu item 9 and see Paul Lewis 'Burning: The Evidence', *The Dickensian*, Winter 2004, pp. 197-208.

## **WILKIE AT FRYSTON HALL**

Richard Monckton Milnes – later Lord Houghton – was a good friend of Wilkie's who visited his home at Fryston Hall on more than one occasion. Wilkie's letters reveal that the first visit was in August 1860 and there was another four years later. Fryston Hall was packed with so many books 'they spilled out into the hallways, bedrooms, and every hidden cupboard' says Professor of Victorian Literature, Deborah Lutz. In her book *Pleasure Bound* she reveals that Fryston would 'become notorious for a subset of this library: its huge stash of rare and illegal erotica which earned the whole house the nickname Aphrodisiopolis'. Much of the material was clandestinely imported from Paris. Milnes was MP for Pontefract from 1837 to 1863 and in 1857 opposed the passing of the Obscene Publications Act which made much of his

collection illegal. He was elevated to the peerage as Baron Houghton in 1863. *Pleasure Bound: Victorian Sex Rebels and the New Eroticism*, New York: 2011, p. 69.

## **GASLIGHT MYSTERIES**

Continuing Gaslight Mysteries, Cora Harrison has now added two more which feature Wilkie Collins and Charles Dickens as characters who solve the various murders and mysteries. The first two were *Season of Darkness* and *Winter of Despair* and there are now two new titles to complete the four-part series.

The first new arrival is *Summer of Secrets* set around Knebworth House. Quoting from the publisher's blurb: "When Inspector Field shows his friend Charles Dickens the body of a young woman dragged from the River Thames, he cannot have foreseen that the famous author would immediately recognize the victim as Isabella Gordon, a housemaid he had tried to help through his charity. Nor that Dickens and his fellow writer Wilkie Collins would determine to find out who killed her. Who was Isabella blackmailing, and why? Led on by fragments of a journal discovered by Isabella's friend Sesina, the two men track the murdered girl's journeys from Greenwich to Snow Hill, from Smithfield Market to St Bartholomews, and put their wits to work on uncovering her past."

Number 4 in the series is *Spring of Hope*. "*March, 1859*. After the 'Great Stink' of the previous summer when Parliament was overwhelmed by the stench of sewage from the River Thames, and with cholera running rife throughout the city, Charles Dickens has a new enthusiasm. Having formed a firm friendship with Joseph Bazalgette, he is assisting the ambitious young engineer in his efforts to find a solution to London's pollution problem. Dickens' friend and fellow writer Wilkie Collins meanwhile is distracted by thoughts of his pretty new housekeeper and her charming daughter. But what does he really know of his new employee's past - and just who - or what - is making her so frightened? During an exhibition to showcase London's top engineers' plans to solve the sewage issue, proceedings are disrupted by a high-pitched, agonised scream - and the discovery of a blood-soaked body; the result - it would appear - of a terrible accident. Dickens however is convinced of foul play, and once again he and Wilkie Collins set about uncovering the shocking truth."

These titles, along with several others by Cora Harrison, who appears to produce books at an astonishingly fast rate, are issued by publishers Severn House. All are available on Amazon or Book Depository.

As an aside, there really was ‘the Great Stink’ in the summer of 1858 which Wilkie would have endured – see ‘One Hot Summer’, WCS Newsletter Spring 2019. The real-life Joseph Bazalgette constructed the impressive Crossness Pumping Station with its beam engine house on the southern side of the Thames at Abbey Wood in 1865. Crossness still exists and hosts open days for visitors. The interior is truly magnificent and certainly well worth a visit. (See [www.crossness.org.uk/visit.html](http://www.crossness.org.uk/visit.html)).

### **LARGE PRINT EDITIONS**

Most of Collins’s titles, including some of the short stories, now seem to be available in large print editions. Most are paperbacks and can be found on Amazon; or on Book Depository just search for Wilkie Collins Large Print. Prices vary mainly between about £8.99 for *Hide and Seek* and £22.99 for *The Black Robe*.

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## ***THE WILKIE COLLINS SOCIETY***

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### **NEWSLETTER**

**SPRING 2022**

#### **MUTUALLY ASSURED DESTRUCTION**

In these troubled times, we might recall that Wilkie was at the forefront if not the creator of the concept of Mutually Assured Destruction. Writing at the time of the Franco-Prussian war on 7 August 1870, he wrote in a letter to his German translator, Emil Lehmann

I am, like the rest of my countrymen, heartily on the German side in the War. But what is to be said of the progress of humanity? Here are the nations still ready to slaughter each other, at the command of one miserable wretch whose interest it is to set them fighting! Is this the nineteenth century? or the ninth? Are we before the time of Christ or after? I begin to believe in only one civilising influence – the discovery one of these days, of a destructive agent so terrible that War shall mean annihilation, and men's fears shall force them to keep the peace.

Collins returned to the notion in his fiction on two occasions. In *Jezebel's Daughter* (1880), describing the mysterious Hungarian:

He not only believes in The Philosopher's Stone; he says he is on the trace of some explosive compound so terrifically destructive in its effect, that it will make war impossible.

The theme then recurs in *Heart and Science* (1883) where referring to the evil Dr Benjulia he writes:

One report says that he is trying to find a way of turning common metals into gold. Another declares that he is inventing some explosive compound, so horribly destructive that it will put an end to war.'

So here we are, 150 years on and more than 75 years after we have had such a weapon and sadly recent events show that wars still continue!

## **COLLINS'S FIRST SHORT STORIES**

### **'Volpurno' ('A Maniac Bridegroom') (1843)**

'Volpurno' is Collins's first identified short story, discovered in 2008 by Daniel Hack of the University of Michigan. It was originally published in New York on 8 July 1843 in *The Albion, or British, Colonial, and Foreign Weekly* and in the same month in two other broadsheets - in Philadelphia in the *Pennsylvania Inquirer and National Gazette* on 20 July and again in New York in *The New Mirror of Literature, Amusement, and Instruction* on 29 July. Later that year it was republished using the entirely different title of 'A Maniac Bridegroom' in *The Evansville Journal* on 2 November 1843 and on 25 December 1843 in *The Rover, a Weekly Magazine of Tales, Poetry, and Engravings*.

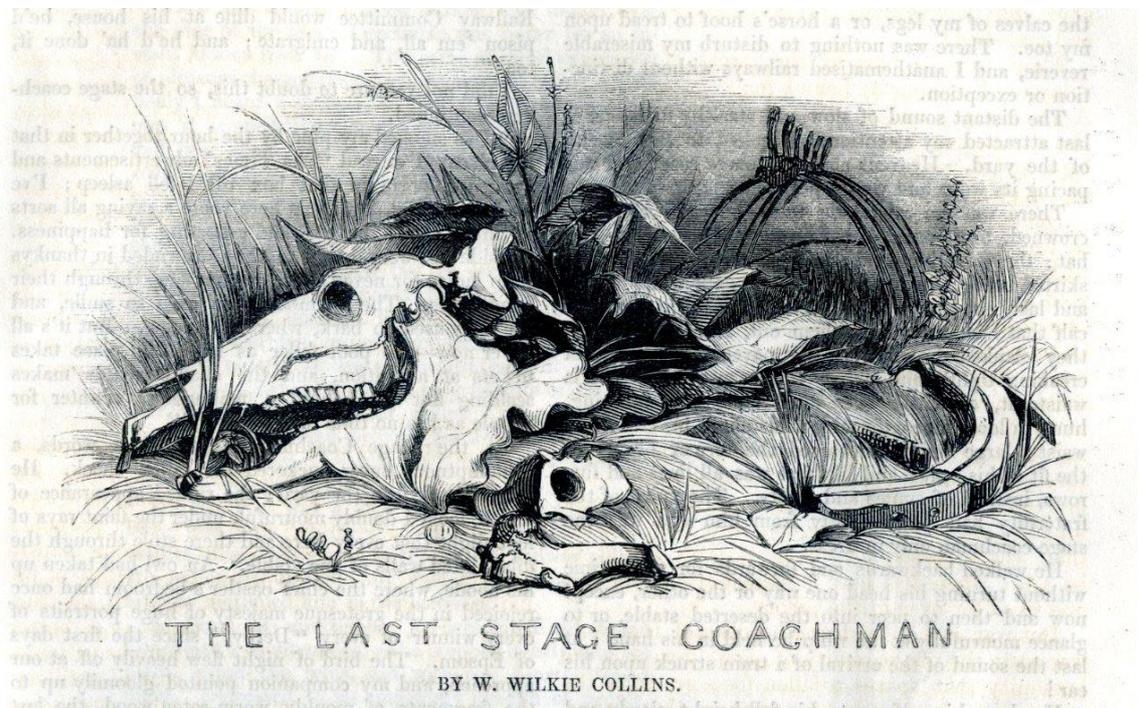
Using the wonderful modern resources of so many newspapers available online, it is now possible to add two more US newspapers to the above, both using the title 'A Maniac Bridegroom': *The Lexington Union* (from Mississippi) for 11 November 1843 and *The York Gazette* (from Pennsylvania) for 19 December.

The story was issued in 2009 as a separate publication by the Wilkie Collins Society but no record has been found for English publication around the time of the 1843 US newspapers. It can be found online at <http://www.wilkie-collins.info/volpurno.htm>.

### **'The Last Stage Coachman' (1843)**

The 'Last Stage Coachman' was long considered Collins's first identified publication until the discovery of 'Volpurno'. A Brief fantasy story lamenting the passing of the stage coach, displaced by the arrival of the railway. It was first included in volume I of Douglas Jerrold's *Illuminated Magazine* for August

1843 and this had been considered its only publication. Some further investigation now shows it was issued in several other British Newspapers in 1843, either in full or as an excerpt.



*The Hampshire Advertiser & Salisbury Guardian*, 5 August (excerpt); *Woolmer's Exeter and Plymouth Gazette*, 12 August (in full); *Manchester Times and Manchester and Salford Advertiser*, 12 August (excerpt); *Gloucestershire Chronicle*, 12 August (short excerpt); *Bristol Mercury and Daily Post*, 19 August (excerpt); *Lloyd's Weekly London Newspaper*, 20 August (in full); *Coventry Herald and Observer*, 1 September (excerpt); and the *Coventry Standard*, 1 September (short excerpt).

An excerpt also appeared in *The Royal Cornwall Gazette, Falmouth Packet, and General Advertiser* on 11 January 1850. Another 'Last Stage Coachman' – not by Collins - was published in *Tait's Magazine*, No. 144 for September 1852.

'The Last Stage Coachman' was republished by the Wilkie Collins Society in November 1990.

## **COLLINS'S COPYRIGHTS AND *THE EVIL GENIUS***

Collins was always seeking to protect his copyrights, mainly from American pirate book publishers but also from unauthorised English dramatists. *The Evil Genius* illustrates the methods he was obliged to follow in order to protect his copyright for both his dramas and his books.

*The Evil Genius* was written as a play at the same time as the novel. It was produced at the Vaudeville Theatre on the afternoon of Friday 30 October 1885, described as “a new and original drama, in Five Acts.” This was the sole public performance designed to secure Collins’s dramatic copyright. The cast included Marian Carr as Catherine Linley, Mrs Hendrie as Sydney Westerfield, Mr Morris as Herbert Linley and John Phipps as Captain Bennydeck. The full cast and contemporary background is given in *The Era* of 31 October 1885:

Frequenters of theatrical London passing along the Strand on Friday afternoon might have discovered an unusual announcement affixed to the doors of the Vaudeville Theatre, making public the fact that there would be produced for the first time a new drama by Mr Wilkie Collins, entitled *The Evil Genius*. To those accustomed to production simply made for the purpose of securing dramatic copyright the announcement, though quite unexpected, would not occasion surprise, seeing that these performances are of necessity prepared in secret, and that they are launched upon the public as suddenly as is possible in order that no advantage may be taken by the unscrupulous ... It may appear strange that an author should perforce have to adopt such tactics to protect his own property, and it is also hard upon him, in many ways, that this state of things should exist. Still, as things are they must be accepted until some radical and much-needed changes are made in our laws of copyright..... we found a small proportion of the small audience assembled, and witnessed the first publication of Mr Collins’s new drama.

Equivalent methods were employed to protect Collins’s book copyrights. In the case of *The Evil Genius*, the first English book edition of the novel was published in three volumes in September 1886. This, however, was preceded by an undated 24-page pamphlet of what Collins called a ‘bogus story’, consisting of the Prologue to the main story. It was issued in an edition of just twelve copies by Tillotson, who was serialising the novel in his syndicated newspapers. The title was entered at Stationer’s Hall and the sale of a copy would have protected Collins’s copyright. A similar procedure was adopted for *The Guilty River* (1886) and *The Legacy of Cain* (1889).

A facsimile edition of the ‘Bogus’ *The Evil Genius* is published by the British Library *Historical Print Editions*.

### **WHERE WAS THE COLLINS’S HOUSE IN VIA FELICE?**

Long standing WCS member Angela Richardson has been researching and annotating Harriet Collins’s manuscript *Italian Journal* now held at the Victoria & Albert Museum. Here we have her conclusions on where the Collins family stayed in Rome during the 1830s.

The Collins family lived for five months in Rome in apartments on the Via Felice from 7 January to 2 May 1837 as part of William Collins’s European art tour.

Wilkie, was 13 years old when he was first in Rome in 1837. He revisited it in 1853 and wrote of his feelings to his brother:

Here I am actually in Rome again after an interval of no less than sixteen years.... nothing has astonished me more than my own vivid remembrance of every street and building in this wonderful and mournful place.... Not the least changeless object in Rome was our old house in the Via Felice. The Virgin is still in her niche – the cabbage stalks and rubbish are strewn about underneath – the very door looks as if it had never been painted since we left it.

([0159] WC to Charles Collins, 13 November 1853)

The first place to look for Via Felice is in the ‘Ghetto Inglese’ - an area where the 19th century English artists and tourists stayed in Rome. It was believed to be a healthy place as it was less crowded and from there the Pincian Hill, with its parklands, could easily be reached. The ‘ghetto’ was centred around the Piazza di Spagna and the Spanish Steps where would-be artist models sought employment. William Collins wrote to Sir David Wilkie identifying Via Felice as “not five minutes walk” from the Trinita del Monte, the church at the top of those steps. The road at the back of the Trinita is Via Sistina which runs down the Quirinal Hill to the Via delle Quattro Fontane and at a cross roads, Via Felice in on the right-hand side and Via Pia on the left. The fountains of the Via Della Quattro Fontane are built into corner buildings of the crossroads.

Although, in 1853, Wilkie described Rome to his brother as ‘changeless’, he was, only eight years later, using his contemporary knowledge of a change in Italian politics in *The Woman in White*. The plot turns on the past lives of two

Italian characters – Professor Pesca and Count Fosco. The former, a ‘sleeper’ in London for a secret revolutionary society and the latter, a renegade spy. In the 1860s when Wilkie was writing this novel, the Italian *risorgimento* – the movement for reunifying the country – was in its early stages and one of its leaders, Guiseppe Mazzoni, was on his third bout of exile in London.

The final achievement of the unification of Italy in 1870 led to the changing of many street names, one of which was Via Felice. Its opposite road at the crossroads was given the exact date of unification: Via Venti Settembre. Via Felice took on the name of Via del Quirinale, because of the Pallazo della Quirinale which had been dominating Via Felice since the 16th century.

It is odd that none of the Collins family referred to this landmark, which took up a quarter of the length of the road. The number, or name, of their apartments is still not known. Perhaps they lived at the other end of the street, closer to the Spanish Steps. There is no Madonna in a niche visible on modern day Via del Quirinale and certainly no cabbage stalks but there are some gated courtyards where perhaps the Roman apartments rented by the Collins family still exist.

### ***THE MOONSTONE AND RECOVERED MEMORIES***

Mentioned in general terms in the Preface to *The Moonstone*, Collins uses a case history on p. 646 of John Elliotson's *Human Physiology* (1840) as his inspiration for the attempt to find the missing diamond by administering a second dose of opium to Franklin Blake. Elliotson – described by Ezra Jennings towards the end of the *Third Narrative* in *The Moonstone* as “one of the greatest of English physiologists” – narrates the recovery of a missing parcel.

An Irish porter to a warehouse, who forgot, when sober, what he had done when drunk; but, being drunk, again recollected the transactions of his former state of intoxication. On one occasion, being drunk, he had lost a parcel of some value, and in his sober moments could give no account of it. Next time he was intoxicated, he recollected that he had left the parcel at a certain house, and there being no address on it, had remained there safely, and was got on his calling for it.

*The Moonstone* is fiction imitating real life but real life imitates fiction according to the headline in the New York *Buffalo Evening News* of 15

September 1904: “The Plot of Wilkie Collins’ “Moonstone” Duplicated in real Life.”

It is improbable “that Franklin Blake could have stolen the diamond while under the influence of laudanum and then have repeated the theft a year later while again under the influence of the same drug.... Now an actual occurrence goes to prove that the laudanum incident introduced by Collins into his famous story was not a wild flight of the novelist’s imagination.

A painter fell from a scaffold and was seriously injured. He was placed under an anaesthetic and operated upon. In his unconsciousness he babbled about continually of a fortune of \$100,000 which awaited him in England. When the man regained consciousness and the surgeons joked him of the supposed wild dreams which the anaesthetic had caused, the man’s brain completely cleared from the shadow which had long hung over it and proved that the fortune did actually await him. Subsequent developments show the man’s story to be substantially true.

Similar instances of fiction imitating real life and real life imitating fiction are explored in ‘*Poor Miss Finch and Some Literary Coincidences*’ accompanying this Newsletter.

### **A RECORD LETTER**

A newly found and charming letter from Wilkie Collins came on the market at a recent auction in Chicago. Showing some signs of having been stuck in an album the auctioneer at Potter & Potter could give no further clues about its provenance.

Dated 12 January 1881 the three-page letter, written on the green-blue paper Wilkie used at the time, was to Jane Ward. Often said to be Wilkie’s favourite niece, Jane was the daughter of his mother’s sister, Margaret Carpenter, the highly successful Victorian artist. Jane was married to Charles Ward, Wilkie’s lifelong friend who worked at Coutts and acted as his banker.

In barely one hundred words he responds affectionately to her gift of flowers for his 57<sup>th</sup> birthday four days earlier.

12th January 1881

My dear Jane,

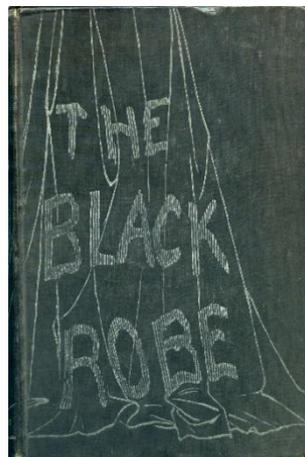
Four days since I ought to have thanked you for that charming token of remembrance and kindness. My only excuse is that I am smothered in the folds of “The Black Robe”. In plain English, I am so hard at work on the concluding chapters of a new story, that I am not even fit to write a letter when the day’s task is done. This is only an apology for a letter – but I delight in the lovely flowers – and I most sincerely thank you.

My love to all at home.

Yours affectly | Wilkie Collins

Mrs Charles Ward

Even in casual correspondence Wilkie created memorable phrases – ‘I am smothered in the folds of “The Black Robe”’. The story was being published in parts in several syndicated newspapers and in April 1881 Chatto & Windus published it as a three-volume novel. The binding, incidentally, shows the folds of a Black Robe and is possibly the first use on cloth of a reliable ‘silver’ pigment in the form of aluminium.



Collins’s reference to ‘all at home’ includes the four grown up children of Jane and Charles who were still living with them. They had eleven children altogether. Charles died two years later.

The letter fetched what is thought to be a record price of \$6,600, around £5,000 - a rate of £50 per word! It will be one of several newly identified letters in the 14<sup>th</sup> Addenda to his letters which the Society plans to publish towards the end of the year.

## WHISTLER EXHIBITION

The Royal Academy in London has put together a unique collection of James Whistler's paintings and drawings of women dressed in white. The centrepiece is his *Symphony in White, No. 1: The White Girl* (1862), a painting of Whistler's Irish lover, the red-haired Joanna Hiffernan, dressed entirely in white. Inevitably it was widely referred to as 'The Woman in White' when it was exhibited in the Berners Street Gallery in 1862 after being rejected by the Royal Academy. Wilkie's novel had been published a couple of years earlier and was still selling thousands of copies in its one volume edition.

Whistler denied the connection with Wilkie's *The Woman in White*. In a letter to the editor of *The Athenaeum*, William Dixon, he wrote

May I beg to correct an erroneous impression likely to be confirmed by a paragraph in your last number? The Proprietors of the Berners Street Gallery have, without my sanction, called my picture "The Woman in White." I had no intention whatsoever of illustrating Mr. Wilkie Collins's novel; it so happens, indeed, that I have never read it. My painting simply represents a girl dressed in white standing in front of a white curtain. (*The Athenaeum* 5 July 1862 p.23).

But Frederick Buckstone, the secretary of the Berners Street Gallery where it was displayed, claimed in *The Athenaeum* two weeks later:

Mr. Whistler was well aware of his picture being advertised as 'The Woman in White,' and was pleased with the name. (*The Athenaeum* 19 July 1862 p.86).

There is no mention of Whistler or the painting in Wilkie's known letters. Whatever the truth of the controversy, this exhibition is a must-see for all Wilkie Collins enthusiasts. It contains many other paintings by Whistler and is an exploration of Whistler and white. Curated by Ann Dumas and Margaret MacDonald, it closes on 22 May. Tickets £17 (RA members free but must book). Another account of the exhibition is at <https://thecritic.co.uk/sensation-painting>.

More information and a video tour at [royalacademy.org.uk](http://royalacademy.org.uk). The RA magazine (Spring 2022) contains two essays about the painting.

## WHAT WE OWE TO WILKIE

Part of Whistler's painting is used to illustrate a 2018 article by Radha Vastal published at [crimereads.com](http://crimereads.com). 'What we owe to Wilkie Collins's *The Woman in White*' is an essay on the 19<sup>th</sup> century origins of the modern psychological thriller. It is a comprehensive and well written account of how the book has influenced writers at the time and up to the present day. Read more at [crimereads.com](http://crimereads.com): search 'Wilkie Collins', which also finds three other essays about his work.

## JUPITER AND HIS SATELLITES

A high-resolution image of a little-known engraving of Wilkie, Dickens and other contributors to *All The Year Round* can be found on the website of the Yale Centre of British Art – search 'Wilkie Collins'.

WCS member Professor Graham Law identified it as originally published in the *Queen*, Vol. 1, 16 (21 December 1861), pp. 313-315.



'Tom Tiddler's Ground--The Committee of Concoction: Extraordinary Proceedings in Wellington Street (from our own Reporter). A humorously attended and highly influential meeting of literary gentlemen was recently held at the office of *All the Year Round*, to arrange a plan for the Christmas number of that deservedly popular periodical'.

The clock on the left is captioned ‘Jupiter and his Satellites’. Wilkie holds up his manuscript entitled ‘Something Horrid’ and the misspelled label on the picture on the wall top right reads ‘Collincs Wilkie or Ye Modern Frankenstein’. The boy, identified only as F.C., is bringing in two bottles – not of wine but of ink. The five men in the image left to right are identified as George Augustus Sala, Wilkie Collins, Charles Dickens, William Moy Thomas, and John Hollingshead. Of these only Thomas was not a contributor to ATYR (Oppenlander (1984) and Parrott (forthcoming)) though he had contributed many articles to *Household Words* (Lohrli (1973)). The print supposes they are ‘concocting’ the Christmas number of *All The Year Round* which that year was *Tom Tiddler’s Ground*. The authors of that work were later revealed to be – apart from Dickens and Collins – Wilkie’s brother Charles, Amelia Edwards, and John Harwood. It was Wilkie’s last Christmas number until he wrote *No Thoroughfare* with Charles Dickens, six years later in 1867.

The image is referred to by Lillian Nayder in *Unequal Partners – Charles Dickens, Wilkie Collins, & Victorian Authorship*, Cornell UP, 2002, p.130 and frontispiece.

A search on the website of the Yale Centre for British Art reveals that it also holds several works by Wilkie’s father, William Collins, which include *May Day* (1812) and *Frost Scene* (1827).

## **ALLIANCE OF LITERARY SOCIETIES**

The ALS will be holding its AGM this year at the Hull History Centre from Friday 20 to 22 May 2022. The weekend will be hosted by the Philip Larkin Society, celebrating the 100<sup>th</sup> anniversary of his birth. It will include a range of talks about his life and works, including his time at the University of Hull. As always there will be plenty of opportunities to meet and socialise with friends from other societies. Full details can be obtained from the Alliance website <https://allianceofliterarysocieties.files.wordpress.com/2022/02/als-agm-2022.pdf>.

## **ALPHA FEMALE**

One of the strangest uses of an extract from *The Woman in White* was published recently by an investment firm called Seeking Alpha in an analysis of a Boston

firm called Toast, which provides cloud-based technology for the restaurant industry. Its shares had not lived up to expectations after a stock market launch. After a summary of the firm, the article on its website includes this quote:

*My hour for tea is half-past five, and my buttered toast waits for nobody.*"— Wilkie Collins, *The Woman in White*.

They are the concluding words of Mrs. Catherick's narrative

On this account no names are mentioned here, nor is any signature attached to these lines: the handwriting is disguised throughout, and I mean to deliver the letter myself, under circumstances which will prevent all fear of its being traced to my house. You can have no possible cause to complain of these precautions, seeing that they do not affect the information I here communicate, in consideration of the special indulgence which you have deserved at my hands. My hour for tea is half-past five, and my buttered toast waits for nobody.

It is a strange choice to illustrate an article about a firm called Toast. Perhaps Wilkie has a fan at the investment firm?

## **BAD BOOK COVERS**

And still with the lasting attraction of Wilkie's most famous book, long time member Susan Hanes sent this link to some examples of the most inappropriate literary fiction book covers – scroll down to the fourth item <https://lithub.com/50-very-bad-book-covers-for-literary-classics/>.

Paul Lewis  
Andrew Gasson

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

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



## ***THE WILKIE COLLINS SOCIETY***

**PATRON** Faith Clarke

**Chairman** Andrew Gasson, 21 Huson Close, London NW3 3JW

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

**NEWSLETTER**

**SUMMER 2022**

### **Anthony West 25 August 1936 – 29 May 2022**

The Society is very sorry to report the death of Wilkie Collins's great-grandson Anthony West. Wilkie's own son William Charles Collins Dawson (1874-1913) had two children. William's daughter Helen Martha Dawson (1907-1987) married George West and Anthony was their son. Our patron and Wilkie's great-granddaughter Faith Clarke attended the funeral on 28 June and writes this appreciation of Anthony for us.

Anthony West, more often known as Tony, died on the 29th May at the age of eighty-five. He was a much loved family man who will be greatly missed and he was also the great-grandson of Wilkie Collins.

Cousin Anthony certainly added colour to my childhood, sometimes in an unexpected way. One summer, I remember, we pitched a tent on the lawn to have a sleepover but, waving his blunderbuss around the tent, he hit me on the head. I was sworn to secrecy for ever and did not let him down but, in the morning, the lump on my head sadly gave the game away. On another occasion

he fixed some wheels on a crate, took me to the top of a hill, put me in the crate and let go. I did not come out of that adventure unscathed either, but I never held it against him.

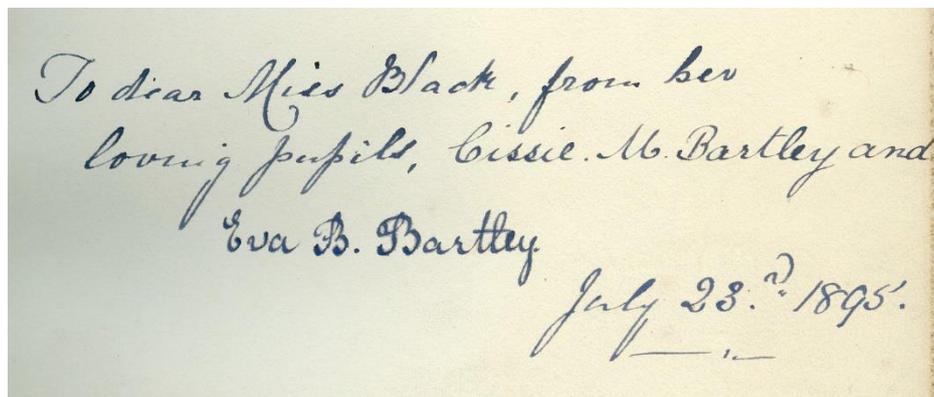
Sailing was a popular pursuit to be shared with all the family and, indeed, any interests of his children, immediately became his interests, too. Tony's passion for cars directed his whole working life. Firstly, there was an engineering apprenticeship with Bedford Trucks followed by other appointments with Volvo and later within the Vauxhall group. To end his career, it was back to Vauxhall, handling Fleet Sales both nationwide and overseas and, finally, managing Special Vehicle Orders for the police, the army and fire services.

With Tony leaving two sons and four grandchildren, it is comforting to know that the Wilkie line will live on for a long time to come. Indeed, the two youngest grandsons have already made their mark with school projects and addressing their class on the subject of their great-great-great grandfather. Well done, Oscar and Harry!

**Faith Clarke**

### **A PERSONAL COPY OF *RAMBLES BEYOND RAILWAYS***

Recently advertised for sale on ebay was a fine copy of the first 1851 edition of *Rambles Beyond Railways*, elegantly bound in maroon leather with ornate decoration in gilt. On the front free end-paper is the presentation inscription "To dear Miss Black, from her loving pupils, Cissie M. Bartley and Eva B. Bartley. July 23rd. 1895." Those who have read the more detailed biographies of Wilkie, especially William Clarke's *The Secret Life of Wilkie Collins*, may recognise the last two names as well as the surname Bartley.



To dear Miss Black, from her  
loving pupils, Cissie M. Bartley and  
Eva B. Bartley  
July 23<sup>rd</sup>. 1895.

Caroline Graves, who lived with Wilkie for twenty or so years in Gloucester Place, had a daughter, Harriet Elizabeth – Carrie, as Wilkie used to call her. She became his goddaughter and frequently acted as his amanuensis. Carrie married in 1878 Henry Powell Bartley, who became Wilkie’s solicitor. They had four surviving daughters: Doris Elizabeth (Dah) who became Doris Beresford, a musical comedy actress; Cecile Marguerite (Cissie); Evelyne Beatrice (Bollie) who became Eve Bebington; and Iris Dora.

Caroline died in June 1895. By this time, the extravagant Henry Bartley had run out of money and in May that year sued for bankruptcy – he had already sold the 1850 Millais portrait of Collins to the National Portrait Gallery. His profligate lifestyle and subsequent embezzlement destroyed the inheritance that Wilkie had so carefully worked out for both his ‘morganatic families’.

By July 1895, Cissie was 14 years old and Eva just 12 and the family had been abandoned by their father. It is unlikely that at their young age they would have had the money either to purchase or commission such an elegant binding. It is unclear whether the presentation to Miss Black was because she was leaving or whether, and rather more likely, the girls were obliged to leave school for financial reasons. We can speculate that the volume was selected from Carrie’s personal books. Possibly it had been passed down to her having previously belonged to Caroline. Perhaps, even, the expensive binding had been commissioned by Wilkie and presented to Caroline. It may have been his personal copy although it doesn’t appear in Baker’s *Wilkie Collins’s Library* and is not listed in any of the contemporary sales catalogues. We’ll probably never know for certain, but it does seem to offer a personal link to Wilkie. More details of the Bartleys can be found in *The Secret Life*.

### ***THE WOMAN IN WHITE AND THE EARLY CINEMA***

Since the 1940 *Crimes at the Old Dark House* and the 1948 version of *The Woman in White* there have been several television adaptations and series not only in England but also in Germany, Spain and Russia. There had been, however, several adaptations by the silent cinema, beginning with two versions in 1912.

A version by Thanhouser was released in two reels with the scenario by Lloyd Lonergan, starring Marguerite Snow as Laura Fairlie and Anne Catherick, William Garwood as Walter Hartright and James Cruze as Sir Percival Glyde. This adaptation was released on 20 October 1912, just two days before that filmed by the Gem Motion Picture Company with Janet Salisbury as Laura Fairlie and the *Woman in White*, Alexander F. Frank as Fosco and Charles Perley as Walter Hartridge (sic). There is a six-page synopsis of the Gem version by John Ogden with photographic stills in *The Motion Picture Story Magazine* for November 1912, pp 49-56. The Thanhouser version was apparently lost when the studio burned down in 1913.

There were then two ‘modernised’ versions in 1917. *Tangled Lives*, released on 2 April, where “after squandering his entire estate, Roy Schuyler is forced by his creditors to marry the wealthy Laura Reid. Ann, Laura's half-sister, tries to warn her sister of Roy's motives, but is kidnapped by Roy and incarcerated in an asylum before she is able to do so ... etc.” It was directed by J. Gordon Edwards with scenario by Mary Murillo and starring Genevieve Hamper as Laura Fairlie and Walter Miller as Walter Hartwright (sic).

A new Thanhouser Film Corporation version of *The Woman in White* was released on 1 July 1917. It was directed by Ernest C. Warde with the scenario once again by Lloyd F. Lonergan. It starred Florence La Badie as Laura Fairlie and Ann Catherick, Richard R. Neill as Glyde, Gertrude Dallas as Marian, Arthur Bauer as Fosco and Wayne Arey as Hartright. It had the alternative title of *The Unfortunate Marriage* and was re-released by Chandler Pictures c.1920.

A subsequent version then becomes even more remote from the original, issued by the Acme Pictures Corporation in September 1919 in five reels as *The Twin Pawns*. “Separated since birth, twins Violet and Daisy White are unaware of each other's existence. Violet, the idol of her indulgent father Harry has everything her heart could desire while Daisy, reared by her indigent mother, is poorly clad and underfed ... etc. The scenario, such as it was, was created by the director, Léonce Perret. It featured Mae Murray, Walter Oland, Jack W. Johnston and Henry G. Sell. This version was also issued in 1920 as *The Curse of Greed*.

The first British version was released in January 1929 as *The Woman in White* from the British and Dominion Film Corporation. It was produced by Herbert Wilcox seemingly with some resemblance to Collins's original, featuring Blanche Sweet as Laura Fairlie and Anne Catherick, Haddon Mason as Walter Hartright, Cecil Humphreys as Sir Percival and Frank Perfitt as Count Fosco.

Two of the early versions can now be found on modern DVD. A restored version of *The Woman in White/The Unfortunate Marriage* is currently available in the Thanouser Collection, part of the combined Volumes 7, 8, & 9. *The Twin Pawns* is available from tripdiscs.com. for £6.99. Both titles also turn up from time to time on ebay.

Further plot and cast details with photographic stills are available at IMDB [https://www.imdb.com/name/nm0172741/?ref\\_=nv\\_sr\\_srsrg\\_0](https://www.imdb.com/name/nm0172741/?ref_=nv_sr_srsrg_0)

There is, incidentally, an actor called Wilkie Collins, known for his roles in *The Tale of Ruby Rose* (1987), *The Fringe Dwellers* (1986) and *The Accidental Conspiracy* (1995).

### **'THE DREAM WOMAN' ON RADIO 4 EXTRA**

"Isaac lives in constant fear of a knife-wielding female. But is she of this Earth - or from beyond the grave?" This was the BBC introduction for a very passable adaptation of 'The Dream Woman', repeated on Radio4 Extra on 13 June as part of its 'Haunted' series. It was adapted by Derek Hoddinott and originally broadcast on the BBC World Service as long ago as 1979. Sadly, it is not currently available on BBC Sounds but 'Mrs. Badgery', read by Christopher Harper, is.

### ***CLUES FROM THE COUCH***

Members interested in detective fiction may like the idea of the newly published *Clues from the Couch: Psychology in Detective Fiction from Wilkie Collins to Winspear and Penny* by Laird R. Blackwell who has taught psychology and literature for over thirty years. Quoting the publisher's blurb:

The detective story – the classic whodunit with its time-displacement structure of crime – according to most literary historians, is of relatively recent origin. Early in its

development, the whodunit was harshly criticized for its tightly formula-bound structure. Many critics prematurely proclaimed "the death of the whodunit" and even of detective fiction altogether. Yet today, the genre is alive, as contemporary authors have brought it into modern times through a significant integration of elaborate character development and psychology. With the modern psychological detective story emerging from the historical cauldron of detective fiction and early psychology, the genre continues to develop a complexity that reflects and guides the literary sophistication needed. This book, the first of its kind, analyzes over 150 whodunit novels and short stories across the decades, from *The Moonstone* to the contemporary novels that saved the genre from an ignominious death.

Published in the USA by McFarland at \$55 and about £58 in the UK; available discounted from the Book Depository and Amazon.

### **PLOTTING THE NEWS IN THE VICTORIAN NOVEL**

Another new title, *Plotting the News in the Victorian Novel*, part of Edinburgh Critical Studies in Victorian Culture, by Jessica R Valdez, Assistant Professor of English at the University of Hong Kong has been published by Edinburgh University Press. The text draws upon a real Victorian news story in each of the first three chapters. Once again, quoting from the publisher's blurb:

This book shows that novelists often responded to newspapers by reworking well-known events covered by Victorian newspapers in their fictions. Each chapter addresses a different narrative modality and its relationship to the news: Charles Dickens interrogates the distinctions between fictional and journalistic storytelling, while Anthony Trollope explores novelistic *bildung* in serial form; the sensation novels of Wilkie Collins and Mary Elizabeth Braddon locate melodrama in realist discourses, whereas Anglo-Jewish writer Israel Zangwill represents a hybrid minority experience. At the core of these metaphors and narrative forms is a theorisation of the newspaper's influence on society.

### **COLLINS AND TROLLOPE**

In Chapter XVII of Anthony Trollope's *The Small House at Allington*, originally published in the *Cornhill* during 1862, there is a nice reference to the then recently published and hugely popular *The Woman in White*. Trollope describes "their dear Lady Dumbello, hoping this and beseeching that, as though the "The Woman in White" before them had been the dearest friend of

their infancy. She was a woman in white, being dressed in white silk, with white lace over it, and with no other jewels upon her person than diamonds.”

Trollope, the prolific novelist best known for his *Barsetshire* and *Palliser* series, was highly regarded by Collins for his energetic but consistently workmanlike production of fiction. Collins wrote to Horace Pym in 1887: “By comparison with my late 'colleague,' Anthony Trollope, with his watch on the table, and his capacity for writing a page in every quarter of an hour, I am the slowest coach now on the literary road.” ([2785] to Horace Noble Pym, 5 December 1887)

Collins's fiction similarly received a rather guarded assessment in Trollope's 1883 *An Autobiography* “Of Wilkie Collins it is impossible for a true critic not to speak with admiration, because he has excelled all his contemporaries in a certain most difficult branch of his art.” Trollope continues, however “The construction is most minute and most wonderful. But I can never lose the taste of the construction...One is constrained by mysteries and hemmed in by difficulties, knowing, however, that the mysteries will be made clear, and the difficulties overcome at the end of the third volume. Such work gives me no pleasure.”

## **WILKIE IN COMMON CULTURE**

Wilkie's most famous novel continues to inform popular culture. An obscure article ‘What The Numbers On Your Toaster Actually Mean’ on an American website (8 April 2022) is a paean to toast and begins with the famous quote from *The Woman in White* “My hour for tea is half-past five, and my buttered toast waits for nobody.” Find out more about toast at [www.tastingtable.com/826198](http://www.tastingtable.com/826198) and look up the quote in ‘Mrs Catherick's letter’ in ‘Hartright's Narrative, Part the Second’, originally published as Part 36 on 21 July 1860 in *All the Year Round*.

*Armadale* is less often quoted but here it pops up in *The Daily Telegraph* (30 April 2022) beginning a review by Francesca Peacock of an exhibition on shipwrecks at Hastings Contemporary gallery. “From Gerald Manley Hopkins's poem ‘Wreck of the Deutschland’ (written 1875–6) to Wilkie Collins's novel *Armadale* (1864–6), we've long thought of the 19th-century sea as beset with dramatic shipwrecks both real and fictional”. Paywalled but you can get round it

[www.telegraph.co.uk/art/reviews/seafaring-hastings-contemporary-review-exhibition-show](http://www.telegraph.co.uk/art/reviews/seafaring-hastings-contemporary-review-exhibition-show) .

## **MR FAIRLIE**

Graham Caveney in his new book *On Agoraphobia* uses Mr Fairlie from *The Woman in White* as a literary example

*The Woman in White*, home to one of the most sinister grotesques of nineteenth-century fiction. Mr Fairlie is a man whose excessive sensitivity leads to a permanent migraine. He languishes in his room, able to tolerate only the dimmest of lights and the softest of sounds. His feet ‘were effeminately small,’ writes Collins, clad in ‘little womanish bronze-leather slippers.’ At one point Fairlie describes himself as ‘nothing but a bundle of nerves dressed up to look like a man.’ His nerves have castrated him...Both Miss Havisham and Mr Fairlie’s seclusions were rendered in terms of a gendered grotesque: the first as a monstrous spinster, the second as foppish aesthete. (*On Agoraphobia*, Graham Caveney, Picador 2022, pp.32, 70).

Mr Fairlie is also responsible for another nice quote – possibly how we all feel when having a bad day:

It is the grand misfortune of my life that nobody will let me alone.

## **WILKIE STUDIES ONLINE**

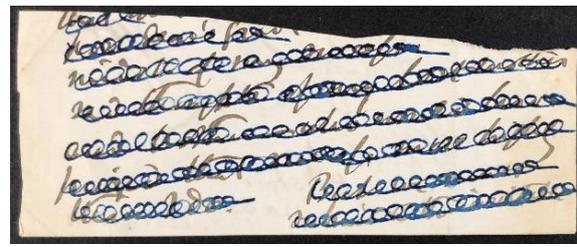
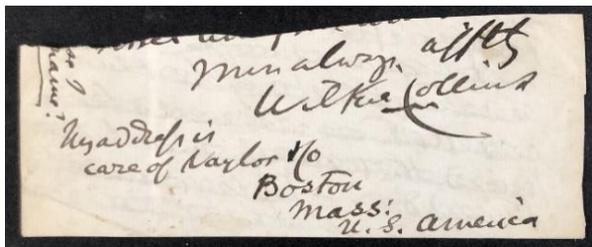
Five fairly recent studies of Wilkie Collins are available free online as pdfs. A search for ‘Wilkie Collins’ on [www.epdf.tips](http://www.epdf.tips) turns up

- Lyn Pykett, *Authors in Context – Wilkie Collins* (2005)
- Jenny Bourne Taylor, *The Cambridge Companion to Wilkie Collins* (2006)
- William Baker, *A Wilkie Collins Chronology* (2007)
- Graham Law and Andrew Maunder, *Wilkie Collins – a Literary Life* (2008)
- A B Emrys, *Wilkie Collins, Vera Caspary and the Evolution of the Casebook Novel* (2011).

Four of these authors are Society members. The site also has pdfs of eight of Wilkie's novels.

## WILKIE'S LETTERS

A number of Wilkie's letters have recently come to light. Including two tantalising scraps. Many Victorians collected scrap books of signatures of famous people. Many examples are known of Wilkie writing a short letter or sending collectors a small signed and dated piece of paper for their albums. Occasionally, a collector will be sent the cut off end of a full letter just for the signature. That can leave a partial text on the other side. Two of these have come to light this year. One had the text obscured by a systematic overwriting in blue ink of joined up small circles.



The other was glued to a page so the writing could not be seen. In both cases detective work – and modern image analysis – has enabled the Editors to read the dozen or so words on the reverse of these valedictions. We may even be able to identify possible recipients and dates. Both will feature in the next Addenda and Corrigenda to the Collected Letters to be published the end of the year which will include many other newly-found letters – most of them complete!

## MERCY MERRICK – LA NUOVA MADDELENA

WCS member and prize-winning author Serena Venditto has produced a fresh Italian edition of *The New Magdalen*. Using the original 1874 translation she has updated the language into what she tells me “will be like a brand new translation!”. Published by Homo Scrivens in Naples the book has an introduction, a short biography of Wilkie, and a concluding critique of the book by Serena. It also contains a promotion for the Society and a paragraph welcoming the edition by WCS member Paul Lewis. Find out more at [www.homoscrivens.it](http://www.homoscrivens.it) where you can buy a copy for €18. Serena is an

archaeologist and writer of detective fiction and is on Twitter and Instagram @LadyAventinus.

### **WILKIE IN THE NORTH**

A new book *Dickens and the North* brings together the occasions when Charles Dickens visited Scotland, Ireland, and the north of England. On some of these trips he was accompanied by Wilkie Collins. The book, by Stephen Duxbury, begins with the tour by Dickens and Wilkie to Cumberland which they wrote up as ‘The Lazy Tour of Two Idle Apprentices’ for *Household Words*. The trip was, of course, really a cover for Dickens’s visit to the Doncaster races where he planned to meet the Ternan family who were acting there in race week. Ellen Ternan later became Dickens’s lover.

That trip features three times in the book – once in its own Chapter and twice more later on. Wilkie’s trip to Whitby is also included as is the amateur dramatic performance at the Sunderland Lyceum Theatre in August 1852.

Aside from Collins the book also presents some obscure details on Dickens’s life that are either not known or certainly hard to find. My favourite was the reference (p. 152) to the Whitby and Pickering Railway which used horses to pull carriages up steep rails and then counterweights when the route became too tough even for the horses. The book explains Dickens’s comments on this much more fully than the Pilgrim edition of his letters. The book can be found on the Grayswood Press website for £12.50.

### **DICKENS DAY**

WCS members may be interested in Dickens Day which returns after a gap of two years. It will take place on 8 October at London’s Senate House with the theme ‘Beginning Dickens’. Contact [IESEvents@sas.ac.uk](mailto:IESEvents@sas.ac.uk) for more details and see @DickensDay\_UK on Twitter.

### **SALE OF THE PET LAMB**

One of William Collins’s most iconic paintings came up for auction at Sotheby’s in April. *The Disposal of a Favourite Lamb*, also known as *The Sale of the Pet Lamb*, was painted in 1813 and bought from the Royal Academy

Exhibition of that year by William Ogden for 140 guineas (£147). The painting has spent all its life in private collections and was last seen in a Sotheby's sale more than forty years ago on 29 November 1978. So it was a real privilege to see the painting in all its vibrant life at Sotheby's where it was on exhibition. It shows a butcher handing over a few coins for a lamb which the mother is selling to make ends meet, to the distress of her children who are mocked by the butcher's boys. The image was not so mawkish as it may appear to us now. Country people did commonly keep so-called cade lambs abandoned by their mother until they grew to edible size when they were sold. Nevertheless, the painting was one of William's most popular images and was engraved many times both for individual sale and in art books. On 5 April 2022 it cost its anonymous buyer £11,970, a sum not much lower in real terms than its original price in 1813.



Sale details can still be seen at [www.sothebys.com/en/buy/auction/2022/old-master-paintings/the-sale-of-the-pet-lamb](http://www.sothebys.com/en/buy/auction/2022/old-master-paintings/the-sale-of-the-pet-lamb)

## **WILKIE CONFERENCE**

The Middle East Technical University in Ankara, Turkey is hosting a conference there called 'Wilkie Collins and his Work' on 8 & 9 December 2022. WCS member Professor Andrew Mangham is the keynote speaker. The

University is inviting people to send proposals for 20-minute presentations on any aspect of Wilkie’s work. Send a 250-word synopsis and an academic biography to bnic2020@metu.edu.tr by 16 September not forgetting your name and contact information. Any queries to Prof. Dr. Hülya Yidiz Bağçe huyildiz@metu.ed.tr.

## **THE END**

Finally, at the end of this newsletter, here is Wilkie himself on reaching the end.

To his friend Pigott on finishing *Basil*:

Yesterday morning I wrote those two last welcome words “The End”; and today, I feel as if I had really achieved something wonderful in only getting rid of my own little trumpery responsibility. ([0136] to Edward Pigott, 16 September 1852).

To the *Household Words* printer, on writing the final instalment of *The Dead Secret*:

I have done!! Those two blessed words, “The End” were written at 1/2 past 3, today. ([0254] to F. M. Evans, 21 May 1857).

And to his mother, Harriet Collins, 26 July 1860 [0357] triumphant after completing *The Woman in White*:

Hooray ! ! ! ! !

I have this instant written at the bottom of the four hundred and ninetieth page of my manuscript the two noblest words in the English language

— The End —

Paul Lewis  
Andrew Gasson

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www.wilkie-collins.info



## ***THE WILKIE COLLINS SOCIETY***

**PATRON** Faith Clarke

**Chairman** Andrew Gasson, 21 Huson Close, London NW3 3JW

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

### **NEWSLETTER**

**WINTER 2022**

#### **WILKIE COLLINS – CENTENARY AND BICENTENARY**

WCS members will, of course, be aware that 2024 is the bicentenary of Wilkie's birth on 8 January 1824.

It is unlikely that much recognition took place for his centenary in 1924, although Chatto & Windus at that time were still issuing most of his titles in their *Library Edition*, 35 years after his death. The occasion was, however, marked by two pieces in the leading magazine of the time, *John O'London's Weekly*. The first was written by Rowland Grey with the title 'The Centenary of Wilkie Collins'; it appeared on 12 January 1924 (Vol. X, No. 249, p. 550) but managed to misprint the year of his birth. The second appeared on 23 February (Vol. X, No. 255, p. 744) with the title 'A Master of Mystery' by Sir Charles Biron. These were both short articles but a much longer piece, partly biographical and partly literary criticism, by Paul-Louis Hervier was published in France on 1 June 1924 in the Paris *La Nouvelle Revue* (Vol LXXI, pp. 239-243).

Collins's popularity had somewhat declined by 1924 and not yet influenced by such literary luminaries as T. S. Eliot and Dorothy L. Sayers. Eliot wrote his essay 'Wilkie Collins and Charles Dickens' in the *Times Literary Supplement* for 4 August 1927 and this became the basis for his much-quoted introduction to the 1928 *The Moonstone* in the World's Classics "the first and greatest of English detective novels." Sayers had intended to write a biography of Collins for several

years but did not advertise for biographical material in the *TLS* until 21 June 1929. This was never completed but five chapters were eventually published as *Wilkie Collins: a Critical and Biographical Study*, edited by E. R. Gregory, Toledo, Ohio, 1977. Copies turn up fairly regularly on eBay.

We intend to do rather better in 2024 and have already been formulating ideas:

In conjunction with the Dickens Museum, we are holding a joint exhibition which is planned to run from approximately November 2023 till May 2024.

There will be a Symposium related to the exhibition focussing on collaborations between Collins and Dickens organised by Dr Caroline Radcliffe (University of Birmingham), Dr Pete Orford (University of Buckingham) and Dr Joanna Hofer-Robinson (University College Cork) on Saturday 17 February plus a roundtable event on the 16th February discussing the future of Collins/Dickens studies. Both will be held in London and followed by a reception for symposium delegates at the Dickens House Museum on the evening of 17 February.

Caroline is also planning an evening of mesmerism based on accounts by Collins and Dickens with magician, Careena Fenton, date to be confirmed.

The University of Birmingham will be holding an exhibition of their Collins and Dickens items from the Cadbury Research Library collections from January to July 2024 coinciding with the Dickens Society Conference which is being held at Birmingham that year.

We have also been in touch with the British Library and hope that they will devote at least some small part of their exhibition space to Collins.

We will be organising a Wilkie Walk during the summer of 2024 to highlight the main addresses where he, his family and friends lived, along the lines of our earlier 'Rambles around Marylebone' (an idea originally conceived by William Clarke, author of *The Secret Life of Wilkie Collins*).

It is also hoped to run a bicentenary conference, probably during the summer of 2024. This is being organised and co-ordinated by our ever-resourceful *Wilkie Collins Journal* editor, Joanne Parsons, and will likely take place in Falmouth.

Jak Stringer is arranging to perform one of her imaginative Wilkie entertainments probably also in Cornwall.

We are also hoping to arrange a joint meeting in Whitby (where Wilkie stayed in 1862 and began *No Name*).

We would be happy to receive any further suggestions from members. Perhaps you could arrange something locally or arrange to give a talk to a local society. Does anybody have any connection with Royal Mail or the Philatelic Bureau? A true commemoration would be an issue of Wilkie stamps – they do it for lesser individuals – but the Bureau seem impossible to get in touch with.

Please let Andrew Gasson have any thoughts or ideas on any of this.

### **A REMINDER FOR MEMBERS**

Members are reminded that most of the WCS publications are listed or appear in full on the website, [wilkiecollinssociety.org](http://wilkiecollinssociety.org). All of the material including the *Journal* can be searched and most downloaded. The latest issue requires a username now updated to **franklin** and password which is now **blake**.

### **LETTER PRICE RECORD SHATTERED**

The £5,000 price record for a Wilkie Collins letter which we reported in the Spring 2022 Newsletter has been almost doubled. A letter from Wilkie to his New York publisher Harper & Bros was sold at Sotheby's in New York on 9 December 2022. The 409 word letter dated 12 November 1867 informed Harpers of the title for his new serial novel *The Moonstone*. He used what appear to be strips cut from the blue outside wrappers of *All the Year Round* and glued to the first page of his headed paper.

Harpers were serialising the novel in *Harper's Weekly* and Wilkie states he will send copy 50 clear days in advance of publication so it can be published simultaneously in London and New York.

The first weekly part of the story will be published in "All The Year Round", on Wednesday January 1<sup>st</sup> 1868. We shall therefore appear on both sides of the Atlantic on New Year's Day.

The hammer fell at \$10,000 which, with Sotheby's 26% premium, cost the anonymous buyer \$12,600, around £10,300 at current exchange rates. The previous record for the much shorter and less significant letter to his cousin Jane Ward was sold at a hammer price of \$5,500 which, with that auction house's 20% buyer's premium, cost \$6,600 (£4,800 at the time).

Unlike the Ward letter, this one to Harpers was already known from a rather poor photocopy in the Parrish Collection at the Princeton University Library. It had appeared in print before and is included in the Collected Letters.

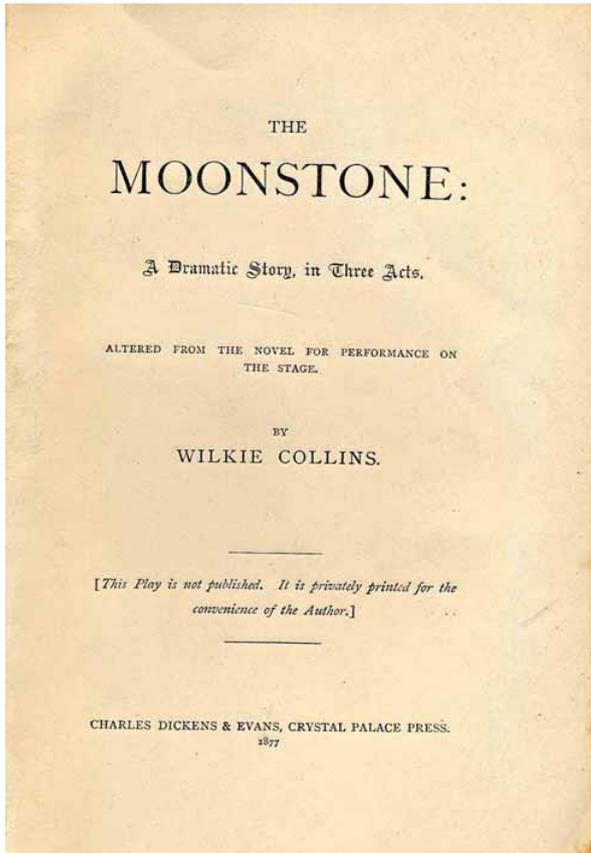
New and very welcome clear images of the letter can be seen on the Sotheby's website as Lot 1028 in the 'Age of Wonder' sale which ended on 9 December.

### **THE MOONSTONE PLAY – AN ANNOTATED COPY**

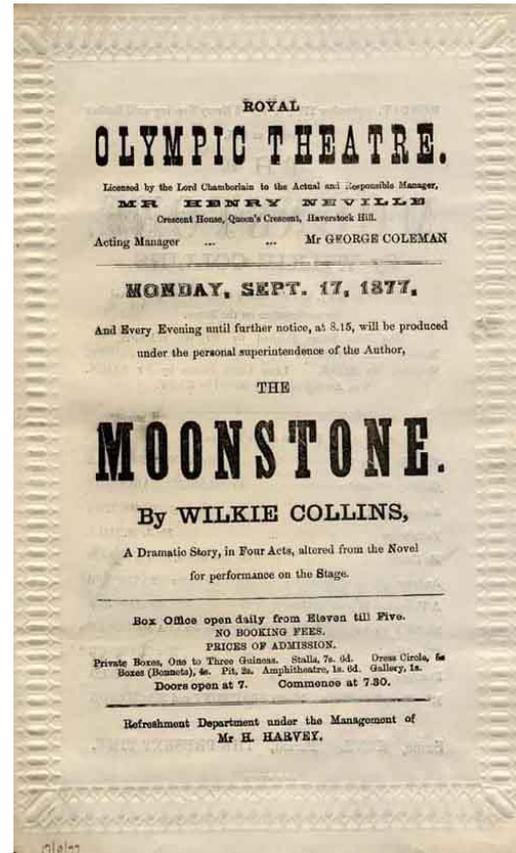
The record-breaking letter, however, was not the star of the auction for Collins scholars. A few lots later (1034) the hammer fell on a unique copy of the privately printed 1877 dramatisation of *The Moonstone* which had been carefully annotated by Collins. Sotheby's confirmed that 60 of the 88 leaves contained his notes and amendments. The text of the book was printed on one side of the paper only and some sections were completely rewritten in Wilkie's hand on the blank versos of the leaves. In one case the changes were so extensive that he inserted a new leaf in the book with both sides covered in his handwriting.

Although the annotations are not dated the changes must have been made for the first production of the play at the Olympic Theatre which ran for 55 performances from 17 September to 17 November 1877. Collins's altered copy converts the three-act printed play into a four-act drama, confirmed by the first amendment on the title page where 'three' is clearly deleted and 'four' inserted.

The play was performed at the Olympic in four acts as clearly stated in the programme and also confirmed by the final paragraph of a contemporary review in *The Times* (21 September 1877, p. 4e): "The scene – all the four acts were laid in one scene, a hall in Miss Verinder's house – was very complete."



Printed version of *The Moonstone* in three acts



Programme for the four-act *Moonstone*

So this item represents the only known extant text of the play as it was actually performed. The hammer went down at \$40,000, the mid-point of the estimate, and cost the anonymous bidder \$50,400 including the 26% buyer's premium - around £42,000. Its whereabouts are now unknown. Previous copies without annotation were offered for sale at \$7500 in July 2015 by bookseller, James Cummins of New York and a rebound copy for £1000 by a London bookseller in 2019.

The play did well at the Olympic, netting Collins £242-7s in seven payments from the theatre manager Henry Neville. In today's terms that is not much more than half as much as the annotated copy fetched in the New York auction.

### ***THE WOMAN IN WHITE A NEW DRAMATISATION***

*"Are you to break your heart to set his mind at ease? No man under heaven deserves these sacrifices from us women. Men! They are the enemies of our innocence and our peace."* (Marion Halcombe). Thus opens the website for the 'Heady Conduct Theatre' production of *The Woman in White* adding

This gripping adaptation of intrigue, love and betrayal is as vibrant and exciting as when it was first written.

This latest adaptation of *The Woman in White* toured amphitheatres in the Cotswolds and St Albans and opened a new venue in the heart of St Ives, Cornwall, before moving indoors at Norwich Playhouse and Stamford Arts Centre, and ending its tour at Brighton Open Air Theatre on September 15. Any member who saw it please contact paul@paullewis.co.uk.

### **THE WOMAN IN WHITE CAR**

Not exactly an adaptation, but the South Korean film *The Woman in White Car* (2022) freely draws on elements in Collins's novel – a pair of sisters, kidnapping, mistaken identities, a woman committed, opportunists out for an inheritance – all approached from a variety of different perspectives. This South Korean take on the story was shown at the 2022 London Film Festival. A Google search will find more, including a You Tube trailer, fortunately with subtitles.

### **WILKIE COLLINS – THE COMPLETE FICTION**

This book by WCS member Professor Stephen Knight of Melbourne University is “the first comprehensive overview of the complete works of Wilkie Collins.” It is part of Routledge's ‘Studies in Nineteenth Century Literature.’ Continuing the publisher's blurb, it examines Collins's

... vast array of novels and short stories, this volume includes analysis of the social, historical, and political commentary Collins offered within his works, illuminating Collins as more than a successful crime and sensation author, or the fortunate recipient of Dicken's grand patronage, but as a hard-thinking and lively-writing part of the rich mid-Victorian literary scene. Overall, Collins is seen as a master of narratives which deal with social and personal issues that were much debated in his fifty-year authorial period. Close attention is paid to the events, themes, and characterization in his fiction, revealing his analytic vigor and the literary power of that period and context. Delivering fresh insight into the variety and richness of Collins' themes and arguments, this volume provides a key source of information and analysis on all Collins' fiction.

Comprehensive the book certainly is. Knight has read everything by Wilkie and, his bibliography shows, every major work about him. Taking an essentially chronological approach Knight looks at the development of Wilkie as a storyteller – moving from short stories to novels and then interspersing novellas and short stories among his longer works. He pulls out six categories to cover all his

fiction from ‘Failed Romance’ to ‘Supernatural Forces’ via ‘Crime and Social Tensions’. Nothing quite like it has ever been done on Wilkie’s fiction and it is a detailed and interesting read.

It might usefully be taken in conjunction with Julian Thompson’s 1995 *Wilkie Collins: The Complete Shorter Fiction* and all the stories are listed in tabular form on a page of Andrew Gasson’s Wilkie Collins website at [https://www.wilkie-collins.info/short\\_stories.htm](https://www.wilkie-collins.info/short_stories.htm).

Like so many academic books Knight’s *Complete Fiction* is not cheap at £120 although it can be had for a quarter of this on Kindle. *Wilkie Collins – the Complete Fiction*, Routledge, 2023.

### **BLACK HERITAGE IN *THE MOONSTONE***

*The Moonstone* also gets a mention in a history of medical practitioners of black heritage by archivist and diversity ally for the Archives and Records Association, Phillip Milnes-Smith as part of black history month. He writes

Wilkie Collins’ 1868 novel *The Moonstone* offers, in Ezra Jennings, the portrait of a medical man of mixed heritage in Victorian Yorkshire. An unsympathetic servant notes of him, ‘The work all falls on [Jennings]. Not much of it now, except among the poor. THEY can’t help themselves, you know. THEY must put up with the man with the piebald hair, and the gipsy complexion—or they would get no doctoring at all.’

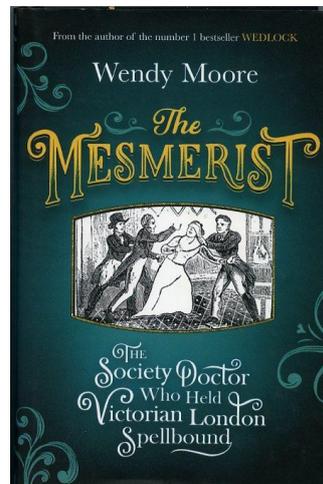
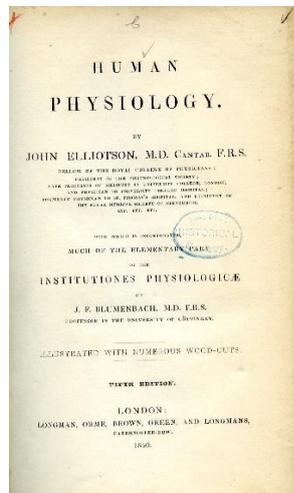
More in <https://practicebusiness.co.uk> search ‘Wilkie Collins’.

### **JOHN ELLIOTSON**

Ezra Jennings from *The Moonstone* was in fact based on the unconventional John Elliotson (1791-1868) who was one of the subjects of ‘Spellbound: James Braid and John Elliotson, Victorian Pioneers of Hypnotism’, a webinar at the Royal Society of Medicine on 10 October. The lectures were given by Dr Michael Gow, a dental practitioner and a modern exponent of hypnotism, and Wendy Moore, the author of *The Mesmerist: The Society Doctor Who Held Victorian London Spellbound*.

Dr James Braid evolved early theories on hypnotism while Elliotson charted the therapeutic effects of hypnosis when it was first introduced in Britain. His discoveries were first acclaimed and then traduced by the medical establishment. He was one of the first surgeons to operate using hypnosis as a form of

anaesthesia but concern among his colleagues about his unconventional practices led to his forced resignation in 1838 from his Chair at the University of London.



Through his connection with Dickens, Collins was well acquainted with Elliotson who in 1863 tried, unsuccessfully, to use hypnotism as a substitute for laudanum to control the pain of his rheumatic gout. He wrote to his doctor Francis Carr Beard on 30 January 1863

Elliotson came here today. I told him this – I said “I am so weak, I have no writing power left in me – give [me] a tonic – I must have strength.” [He] has prescribed simple “Wormwood,” the other medicine to be taken with it, if it agrees with me – to be left off, if it does not. Caroline to Mesmerise my feet, and to Mesmerise me into sleeping so as to do without the opium!

Ezra Jennings in *The Moonstone* calls Elliotson 'one of the greatest of English physiologists' and uses a case history in Elliotson's *Human Physiology* as his inspiration for the attempt to find the missing diamond by administering a second dose of opium to Franklin Blake. With a curious symmetry, Elliotson's death in 1868 coincides with the first publication of *The Moonstone*.

## WILKIE IN MARYLEBONE

Recently come across is *Marylebone Lives: Rogues, Romantics and Rebels, Character Studies of Locals since the Eighteenth Century*, published by Spiramus Press at £14.99, originally issued in 2015 and apparently still available. This is a compilation by Mark Riddaway and Carl Upsall of biographical pieces which originally appeared over a 10 year period in *The Marylebone Journal*, a bi-monthly magazine owned by the Howard de Walden Estate. Wilkie, of course, lived in Marylebone for most of his life and in Wimpole Street on the de Walden

Estate during his final years. He may well have encountered many of the entries as his neighbours.

The short piece on Collins originally appeared in the December/January issue for 2013/2014 and was written by Andrew Lycett, author of the excellent 2013 *Wilkie Collins: a Life of Sensation*. Amongst numerous others, Wilkie is in the excellent company of politicians such as William Pitt, scientists such as Charles Babbage, architects such as John Nash and a variety of infamous miscreants. Amongst the illustrations, Wilkie's photograph appears directly above prolific crime writer, Edgar Wallace.

### **SOME OTHER COLLINS HIGH PRICES**

Auctions are not the only source of high prices for Collins's works. There are apparently several other kites being flown at present. A first US edition of *The Woman in White* (1860), admittedly the first of the four states, can be had for a modest \$12,500 from the Manhattan Rare Book Company. An 1862 one volume English edition of the same title – not the first one volume in 1861 - has been offered for a while at the equally ambitious price of about £4,000 by The-Mad-Librarian but now seemingly reduced to £3,250. The same source has *The Black Robe* at £6,500, an 1881 first edition in three volumes but with spines which appear not to match and contemporary library labels attached. Or you could have *The Moonstone* as the first US edition in paper wrappers at a modest \$4,000. All of these and other 'bargains' can be found on ABE books or on eBay.

### **NO NAME - A LOST CLASSIC**

Mark Gatiss, director and writer of the TV Series *Sherlock* starring Benedict Cumberbatch, asked for his favourite book by *The Times*, wrote

*No Name* is a lost classic. It's not one of Collins's famous "sensation" novels like *The Woman in White* or *The Moonstone*, in fact quite the reverse. He sets out not to have any twists. But it is the most amazing piece of work — you could stand a spoon up in the plot, it is so dense. It is a brilliant mid-Victorian classic that no one has ever adapted and I love it. (My Culture Fix, *The Times*, 23 November 2022).

In fact as long ago as 1989 BBC Radio produced a very good adaptation of *No Name* which is occasionally repeated on Radio 4 Extra. It was adapted by Elizabeth Bradbury with such long departed radio stalwarts as Jack May as Captain Wragge and John Moffatt as one of Collins's best lawyers, Mr Pendril.

## WILKIE COLLINS AND HIS HEROINES

Long-standing WCS member and Collins researcher, Angela Richardson, has written the following notes and observations about ‘Wilkie Collins and His Heroines’.

Much has rightly been written about the strong women characters in Wilkie Collins’ novels. Less attention has been given to the colour of their hair. Take the two most honest speaking: Marian Halcombe from *The Woman in White* (1860) and Rachel Verinder from *The Moonstone* (1868). They are alike in their dark colouring. Wilkie Collins tells us that Rachel is a brunette and Marian has such dark hair that a down of it can also be seen on her upper lip. They both dress in strong colours. Marian’s clothes are a rich contrast to her half-sister Laura’s white muslin and in *The Moonstone* Betteridge observes Rachel’s bright yellow travelling dress.

There is a similarity of description between the blond heroines in *The Woman in White* and *Heart and Science* (1883). They both share pale skin and hair. Laura Fairlie in *The Woman in White* has very pale hair “of so faint and pale a brown—not flaxen, and yet almost as light; not golden, and yet almost as glossy.” So too has Carmina Greywell in *Heart and Science*: “Her hair was of so light a brown that it just escaped being flaxen.” Both Carmina and Laura share a nervous disposition.

Lydia Gwilt in *Armadale* (1866) is one of Wilkie Collins’s pale women characters, who also has beautiful skin. So pure is her complexion that she was used as an advertisement when a child, for a beauty product. However, her hair is very different from all other Wilkie Collins heroines. “This woman’s hair, superbly luxuriant in its growth, was of the one unpardonably remarkable shades of colour which the prejudice of the Northern nations never entirely forgives – it was red!”

The “prejudice of the Northern nations” stems from the Christian belief that Judas Iscariot had red hair, which became associated with betrayal and criminality. There is no mistaking, that in *Armadale* Lydia Gwilt is a criminal. She begins with forgery and goes on to murder, theft, attempted murder and attempted bigamy. But Wilkie Collins does not portray her solely as a villainess. She sacrifices her life for the love of her husband and is also shown as much a victim as a perpetrator, manipulated by the men around her into committing crimes for their benefit.

If the ‘wicked’ Miss Gwilt has the weight of Renaissance art pointing out that her red hair means she has a capacity for wrong doing, then the Pre-Raphaelite-Brotherhood has the counter presentation of her vulnerability. Holman Hunt was a Collins family friend, and we can safely assume that Wilkie Collins knew his art well – and had met his models, particularly Fanny Cornforth, whom Holman Hunt wanted to marry. She is the model with wonderful red hair, in ‘The Awakening Conscience’ and ‘The Hireling Shepherd’. Rossetti also painted her in the luscious portrait ‘Bocca Baciata’ which translates as ‘the kissed mouth’.

Contemporary readers of *Armadale* would be very familiar with these visual references to red hair and find the character of Miss Gwilt both thrilling and beguiling. No wonder Wilkie Collins’ play of this name was by far his most successful drama.

### **WILKIE IN THE MAGNETIC NORTH**

Wilkie crops up in all sorts of unlikely places. In *The Magnetic North* by noted polar traveller and author, Sara Wheeler, he receives on page 197 a rather unkind mention about *The Frozen Deep* before she discusses the Dickens connection in greater detail:

The business of transformation and romanticism brought out the worst in everyone. Wilkie Collins supplied *The Frozen Deep*, a terrible melodrama loosely based on the Franklin story, the action centring on a group of women waiting for news of their menfolk, these latter having vanished on an Arctic expedition.

### **THE QUEEN OF HEARTS AND HUNTLEY & PALMERS**

Early in the twentieth century, biscuit manufacturers Huntley & Palmers produced decorative tins for their products in the form of book-ends or book stacks. A recent example on eBay dated 1909 included *The Queen of Hearts* in a stack of seven books held between bookends. This particular figural tin was the fifth in a series of ten which Huntley & Palmers began releasing in 1900. Wilkie was in excellent company, including John Keats and Arthur Rackham. Several well illustrated examples can be found by searching online for ‘Huntley & Palmers biscuit tins.’ There are at least two books on the subject and they appear to be highly collectible items: this particular example was offered at \$425.

## **THE HAUNTED HOTEL IN ITALY**

*The Haunted Hotel* appeared in an auction of ‘Original and Comic Arts & Illustrations’ in Rome on 21-22 October 2022. Lot 168 was an ink and tempora illustration by Aurelio Galleppini for *l’Albergo Della Paura (Hotel of Fear)* by Wilkie Collins in a 1948 series of successful detective stories. Aurelio Galleppini (1917-1994) was better known by his nickname Galep and was an Italian comics artist and illustrator.

## **QUESTIONS**

A new artificial intelligence chatbot is astonishing. Ask [chat.openai.com/chat](https://chat.openai.com/chat) anything and it will produce concise paragraphs in plain English to answer your question. Like humans, it occasionally gets things wrong. Unlike humans, it has no access to the internet or anything that happened after 2021. What it produces in answer to ‘what is Wilkie Collins’s greatest novel’ could form part of an essay. A more difficult questions like ‘what is the plot of *Armada*’ is even better. Each time it is asked it produces a fresh and different answer. It will of course answer any question about anything and in several languages if required. Astonishing.

But if you prefer to read what a human thinks of *The Moonstone* there is an interesting alternative take by Katelyn Nelson titled “‘She Might Have Been Happy with Me’”: Queerness and Disability in Wilkie Collins’ ‘*The Moonstone*’.’ Search for ‘moonstone’ at [dreadcentral.com](https://dreadcentral.com).

## **QUIZ**

In *The Times* on 20 October a question (No. 8) to tax the brains of all WCS members: “In the Wilkie Collins novel *The Moonstone*, what type of gemstone is the title object?” Answers on the proverbial postcard!

## **AUTOMATED PR**

In September this email appeared in Paul Lewis’s inbox:

Hi Wilkie Collins, Do you want us to include your book "**The Woman in White**" in our newsletter sent to 85k Subscribers? Also to tweet about your book to 20K Readers 105 times? On Wilkie’s behalf, he declined.

Andrew Gasson      [apogee@apgee.co.uk](mailto:apogee@apgee.co.uk)

[www.wilkie-collins.info](http://www.wilkie-collins.info)

Paul Lewis              [paul@paullewis.co.uk](mailto:paul@paullewis.co.uk)

[www.wilkiecollins.com](http://www.wilkiecollins.com)



## ***THE WILKIE COLLINS SOCIETY***

**PATRON** Faith Clarke

**Chairman** Andrew Gasson, 21 Huson Close, London NW3 3JW

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

### **NEWSLETTER**

**SPRING 2023**

#### **RAMSGATE TALK**

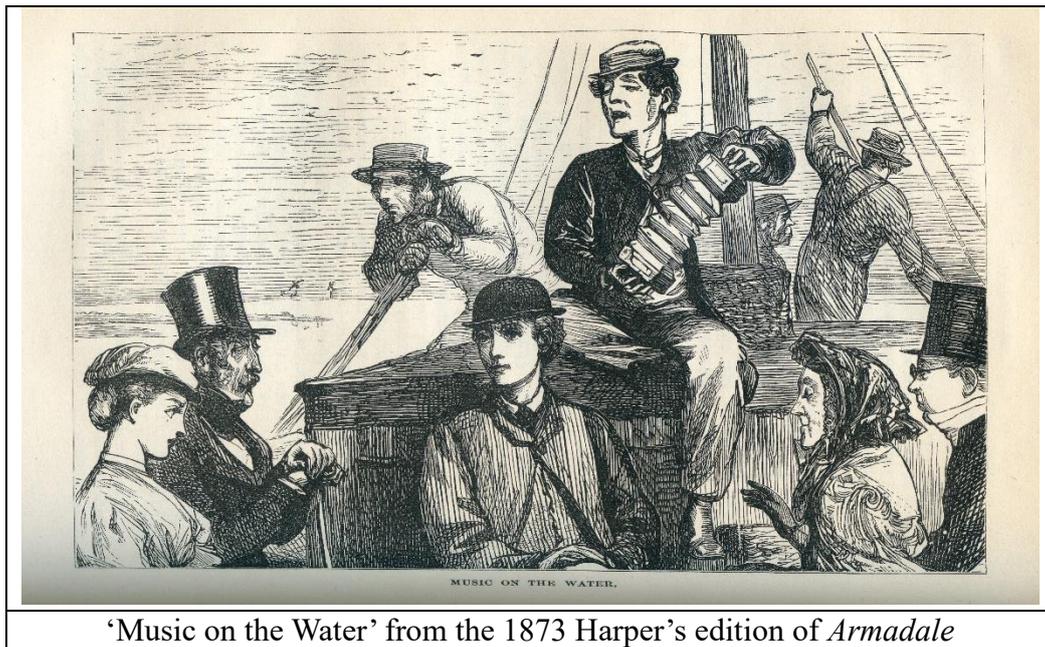
On Monday 15 May, Paul Lewis is giving a talk about Wilkie in Ramsgate called 'A Tale of Two Towns'. Organised by the Ramsgate Society it will be at the Royal Temple Yacht Club in Ramsgate, doors open 6.30pm. Sadly the organisers say every place is taken but you could try to get returns here [bit.ly/WilkieCollinsTalk](http://bit.ly/WilkieCollinsTalk).

#### ***A WILKIE COLLINS SONGBOOK***

One of the more unusual contributions to Wilkie Collins studies is the just published *A Wilkie Collins Songbook* by Allan Atlas. It is published by A-R Editions, from Middleton, Wisconsin as part of their series 'Recent Researches in Music.'

The Songbook contains the complete scores and lyrics of twenty-seven pieces of music "that were either cited by Collins or can be associated with him in one way or another." Here we have Francesco Berger's overture to *The Frozen Deep* plus six pieces inspired by Collins's works - four for *The Woman in White*, and one each for *No Name* and *No Thoroughfare*. The bulk of the anthology consists of twenty ballads, patriotic songs and traditional tunes to which Collins refers in his works or in some cases are performed by his characters. These include, for example, 'Begone, Dull Care' 'The Girl I Left Behind Me' and 'Nelson' by John Braham.

Each piece includes a commentary on its sources, its relation to Collins's work, some details of the relevant plot summary plus where useful quotations from the original text. There are also critical notes and comments on the musical score. *Armadale*, we learn contributes seven pieces to the Songbook, more than any of Wilkie's other novels or short stories; the 'Fosco Gallop' was inspired by Collins's 1871 adaptation of *The Woman in White*; and the 'No Name Waltz' contains the mysterious dedication by 'The Veiled Lady.'



The Songbook also contains a 'thumbnail biography' of Collins together with paragraphs on Collins and music. He notes Wilkie's dislike of German music and Schumann in particular and his preference for melodies.

As in all Victorian literature, music plays many roles within Collins's works: dramatic, symbolic, psychological, and decorative, among others. Thus *Basil* (1852), *The Woman in White*, and *Armadale* weave music and musical venues into their plots in a number of significant ways.

Allan Atlas is emeritus professor at the Graduate Centre in New York and has published extensively on music including 'Wilkie Collins, Mr. Vanstone, and the Case of Beethoven's "No Name" Symphony' (*Dickens Studies Annual*, 33, 2003). Overall, the Songbook is a musical tour de force and an invaluable accompaniment for your next Wilkie Collins Concert.

See also ‘The Making of a “Wilkie Collins Songbook”’ at [https://www.areditions.com/blog/post/the-making-of-a-wilkie-collins-songbook?mc\\_cid=7858940547&mc\\_eid=1dcf3a0659](https://www.areditions.com/blog/post/the-making-of-a-wilkie-collins-songbook?mc_cid=7858940547&mc_eid=1dcf3a0659).

Although published in the USA (ISBN 978-1-9872-0836-8), it can be obtained through Amazon in the UK but you will need to sit down for the astounding price of \$325 or £298.60 - and that for a soft cover book! Why do publishers issue books which they know only libraries and the occasional millionaire will buy?

### ***THE FROZEN DEEP AT KENSAL GREEN***

The latest issue of *The Telamon*, the magazine of the Friends of Kensal Green Cemetery, features a lengthy article by Alison Freebairn and Logan Zachary about the North-West Passage and its connection with Kensal Green where, of course, Wilkie is buried. His *The Frozen Deep* play written in 1857 was based on the Franklin expedition which was lost while searching for the North-West Passage during 1845. The expedition in Collins’s drama has a much happier ending than real-life ill-fated venture which lost the naval vessels *Erebus* and *Terror*.

Wilkie lies in good company with Lady Jane Franklin and Sophia Cracroft, wife and niece respectively of Sir John Franklin, both of whom refused to accept the Admiralty decision to abandon the search. Lady Franklin (1791-1875) is buried in Catacomb B beneath the chapel. In 1854, with one last attempt at discovering the fate of her husband she privately commissioned Captain McClintock and his ship the *Fox* to continue the search which ultimately revealed the date of his death on 11 June 1847 (see below). Sophia Cracroft (1816-1892) collaborated with Lady Franklin’s endeavours. Named after her, the *Sophia* was part of the 1850-51 search and its Captain, Horatio Austin, is likewise buried at Kensal Green.

Also buried at here is Sir John Ross (1777-1856) who had made two unsuccessful attempts to find the North-West Passage in 1818 and 1829. He also accompanied the 1850-51 search expedition which located the graves of three members of Franklin’s crew on Beechey Island. Other connections with the North-West Passage are Sir Robert McClure (1807-1873) and his rescuer Bedford Pim, whose grave is currently located but unmarked, together with several other notables listed in this excellently detailed article.



Graves of four re-interred sailors as they now appear at Beechey Island in the Canadian Arctic

Outside the Canadian Arctic itself, no single place is home to as many graves from the quest for the North-West Passage as this one London cemetery.

Further details of Alison Freebairn’s research and collaboration with Logan Zachary are available with photographs on her website, [finger-post.blog](http://finger-post.blog).

## **COLLINS AND THE ARCTIC**

Collins never lost his interest in the far North. Nearly thirty years after *The Frozen Deep* drama and ten years after his 1874 book version of the story, he purchased a copy of McClintock’s *The Voyage of the ‘Fox’ in the Arctic Seas: a Narrative of the Discovery of the Fate of Sir John Franklin and his Companions* (London: John Murray, 1859). This particular copy had been presented by the publisher on 22 December 1859 to E. Osborne Smith, treasurer of the Geographic Club. Beneath the original presentation inscription Wilkie has written “Purchased from a London Bookseller, in 1884, by Wilkie Collins.” This same copy includes the further ownership inscription of noted Arctic collector Townsend W. Thorndike “Added to my Arctic Collection Jan 8th, 1913”.

E Osborne Smith Esq  
Treasurer of the Geograph. Club  
with the publishers Comp  
Dec<sup>r</sup> 22. 1859.  
2  
Purchased from a London  
Bookseller, in 1884, by  
Wilkie Collins  
Added to my Arctic  
Collection Jan 8<sup>th</sup> 1913  
Journes W. Thordike

McClintock commanded the private expedition sponsored by Lady Franklin in 1857 to search for her husband and his crew, missing since 1845. This account details his thorough search of the area between the Boothia Peninsula and King William Island, and his discovery of the fate of Franklin with the recovery of written records left by Lt. Graham Gore, Captain James Fitzjames, and Capt. Francis Crozier. (Arctic Bib. 10555; National Maritime Museum I 930; Sabin 43043; Smith 6220; TPL 8741; cfLande 1300).

### **WILKIE AND CHARLES COLLINS, AND AUGUSTIN DALY IN *THE DICKENSIAN***

Wilkie receives a theatrical mention in an interesting article by Don Richard Cox in *The Dickensian* (Winter 2022, No. 518, Vol. 118, Part 3). Cox is familiar with Wilkie's works, having been co-editor of the scholarly Broadview Press edition of *Blind Love* in 2004.

'The Charles Collins Letter: Some additional Mysteries' investigates a letter thought to have been written on 4 May 1871 by Wilkie's brother Charles to Augustin Daly, the New York theatre manager and playwright. The correspondence concerned Daly's proposed dramatisation of *The Mystery of Edwin Drood*. The letter was first published in Daly's biography, *The Life of Augustin Daly* by his brother, Joseph Francis Daly (New York: Macmillan, 1917,

pp. 107-8). Cox's detailed investigation discusses various mysteries surrounding the letter and the involvement of Wilkie's dramatic agent, John Bonner.

Wilkie was originally at loggerheads with Augustin Daly because of his unauthorised adaptation of *Man and Wife* which ran for ten weeks at New York's Fifth Avenue Theatre from 13 September 1870. Wilkie, as ever, was keen to protect both his copyright and reputation and subsequently objected to Daly's *No Name* which was staged in June 1871. Eventually they were reconciled and Collins collaborated more willingly with Daly for the highly successful *The New Magdalen* in November 1873. The two eventually became good friends and Collins presented Daly with the manuscript of his then unpublished novel *Iolani* when he toured London in 1878.



Man and Wife at the Fifth Avenue Theatre in 1870

The New Magdalen at the Globe Theatre Boston in 1873

## THE NEW MAGDALEN IN SAN FRANCISCO

The *New Magdalen* was hugely popular on both sides of the USA with a very successful but unauthorised production by the theatrical producer and playwright

David Belasco. This was staged at Shiel's Opera House in San Francisco on 14 July and preceded the version by Augustin Daly. Theatre critic, William Winter, describes the circumstances in his *Life of David Belasco* (New York: Boatyard, 1918, Vol. I, pp. 47-48).

I had mentioned Wilkie Collins' 'The New Magdalen' [published that year] to Le Roy as containing good material for a play and he had bought a copy of the book and begun to make a dramatization. He told Miss Pateman about it and when she agreed that it would make a fine play for her he hastened his work, dictating to me, and it was brought out soon afterward." Le Roy's "dramatization" of Collins' novel was produced at Shiels' Opera House on July 14, 1873, and it was the first, or one of the first, stage adaptations of the story to be acted in America: piratical versions of it eventually became so numerous that, at one time, they could be bought for \$10! Collins, in the disgraceful state of American copyright law at that time, was helpless to prevent what he designated, in writing to me, as the "larcenous appropriation of my poor 'Magdalen.'" As illustrating the practical value of priority in such matters and an injury often inflicted on authorship, it is significant to recall that Le Roy's scissored version of the novel and Miss Pateman's performance in it were much preferred, in San Francisco, to the drama made by Collins, as it was acted there, at the California Theatre, by Carlotta Leclercq (1838-1893), September 22, 1873.

Writing about the production of Le Roy's "larcenous appropriation," Belasco has said: "When it was ready it represented a week of pasting, cutting, and putting together.... It proved to be one of the greatest successes San Francisco ever had.... As for the actress, Bella Pateman, she was a wonderful woman of tears, always emotionally true, and she became the idol of the hour, for her *Mercy Merrick* showed her to be an artist of great worth." Miss Pateman was an accomplished actress (her professional merit was much extolled in conversation with me by both Edwin Booth and Lawrence Barrett), and she became an exceptional public favorite in San Francisco. Her first engagement in that city continued until August 16, and, after July 14, it was devoted on all but four nights to repetitions of "The New Magdalen."

Apart from *The New Magdalen*, Belasco also produced a version of *Man and Wife* during the latter half of 1873.

### ***RADIO TIMES***

Our regular Cornish contact and WCS member, Jak Stringer, has drawn our attention to a small paragraph in the *Radio Times*. Mark Catley, its correspondent from Watford, compliments Sky Arts on its series 'Skinner and Mina's Literary Road Trip' which has included 'Pope and Swift', 'Boswell and Johnson' and 'Wordsworth and Coleridge'.

Frank and Denise, the warm and witty presenters, work so well together. Their 'Road Trip' offers us stunning locations and the chance to discover or perhaps rediscover great writing. We are informed and entertained. I do hope there will be further series. Perhaps the friendship between Charles Dickens and Wilkie Collins might make a suitable subject?

Indeed, it would, so let's hope either Sky Arts or even the BBC will take the hint for next year's bicentenary.

Jak has presented several one-woman shows about Wilkie. She and her partner in likeable eccentricity, Linda, issue regular newsletters 'History-onics' about their weird and wonderful goings on in Cornwall. If you would like to subscribe, e-mail Linda at [lindacamidge@yahoo.co.uk](mailto:lindacamidge@yahoo.co.uk) – or send a message to Camidge & Stringer on Facebook.

## **WILKIE AT SEA**

Sailing was one of Wilkie's his favourite outdoor recreation. 'He had a thoroughly English love of the sea and of all that belongs to it' (*Armadale*). His regular sailing companions were Edward Pigott, Henry Bullar and Charles Ward. Both Collins and his doctor, Frank Beard, were convinced that the sea breezes were good for his health. Collins's first major trips were with Pigott to the Scilly Isles in 1855 and Cherbourg in 1856. He sailed from Broadstairs in 1858 and the early 1860s, and from Great Yarmouth in 1864. In his later years, he sailed off Ramsgate where he joined the local yacht club from the 1870s.

Collins was himself a good sailor and sailing featured in several stories, including 'The Cruise of the Tomtit' (1855), 'A Plot in Private Life' (1858), *Armadale* (1866), and 'Miss or Mrs?' (1871). But having just returned from a less than calm winter cruise, it might be worth remembering the inebriated Zack in *Hide and Seek* (1854) produce

sounds nautically and lamentably associated with white basins, whirling waves, and misery of mortal stomachs wailing in emetic despair.

## **MOONSTONES FOR £100,000**

This is the spectacular price for two separate *Moonstones* currently for sale on AbeBooks. The first is an 1868 three-volume first edition copy of *The Moonstone*

in original condition. The purple binding looks brighter than most copies that survive in cloth although from the illustrations the spines look unevenly darkened with age. There are also two tipped-in Collins signatures. Not in this case, but the first edition of 1500 copies is often advertised with the distinguishing point that ‘treacherously’ is misspelled ‘treachesrouly’ on p. 129 of Volume II. This misprint, however, is still present in the subsequent second edition of 500 copies issued in the same year.

The second item is more significant being Collins’s own annotated copy of the dramatic version of the play privately printed in 1877. This is the same, unique copy which was sold for \$50,400 including premium at Sotheby’s, New York, in December 2022. See our last Newsletter, Winter 2022, for further details.

### ***THE MOONSTONE IN THE TOP 5***

T. S. Eliot called it “the first, the longest and the best of modern English detective novels” and Dorothy L. Sayers said it was “probably the finest detective story ever written”. But *The Moonstone* is relegated to fifth place in the list on knowinsiders.com (search ‘ten best detective novels’) after two by Agatha Christie, all of Sherlock Holmes and, extraordinarily, Dan Brown’s *Da Vinci Code*! I doubt if members will agree!

### **WILKIE’S LETTERS**

The fourteenth Addenda & Corrigenda to Wilkie’s letters is enclosed with this newsletter. It features 36 newly identified letters, including two important items on copyright and a letter setting out how Wilkie managed and was paid for foreign translations. There are also letters to publishers, friends, fans, and a photographer, as well as the last letter he wrote from Ramsgate the year before his death. Wilkie’s letters were mainly written straight onto the page with few amendments or corrections. It is the closest we can get to hearing him talk. Sadly, he turned down an opportunity to record his voice on the astonishing new sound recording equipment invented by Thomas Edison. A year before his death he wrote to Edison’s agent in England

in the present state of my health, I fear there is little hope of my being able to profit by this opportunity which you have been so good as to offer me of investigating the most wonderful invention of our time. ([2892] to George Gouraud, 24 September 1888).

## DINNER WITH DICKENS

The editors of The Dickens Letters Project, Dr Leon Litvack, has come up with a novel idea to get Dickens to speak to us. Using artificial intelligence and an as yet small sample of Dickens's letters he has launched a competition for software developers to devise a game where Dickens would answer people in a natural way in his own words from the letters. Could you talk your way not getting an invitation to a dinner party? More at [qub.ac.uk](http://qub.ac.uk) search 'litvack hackathon' or, if you have a subscription to *The Times*, read the story here <https://bit.ly/3xoAmuN>

## DICKENS'S NOTES

Another fascinating Dickens project is the publication of his working notes at [dickensnotes.com](http://dickensnotes.com). The chapter by chapter notes he wrote for *Bleak House* and *David Copperfield* are already online and give an interesting background to the composition of those novels. Dickens didn't just write notes to himself. He also tried to help Wilkie, in particular finding titles for his books. For example, on 24 January 1862 he sent Wilkie 26 titles he might use for *No Name* (See *Pilgrim* Vol. X, p. 22). Wilkie considered some but then at the last minute came up with *No Name* and stealthily went back in the manuscript to insert the words 'no name' in the story. See Virginia Blain, 'The Naming of No Name', *Wilkie Collins Society Journal*, 1984 pp. 25-29. To read it go to [wilkiecollinssociety.org](http://wilkiecollinssociety.org) click on journal and scroll down to original series and enter the updated username **franklin** and password **blake**.

Wilkie's own notes for *The Moonstone* were published and annotated by Professor William Baker in *Victorian Institute Journal*, Vol. 31, 2003, pp. 187-205. Wilkie also wrote extensive notes for his last novel, *Blind Love*, which he died before completing and which was finished from these notes by Walter Besant who wrote in the Preface

I found that these were not merely notes, such as I had expected — simple indications of the plot and the development of events—but an actual detailed scenario, in which every incident, however trivial, was carefully laid down: there were also fragments of dialogue inserted at those places where dialogue was wanted to emphasise the situation and make it real...the possession of this scenario lightened the work enormously.

## **THE WOMAN IN WHITE POSTER**

The model for the famous poster for the 1871 dramatic version of *The Woman in White* has been revealed in an online Croydon newspaper. The full-size artwork for the poster was drawn by the Victorian artist Frederick Walker. It turns out that the model was his sister, Mary, who died 29 November 1925, probably in her eighties. Frederick himself died in his thirties in 1875, not long after producing the artwork. The identification was in an article on a Croydon news website as part of a long and interesting article about Walker and his paintings. It includes an image of his original work for the poster - see [insidecroydon.com](http://insidecroydon.com) - search Frederick Walker. The life size original is in the Tate and can be found online at [tate.org.uk](http://tate.org.uk) by searching the same name.

## **A FAIR PENITENT**

One of Wilkie's earliest forays into writing a short piece of historical fiction from real events was 'A Fair Penitent'. First published in *Household Words*, 18 July 1857, Vol. XVI, pp. 55-59. Most unusually this story has been republished recently on a website called [magtheweekly.com](http://magtheweekly.com). A search on the site will find the two parts into which it has been divided. It is one of those stories which make classifying Wilkie's writing into fiction and non-fiction so difficult. It is well worth a read in this new and accessible version although it can also be found in Julian Thompson's *Wilkie Collins: the Complete Shorter Fiction* (London: Robinson Publishing, 1995).

## **HANOVER TERRACE DICKENS'S HOUSE FOR SALE**

Wilkie Collins lived at 17 Hanover Terrace from August 1850 to June 1856 with his mother Harriet and brother Charles. It was from here that Charles painted *May in the Regent's Park*, one of his more well-known paintings and now in Tate Britain (though not always on display). Less well-known is that Dickens rented no. 3 Hanover Terrace from 14 February to 15 June 1861. From there he wrote letters and held dinner parties and it is inconceivable that Wilkie did not see him there close to his old home – Dickens certainly visited No.17 when Wilkie was there. Wilkie is often mentioned in letters Dickens wrote from Hanover Terrace. This stay of just four months has been used to market No. 3 as 'Charles Dickens's Former Regent's Park townhouse' on [luxurylondon.co.uk](http://luxurylondon.co.uk) and no doubt bump up the price to the astonishing £22.5 million for a 115 year lease and with £9000 a

year annual charges. The 6103 sq. ft. home is still on sale at [knightfrank.co.uk](http://knightfrank.co.uk) and you can get some idea there of how Dickens and indeed Collins lived as authors. It would be beyond most writers now – and indeed probably was then.



Hanover Terrace as it appeared in 1827

## OBITUARY

Ray Jenkins, who wrote the BBC's 1982 TV version of *The Woman in White* died on 17 January aged 87. The serial starred Ian Richardson as Frederick Fairlie, Diana Quick as Marian Halcombe, Jenny Seagrove as Laura Fairlie and Alan Badel as Fosco. It is still available on DVD. More at [variety.com](http://variety.com) and search 'Ray Jenkins'.

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## ***THE WILKIE COLLINS SOCIETY***

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

**NEWSLETTER**

**SUMMER 2023**

### ***WILKIE COLLINS IN CONTEXT – A BICENTENARY VOLUME***

*Wilkie Collins in Context* has just been published by Cambridge University Press, to celebrate the forthcoming 200<sup>th</sup> anniversary of his birth on 8 January 1824. The volume is officially released on 31 August 2023 in hardback but also available in Kindle format. Edited by long-standing WCS member Professor William Baker and Professor Richard Nemesvari, it includes contributions from seven WCS members. Overall, it provides a very accessible and factual appreciation of many aspects of Wilkie's life and work and will become an invaluable reference source for Collins studies. The full price of £103.50 has been reduced to £90 but we have done a deal with the publisher to discount it further for Society members to £72 (or \$92) plus postage. You can obtain the discount by ordering online at [www.cambridge.org/9781316510575](http://www.cambridge.org/9781316510575) and entering the PROMO code BAKER2023. If that is still too much, perhaps you can persuade your local library to buy a copy?

### **BICENTENARY EXHIBITION AT THE CHARLES DICKENS MUSEUM**

To coincide with the 200th anniversary of Wilkie's birth, an exhibition at the Charles Dickens Museum in London 'Mutual Friends – the Adventures of Charles Dickens & Wilkie Collins' will run from 15 November 2023 to 25 February 2024 including of course that special day when Wilkie is 200 on 8 January 2024.

The exhibition will explore the professional and personal relationship between Dickens and Collins and its impact on their literary careers and private lives. It will include significant loans from members of the Wilkie Collins Society and feature a number of objects from the Museum not previously on public display.

Star objects will include

- the Act Drop from *The Lighthouse*
- Dickens's rules and regulations for his amateur dramatic company, not previously displayed
- Letters from Charles Dickens to Wilkie Collins and others about their travels and work.
- Annotated copies of *The Frozen Deep*, 'Message from the Sea', and 'No Thoroughfare'
- Playbills of their collaborative work
- Original sketch of Wilkie Collins by E. M. Ward for 'Fall of Clarendon' painting, not previously on public display
- Wilkie and Charles Collins as boys, aged 9 and 5, by Alexander Geddes (1783-1844) painted in 1833.

The Museum expects 20,000 visitors to the exhibition and will take the opportunity to digitise up to 50 relevant items so that they will become permanently available online. It hopes to produce a pdf version of those for members of the Wilkie Collins Society and the Dickens Fellowship.

The Museum is at 48-49 Doughty St, London WC1N 2LX and is open Wednesday to Sunday 10.00am to 5.00pm; entry costs £12.50 and is free to members of the Dickens Fellowship (with membership card!). The website is <https://dickensmuseum.com/pages/homepage>.

There will also be a small Collins display next year at the British Library but the dates have not yet been confirmed.

## **ELECTRO-CHEMICAL TREATMENT FOR GOUT**

Wilkie suffered from what he called gout or rheumatism most of his life. And he spent a lot of time and money trying to find a cure or at least some alleviation of the painful symptoms.

Newly identified information from his bank accounts reveals what he paid for one of these attempts at a cure. We know from his letters that he tried the Electro-Chemical Baths of Dr Jean Caplin which were quite nearby at 9 York Place. On 31 March 1863 he wrote to his friend Charles Reade

I am to be found here before two – or after six. Between these hours, I take a drive in the fresh air, and a dip in “Dr Caplin’s Electro-Chemical Bath” – out of which I hope I am getting strength enough to go abroad on Monday week, April 13th. (to Charles Reade, 31 March 1863).

It seems he was having a course of treatment as four days later he wrote to his doctor Frank Beard

My back is painful again – and I had a restless night. But I managed to walk a quarter of an hour yesterday on the high road, and I shall try again today. I will call at Welbeck Street at or a little before four o’Clock this afternoon on the chance of seeing you before I go to the Bath. (to F. C. Beard, 4 April 1863).

The trip abroad was also to seek relief for his gout – he went to the sulphurous baths at Aix-la-Chappelle and then onto the springs at Wildbad, so presumably Dr Caplin’s treatment did work at least enough to get him on the trip.

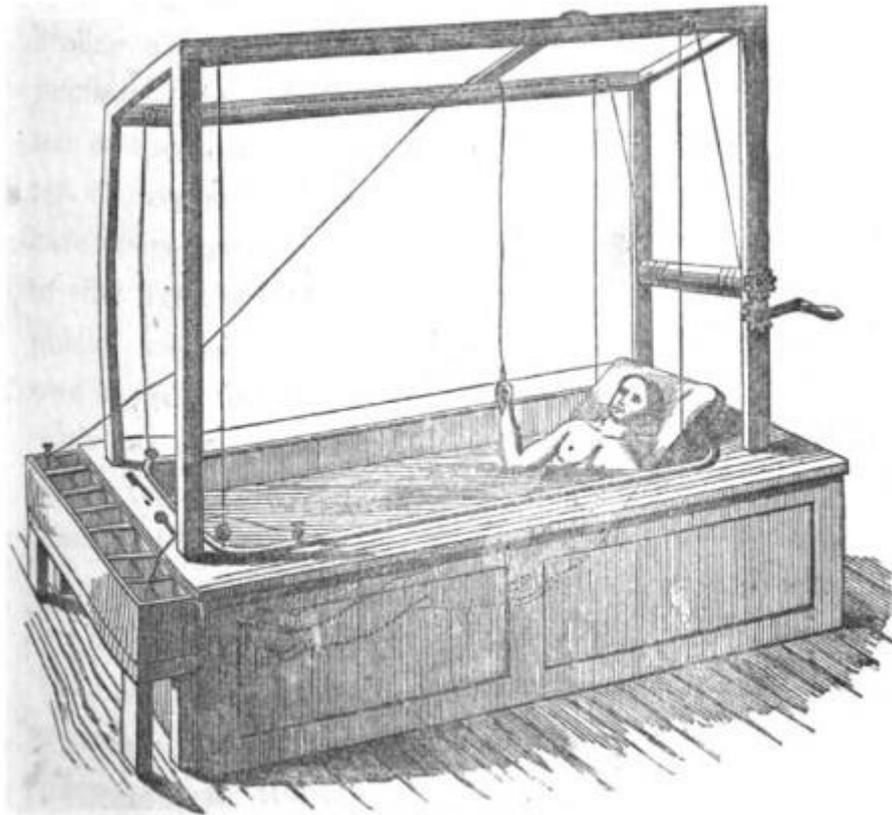
Five years later he was back at Caplin’s. In 1868 he wrote to his lawyer, Edward Benham

I have begun the electric baths. Rating the pores of my skin at only 7 million – I have had 7 million currents of electricity running through me for 45 minutes. The result is great cheerfulness... At 4, I take my Bath At 5, I get out – amidst thunder & lightning. (to Edward Benham, 25 September 1868).

The 45-minute sessions were described by Caplin in 1856 in a book explaining his methods.

The patient is placed up to the neck in a metallic bathing-tub, isolated from the ground and made to rest in a horizontal position, upon a wooden bench, the whole length of the body, which is to be also isolated from the bathing tub...One extremity of the bath is put in contact with the negative pole of the pile [battery] by means of a screw, and the patient takes hold of the positive pole, sometimes with the right hand and sometimes with the left. The arm is held up by supports in contact with the seat...The patient being thus placed, the positive current enters either by the right or left arm, circulates from the head

to the feet, and is neutralized at the negative pole on the sides of the bathing-tub. Being isolated from direct contact with the negative pole as well as from the ground, the electric fluid radiates from the body into the bath, forming a multitude of currents from the entire surface of the body, which, after having traversed the organs and even the bones, neutralise themselves upon the negative side of the bathing-tub. (*The Electro-Chemical Bath, for the Extraction of Mercury, Lead, and Other Poisonous Substances from the Human Body*, London: William Freeman, 1856, p. 3).



DR. CAPLIN'S ELECTRO-CHEMICAL BATH.

Wilkie's bank account for 1868 records these four payments to Dr Caplin:

7 Oct 1868 £5-10s

31 Oct 1868 £5-11s

7 Nov 1868 £5-10s

30 Nov 1868 £5-15s

The total of £22-6s for four sessions is equivalent to more than £2000 at today's prices. We also know that during this course of treatment Caplin gave Wilkie a copy of the third edition of his book which was published by Trübner in October

that year (*The Times*, 17 October 1868 p. 11f). The book was found in his library after his death described as a “presentation copy from the author to Wilkie Collins 1868” (Baker, *Wilkie Collins’s Library*, 2002 p. 87).

These are the only known accounts of Wilkie’s visits to Caplin. He did refer to ‘electric baths’ in letters in 1871 and 1877 but they may have been at a different establishment run by Adolphe Didier a ‘medical galvanist’ of 10 Fitzroy Street (*Kelly’s Directory*) to whom he paid £20 on 9 September 1871. And it was Caplin not Didier whom he later recommended to the photographer John Watkins

Have you ever tried Caplin’s Electro Chemical Baths? 9 York Place Baker Street. They did wonders for me, some years since. (to John Watkins, 26 August 1873).

## **WILKIE’S INHERITANCES**

We tend to think of Wilkie as earning his own living from his twenties until his death by writing novels, stories, and plays. Over his lifetime he earned around £62,000 from doing that – rather more than £6 million in today’s prices. But he also inherited a considerable sum from his father, the painter William Collins, RA (1787-1847). When William died, he left £11,815 most of it in trust to provide an income for his widow Harriet. When she died in 1868 the income reverted to his sons Wilkie and Charles, about £85 a year each. And in 1873 when Charles died all the income – around £180 a year – came to Wilkie. Over his lifetime he received £6,756 income from dividends on his inherited money out of which he felt obliged to pay £332 to a distant cousin of his father and her family. Wilkie also paid sums to two of his mother’s sisters, a total over several years of £500 to Catherine Esther and £605 to Mary Christina.

Harriet had her own money inherited from an aunt. On her death that was shared between her two sons, around £3,000 each. Charles’s share passed to his widow Katey on his death in 1873. Wilkie invested his share and dividends and gains on these brought him a net £445 over his lifetime. By the time of his death in 1889 all his investments had been sold, the last in 1881.

Other minor sums from the accounts of his father and mother leave him with a net inheritance of £10,039 over his lifetime. While this is far less than the estimated £62,000 he earned from his writing it is likely he could have lived modestly as a gentleman even if he had earned nothing. He could not have had

numerous foreign trips, spent summers in Ramsgate, maintained two households, smoked the best cigars and drunk quantities of dry champagne, not to mention paying doctors and buying laudanum. But he would have been comfortable.

When Wilkie died, the money left in trust by his father was largely intact and formed part of his estate. After the sale of his books and manuscripts that was valued at £11,414.80, rather less than his father had left for his family 42 years earlier and which Wilkie ultimately inherited. He had spent all he had earned and inherited in his lifetime bar £862.63 in his bank account, some of which arrived after his death. (Extracted from 'Money', *Wilkie Collins in Context*, 2023, pp. 201-211.)

## **BLUE PLAQUE**

The Spring Newsletter revealed plans for a blue plaque on the newly identified cottage where Wilkie stayed in 1859 and where he wrote the opening chapters of *The Woman in White*. The plaque was fitted to the cottage and unveiled on 16 May by Ken Nickoll, the man who did the forensic detective work to discover that Woodside Cottage, The Vale, Broadstairs was in fact as Wilkie described it to his friend Charles Ward in July 1859

Mr Wayhall's, Church Hill Cottage, Broadstairs...a half-detached cottage all to myself, on the Ramsgate road with nothing between me and the sea but the open down.



**Novelist & journalist  
WILKIE COLLINS  
(1824 - 1889)  
stayed in this cottage  
in 1859 and wrote the  
opening chapters of  
The Woman in White**

## RAMSGATE

A new analysis of Wilkie's letters and accounts shows that he spent sixteen holidays in Ramsgate on the Kent coast in the 1870s and 1880s – a total of 373 nights at a cost of £1185 – approximately £125,000 in today's money.

Most of these visits were with Caroline and her daughter Harriet though at least one was with Martha and their three children and probably three were taken by himself. After her marriage to Henry Bartley, Harriet and her children came to join him there. Wilkie stayed at the Granville Hotel three times, 14 Nelson Crescent at least eight times, and at least once at 27 Wellington Crescent on the east cliff. Another trip was mainly spent on the Yacht *Phyllis* but he sailed in a variety of vessels on a number of his visits. As well as getting away from the dirt, noise and oppressive heat of London, his trips were a mixture of seeking health from the Ramsgate air, holidays, and a place to work.

He set key scenes of three books in Ramsgate – *Poor Miss Finch* (1872), *The Law and the Lady* (1875), and *The Fallen Leaves* (1879). Only one of those scenes was ever illustrated, and then in *Harper's Weekly* – the key moment of revelation near the start of *The Law and the Lady*.



Valeria and Eustace Woodville on Ramsgate beach  
*The Law and the Lady* in  
*Harper's Weekly*, 17 October 1874, p. 853

In addition, we know he wrote or developed parts of other books while he was there including *The Haunted Hotel* (1879), *Heart and Science* (1883), “*I Say No!*” (1884), and *The Evil Genius* (1886).

### ***HARPER’S MAGAZINE***

Volume XVI of *Harper’s New Monthly Magazine* from December 1857 to May 1858 was sold by Forum Auctions on 10 August 2023 for £100 plus premium. This particular volume contained Thomas Nast’s illustration ‘Saint Nicholas and his Reindeer’ but more significantly for Collins, the first publication in the February number of ‘A Marriage tragedy’. This short story on pp. 334-357 was subsequently republished in *The Queen of Hearts* (1859) as ‘Brother Griffith’s Story of ‘A Plot in Private Life’. It is an early example of detective fiction with the chief protagonist a lawyer’s clerk named Mr Dark.

### **BEARDS IN THE NINETEENTH CENTURY**

There is an interesting article by Michael Steel in the latest Spring issue of *The Dickensian* (Vol. 119, No. 519, pp. 36-47). Entitled ‘Why *did* Dickens grow his beard?’, it discusses social and fashion implications of beards in the nineteenth century and how they changed from ‘Newgates’ to ‘door-knockers’. There are several pictures of Dickens with and without. *The Frozen Deep* is duly mentioned with a brief mention of Wilkie and includes the photograph of the cast at Gad’s Hill.

In fact both Dickens and Wilkie grew beards for their parts in the play and they continued to wear them for the rest of their lives. Wilkie wrote of his with good effect to the Dutch firm, Belinfante Brothers when they attempted to pirate *Man and Wife*. They also made the mistake of assuming that ‘Wilkie’ was a woman’s name and received on 10 November 1869 the following blunt response:

Your letter is addressed to me as “Madame Wilkie Collins.” I avow it with sincere regret, but the interests of truth are sacred. The trumpet of Fame, gentlemen, has played the wrong tune in your ears. I am not the charming person whom you suppose me to be. I wear trousers; I have a vote for Parliament; I possess a beard; in two dreadful words, I am – a Man.

## PAINTINGS BY WILLIAM COLLINS

William Collins's well-known 1844 oil painting of Seaford in Sussex showing three children playing on the beach is on display at the Victoria & Albert Museum in London in the British Galleries, Room 122. Also on display in the gallery is his even more famous *Rustic Civility* (1833) showing three children by an open gate, one apparently touching his forelock to a passer-by. It was widely reproduced as an engraving and print right through to the last century. A search on 'William Collins RA' at <https://collections.vam.ac.uk> brings up images of both as well as details – some with images – of more than 30 other items by William in the V&A.

## A VISIT TO LINCOLN'S INN

As a young man Wilkie qualified as a barrister which then only involved eating a set number of dinners at one of the Inns of Court. Wilkie chose Lincoln's Inn, the largest, and qualified on 21 November 1851. He wrote the morning after to his friend Edward Pigott – who had also qualified the same day

What a night! What speeches! What songs! I carried away much clarets and am rather a seedy barrister this morning. I think it must have been the oaths that disagreed with me!

In September Lincoln's Inn is throwing open its doors to the public as part of the Open House Festival weekend. It will welcome visitors from 10am to 3.30pm on Saturday 9<sup>th</sup> and Sunday 10<sup>th</sup> September and among other attractions such as a second folio of Shakespeare, a 400-year-old chapel, and a stunning Great Hall, it promises cake! Details here at [lincolnsinn.org.uk](http://lincolnsinn.org.uk) and search 'open house 2023'.

Wilkie never practised as a barrister though of course he did use the law and lawyers in several of his novels, especially in *The Woman in White* and *No Name*. He also came up with some nice lawyer quotes:

But then I am a lawyer, and my business is to make a fuss about trifles. *The Law and the Lady*

The men who rise in the law are the men who decline to take No for an answer. *Armada*

He fell headlong into the bottomless abyss of the English Law. *Armada*

Every human institution (Justice included) will stretch a little, if you only pull it the right way. *The Moonstone*

Always distrust a man's last wishes on his death-bed - unless they are communicated to his lawyer, and expressed in his will. *Jezebel's Daughter*.

Wilkie also used his legal status to become William Dawson, barrister-at-law, when visiting his morganatic 'wife' Martha Rudd and their children – all of whom went by the name 'Dawson' on censuses and in their son's case on his birth certificate. Their daughters were not registered as they were born before there were penalties for failing to register a birth.

CERTIFIED COPY OF AN ENTRY OF BIRTH

GIVEN AT THE GENERAL REGISTER OFFICE

Application Number Y 004720/c

REGISTRATION DISTRICT *Marylebone*

1875 BIRTH in the Sub-district of *Christ Church* in the County of *Middlesex*

No.	When and where born	Name, if any	Sex	Name and surname of father	Name, surname and maiden surname of mother	Occupation of father	Signature, description and residence of informant	When registered	Signature of registrar	Name entered after registration
139	<i>Twenty fifth December 1874 10 Taunton Place</i>	<i>William Charles Collins</i>	<i>Boy</i>	<i>William Dawson</i>	<i>Martha Dawson formerly Rudd</i>	<i>Barrister at Law</i>	<i>Martha Dawson Mother 10 Taunton Place Marylebone</i>	<i>First February 1875</i>	<i>Frank Stokes</i>	<i>Registrar</i>

When and where born	Name, if any	Sex	Name and surname of father	Name, surname and maiden surname of mother	Occupation of father	Signature, description and residence of informant	When registered	Signature of registrar
Twenty fifth December 1874 10 Taunton Place	William Charles Collins	Boy	William Dawson	Martha Dawson formerly Rudd	Barrister at Law	Martha Dawson Mother 10 Taunton Place Marylebone	First February 1875	Frank Stokes Registrar

Can you spot the three pieces of false information on this certificate!

## **IMPORTANCE OF *THE DEAD SECRET***

Elizabeth Steere, who teaches English at the University of North Georgia, re-appraises the importance of *The Dead Secret* in the genre of female detectives in detective fiction. She writes:

While Wilkie Collins' novels *The Moonstone* (1868) and *The Woman in White* (1859-60) have long been accepted as part of the early mystery canon, Collins' earlier novel *The Dead Secret* (1857) is rarely included. *The Dead Secret* is here reconsidered as one of the earliest English female detective novels, revealing its heretofore unrecognised significance to the genre of detective fiction and the evolution of the literary female detective.

Her essay 'The Mystery of the Myrtle Room' was published in *Victorian Popular Fiction* Vol. 5 Issue 1 (Spring 2023) and can be downloaded free from [victorianpopularfiction.org](http://victorianpopularfiction.org); search 'Steere'.

## ***THE FROZEN DEEP***

A website called [picnicwit.com](http://picnicwit.com) has a page about the 1867 Manchester production of Wilkie's play *The Frozen Deep* – see [picnicwit.com](http://picnicwit.com) and search 'albert smith'. It includes a photograph of the cast including Wilkie Collins but excluding the Ternan family, taken at a party on 12 July 1867 at the home of Dickens's lawyer Frederic Ouvry. The original is in the National Portrait Gallery ([npg.org.uk](http://npg.org.uk) search 'Francesco Berger'). It also has images of an invitation to the party and a playbill from the Manchester performance.

## **DOUBLE JEOPARDY AND A SPOT OF COLOUR**

"The mysterious Anne Catherick strongly favors a certain color in this novel by Wilkie Collins,"

That key question in the US quiz show 'Jeopardy' in May this year would be no problem for WCS members! It was answered correctly by Raquel Matta but she sadly failed to win the final prize which came to \$147,801 – see [www.tvinsider.com](http://www.tvinsider.com) and search 'Raquel Matta'. Technically, of course, white isn't a colour but a mixture of its components – think Isaac Newton and his prism!

Continuing the subject of colour, the title of *The Woman in White* was itself imitated during the nineteenth century with various ‘women’ in mauve, red, grey and black. These have continued into the twentieth century with the most familiar probably being Susan Hill’s ghost story *The Woman in Black*.

## **MARIAN HALCOMBE STRIKES AGAIN**

It seems that Marian Halcombe has become the eponymous heroine of Brenda W. Clough’s recent novel *Marian Halcombe: The Thrilling Victorian Adventures of the Most Dangerous Woman in Europe*. To quote from the publisher’s blurb:

The redoubtable Marian Halcombe first burst onto the world in the 1860s in *THE WOMAN IN WHITE*, by Wilkie Collins. In that classic Victorian thriller, Marian won the hearts of every reader. Now, refusing to rest on her laurels, she goes on a life of love and adventure in the most sensational Victorian style. Bigamy, murder, and a final confrontation with anarchists who will stick at nothing keep Marian from the happily-ever-after she’s determined to achieve.

The novel is published in the USA by Book View Café of Las Vegas but is available from Amazon at £9.20 paperback or £0.77 for the Kindle edition. Clough has written a further ten stories of Marian’s adventures all available as e-publications only from Amazon or Book View Café.

Paul Lewis  
Andrew Gasson

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[www.wilkie-collins.info](http://www.wilkie-collins.info)





## ***THE WILKIE COLLINS SOCIETY***

**PATRON** Faith Clarke

**Chairman** Andrew Gasson, 21 Huson Close, London NW3 3JW

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

**NEWSLETTER**

**WINTER 2023**

### **CENTENARY AND BICENTENARY**

In 1924, 100 years ago, as far as we can tell Wilkie's Centenary went by with very little celebration. *The Daily Telegraph* of 8 January – the exact anniversary – allowed almost a full column with the title 'Wilkie Collins: A Master of Plot.' "It is 100 years to-day since Collins was born ... Yet his best work holds its own. We still see people in trains reading "The Moonstone" and "The Woman in White," as their grandparents did in the distant days of the "yellow back." These two novels, at least, must have passed through many cycles of cheap editions, and they still find their way into new series of popular classics." The article by H. C. Bailey, himself an author of detective fiction, then discourses about Collins and Dickens and who influenced whom but ends with "But the three or four books of his prime, we may believe, stand secure. They are a monument more enduring than brass to the sheer power of story-telling when it is served, as it was in Wilkie Collins, by that subaltern form of genius which is an infinite capacity for taking pains."

*The Times* of the same date devoted just a half column to a brief biography concentrating mainly on *The Woman in White* and *The Moonstone*. It concluded "...we doubt not that the best of his novels will still have eager readers of all ages when, sixty-five years hence, time brings the centenary of his death."

Remarkably prescient since 1989 probably coincided with a renewed interest in Collins studies.

There were also two articles in *John O'London's* weekly, a literary magazine founded by George Newnes in 1919. 'The Centenary of Wilkie Collins' was published on 12 January 1924. The author, Rowland Grey, seemed to have done his research although managing two critical mistakes in the first seven lines. The final short paragraph posed the question "Is Wilkie Collins Read? Mr Louis N. Parker [a British dramatist, translator and composer], at any rate, insists that he is 'bound to come into his own again,' and the multitude of translations looks like lasting remembrance."

The second, wholly enthusiastic essay 'A Master of Mystery' by the eminent barrister Sir Chartres Biron was published on 23 February 1924. Dwelling mainly on *The Woman in White* and *The Moonstone*, he writes "In the Victorian era, almost the golden age of the English Novel, Wilkie Collins was pre-eminent, and the year of his centenary finds him not forgotten. After all, in their heart of hearts, all readers like a good story, and no one gives them better than the author of "The Woman in White."

These few articles seem to belie the opinion that Wilkie Collins's popularity declined after his death in 1889. In addition, his main publishers, Chatto & Windus, until 1925 continued to issue in several formats the twenty-nine titles for which they held the copyright. In America, there was a collected edition of his works in 30 volumes issued in 1900 by P. F. Collier.

## **BICENTENARY EVENTS**

Events for Wilkie's Bicentenary have already begun and will continue into the Summer of 2024. They will include talks, conferences and published articles although some of the details have yet to be finalised. Here they are in approximately chronological order.

**Wilke Collins in Context.** As mentioned in the last Newsletter, this has just been published by Cambridge University Press. Members are reminded that they can obtain copies at £72 which represents a 20% discount off the published price.

**Mutual Friends, The Adventures of Charles Dickens and Wilkie Collins** is the title of the Exhibition at the Charles Dickens Museum. This has been running from **15 November and will continue until 25 February 2024**. It is open Wednesdays to Sundays from 10.00am to 5.00pm. Further details can be found on the Museum's website.

**The British Library** has also planned to hold a small exhibition with the possibility of a suitable event to tie in with the bicentenary. However, the date has not yet been confirmed.

**The Ramsgate Society.** On 28 November, Paul Lewis gave a talk to a sell-out audience of the Ramsgate Society entitled 'A Tale of Two Towns: The Seaside Life of Wilkie Collins.' This included a good deal of new information about Wilkie's several visits and time in Ramsgate. The copiously illustrated presentation can be downloaded from the Ramsgate Society website <https://bit.ly/Paul-Lewis-Two-Towns>

*The Telamon* is the excellent magazine of **the Friends of Kensal Green Cemetery**. Issue 95, published in November, contained 'Wilkie Collins Bicentenary' an illustrated article by Andrew Gasson, reflecting on one of Kensal Green's more famous residents. It concentrated on contemporary descriptions of Wilkie's funeral but also set the scene with brief biographical notes and details of *The Moonstone* and *The Woman in White*.

**A Guided Walk through Kensal Green Cemetery.** *The Telamon* article was a prelude to an event on **20 January 2024** being organised by the Friends of Kensal Green Cemetery (FOKGC). The guided walk will commence at 10.30 am and will be conducted by one of the cemetery's experts. In addition to Wilkie Collins, many famous Victorian writers, including Thackeray, Trollope along with their friends and colleagues, lived at the time when Kensal Green became Britain's most prestigious cemetery and came to rest there.

The walk will end with a buffet lunch to be followed by enthusiastic WCS member Jak Stringer who will give her one-woman performance, 'Rambles around Wilkie Collins.' The cost of the entire event will be £25 (£20 concessions) or £8 to FOKGC. Bookings should be made on the website at [www.kensalgreen.co.uk](http://www.kensalgreen.co.uk).

**Wilkie Collins's Guide to Modern Life.** Well known broadcaster and Collins enthusiast, Matthew Sweet, is presenting a programme on 'Wilkie Collins's Guide to Modern Life'. It will be aired on BBC Radio 4 on **2 January** at 11.30 am.

**California Writer's Club (CWC)** zoom talk on **6 January 2024** at 9pm GMT. WCS Secretary Paul Lewis will give a talk to the San Fernando Valley Branch of the WCS, titled. *Wilkie Collins – A Complicated Life*. The meeting, organised by WCS member Heather Bradshaw, will be available to WCS members online. Joining instructions will be sent by email to members.

**Radio 4 Book Club**, hosted by the BBC's well known bibliophile Jim Naughtie, will broadcast a presentation on *The Moonstone*. It is scheduled to be aired on **7 January** and repeated on **11 January**. Paul Lewis, our secretary, will take part in the programme.

**The Dickens Fellowship**, London Branch, will host a joint talk by **Andrew Gasson and Paul Lewis** on Tuesday **30 January 2024**. The illustrated presentations will concentrate on the life of Collins and his many collaborations with Dickens. The meeting will take place at 6.30pm at the Fellowship's new venue, The Charterhouse, Charterhouse Square, London EC1M 6AN. Nearest tubes, Barbican, Farringdon, Moorgate or Old Street; buses, 4, 5 or 153.

***The Marylebone Journal***. Andrew Lycett, author of the most recent Wilkie biography *Wilkie Collins: A Life of Sensation* is contributing a feature to the **February 2024** issue of the *Marylebone Journal*. Wilkie of course lived in Marylebone for almost his entire life and if any members visits the area, they will find a small portrait of Wilkie amongst those of other local celebrities in the entrance to the local Waitrose in Marylebone High Street.

**Wilkie in Whitby: a Bicentennial Celebration** will be a joint convention of the WCS, the Dracula Society and A Ghostly Company. It will be held over the weekend of **Saturday and Sunday 8 and 9 June** and consist of a day of talks on the Saturday at the Whitby Museum, followed by a Dinner at the Royal Hotel (where Wilkie stayed in 1862). We are also hoping to arrange a guided tour of Whitby on the Sunday morning. On the Friday evening, individual societies will arrange their own informal get-togethers.

The cost of the Saturday talks, Dinner and Sunday guided tour will be £60. Bookings are being taken by Julia Kruk of the Dracula Society and need to be made by 31 January 2024. Remittances to be made to Dracula Society account (J Kruk), sort code 77-91-28, account number 87169668; or by cheque to J. Kruk (the Dracula **Society**, 213 Wulfstan Street, East Acton, London W12 0AB), or PayPal to [juliakruk7@gmail.com](mailto:juliakruk7@gmail.com).

The Dracula Society, who are of course well acquainted with Whitby, stress that June is a busy time and attendees will need to arrange their own accommodation as soon as possible. The Royal Hotel is not particularly recommended and those with cars might prefer to book accommodation in Robin Hood's Bay, Scarborough or York and drive in for the convention.

**The University of Buckingham** is arranging a conference on **20-21 June**. The meeting is being organised by Peter Orford, Senior Lecturer in the Department of English, to celebrate the bicentenary with the theme of Collins and Dickens. More details and how to submit a paper at [www.collins-and-dickens.com](http://www.collins-and-dickens.com).

**Falmouth Conference.** Our former Journal editor Joanne Parsons, is planning to arrange a conference in Falmouth over the weekend of 2-4 July. Although there is no specific Collins theme, he will no doubt feature among the papers presented there. Further details when available.

**Dickens Society Conference, Birmingham.** This will be held from **15-18 July** and will include Collins in the session on 'Family and Friends'.

**University of Birmingham.** There will be a small Collins-Dickens Special Collections exhibition from **1 July 2024 - 31 January 2025**.

**Rambles Around Marylebone.** The WCS will arrange a walk around central London's Marylebone area in which Wilkie lived for almost his entire life. It will be based on William Clarke's original 'Rambles' with updates from Paul Lewis and Andrew Gasson. It will take place during the summer but the date has yet to be finalised.

## **MUTUAL FRIENDS AT THE CHARLES DICKENS MUSEUM**

The first of the events to celebrate the 200<sup>th</sup> anniversary of Wilkie's birth on 8 January 1824 was opened on 15 November at the Dickens Museum in London. Called *Mutual Friends – The Adventures of Charles Dickens & Wilke Collins* it is a major exhibition about the friendship of Wilkie and Dickens from the day they met on 12 March 1851 to Dickens's death in June 1870. The opening preview night was attended by about 60 guests including our Patron, Faith Clarke, who proposed a toast to Wilkie, her great grandfather. The Exhibition features loans from private collections with rare and seldom seen items including paintings, letters, and other artefacts from their two decades of close friendship. It runs until 25 February 2024. Book at [dickensmuseum.com](http://dickensmuseum.com).

## ***THE LIGHTHOUSE***

One important item, currently in careful storage for conservation reasons, which the museum was therefore unable to display is Clarkson Stanfield's front cloth to *The Lighthouse*. The play was written by Collins and performed at Tavistock House and Campden house in June 1855. Wilkie played the part of Martin Gurnock and Dickens his guilt-ridden father Aaron Gurnock. The illustration in colour was used for the dust wrapper to the WCS first English publication of *The Lighthouse* in 2013, edited by Andrew Gasson and Caroline Radcliffe. Copies are still available from either the WCS for its limited hardback edition or direct from the publisher, [www.FrancisBoutle.co.uk](http://www.FrancisBoutle.co.uk), for the paperback edition.



## **COLLINS ON FORSTER'S BIOGRAPHY**

An often-quoted – and misquoted – quip of Wilkie's was that Forster's biography of Dickens was more like 'The Life of John Forster with notices of Charles Dickens'. Some biographers have claimed he was bitter at not being mentioned in the book as much as he would have liked. In fact, that cannot be the reason.

John Forster was a friend of Dickens and indeed of Collins. Volume I of his biography covered 1812-1842. Although dated 1872 it was published in time for Christmas on 4 December 1871 (*Publisher's Circular*, 8 December 1871, p.847 and pp.818-819). Wilkie was almost certainly sent a complimentary copy of it by Forster. We know from Wilkie's letters that Forster sent him a copy of volume II in November the next year (WC to John Forster, 16 November 1872) about three weeks before that volume was published on 7 December (*Publisher's Circular* 9 December 1872 pp. 801, 804). So we can assume Wilkie had his copy of Volume I some time in November 1871.

In the week of publication Wilkie was a guest at a dinner party at the house of the journalist and writer Shirley Brooks (1816–1874). He was a *Punch* contributor from 1851 and became its editor in 1870 after Wilkie's friend Mark Lemon died. The dinner was on 7 December 1871 for 16 people including the artist William Frith and his wife Isabelle, Douglas Jerrold, and George H. Lewes.

It appears Wilkie was invited to this dinner party because he had provided Brooks with a theatre box to see his drama *The Woman in White* then playing at the Olympic theatre. It had opened on 9 October to packed houses and was still two thirds full, though Wilkie told another friend he could provide a box 'any day except Saturday'. On 23 November Brooks wrote in his diary

Wrote Wilkie Collins for a box, *Woman in White*, which he sent, with a good note

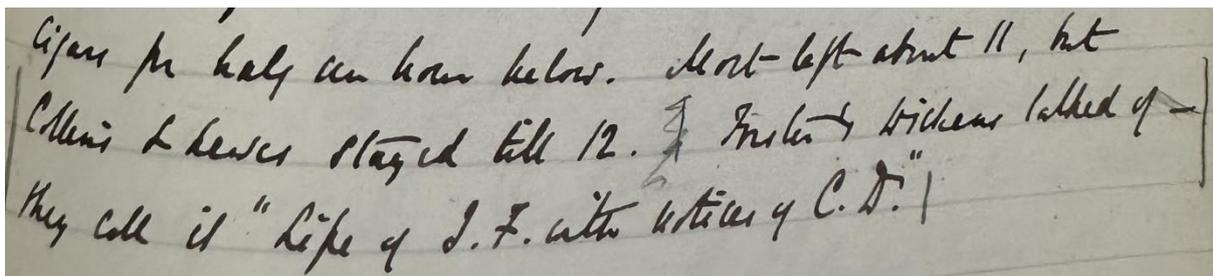
The box – which would have cost between one guinea and two and a half if Brooks had paid – was for the next day, Friday 24 November. Brooks and his wife Emily took the box but Brooks was disappointed by various things – not least that the view from the box was blocked by lights. He also thought the story was better in the novel. He found it 'reasonably well acted' and 'Vining [who played Fosco] much better' than he expected. But he did not like the 'provincial

accents among the company, which ought not to be in a London theatre.’ He and Emily got home at 11.30 and sat up talking about it until nearly one.

A week later he “Asked Wilkie Collins for the 7<sup>th</sup>. (Yes).” So that was why Wilkie Collins was at the dinner party in the week volume I of Forster’s biography of Dickens was published and by which time he would undoubtedly have read it. The first volume covered 1812–1842, long before Dickens had met Wilkie and of course did not mention him.

About 11pm most of the guests left but not Wilkie and George Henry Lewes. Brooks wrote in his diary:

Collins & Lewes stayed till 12. Forster’s Dickens talked of – they call it “Life of J.F. with notices of C.D.”

A photograph of a handwritten diary entry on lined paper. The text is written in cursive and matches the text in the block above. The entry reads: "Collins & Lewes stayed till 12. Forster & Dickens talked of - they call it 'Life of J.F. with notices of C.D.'"

The 1871 volume of Brooks’s Diary is one of three held at the London Library. Our thanks to archivist Nathalie Belkin for permission to examine it.

## WHERE WILKIE MET DICKENS

Wilkie Collins first met Charles Dickens at a read through of a new comedy by Bulwer Lytton called *Not So Bad as We Seem*. Dickens had invited him to take the part of Smart, the valet to Lord Wilmot, played by Dickens himself.

The read through was on Wednesday 12 March 1851 at the house of John Forster, 58 Lincoln’s Inn Fields.



John Forster's House 58, Lincoln's Inn Fields

WILMOT: Smart, my chocolate. Any Duels today? I forget—

SMART: No, my Lord. No duels. Only three drums, four routs, five dinners, and six suppers.

Those are first words spoken to each other on stage by Wilkie Collins and Charles Dickens. They would certainly not be the last.

The play ran for more than 20 performances in London and the Provinces raising more than £4000.

### **WILKIE AND RAMSGATE**

Recent research by Paul Lewis into Wilkie's letters and bank accounts has established that he made fifteen trips to Ramsgate in the last two decades of his life from 1870 to 1888. He passed a total of 373 days there and spent at least £1185 – around £120,000 in today's money. He took these trips hoping that the sea air and the sailing would reduce the symptoms of his many ailments which generally he believed they achieved.

Three of his first trips were to the Granville Hotel, designed by Edward Pugin, son of the more famous Augustus. After that his favourite home from home was at 14 Nelson Crescent run by Catherine Shrive who became a family friend especially to Caroline's daughter Elizabeth Harriet Graves who Wilkie effectively adopted.

Wilkie used Ramsgate as the setting for key scenes in three novels: *Poor Miss Finch* (1872), *The Law and the Lady* (1875) and *The Fallen Leaves* (1879). He also worked on three other novels while staying there: *Heart & Science*, *'I say No!'*, and *The Haunted Hotel*. He said the central ideas for *The Evil Genius* came to him while he was getting a "thorough salting... mostly on the German Ocean" sailing off Ramsgate.

His last trip there was in 1888 when he stayed at 27 Wellington Crescent with what he called his 'morganatic family', Martha Rudd and their three children, all under their adopted name Dawson. On his return the good effects of the Ramsgate air disappeared after just a day leaving him with neuralgia and an abscess. Wilkie died a year later.

## WILKIE'S BOATS



Fishing boat arrived. W. W. Collins 1838.

A pencil drawing noted as by Wilkie turned up for auction in an album of drawings which came from his mother's side of the family. Her name was Geddes

and it contains drawings by two of her sisters. Mary Christina Geddes (1802-1896) was not a known artist though her drawings in the album show her talent. The other sister, who was known as Margaret Carpenter (1793-1872) after her marriage in 1817, was the most successful female artist of the Victorian period. The drawings all date from the 1830s and most are by her husband William Carpenter, who became a keeper of prints and drawings at the British Museum.

It cannot be certain that Wilkie made this drawing *Fishing Boat Arrived* but in 1838 – when he was 14 – he did call himself William Wilkie or W. W. Collins as it is noted. He was a competent enough artist to have a painting – *The Smuggler's Refuge* – accepted for the Royal Academy Exhibition in 1849.

The album was lot 74 in a sale on 6 September 2023 at Toovey's in West Sussex and sold for £3105 including premium.

### **WILLIAM COLLINS'S DATE OF BIRTH**

Members will recall that we published a pamphlet in May 2021 showing that Wilkie's father William Collins RA was born in September 1787 not 1788 as usually stated – not least by Wilkie in his biography of William! The Royal Academy and the *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography* have both made the change and acknowledge the WCS publication. See for example <https://www.royalacademy.org.uk/art-artists/name/william-collins-ra>. Many others – especially auction houses – have yet to follow.

### **LOST LETTERS TO THE LEHMANNS FOUND**

Three letters by Wilkie to members of the Lehmann family have turned up at auction. Previously all three were known only from typed transcripts in the USA. Now the manuscripts and associated envelopes are in the public domain.

With the three letters came an export licence dated 4 September 1975 granted by the UK Board of Trade when they were sent from England to the USA. There they remained with the buyer, Professor Peter Sheldon (1935-2021), unrecorded and unseen for nearly 50 years. The letters are already in the WCS database from the transcripts but have now been checked from the manuscripts and corrected where necessary.

The letters were (1) to Nina Lehmann, 13 November 1862 – a close friend of Wilkie from before her marriage; (2) to her husband Fred Lehmann, [11] December 1886; and (3) to their son Rudolph Lehmann, 1 January 1880. Fred’s brother Rudolf (sic) painted Wilkie’s portrait in 1888 and which can be found in the National Portrait Gallery where a search will also find images of all three recipients.

## **WILKIE AND PETS**

Wilkie’s name turns up in some odd places. A recent article in the online science magazine [phys.org](https://phys.org/news/2023-10-pet-food-vet.html) is about the growth of a love of pets in Victorian times. It mentions “Count Fosco's pet mice in Wilkie Collins's *The Woman in White*” ([phys.org/news/2023-10-pet-food-vet.html](https://phys.org/news/2023-10-pet-food-vet.html)).

Wilkie was devoted to his dog Tommy and was bereft when he died in 1885.

How closely that poor little dog had associated himself with every act of my life at home, I only know now. I can go nowhere and do nothing – without missing Tommy. (To Frank Beard, 31 August 1885).

Nearly twenty years earlier he had written

The only sensible person in this house is the dog! I never heard that Mr Mitchell had been so kind as to call with your note – until it was too late to thank him. I was then informed that the dog had, most properly, done his best to welcome the visitor of whose presence I was unaware. (To Fanny Mitchell, 5 May 1867).

And he wrote from America to his friend Frederick Lehmann

Before I had been a week in the country I noted three national peculiarities which had never been mentioned to me by visitors to the “States.” I. No American hums or whistles a tune – either at home or in the street. II. Not one American in 500 has a dog. III. Not one American in a 1000 carries a walking stick. I, who hum perpetually – who love dogs – who cannot live without a walking stick – am greatly distressed at finding my dear Americans deficient in the three social virtues just enumerated. (To Frederick Lehmann, 2 January 1874).

Wilkie is credited with creating the first canine detective, also called Tommie but with the different spelling, in *My Lady's Money*.

### **THE MOONSTONE UNSOLD**

Wilkie's detective novel *The Moonstone* is one of his most famous and collectors of early or interesting editions of his books have to compete with collectors of detective fiction. T. S. Eliot called *The Moonstone* "the first, the longest, and the best of modern English detective novels". Collins boasted that no reader had ever guessed the identity of the diamond thief, though there were contemporaries who claimed they had.

A very fine copy of the first edition of *The Moonstone* was for sale at auction on 8 December in New York. Sotheby's billed it as from 'an Important American Collection'. It is inscribed "To Elizth Ward from her aff. Husband NW, Derby, 18 July 1868" and was clearly purchased within days of its publication which was around 15 July 1868. An advert in *The Times* by the publisher Tinsley Brothers on 15 July 1868 (p. 13b) describes the book as 'Ready this day'.

Before the sale Sotheby's put an estimate of \$50,000 to \$70,000 (£40,000 to £56,000). The starting bid was \$38,000 (£30,000) but not one hand went up and the lot was unsold. A buyer would have had to pay another 27% in premiums and a further 2.5% on the lot if they paid by card. Images of the book can be found at <https://www.sothebys.com/en/buy/auction/2023/fine-books-and-manuscripts>, lot 1013.

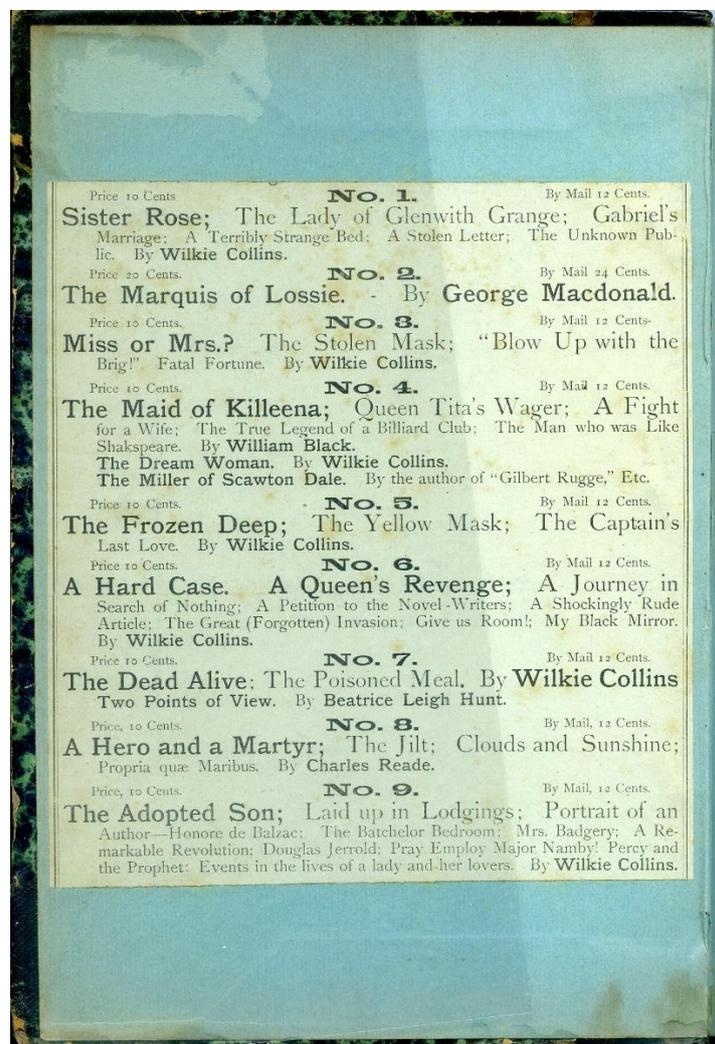
### **PRESENTATION COPY OF ARMADALE**

The Dominic Winter sale on 27 September featured 'The library of the Late Christopher Foyle of Beeleigh Abbey'. Lot 314 was a signed copy of *Armadale* inscribed to "Monsieur Regnier of la Comédie Française from his friend and admirer Wilkie Collins, September 1866". The two volume first edition sold for £9,000 plus premium, well in excess of its rather low estimate.

François-Joseph Regnier (1807-1885) was a leading French actor and playwright of the Comédie-Française. He first met Collins during his trip to Paris in 1855. They collaborated for the French dramatic versions of *Armadale*, *The Woman in White* and *The New Magdalen*. Regnier subsequently became the dedicatee of *The Law and the Lady* in 1875.

## FERGUS' POPULAR LIBRARY

A recent auction by Swann Galleries of New York included a bound volume of *Fergus's Popular Library*, an obscure pirate publisher from Chicago. In the second half of the nineteenth century it was accepted practice in America (as well as Europe) for publishers to reprint large editions of foreign authors without permission or payment. Between the 1860s and 1880s, numerous firms produced unauthorised editions at 10c instead of the usual \$1.50, and 20c instead of \$4.00. Publishers included the Seaside, Lovell's, Leisure Hour, Fireside and Dime Libraries in New York; Donnelly's Lakeside Library in Chicago; and Peterson in Philadelphia. It was estimated that some 500 novels a year were required to satisfy the various series.



Fergus published these first nine numbers in 1881 where they reproduced several Collins titles, not only his longer stories such as *Miss or Mrs?* and *The Frozen Deep* but also several of his better known short stories including 'The Dream

Woman' and 'A Terribly Strange Bed'. Most unusually, it also published several pieces from *My Miscellanies*, such as 'The Unknown Public' and 'Laid up in Lodgings'. The US pirates nearly always concentrated on fiction and these non-fiction articles might well be their only publication in the USA.

### **'SLOW READ' *THE DEAD SECRET***

Jak Stringer who is due to give her Wilkie show at the forthcoming Kensal Green tour in January tells us about two local groups that offer creative stimulus and good company for wintry afternoons. These are '[Sunday Speakeasy](#)' and '[Slow Read](#)'. Both run events every month in Penzance.

The Slow Read Group does exactly what it says on the tin - it's a book club on the instalment plan. Most Victorian novels were first published in monthly episodes, and if you've ever wondered how the original readers experienced them, now's your chance to find out. The first meeting took place on Saturday 28 October and continues on a regular basis at the Queen's Hotel.

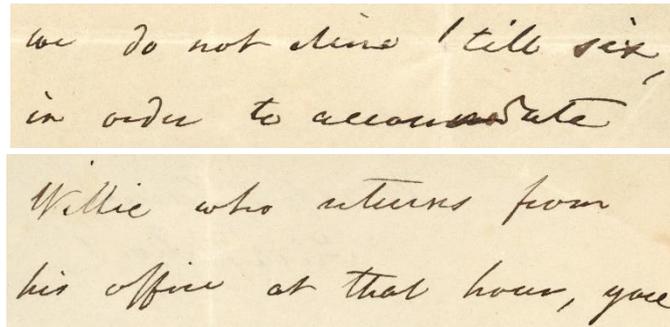
If you want to know more about either of these groups, please follow the Facebook links above - or if you're not on FB, contact Jak Stringer on 07814614764

### **WILKIE'S OFFICE HOURS**

Letters often give us information that is not available anywhere else. An interesting insight comes in a newly discovered letter from Wilkie's father William Collins to his friend, the Norwich artist James Stark (1794–1859). On Friday 7 May 1851 William writes to invite Stark for dinner adding

we do not dine 'till six, in order to accommodate Willie who returns from his office at that hour...

On his 17<sup>th</sup> birthday earlier that year Wilkie began to work at the tea merchant run by Edward Antrobus whose office was in the Strand. The journey of just over two and a half miles would have taken an hour to walk and Wilkie probably did not afford a cab at that time. So we can reckon that his office hours ended at 5pm or 5.30 if he did cab it.



do not dine till six  
in order to accommodate  
Willie who returns from  
his office at that hour, you

The name ‘Willie’ or ‘Willy’ was used by family members rather than ‘Wilkie’ which by then was his own preferred name.

### **MURDER IN THE MIST**

Cora Harrison has produced the fifth in her series of Gaslight Mysteries which cast Wilkie Collins and Charles Dickens as detectives. Her latest, *Murder in the Mist*, is written in the first person by Wilkie – though it has to be said Harrison is no Wilkie Collins when it comes to prose! Set at Dickens’s Kent house, Gadshill Place, at Christmas in the late 1850s, the fun is cut short when one of the guests, an Irishman called Timmy O’Connor, is found dead in the snow with a terrible head injury. Collins and Dickens have different ideas about who killed him. *Publishers Weekly* wrote “The ingenious solution to the mystery makes this the series’ best entry yet. Victorian whodunit fans are in for a treat.”

Please do not read this book for factual information about Wilkie as Harrison gets almost everything about him, his family, and his character wrong. She is slightly better at jigsawing her story into details of Dickens’s life but she is from the school of thought that Collins was a rather gauche and jejune imitation of the genius that is Dickens. Nevertheless, her four previous books about the detective duo – *Season of Darkness*, *Winter of Despair*, *Summer of Secrets*, and *Spring of Hope* – have been fun if exasperating. ISBN 978-1-4483-1134-7 in hardback and also on Kindle.

Andrew Gasson      [apogee@apgee.co.uk](mailto:apogee@apgee.co.uk)

[www.wilkie-collins.info](http://www.wilkie-collins.info)

Paul Lewis          [paul@paullewis.co.uk](mailto:paul@paullewis.co.uk)

[www.wilkiecollins.com](http://www.wilkiecollins.com)



# *THE WILKIE COLLINS SOCIETY*

**PATRON** Faith Clarke

**Chairman** Andrew Gasson, 21 Huson Close, London NW3 3JW

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

## **NEWSLETTER**

**SPRING 2024**

### **BICENTENARY EVENTS**

Several talks and events for Wilkie's Bicentenary as detailed in the last Newsletter have already taken place. Here in approximately chronological order are those now scheduled to continue into the Summer.

**Mutual Friends, The Adventures of Charles Dickens and Wilkie Collins** is the title of the Exhibition at the Charles Dickens Museum. This has been running from **15 November** and has been so popular that it has been extended to run **until 21 April 2024**. It is open Wednesdays to Sundays from 10.00am to 5.00pm. Further details can be found on the Museum's website.

**Wilkie in Whitby: a Bicentennial Celebration** will be a joint convention of the WCS, the Dracula Society and A Ghostly Company. It will be held over the weekend of **Saturday and Sunday 8 and 9 June** and consist of a day of talks on the Saturday at the Whitby Museum, followed by a dinner at the Royal Hotel (where Wilkie stayed in 1862). We are also hoping to arrange a guided tour of Whitby on the Sunday morning. On the Friday evening, individual societies may well arrange their own informal get-togethers.

The cost of the Saturday talks, Dinner and Sunday guided tour is £60. Bookings are through Julia Kruk of the Dracula Society and should have been made by 1 April 2024 but try anyway! Remittances to be made to Dracula Society account (J Kruk), sort code 77-91-28, account number 87169668; or by cheque to J. Kruk (the Dracula **Society**, 213 Wulfstan Street, East Acton, London W12 0AB), or PayPal to [juliakruk7@gmail.com](mailto:juliakruk7@gmail.com).

The Dracula Society, who are of course well acquainted with Whitby, stress that June is a busy time and attendees will need to arrange their own accommodation as soon as possible. Those with cars might prefer to book accommodation a little further out and drive in for the convention.

**Rambles Around Marylebone.** The WCS is arranging a walk around central London's Marylebone area in which Wilkie lived for almost all of his life. It will be based on William Clarke's original 'Rambles' with updates from Paul Lewis and Andrew Gasson. It will take place on **Sunday 16 June**. More details will be sent to members by email.

**The University of Buckingham** is hosting a conference on **Thursday 20 to Friday 21 June** with the title **Collins and Dickens – Dickens and Collins**. As part of the events to commemorate the 200<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the birth of Wilkie Collins, the meeting is being supported by both the Wilkie Collins Society and the Dickens Fellowship. The event is being organised by Peter Orford, Senior Lecturer in the Department of English. The Conference programme is about to be publicly announced but it will discuss aspects of Collins and Dickens's works, collaborations, and influences upon one another at <https://www.collins-and-dickens.com>. Paul Lewis will be talking on Thursday afternoon 'Wilkie Collins and Charles Dickens – a Financial Relationship'. You can register for the event here <https://www.eventbrite.co.uk/e/collins-and-dickens-tickets-859008767347>.

The 29th **Annual Dickens Society Symposium** will be held from **15-18 July 2024** with the title 'Dickens, Context, and Co-occurrence'. For further details contact the conference organisers **Michaela Mahlberg** and **Caroline Radcliffe** at [dickens2024@contacts.bham.ac.uk](mailto:dickens2024@contacts.bham.ac.uk) or you can view the website at <https://dickenssociety.org/home>. The meeting is expected to include Collins in the session on 'Family and Friends'.

**University of Birmingham** is also staging a small Collins-Dickens Special Collections exhibition from **1 July 2024 - 31 January 2025**.

The Birthplace Branch of the Dickens Fellowship is holding a conference in Portsmouth on **5 to 8 August**, There will be at least two talks on the relationship between Charles Dickens and Wilkie Collins. More from the Dickens Fellowship in due course.

**The British Library** we think still intends to hold a small exhibition for Wilkie's bicentenary. However, with the BL's other issues a date is still uncertain.

What the BL website does feature, however, is the painstaking work by our Dutch member Pierre Tissot van Patot on a *Bibliographic overview of the Dutch language translations* and in particular on Collins's play *The Lighthouse*. See <https://blogs.bl.uk/european/2020/09/shining-a-light-on-wilkie-collins-and-the-low-countries.html>.

### **COLLINS IN MARYLEBONE JOURNAL**

Wilkie's biographer and WCS member Andrew Lycett has written a bicentenary piece in the latest issue of *Marylebone Journal*. Entitled 'A Life Less Ordinary', it describes Wilkie Collins and his life which he lived almost entirely in London's Marylebone area. It provides a very readable and clear introduction to Wilkie's life and work. *Marylebone Journal*, Issue 103, pp. 22-26 and can be found online at [marylebonejournal.com](http://marylebonejournal.com).

This is Wilkie's second appearance in *Marylebone Journal* where Andrew Lycett had previously written in the issue for December/January 2013-14 'Wilkie's Worlds'.

### **SOME OTHER RECENT TRIBUTES TO WILKIE**

WCS member Kishor Kale has written in *Studies in Religion and the Enlightenment* about "I say No!" and Charlotte Smith's *Ethelinde*. His article 'The Romance of Mystery and the Mystery of Romance' draws parallels between the two novels and the use by both authors of a McGuffin character. Find out more at [srejournal.org](http://srejournal.org) - search 'Wilkie Collins'.

*Fine Books Magazine* has a number of items on Wilkie including 'A Tale of Two Writers' looking at his collaboration with Dickens on the dramatic version of *The Frozen Deep*. [finebooksmagazine.com](http://finebooksmagazine.com) - search 'wilkie collins'.

Several other newspapers and magazines have written about Wilkie for his 200<sup>th</sup> anniversary. Search his name in the online publications of *The Telegraph*, *The Guardian*, *The Times*, [lithub.com](http://lithub.com) and many more.

### **KENSAL GREEN CEMETERY**

On 20 January 2024 the Friends of Kensal Green Cemetery (FOKGC) organised a guided walk conducted by one of the cemetery's experts. Apart from Wilkie Collins, the walk included many other famous Victorian writers, including Thackeray and Trollope along with their friends and colleagues who lived at the time when Kensal Green became Britain's most prestigious cemetery and came to rest there.



Reading from a description of Wilkie's funeral

The expert guided walk was accompanied by several readings including one at the graveside from *The Daily Telegraph* of September 1889 with its description of Wilkie's funeral and the assembled mourners. The twenty-five or so participants in the walk then collectively drank A TOAST TO WILKIE COLLINS.

The walk concluded with a buffet lunch followed by 'Rambles around Wilkie Collins,' a presentation from Jak Stringer. Jak had travelled up from Cornwall to give one of her remarkable and enjoyable one-woman Wilkie shows. She is scheduled to repeat this in June during the forthcoming Collins meeting in Whitby.



Jak Stringer during her afternoon performance

## DICKENS FELLOWSHIP

The Dickens Fellowship, London Branch, hosted its scheduled joint talk by Andrew Gasson and Paul Lewis on 30 January 2024. Their respective titles were 'Mutual Friends - Two Destinies' and 'No Thoroughfare and No Cooling'. The illustrated presentations naturally concentrated on the life of Collins and his many collaborations with Dickens. The meeting took place at the Fellowship's magnificent new venue, The Charterhouse in Charterhouse Square.

## WCS WEBSITE

The Wilkie Collins Society website [wilkiecollinssociety.org](http://wilkiecollinssociety.org) is being revamped for Wilkie's 200<sup>th</sup> birthday year.

Stage 1 has been completed and everything the Society has published since it began in 1981 is now available on the website, free to read or download. That is more than one and a quarter of a million words of news, information, research, and scholarship as well as many of Wilkie's lesser-known works which we published for the first time. No password is needed.

Members will continue to get printed publications posted to them and receive emails with the latest developments. New publications will go on the website after a suitable exclusive period for members. In this way we are making available to researchers and fans 40 years of scholarship by the Society's members and others. Paper copies of some older publications will still be available for sale.

Stage 2 is to update the website for the second quarter of the 21<sup>st</sup> century by replacing the current tired and old-fashioned look with a complete restyle. The new website will also work properly on tablets and mobiles which can encounter problems with the present one. This restyling is currently being worked on and we hope will be released in the very near future. The URL will not change.

Meanwhile, enjoy the 99 newsletters, the 83 pamphlets, leaflets, and books, the 14 updates to the Collected Letters and the 27 issues of the three incarnations of the *Wilkie Collins Journal*. All are free to read and download at [wilkiecollinssociety.org](http://wilkiecollinssociety.org). You can also listen to the eight-minute performance of the Overture to *The Frozen Deep*, found and recorded by the WCS in 2008.

## MUSIC AND WILKIE

Allan Atlas, editor and compiler of *A Wilkie Collins Songbook* (A-R Editions, 2023) will be acting as narrator in a forthcoming concert at the 11<sup>th</sup> Biennial Conference of

the North American British Music Studies Association. The event will take place on Saturday 27 July 2024 at Oberlin College & Conservatory, Oberlin, Ohio and will feature five of the entries from the *Songbook* including *The Woman in White*. The concert is expected to feature Samuel Jungman, tenor; Susanna McCleary; soprano and violin; and Dorothy de Val, piano.

*A Wilkie Collins Songbook* is available from A-R Editions, Middleton, Wisconsin or from Amazon - but at a price not far short of the air fare to the concert in Ohio at the sky-high price of £292.47!

### AN EARLIER APPEARANCE OF *VOLPURNO*

Fourteen years after Wilkie's earliest published piece was identified as *Volpurno* in a July 1843 New York periodical, an earlier appearance published in England has been located.

The *Monmouthshire Beacon* published the short tale on 3 June 1843. It occupies a single column on p. 4 of the broadsheet newspaper and is identical with the piece published in the New York *Albion* a month later. Tantalisingly, the *Beacon* indicates that the story was taken from a London publication called the *Court Journal*. That may be its original publication and its office was not far from where Wilkie worked at the time in Antrobus's tea merchants in the Strand. *The Court Journal* sold only a few hundred copies and the only extant copy for 1843 which has been found is in the British Library. However following the infamous cyber-attack last October, most of the library's books and periodical volumes are unavailable to researchers. The *Court Journal* is not scheduled to be released until the summer, probably in July. So by the next newsletter we may have found *Volpurno*'s original publication.

The discovery of *Volpurno* and the text of the story was published by the Society in 2009 and can be read on the website [wilkiecollinssociety.org](http://wilkiecollinssociety.org) - search 'Volpurno'.

#### VOLPURNO—OR 'THE STUDENT.

BY W. WILKIE COLLINS.

"—Memory, like a drop that, night and day,  
Falls cold and ceaseless, wore her heart away."—Lalla Rookh.

Perfectly overcome by the heat of an Italian evening at Venice, I quitted the bustling gaiety of St. Mark's Place for the quiet of a gondola, and directing the man to shape his course for the island of Lido, (a narrow strip of land dividing the "lagunes," or shallows beyond the city, from the open sea,) I seated myself on the prow of the vessel, with a firm determination to make the most of the sunsey wafts of air that every now and then ruffled the surface of the still, dark waters.

From *The Albion. A Journal of News, Politics and Literature*, 8 July 1843

[*A note from Andrew Gasson. We should all be very grateful to Paul Lewis for the immense amount of time and effort he has spent in putting the website in order; and secondly, he must take the credit for discovering through his research what is likely to prove the first publication of Wilkie's first ever story, Volpurno.*]

## **POLITICIANS**

With so much never-ending politics in the news and a general election imminent, members might like to be reminded of some of Wilkie's cynical views on politicians. "Which of our political parties deserves the confidence of the English people?" In plain terms, on his sides Randal answered: "The party that lowers the taxes." Those words acted on the discussion like water on a fire. As members of Parliament, the two contending politicians were naturally innocent of the slightest interest in the people or the taxes; they received the new idea submitted to them in helpless silence. (From *The Evil Genius*).

Lord B. is the greatest impostor of modern times. In politics a glib tongue and no scruples will do wonders. But literature under false pretences, betrays the pretender. I sincerely believe that man to be the very worst novelist that has ever appeared in print. (Referring to Lord Beaconsfield (Disraeli) in a letter to George Maclean Rose, January 1881).

## **THE WOMAN IN WHITE ANOTHER FILM VERSION**

Recently seen tipped into an online copy of *The Woman in White* was a photograph taken from the filming of the 1929 cinematic version of Collins's sensation novel at the Cricklewood studio in north London.



Our Newsletter for Summer 2019 gave details of various silent film versions of *The Woman in White* including *The Unfortunate Marriage* from 1917 and *The Twin Pawns* from 1919. This 1929 silent version with Collins's original title was directed by the well-known film maker, Herbert Wilcox. The cast consisted of Blanche Sweet as Laura Fairlie, Haddon Mason as Walter Hartwright [sic], Cecil Humphreys as Sir Percival Glyde, and Louise Prussing as Marion Halcombe. There are further details online at IMDB which gives the brief storyline as:

Following a promise she made to her father on his deathbed, Laura Fairlie ([Blanche Sweet](#)) goes to Scotland with Sir Percival Glyde ([Cecil Humphreys](#)) to his mysterious mansion to be married. Once there, many strange and disturbing things happen. She meets a girl who has been a victim of Sir Percival's scheming in order to get her fortune.

The scene depicted in the photograph appears to be towards the end of the story, after Sir Percival has died in the fire at the Old Welmingham Church.

## **MELVYN BRAGG**

Preparing the old Wilkie Collins Society Newsletters for publication on the website has turned up several gems. One is the 2003 edition of *In Our Time*, Melvyn Bragg's intelligent and accessible series on Radio 4. Broadcast on 6 November 2003 'The Novels of Sensation, a Victorian Literary Phenomenon' included *The Woman in White* and *The Moonstone* in the discussion by Bragg's guests Professor Lyn Pykett, Professor Dinah Birch, and John Mullan. It is still available on BBC Sounds at [www.bbc.co.uk/sounds/play/p005492t](http://www.bbc.co.uk/sounds/play/p005492t)

## **THE NEW MAGDALEN – A FRENCH VERSION**

We also mentioned in an earlier Newsletter, Winter 2020, a French film adaptation of Collins's 1873 novel and play *The New Magdalen*. At that time it was in production in France under the title *La Place d'une Autre* and now has the English title *Secret Name*. Filming began in October 2020 and the final version was released in 2021. The studio's plot summary will sound familiar to readers of the book.

Despite being inspired by the English tale *The New Magdalen* (1873), penned by the mysterious Victorian author Wilkie Collins (a friend and collaborator of Charles Dickens), Aurélie Georges decided to set her feature film in France at the beginning of the First World War. In this dark and angst-ridden context, we find young Nélie - played by **Lyna Khoudri**, the winner of the Orizzonti's Best Actress award in Venice – a woman in search of some sort of social redemption which will allow her to exist beyond the confines of her social condition. With the help of the Red Cross, our heroine, who becomes a courageous nurse on the front line, can at

last leave behind her life of misery where fighting to get by is an everyday event. During a brutal bombing raid, a mysterious woman loses her life and N elie decides to steal her identity in the hope of improving her lot. But one day, the dead woman resurfaces...

*Secret Name* is produced by 31 Juin films (France) in co-production with ARTE France Cin ma, and released by Pyramide International. Full details can be found at <https://cineuropa.org/film/407504/> where there is an interview with Aur lie Georges and an evocative 1.40 minutes trailer. This is also available on IMDB - search *Secret Name*.

### **NEW VICTIMS OF CIRCUMSTANCES**

There have been discoveries too about Wilkie's three short stories published in 1886 and 1887 in the *Youth's Companion* in New York as a series of 'Victims of Circumstances'. We covered the discovery of the third story in 2002 and in 1992 we published two of them from the London *Boy's Own Paper*.

The three stories were based on real court cases in which an innocent individual was executed for a crime on the basis of circumstantial evidence alone. Earlier this year the probable source of those three stories was identified. Professor Graham Law has incorporated these findings into a new edition of his *Victims of Circumstances* which also updates the background to the tales with twenty years of subsequent scholarship.

### **RICHARD J SMITH**

We are very sorry to inform members that researcher and writer Richard J. Smith died during 2023. Richard was one of our earliest members joining in 1992. His wife Jackie told us he had been ill for some while before his death last June. Richard knew more than most about Wilkie's aunt the artist Margaret Sarah Carpenter (*n e* Geddes, 1793-1872) whose life and works he had researched for many years. Although his planned biography of her remained unpublished he did write her entry for the online *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography*. Richard also researched in detail the backgrounds of the people mentioned in the autobiography written by Wilkie's mother Harriet. His meticulous work will find a place in that account when it is published, we hope, in the near future. You can read more about Richard in the Winter 1998 Newsletter which is on the society's website.

### **ROYAL ACADEMY 'ENTANGLED PASTS'**

Like many organisations, the Royal Academy is trying to come to terms with the links to the slave trade of people in its past. A new exhibition 'Entangled Pasts, 1768–now' is the first part of that work and runs until 28 April. Wilkie's father William Collins was a student at the RA and became a full Academician in 1820. He exhibited there almost

every year from 1807 to his death forty years later. Although it is possible that some of his patrons who bought his pictures derived money from the slave trade his father, also called William, was passionately against slavery. In 1788 he wrote a polemical poem on the evils of it called *The Slave Trade: a Poem*. Published in 1793 it was ‘dedicated to the Gentlemen, who compose that truly noble, generous, and philanthropic Society for the Abolition of the Slave Trade’. The 24-page pamphlet was priced at one shilling. A reprint can still be tracked down online.

The theme of slavery was also tackled by Wilkie Collins in his 1861 play, *Black and White*. It was written by Collins from an idea by Charles Fechter who suggested the outline of the first two acts. With Fechter's agreement, Collins provided the ending, developed the characters and wrote the dialogue. The story is set in Trinidad in 1830. The English villain, Stephen Westcraft, competes with the Count de Layrac for the hand of an heiress, Miss Milburn. He discovers that the Count is actually of mixed race and legally a slave. He buys him at auction but by another technicality the Count is freed. Fechter played the part of Maurice de Layrac. His leading lady, Carlotta Leclerq, took the part of Miss Milburn.

## **OVERSEAS WILKIE TRIBUTES**

Society member Andrew Mangham took part in a radio seminar about Wilkie Collins on Canada’s CBC radio in January. See [www.cbc.ca](http://www.cbc.ca) and search for ‘Wilkie Collins’ for background material and to hear the podcast. He also gave a paper ‘Out of the Blue? Epilepsy, Sensation and Wilkie Collins’s Poor Miss Finch’ as the lead article in a special Wilkie Collins issue of the Turkish *Çankaya University Journal of Humanities and Social Sciences*. You can read his article and half a dozen others on Wilkie at [dergipark.org.tr/en/pub/cankujhss/issue/82381](http://dergipark.org.tr/en/pub/cankujhss/issue/82381)

## **MUSICAL *THE WOMAN IN WHITE***

First seen in 2004, Andrew Lloyd Webber’s musical admitted it was ‘freely adapted’ from *The Woman in White* and attracted an excoriating review in our Winter 2004 newsletter after a short preview in the previous Summer’s issue. It was revived in 2017 at the Charing Cross Theatre, again reported in the 2017 Summer and Winter Newsletters. That may not be the end of it as it still features on Lloyd Webber’s website with the cast forming the backdrop [www.andrewlloydwebber.com/shows/the-woman-in-white](http://www.andrewlloydwebber.com/shows/the-woman-in-white). Another discovery from putting the newsletters online – [wilkiecollinssociety.org](http://wilkiecollinssociety.org) - see Old Newsletters.

## **REYNOLDS AND COLLINS**

A book on the little-known Victorian writer George W. M. Reynolds (1814-1879) contains an interesting chapter by WCS member Professor Stephen Knight comparing

him to Wilkie Collins. ‘Two Mid-Nineteenth Century Popular Radical Novelists’ compares the two men starting from the premise that they

share a major interest in socio political issues. They explore arrogant aristocrats, dubious clergymen, corrupt professionals in business, law, and medicine, and place substantial emphasis on the maltreatment in various ways of women.

There is no evidence the two authors actually met or directly influenced each other (Reynolds stopped writing just as Wilkie was hitting his peak) but Knight draws interesting parallels about their lives and development as novelists and who at times have been very neglected by academics and historians.

*G.W.M. Reynolds Reimagined – Studies in Authorship, Radicalism, and Genre, 1830-1870*, Ed. Jennifer Conary and Mary L. Shannon (Routledge 2023) is £34.99 in paperback though slightly cheaper on Amazon and Kindle.

## **A ‘NEW’ RADIO PLAY**

More than 1000 radio plays which were long lost from the BBC’s archives have been recovered and restored from home recordings by enthusiasts at the Radio Circle. The only one by Wilkie Collins revealed so far is a 1964 adaptation by Molly Hardwicke of the drama *No Thoroughfare* written by Wilkie Collins in 1867/68 from the story he and Dickens collaborated on for the 1867 Christmas Number of *All the Year Round*. Originally broadcast on 18 July 1964, the 90-minute play was broadcast on Tuesday 26 March on Radio 4 Extra and is on BBC Sounds until 25 April <https://www.bbc.co.uk/sounds/play/m001xlt2>. The BBC broadcast many items by Wilkie Collins in the 1950s and 1960s but this is the oldest item for which a recording exists. In 2005 we published ‘Wilkie on the Airwaves’ a bibliography of the BBC holdings but it was not included in that – search ‘airwaves’ on [wilkiecollinssociety.org](http://wilkiecollinssociety.org).

There is much more at [bbc.com](http://bbc.com) - search ‘hidden treasures’ and [radiocircle.org.uk](http://radiocircle.org.uk). At the moment the BBC says no other Wilkie Collins plays have been found but it is still going through the 1000 recordings. A long job!

## **MOONSTONE TREASURE**

Booksellers seems to hope that first editions of *The Moonstone* are themselves as valuable as a good diamond. Brought to Book of London NW2 is still trying to sell a fine copy in original cloth with two small pieces of paper signed by Wilkie tipped in, though neither seems to be associated with the copy itself. The price? £60,000 – the

same as a flawless 2ct diamond. We first reported one of these documents in April 2023 in our *Addenda & Corrigenda (14)* as letter number [3396]. For images of the book and the two documents see [broughttobook.com](http://broughttobook.com) - search 'The Moonstone', though the images are better on [abebooks.co.uk](http://abebooks.co.uk) - search 'moonstone signed tinsley'.

## **WHO READ WILKIE COLLINS AND WHERE?**

A first edition of *Armadale* (1866) with an interesting provenance was included in Lot 45 of a recent sale by Bonhams in Knightsbridge. This particular copy had on the front end-paper the stamp of 'Charles A. Rundle, Medical Hall, Wangaratta.' Charles Rundle was the local pharmacist who died in May 1896. Wangaratta is a small Australian town located about 160 miles from the suburban district of Armadale, itself about seven miles from central Melbourne. There is also another Armadale, in Western Australia, and for good measure an Armidale in New South Wales.

## **UNKNOWN MAN**

An Australian auction house, Lawsons of Sydney, caused some excitement by offering a pair of paintings of Charles Dickens and Wilkie Collins by an unknown artist in their 21 February sale. One of the images did look like Dickens but the other was certainly not of Collins as a couple of minutes research on Google would have revealed. After that was pointed out to Lawsons the description was changed to Charles Dickens and Unknown Man. Estimated at only A\$150-A\$250 they fetched a modest A\$450 – about £230 before premium and shipping. Quite a lot for an unknown man! See the images at [lawsons.co.au](http://lawsons.co.au) - search 'charles dickens'

## **ANOTHER WILKIE COLLINS**

From time to time the name Wilkie Collins crops up in the most unlikely places. Apparently, this Wilkie namesake was also a team member of the Lima Giants black baseball team around the turn of the 20<sup>th</sup> century. In his day job, however, he was a railroad baggage master. More details with a photograph at [www.limaohio.com/top-stories/2024/02/20/reminisce-stories-about-the-lima-giants-outside-baseball](http://www.limaohio.com/top-stories/2024/02/20/reminisce-stories-about-the-lima-giants-outside-baseball).

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# *THE WILKIE COLLINS SOCIETY*

**PATRON** Faith Clarke

**Chairman** Andrew Gasson, 21 Huson Close, London NW3 3JW

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

## **NEWSLETTER**

**SUMMER 2024**

### **DICKENS SYMPOSIUM**

Just too late for this Newsletter, the 29th **Annual Dickens Society Symposium** was this year held from **15-18 July** with the title 'Dickens, Context, and Co-occurrence'. It is organised by Caroline Radcliffe and Michaela Mahlberg at the University of Birmingham. Still current, however, the university is also staging a small Collins-Dickens Special Collections exhibition which runs from 1 July to 31 January 2025.

### **DICKENS FELLOWSHIP CONFERENCE**

The one remaining event that is at least partly associated with Wilkie's bicentennial is the Annual Dickens Fellowship conference 5-8 August in Portsmouth. Among other attractions there will be at least two talks on the longstanding friendship between Collins and Dickens. More here [https://www.dickensfellowship.org/images/sati/pdf2024/conf2024\\_form-info.pdf](https://www.dickensfellowship.org/images/sati/pdf2024/conf2024_form-info.pdf).

### **WILKIE IN WHITBY: A BICENTENNIAL CELEBRATION**

This proved a most successful and enjoyable meeting on the weekend of 8 and 9 June. Held at the impressive Whitby Museum, this was a joint convention of the WCS, the Dracula Society and A Ghostly Company.

We began with ‘Do you Believe? – an Introduction to the Supernatural World of Wilkie Collins’ by Katherine Haynes, founder member of A Ghostly Company and outstanding winner of the previous evening’s supper quiz. Katherine brilliantly covered the supernatural in Wilkie’s entire oeuvre, including both the short stories and his full-length novels. Barry McCann then talked on ‘Wilkie Collins on Film and TV’. Barry is a writer, editor and broadcaster on matters supernatural and his presentation took us through Wilkie’s works from the earliest silent films, starting with *The Moonstone* in 1909 to modern 20<sup>th</sup> century television productions.

The afternoon began with Andrew Gasson talking on ‘Wilkie Collins and Detective Fiction’ which discussed both Collins’s ‘firsts’ in detective contributions to his early short stories and those in his major novels, as well as *The Moonstone* and *The Woman in White*. The day concluded with ‘A Ramble around Wilkie Collins,’ one of Jak Stringer’s brilliant solo performances taking us this time through Wilkie’s early life and works.

We are working on publishing all three of the papers presented at the Whitby meeting.

Another high point of the day was the showing of the 1917 silent film version of *The Woman in White*, re-released in 1920 as ‘The Unfortunate Marriage.’ Apart from the anachronistic appearance of the occasional motor car, the film follows quite closely the original plot and caused our Whitby audience to burst into spontaneous applause.

This version is part of the Thanouser Collection (volumes 7, 8 and 9, which included as a complete set several other shorter silent films of the era [www.thanouser.org/videos](http://www.thanouser.org/videos)). *The Woman in White* was directed by Ernest C. Warde with the script based on Collins’s novel by Lloyd F. Lonergan. The cast included Florence LaBadie as Laura Fairlie and Anne Catherick; Richard R. Neill as Sir Percival Glyde, Arthur Bauer as Count Fosco and Wayne Arey as Walter Hartright.

The film is taken from a copy in the Library of Congress and is now in the public domain. It can therefore also be watched online at <http://vimeo.com/20908725> or purchased from Thanouser.

## **BUCKINGHAM UNIVERSITY CONFERENCE**

**The University of Buckingham** duly held its more major conference on **20-21 June** with the title **Collins and Dickens – Dickens and Collins**. As part of the events to commemorate Collins's bicentenary, the meeting was being supported by both the Wilkie Collins Society and the Dickens Fellowship. The event was organised by Peter Orford, Senior Lecturer in the Department of English. Details of the several speakers and panels spanning the two days can still be found at <https://www.collins-and-dickens.com/>.

As part of the conference, Buckingham staged a reading of the Collins and Dickens jointly written but rarely performed play *No Thoroughfare*. Written in 1867 as an adaptation of their Christmas Number of the same name, *No Thoroughfare* tells the sensational tale of Walter Wilding, a foundling child searching for the truth about his past, and his friend George Vendale's pursuit of the beautiful Marguerite overshadowed by her villainous guardian Herr Obenreizer.

Of particular note were first Paul Lewis's 'Wilkie Collins and Charles Dickens – A Financial Relationship' and secondly the idea which emerged from Esther Reilly's paper 'What becomes of Old Giants' that the simple Mrs Wragge in *No Name* (1862) was intended as a parody of Mrs Beeton and her recently published *Book of Household Management* (1861).

Peter Orford intends publishing in due course most if not all of the papers presented at Buckingham in book form.

## **KENSAL GREEN WALK**

In January, to mark the anniversary of Wilkie's birth, the Friends of Kensal Green Cemetery (FOKGC) organised the very successful guided walk to cover Wilkie's resting place as well as numerous other Victorian writers. The cemetery's experts who conducted the walk have possibly agreed to run it a second time – but only if they feel there is enough support. Anyone who missed the first walk and is interested should email Andrew Gasson who will co-ordinate the responses.

## **COLLINS AT THE BBC**

One disappointment of this bicentenary year is the paucity of broadcasts by the BBC – and for that matter independent television. The BBC did air Matthew Sweet’s ‘The Wilkie Collins Guide to Modern Life’ in December 2023, *The Woman in White* and a feature in ‘Bookclub’ in January this year and an adaptation of *No Thoroughfare* in March - but nothing since despite the huge range of material which they have in their archives. There’s still time for them to get their proverbial act together but the entire range of material both held in the archives and that lost to posterity is carefully itemised in the accompanying compilation by Paul Lewis.

## **A WILKIE COLLINS STAMP**

Perhaps it was unrealistic to hope that during Wilkie’s bicentenary year he might appear on Royal Mail postage stamps. After all, the philatelic powers that be have decided that rather less worthy but fictional subjects are Robin Hood, Blackadder, Paddington Bear and Harry Potter: or if you want real people, Shirley Bassey, Paul McCartney or even Queen Victoria for her bicentenary.

So, courtesy of London’s very interesting Postal Museum, we decided to create our own!



## **MURDER BY BOOK**

Apparently unaware of the Collins Bicentenary but giving him a brief mention, Cambridge University Library are holding an exhibition 'Murder by Book; a Celebration of 20<sup>th</sup> Century British Crime Fiction. This has been running from 23 March and continues until 24 August. One of the highlights is Collins's own writing desk which he took with him when he went abroad and on his trip to America in 1873. At his death it passed into the keeping of Harriet Bartley, Collins's amanuensis and daughter of Caroline Graves. The contents of the box include Wilkie's last diary with some of the final entries in the hand of Harriet Graves.

Entry is free but booking is essential. Quoting from the library's blurb:

Crime fiction is the UK's most read, bought and borrowed genre. Cambridge University Library draws on its world-leading collections of British crime fiction to stage a murderously good exhibition! Bringing together literature, culture and heritage, Murder by the Book illuminates and celebrates the stories of the UK's most popular fiction writing. Curated by award-winning crime novelist Nicola Upson, the Library's exhibition challenges traditional distinctions between literary fiction and genre fiction. Murder by the Book examines crime's place in our literary history and the library's own Special Collections.

Agatha Christie's typewriter, Dictaphone and the typescript of her final Poirot novel – so top secret it was kept in a bank vault for three decades are star exhibits. The exhibition also showcases rare books and audio-visual recordings looking at the genre from its origins in the works of Wilkie Collins and Charles Dickens to contemporary best-sellers Val McDermid and Ian Rankin.

With first editions of *The Moonstone* and *Bleak House*, as well as Sherlock Holmes' debut appearance, the exhibition explores the library's remarkable collections and stylish dust jackets that represent more than a century of British book design.

More at [bbc.co.uk/news/uk-england-cambridgeshire-68639001](http://bbc.co.uk/news/uk-england-cambridgeshire-68639001) and book at [www.lib.cam.ac.uk/murderbythebook](http://www.lib.cam.ac.uk/murderbythebook).

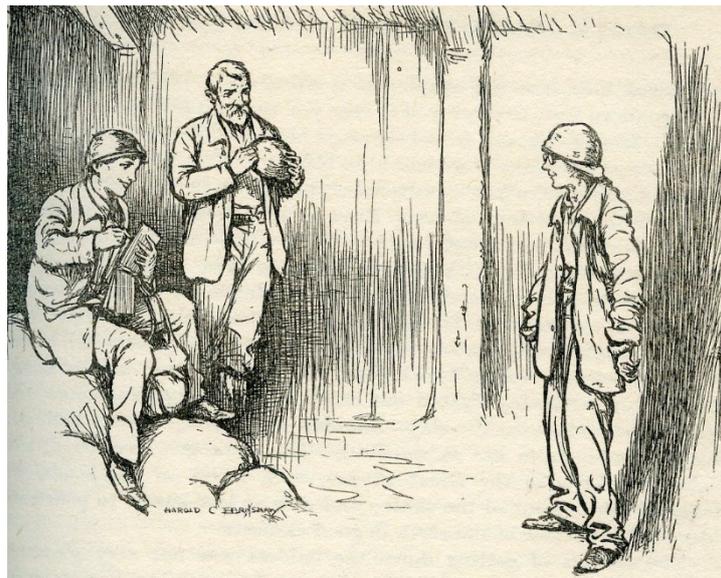
## **RAMBLES AROUND MARYLEBONE**

As mentioned in the Spring Newsletter, on the afternoon of 16 June the WCS ran its walk around the Marylebone area of central London in which Wilkie lived for most of his life. This was based on William Clarke's original 'Rambles around

Marylebone' from 1994, updated by Paul Lewis and Andrew Gasson. About a dozen or so members attended the walk which covered about four and a half miles and took in virtually all of the Wilkie connected places in Marylebone; with stops for explanations it lasted approximately three hours.

The walk is being repeated for the Dracula Society on 18 August, this time in the morning. It will be shortened to last about two hours and cover about three and a half miles. WCS members who were unable to attend the June walk are invited to come along in August. The joining instructions are similar, to meet at the Windsor Castle Pub, 98 Park Road, NW1 4SH at 10.45 for an 11 o'clock start. The nearest underground is Baker Street. The pub is currently closed for refurbishment but has a convenient forecourt. No need for a formal booking, but please let Andrew Gasson know by email if you intend to turn up.

## **BOTALLACK MINE**



Staying with Rambles, BBC2 on 9 May 2024 broadcast a documentary on Botallack Mine. This featured as Chapter IX in Wilkie's own 1851 *Rambles Beyond Railways*. The documentary showed the area in detail with the old mining houses and stacks and went as far underground as is currently safe. It also mentioned the production of arsenic which was a favourite of poisoners at the time and, of course, featured in the later novel *The Law and the Lady*. Wilkie, and his artist companion Henry Brandling, were determined to experience the whole adventure including the tunnels under the sea which were then in constant use. They were equipped with miners' over-suits to keep them dry. Wilkie being

five feet six had clothes which belonged to a six feet two miner with a shirt which fell down to his toes and required the cuffs of his jacket to be turned up to his elbows. He described how a round hat was jammed over his eyes and added that he was “so near-sighted as to be obliged to wear spectacles...nobody, I think, will be astonished to hear that my companion seized his sketch-book, and caricatured me on the spot.” The attached illustration by cartoonist Harold Earnshaw (1886-1937) is taken from an abridged excerpt entitled ‘Down a Cornish Copper Mine’ published in *The Green Book for Boys* [1910] and in *By Land and Sea* [1916], both edited by Herbert Strang.

### **DIONYSUS THEATRE’S *THE WOMAN IN WHITE***

A dramatic production of *The Woman in White* will tour southern England in July and August. WCS members can get a 15% discount on the evening ticket prices by using the code ‘WILKIE24’. The play will run for two or three nights at four venues – Salisbury, Wembley, and Hurstpierpoint and Southwick in Sussex. A special October performance has also been arranged for Broadstairs – where of course Wilkie wrote the opening chapter of the story in August 1859.

The adaptation by the Dionysus Theatre’s Artistic Director, Robert Tremayne – who plays Fosco – is directed by Vicki Newman and described as ‘a tempestuous tale of love, betrayal and greed’. Details at [www.dionysus-theatre.co.uk](http://www.dionysus-theatre.co.uk).

### **WCS WEBSITE**

A reminder that The Wilkie Collins Society website [wilkiecollinssociety.org](http://wilkiecollinssociety.org) has now been revamped for Wilkie’s 200<sup>th</sup> birthday year. Everything the Society has published since it began in 1981 is now available on the website, free to read or download. There is news, information, research, and scholarship as well as many of Wilkie’s lesser-known works which were republished for the first time. You will also find all issues of the *Wilkie Collins Journal*, the annual updates to the Collected Letters and a performance of the overture to *The Frozen Deep*. No password is needed.

New printed publications will continue to be posted to members together with electronic news updates to those on our email list. New publications will be placed on the website after an exclusivity period for members. In this way we are making available to researchers and fans some 40 years of scholarship by the

Society's members and other contributors. Paper copies of some older publications are still available to purchase.

### ***THE WOMAN IN WHITE ON NETFLIX***

The BBC's 2018 production of *The Woman in White* has become a surprise Netflix hit since appearing in its lists in July. Its popularity is helped by Ben Hardy, a former star of the BBC soap *Eastenders* (he played Peter Beale) in the lead role of Walter Hartright. Oscar nominee Jessie Buckley is Marian Halcombe (it is thought Wilkie named his first daughter after her with the unusual spelling Marian) and Olivia Vinall plays Laura. Charles Dance makes a creepy Frederick Fairlie (a character Wilkie Collins is said to have based on either (or both) the writer Leigh Hunt or Dickens's eccentric friend Chauncy Hare Townshend) and Dougray Scott (*Mission Impossible 2*) is the evil Sir Percival Glyde. If you subscribe to Netflix, you can watch it free. It is also available on DVD.

With this newsletter is Paul Lewis's guide to every appearance of Wilkie Collins on BBC radio and television since 1926.

### **WILKIE CARTOON**

A cartoon of Wilkie Collins – looking more like Gandalf than anyone – has emerged from an 1885 publication. Drawn by the Victorian illustrator Phil May for the Winter issue of the periodical *Society*, Wilkie is in the centre of some fifty line drawings of Victorian writers, politicians, and other well-known figures.



Phil May (1864-1903) was a prolific illustrator and caricaturist though he struggled to make a living. This cartoon was published in November 1885 just before he left for a better paid job in Australia. But after three years he returned to London and continued to draw for numerous periodicals including *Punch*, *The Graphic*, and the *Illustrated London News*.

He struggled with alcoholism and “lived a raffish bohemian life, squandered his money, and died of cirrhosis of the liver and tuberculosis at the age of thirty-nine.” (Simon Houfe, *Dictionary of British Book Illustrators*, Antique Collectors Club 1978, p. 386).

### **MOONSTONE ANNOTATED**

In 2022 we reported the sale of an annotated copy of the 1877 privately printed edition of Wilkie’s dramatisation of *The Moonstone* by Sotheby’s in New York – <https://wilkiecollinssociety.org/wp/wp-content/uploads/2024/02/2022-Winter-Newsletter.pdf>. The extensive changes and rewrites amended 60 of the 88 printed leaves and turned the three-act play into four. The hammer went down at \$40,000 and with buyer’s premium it would have cost the UK buyer around £42,000. The book is now on sale by the London book and manuscript dealer Peter Harrington for – wait for it – £100,000 <https://www.peterharrington.co.uk/the-moonstone-a-dramatic-story-in-three-acts-161307.html>. If any WCS member buys it, please let me know!

A plain unannotated copy of the same 1877 edition in a fine red clamshell case is on sale for £18,500 at Rooke Books [www.rookebooks.com/1877-the-moonstone-a-dramatic-story-in-three-acts](http://www.rookebooks.com/1877-the-moonstone-a-dramatic-story-in-three-acts). This is still a very rare item but the price is much higher than for other copies sold in the last few years.

### **MALAYSIAN *MOONSTONE***

A Malaysian edition of *The Moonstone* has been tracked down by the ever-vigilant WCS member Pierre Tissot van Patot in the Singapore National Library. It was published by Macmillan in Kuala Lumpur and is based on an easy-to-read edition of the book published in London which was adapted and abridged by E. F. Dodd for people whose first language was not English. The editions share the same simple illustrations.

## **THE LOCKED ROOM *MOONSTONE***

The reviewgeek.com website featured ten classic locked-room mysteries in January with *The Moonstone* at no.4, after a Conan Doyle story and before one by John Dickson Carr. Both authors were known fans of Wilkie and Carr even featured him in his novel *The Hungry Goblin* (1972).

## **A THESIS ON WILLIAM COLLINS**

WCS member Alan Bean is a specialist in the art of Wilkie's father, William Collins RA. Alan has been awarded a PhD by the University of Birmingham for his thesis '*Natural piety' and sentiment: children, landscape and religion in the paintings of William Collins, R.A. (1787-1847)*'. It can be downloaded here [etheses.bham.ac.uk/id/eprint/14655/](http://etheses.bham.ac.uk/id/eprint/14655/)

Members with information about William Collins or the location of missing paintings can contact Alan at [sandjfineart@gmail.com](mailto:sandjfineart@gmail.com).

## **A THESIS ON *BASIL***

WCS member Guy Philipps has been awarded a DPhil by Oxford University for a detailed study of *Basil* placing the story in its contemporary aesthetic context of pre-Raphaelite art and portraiture and of prose fiction. Guy says he also examines "the manuscript of the novel in detail for the first time" and discusses "what underlies Wilkie's...statement in the preface that he had 'founded the main event out of which this story springs, on a fact in real life' – a statement that is startling when one considers what that 'main event' actually is." The illustrated 272 page thesis *The deeper reach of pen: portraiture and fiction in Wilkie Collins's Basil* is available at [www.ora.ox.ac.uk](http://www.ora.ox.ac.uk) search 'wilkie collins Basil'.

## **DINNER WITH LEAR**

More moments of Wilkie's life have emerged from a diary kept by his friend, the artist and nonsense verse writer Edward Lear (1812-1888). They probably met in Italy when Wilkie was 14 and Lear twelve years his senior. And we know they corresponded as late as 25 May 1887 when Lear sent Wilkie a photograph. Lear

died in January 1888. He kept a diary for his last thirty years and it records being at dinner parties with Wilkie on two occasions.

(1) Thursday 23 August 1860.

At 5.30 to Egg's – 6.30 dinner

Mrs Egg, Holman Hunt – Wilkie Collins & Pigott

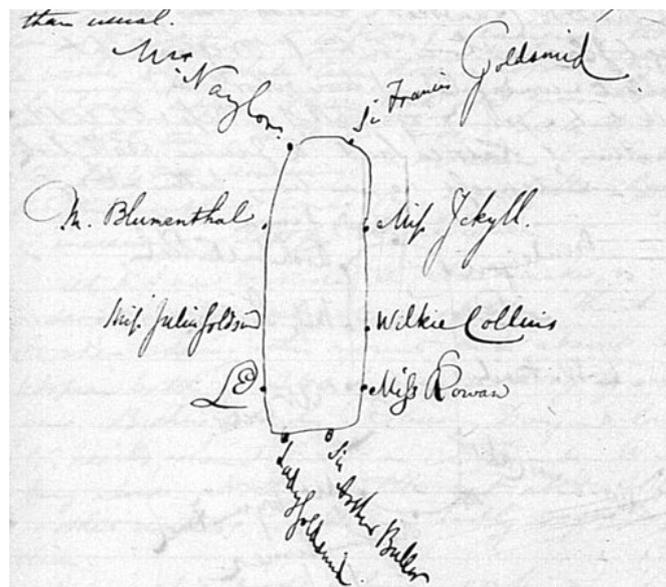
Dinner & wines very good

We staid till 11.15 Then WC and I set off to walk but Daddy [Holman Hunt] did so too & talked & on – & was "wilful = obstinate". So I got in a cab, & came home

On the Tuesday Wilkie had returned from Yorkshire, on Wednesday he collected his first payment of £500 for *The Woman in White* and opened his own bank account with it at Coutts. The day after this dinner party he went to Shanklin to visit his friends the Lehmanns but when he wrote to his mother with all this information he did not mention the dinner party on the Thursday (letter to Harriet Collins 22 August 1860).

(2) Wednesday 13 July 1864.

7.15 Then to St John's Wood Lodge where was a larger party than usual Mrs Naylor, Sir Francis Goldsmid, Miss Jekyll, Wilkie Collins, Miss Rowan, Sir Arthur Bullen, Lady Goldsmid, LE [him], Miss Julia Goldsmid, Mr Blumenthal....Wilkie Collins is very greatly aged. Cab home - near 12.



The diagram shows where Wilkie sat – always arranged male female at such events – but the dinner at the Goldsmid house is not recorded in Wilkie’s letters. Nor is this meeting with Lear in the street on Sunday 15 August 1869.

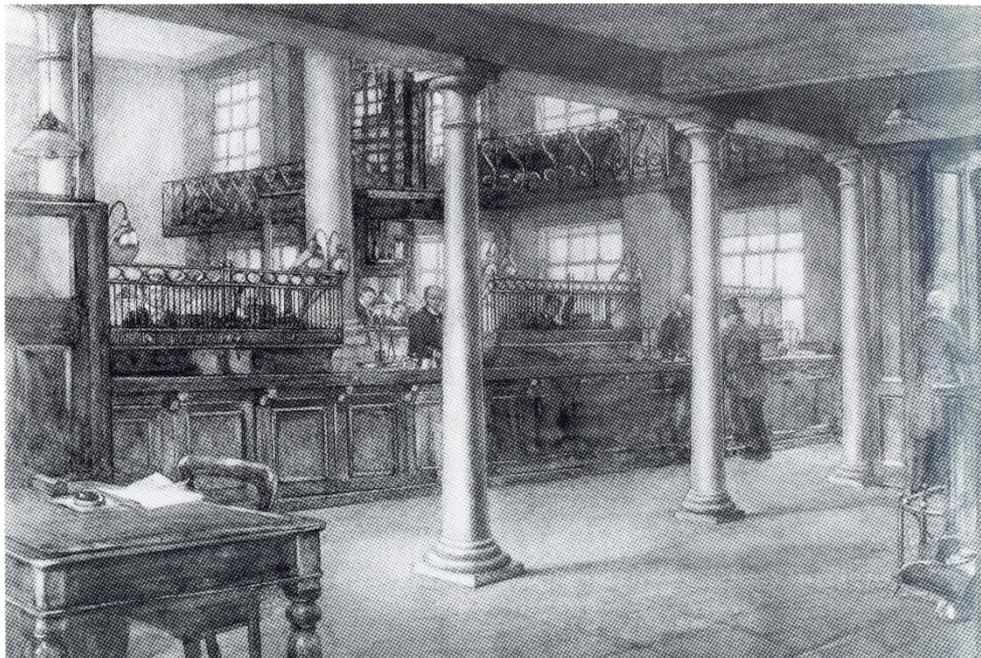
I walked home, meeting with Wilkie Collins by the way & having a rather long talk. That boy is quite unspoiled.

Lear’s diaries also record many letters from Wilkie to him none of which has survived and from Lear to Wilkie of which perhaps only three survive. The editors of Wilkie’s *Collected Letters* are currently considering how to present them. The diaries can be read online at [https://hollisarchives.lib.harvard.edu/search ‘Edward Lear’](https://hollisarchives.lib.harvard.edu/search/Edward%20Lear).

These dates from Lear’s diaries join the two letters recently discovered from the correspondence of Thomas Carlyle who records Wilkie’s being present at the birthday parties of Dickens’s friend and biographer John Forster on 2 April 1861 and 1866. See <https://carlyleletters.dukeupress.edu>. Again, neither event is mentioned in Wilkie’s known letters.

## **COUTTS BANK**

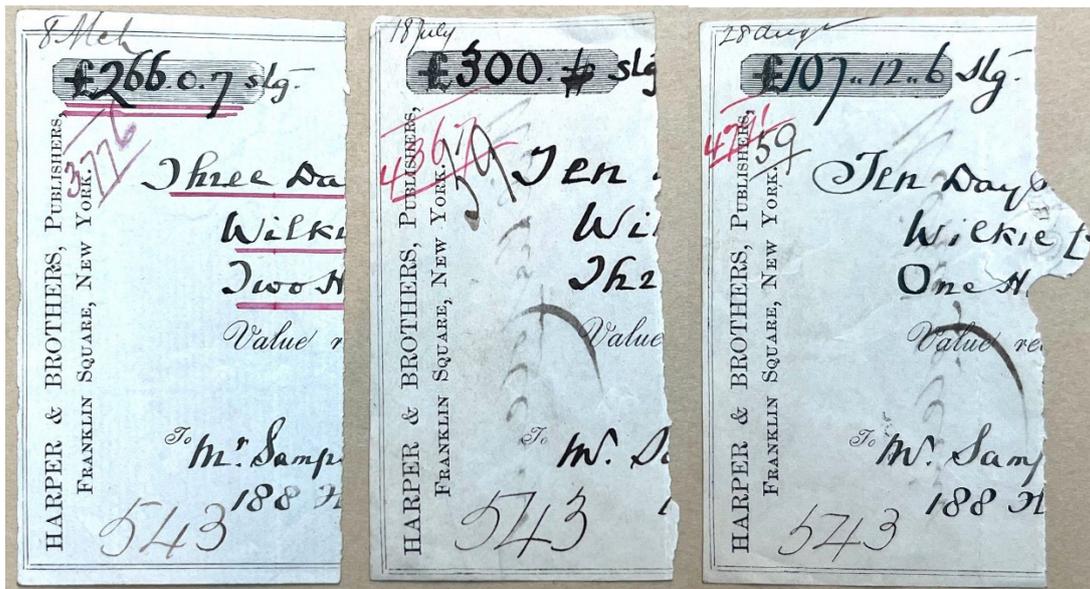
Wilkie opened his bank account at Coutts on 23 August 1860 with £300 of his first payment for the three-volume edition of *The Woman in White*. Coutts was in The Strand then as now but at a different location. Its address was 59 Strand where it stayed until 1904 after which it moved to its present site at 440 Strand, just a few doors from the office of Edmond Antrobus, the tea merchant at no. 446, where Wilkie worked for four hard years from 1841 to 1845. The illustrations show the building and the banking hall which would have been very familiar to Collins: he called there often as did Caroline Graves to cash cheques for housekeeping expenses.



Coutts Bank at 59 The Strand, London in 1885 and the banking hall, c. 1900  
Both from Edna Healey, *Coutts & Co 1692-1992 – The Portrait of a Private Bank*, p. 296d

### **CHECK (CHEQUE) STUBS OR PAYMENT ORDERS**

A brief and hitherto unresearched entry in the massive Parrish Collection at Princeton University refers to three ‘check stubs’. Princeton librarian Brianna Cregle kindly found these items and sent us images of them.



Payable orders – Harper & Brothers to Wilkie Collins.  
 Parrish Collection, Princeton Library (AM18939 Box 15, folder 11)

In fact, they are not check (or cheque) stubs but torn payment orders – or Bills – from Harper & Brothers for Wilkie, paid via its agent the publisher Sampson Low, 188 Fleet Street, for stories which Harper published. Collins’s bank account at Coutts shows all three paid in on the dates indicated. They can be identified as

- 8 March 1875 – £266-0s-7d comprising a second payment for *The Law and the Lady* probably of £200, and royalties for earlier publications. Payable at three days.
- 18 July 1876 – a first payment of £300 for *The Two Destinies*, payable at ten days.
- 28 August 1877 – £107-12s-6d comprising a payment for the story *Percy and the Prophet* probably of £50, and royalties on earlier publications, payable at ten days.

To get a rough idea of current values multiply by 100. All three are countersigned on the reverse by Wilkie.

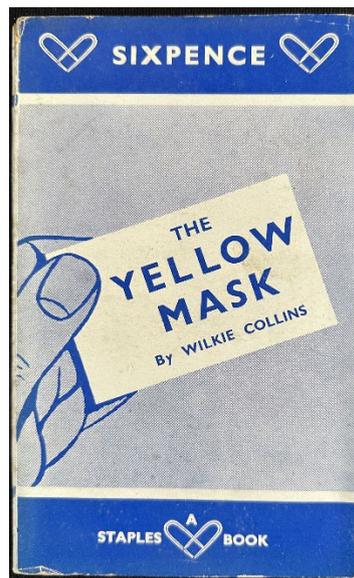
Why these three orders survived from the dozens that Wilkie must have received is a mystery and the curators of the Parrish Collection do not know where they came from. But they are fascinating examples of Victorian financial ephemera.

## RAMSGATE

The illustrated talk to the Ramsgate Society ‘A Tale of Two Towns: The Seaside Life of Wilkie Collins’ by Paul Lewis can still be downloaded from the Ramsgate Society website <https://bit.ly/Paul-Lewis-Two-Towns>.

## THE YELLOW MASK

The first English stand-alone edition of Wilkie’s short story has come to light. *The Yellow Mask* was first published in Dickens’s periodical *Household Words* in four parts in July 1855. A year later Wilkie republished it as one of the stories in *After Dark*. The story was immensely popular in the US where pirate editions proliferated. But it never appeared in Wilkie’s lifetime in a standalone edition in the UK. That had to wait until World War II when a medical publisher called John Bales & Staples branched out into paperback stories, presumably to capture the wartime market for reading material. The sixpenny edition in a blue banded cover ran to three printings between January and March 1941.



## MORE LETTERS

New examples of letters written by Wilkie Collins generally appear at auction or with dealers. But recently a few have been identified which had remained undiscovered in libraries and collections. The latest two are in the archives at Chatsworth, the seat of the Duke of Devonshire. Both relate to the gift to Wilkie in 1852 of a large, newly published lithograph portrait of the sixth Duke, William

Cavendish. Wilkie wrote to the Duke thanking him although only a summary of this letter survives. However, the full manuscript of a chatty letter thanking the Duke's musical director Charles Coote, who actually sent it and whom Wilkie knew well, is in the Chatsworth archive which kindly supplied copies. They will be published with more than 25 new discoveries around the turn of the year.

## **LARGE PRINT EDITIONS**

Recently available on ebay were large print editions of several Collins titles including *The Evil Genius*, 'My Lady's Money', *I Say No* and *Little Novels*. These are issued in English by the German publishing house Megali Verlag which specialises in reproducing historical works in large print to make reading easier for people with impaired vision. Several other titles are also available and much more cheaply from Amazon in either hard or soft covers.

## ***THE WOMAN IN WHITE IN ITALY***

Andrea Mosti writes from Italy that her small troupe of players has decided to stage the 1871 dramatic adaptation of *The Woman in White* at some time next year. More details as and when we have them.

## ***DROOD REVIVED?***

The distastefully weird pastiche *Drood* by Dan Simmons (see reviews 'speculative, unpleasant, overlong...rather horrid novel' mentioned in the Summer 2009 Newsletter on the Society's website) might be made into a TV series. The story has Charles Dickens and Wilkie Collins as characters hunting for a mysterious ghostly figure through Victorian London's criminal hinterland. The website [deadline.com](http://deadline.com) revealed in March that Euro Gang Entertainment had done a deal with German writer-director Marco Kreuzpainter to produce and direct the series. Nothing has been heard of the idea since that original revelation. With a bit of luck, perhaps it will go the way of the proposed film in 2008 directed by Guillermo Del Toro which never saw a frame recorded.

Andrew Gasson

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# *THE WILKIE COLLINS SOCIETY*

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## **NEWSLETTER**

## **WINTER 2024**

### **BICENTENARY YEAR**

As Wilkie's bicentenary year draws to a close, we hope members have enjoyed the various exhibitions, meetings and walks detailed in the Spring and Summer Newsletters. His public profile has certainly been raised with various articles in the general press and even the occasional radio broadcast. We think there is one more talk this year at a meeting of the Aberdeen Dickens Fellowship. It should take place on 11 December at 7.30pm and will be an online talk over Zoom. Anyone can register to listen and ask questions. More details by email when we have them.

To conclude our own WCS 'celebrations' we have arranged two publications for members. The first is a printed version of the three talks given during the Whitby Conference in June, on Wilkie's connection with ghost stories, film and television adaptations, and detective fiction.

The second publication is a printed version for this important year of the *Wilkie Collins Journal*. We are delighted that Professor Graham Law of Waseda University has resumed the role of editor. He has been working very hard with his impressive list of editorial advisors to create this special, extended edition. It returns more closely to Collins's works and contains several important essays and book reviews. The content will also appear online in due course.

Finally, we felt the bicentenary was an appropriate time to make *The Collected Letters of Wilkie Collins* freely available. They have now been placed without restriction or password on the website. See p.3 for further details.

### **'VOLPURNO' - ITS ORIGIN FOUND AT LAST**

The original London publication of Volpurno, Wilkie's earliest known story issued under his own name, has after much research by Paul Lewis been found.

VOLPURNO; OR, THE STUDENT.  
 BY W. WILKIE COLLINS.  
 "—— Memory, like a drop that, night and day,  
 Falls cold and ceaseless, wore *her* heart away."  
 LALLA ROOKH.  
 PERFECTLY overcome by the heat of an Italian evening at Venice, I quitted the bustling gaiety of St. Mark's Place for the quiet of a gondola, and directing the man to shape his course for the island of Lido, (a narrow strip of land dividing the "lagunes," or shallows beyond the city, from the open sea,) I seated myself on the prow of the vessel, with a firm determination to make the most of the flimsy wafts of air that every now and then ruffled the surface of the still, dark waters.

'VOLPURNO; OR, THE STUDENT. BY W. WILKIE COLLINS.' As it first appeared on pp. 338-339 of *The Court Journal* in the issue of 27 May 1843.

It is fifteen years since the story was first identified by Daniel Hack of the University of Michigan in a New York weekly *The Albion, or British, Colonial, and Foreign Weekly* dated 8 July 1843. That put it nearly a month earlier than the story which had held the title of Wilkie's first for many years. 'The Last Stage Coachman' was published in Douglas Jerrold's *Illuminated Magazine* dated August 1843.

It was clear that 'Volpurno' had previously been published in London but there was no hint in *The Albion* of where. No amount of searching on the growing number of digitised periodicals found any reference to it.

Then as we reported in the Spring 2024 Newsletter earlier this year the story was found in a local English newspaper *The Monmouthshire Beacon* dated 3 June 1843, five weeks before *The Albion*. It had been digitised by the britishnewspaperarchive.co.uk But even then the copy was faint and patchy and 'Volpurno' produced no results. However, a striking phrase from within the story 'the maniac bridegroom' turned it up on the front page filling the first column. And at the end of the story were the tantalising words – *Court Journal*.

*The Court Journal and Gazette of the Fashionable World, Politics, Literature, & the Fine Arts* was a London weekly with a circulation in the hundreds. A global search was mounted for the 1843 volume. But because of its scarcity only a very few issues are found in libraries and even fewer have been digitised. No copies of the 1843 issues were found even in hard copy anywhere in the world – except in one place.

The British Library to its credit has the only complete run of *The Court Journal* from 1828 to 1925 stored in its Boston Spa buildings in Yorkshire. But for several frustrating months that store remained closed as a casualty of the cyber-attack on the Library in October 2023. Then on 3 September the news came that the building was again functioning, and the periodical could be ordered and delivered to the St Pancras site in London.

The 1843 edition was searched and on the last possible Saturday before 3 June there it was. Wilkie's first known named publication in the issue dated 27 May 1843, confirming it as his earliest work by nine weeks. No other Wilkie contributions were found from 1841 to 1845.

The *Court Journal* also revealed that it was printed in Charlotte Street and the editorial office was at 19 Catherine Street, Strand – barely half a mile from the office of the tea merchant, Edmond Antrobus where Wilkie worked at that time. This must have been a walk he clearly took when he touted his story to the various publishers in and around the Strand.

The text has now been collated with that in the *Albion*. The New York printer had Americanised punctuation and spelling and the odd word was either omitted or added. The Society will publish the original text of Wilkie's first story exactly as he wrote it, next year.

The 2009 Society publication of 'Volpurno' is free to download on the Wilkie Collins Society website.

#### **'WHO KILLED ZEBEDEE?' – AN EARLIER DATE**

An earlier publication of 'Who Killed Zebedee?' has also been identified through the growing database in [britishnewspaperarchive.co.uk](http://britishnewspaperarchive.co.uk). The first publication was thought to be in the Christmas number of the New York periodical *The Spirit of The Times* dated 25 December 1880 for which Wilkie wrote it. But in fact it first appeared in the *Liverpool Echo* dated 24 and 28 December, so Part 1, at least, predated the New York publication – though it could be that *Spirit of the Times* was actually on newsstands first despite the Christmas day date. The story was also heavily trailed in the *Echo* from 17 December "Christmas Story by Wilkie Collins. An original Christmas story entitled "Who Killed Zebedee" will appear in the "Liverpool Echo" of Friday and Tuesday 24th and 28th instant."

#### **THE COLLECTED LETTERS OF WILKIE COLLINS**

For the first time *The Collected Letters of Wilkie Collins* are published in full online and can be read or downloaded free on our website [www.wilkiecollins.org](http://www.wilkiecollins.org).

The pdf is fully searchable and has bookmarks to help readers find their way around. It contains all the letters written by Wilkie Collins which have been identified by the editors up to December 2023. There are 3398 letters by him in one chronological sequence plus 13 written by his family or others around the time of his death. All are fully footnoted and cross-referenced.

It includes 424 newly identified letters and 146 which have been substantially amended since the four-volume print version of *The Public Face of Wilkie Collins* by the same editors was published in 2005. In addition, all the letters which were in summary form in those volumes are given in full.

So now you can read exactly what Wilkie wrote to his friends, relatives, business acquaintances, and strangers – the closest we can ever get to hearing him speak. This free bicentennial online publication has gone down well among Victorian specialists in the academic world, and we hope it will encourage more people to study Wilkie's life and work.

The website also now has the Spring and Summer Newsletters online and this year's earlier publications – the second edition of *Victims of Circumstances* and the analysis of *Wilkie at the BBC* – all free to read or download – after an interval of just a few months since you saw them first on paper!

### **A NEW PICTURE**

A new picture of Collins has emerged from the 1970s. Drawn by the artist Cecil Longley Doughty (1913-1985), it shows Wilkie with Charles Dickens. The picture illustrated Doughty's own two-page biography of Wilkie, "The 'First' Detective Story Writer". This appeared in an educational magazine called *Look and Learn* dated 16 September 1972. It concentrated mainly on *The Moonstone* and has the splendid headline

"Despite an agonising illness, William Wilkie Collins managed to dictate a novel which was to become one of the most famous mystery stories of the Victorian era....to a succession of secretaries who could not stand his cries of pain."



Wilkie Collins and his great friend Charles Dickens

### **AN ADDENDUM TO 'WILKIE AT THE BBC'**

Inevitably there is an addition to this analysis as another radio programme about Wilkie has been identified. On 27 September 1996 at 2pm, WCS member and

internationally known concert 'cellist Steven Isserlis read a five-minute extract from his favourite Wilkie Collins book on Radio 3. This was part of the series 'Preoccupations' after which he played a short piece by Liszt, La Lugubre Gondola, with pianist Stephen Hough.

## ITALIAN PUBLICATION

At the height of Mussolini's fascist regime before World War II, an Italian periodical *Illustrazione del Popolo* (People's Illustrated) published a Wilkie Collins short story. 'Un Dramma sull'Oceano' was a translation of 'Blow up with the Brig!' first published as 'The Ghost in the Cupboard Room' in the Christmas number of *All The Year Round* dated 13 December 1859 and then republished under a new title in *Miss or Mrs. and Other Stories in Outline* in 1873. The periodical was dated 27 June 1937 and has a lurid cover of an incident from the Battle of Bilbao in Spain a couple of weeks earlier. The story is about an English sailor who is captured by Spaniards and left alone in his ship tied up with barrels of gunpowder waiting for a candle to burn down and light the fuse leading to them. The caption reads 'Now you and the ship will go to hell!'



## HISTORIC MOONSTONE ON AMERICAN RADIO

You can now hear a 1953 radio production of *The Moonstone* on the Internet Archive. It is the second of three Wilkie novels adapted in the Suspense series and squeezes the complicated plot into two 23-minute episodes starring British heart-throb Peter Lawford as Franklin Blake. The show was broadcast live which explains

a slight stumble on the script in part 2. The series ran weekly from 1940 to 1962 and was sponsored by the spark plug firm Autolite. It was preceded by *The Dead Alive* on 9 March 1953 and followed by ‘A Terribly Strange Bed’ on 7 June 1954. You can hear *The Moonstone* at archive.org - search ‘Moonstone Suspense Project.’ ‘A Terribly Strange Bed’ and *After Dark* are also there.

## BLUE PLAQUE

Script Haven, a bookshop in Worcester, put up a blue plaque in July to celebrate a brief visit by Charles Dickens in 1858. Then the building was the Swan Hotel and, says the local [www.worcesternews.co.uk](http://www.worcesternews.co.uk), Dickens wrote a letter from the hotel to – as it puts it – ‘fellow novelist Wilkie Collins’. The Pilgrim *Collected Letters of Charles Dickens* reveals that the letter was datelined ‘Swan Hotel, Worcester | Wednesday Evening | Eleventh August | 1858’. In it Dickens tells Wilkie he has “toned down the capital Unknown Public article...You will not find it essentially changed.” Wilkie’s well-known essay about appealing to all classes of reader was published in *Household Words* on 21 August. Dickens’s stay at the hotel was brief, apparently just on the night of the tenth. On the ninth he was still at Gad’s Hill when he wrote letters to several people. The next day he wrote to a William Giles simply from ‘Worcester’. On the 11<sup>th</sup> as well as the letter to Wilkie he also wrote from the Swan Hotel to Edmund Yates but later the same day wrote to John Lawrence from Wolverhampton. By the 12<sup>th</sup> he was writing from Shrewsbury before travelling to Chester for a reading of *A Christmas Carol* on Friday 13 August: “On Friday we came from Shrewsbury to Chester; saw all right for the evening; and then went to Liverpool. Came back from Liverpool and read at Chester. Left Chester at 11 at night, after the reading, and went to London.” he wrote to Forster on 15 August (Pilgrim VIII, pp. 623-626). The bookshop plans a Dickens Festival in February.

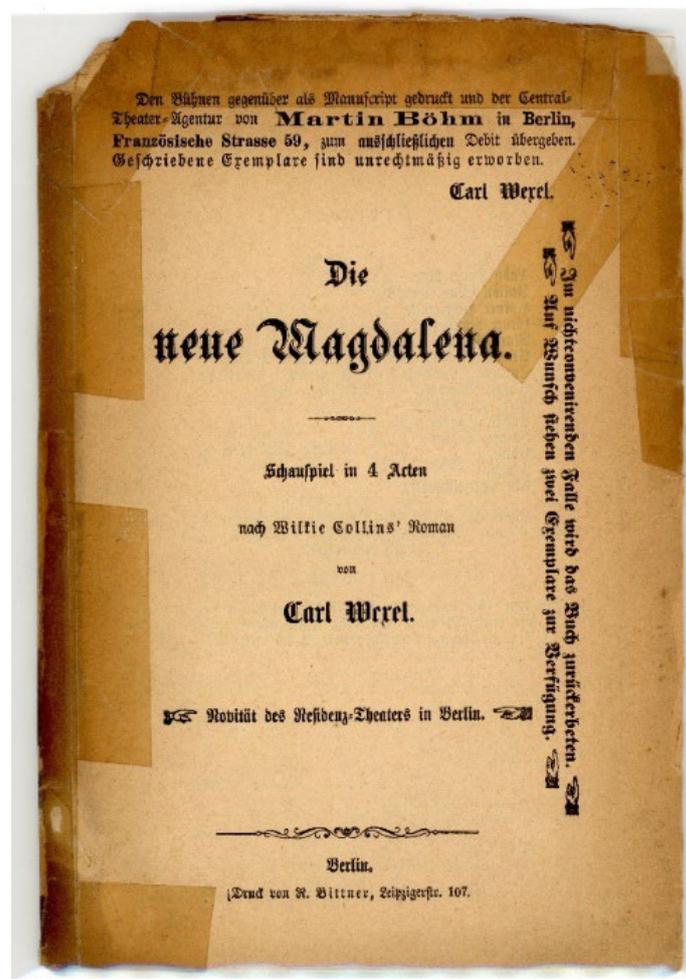
## COLLINS STORIES IN DUTCH

Our long-standing member from the Netherlands Pierre Tissot van Patot continues to research Collins’s stories in the Dutch language. He has recently found two previously unrecorded short stories, ‘Mr. Captain and the Nymph’ (1881) and ‘Mr. Marmaduke and the Minister’ (1880). Both stories were published in Dutch before they were included in the English short story collection, *Little Novels* in 1887.

Pierre writes that altogether he has found a total of 33 different short stories and 26 novels in Dutch translation. These include five additional short stories since the first edition of his remarkably detailed bibliography. He has also discovered a 1964 Malay edition of *the Moonstone* – without any additional details although he does rather modestly add his Malay ‘is not very good’!

## ***THE NEW MAGDALEN PLAY IN GERMAN***

Another recent discovery is a German theatrical version of *The New Magdalen*. It was staged in Berlin as *Die Neue Magdalena* at the Residenz-Theater. It was produced as a play in four acts, translated by Carl Wexel based, of course, on Collins's novel. The heading roughly translated states it was printed for the stage exclusively for the Central Theatre Agency of Martin Böhm in Berlin's Französische Strasse and that any other written copies were acquired illegally. But we would also have to claim that our German is also 'not very good'. The programme is undated but is probably mid-1870s. It was possibly pirated from the English edition of the play in 1873 but could have been taken from a French version in 1887. The theatre was opened in 1869 and renamed the Residenz in 1871. It eventually closed in 1932 and after being badly damaged during the war was demolished about 1944.



## ***THE WOMAN IN WHITE IN ITALY***

Andrea Mosti writes from Italy that her enthusiastic troupe of players are in rehearsal for *The Woman in White*. They are using the facsimile version of *The Woman in White. A Drama in a Prologue and Four Acts, Altered from the Novel for Performance on the Stage. By Wilkie Collins*. This was issued by the British Library in its Historical Print Editions: Poetry and Drama. The photo shows the group

rehearsing the scene where Sir Percival demands Laura to sign the document so that he can appropriate her inheritance of £20,000. Enthusiastic they are indeed as crinolines appear to be the order of the day!



### ***THE WOMAN IN WHITE – THE MUSICAL***

A production of Andrew Lloyd Webber’s musical based (loosely) on *The Woman in White* will be performed by the amateur group Quick Fantastic at The Electric Theatre in Guildford from 22 to 25 January with two matinees. It will have a cast of 15 and an orchestra of 14! Tickets are £30 and can be booked through the website <https://electric.theatre/shows/the-woman-in-white>.

### ***THE WOMAN IN WHITE ON STAGE***

July and August saw a touring production of *The Woman in White* by the Dionysius Theatre Company. It was adapted by Robert Tremayne who also played the part of Fosco. Walter Hartright was played by David Upcraft, Laura by Mollie Simpson and Sir Percival by Kevin Alyward. The play was billed as “A tempestuous tale of love, betrayal and greed, skilfully adapted from Wilkie Collins’ haunting Victorian thriller ... We’ve got a cast of seven and we’re adapting from a book that has 60-plus characters.”

The production was something of the proverbial curate’s egg. It featured a clever, minimalist stage set and in places skilfully used dialogue from the actual novel. On the other hand, Mr Fairlie had transformed into Lady Glyde and the script also borrowed from the Lloyd-Webber musical. The opening and closing scenes were reminiscent of Dickens’s ‘Signalman’ plus the occasional spot of familiar dialogue (“I can get away with murder”). The cast was nothing if not dedicated and enthusiastic but perhaps tried a little too hard.

Andrew Gasson  
Paul Lewis

apogee@apgee.co.uk  
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www.wilkie-collins.info  
www.wilkiecollins.com



# *THE WILKIE COLLINS SOCIETY*

**PATRON** Faith Clarke

**Chairman** Andrew Gasson, 21 Huson Close, London NW3 3JW

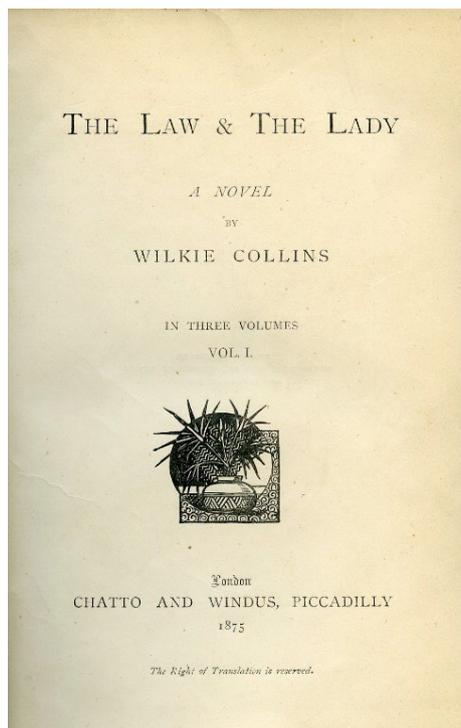
**Membership** Paul Lewis, 4 Ernest Gardens, Chiswick, London W4 3QU

**NEWSLETTER**

**SPRING 2025**

## *THE LAW AND THE LADY*

2025 is the 150<sup>th</sup> anniversary of *The Law and the Lady* one of Collins's better later novels first published in book form by Chatto & Windus during 1875. It had previously been serialised in *The Graphic* 1875 and in the USA in *Harper's Weekly*.



*The Law and the Lady* is essentially a detective story featuring one of Collins's resourceful female characters. It is an early if not the first full-length novel to feature a lady detective. There are also several similarities with the notorious trial of Madeleine Smith in 1857. These include the use of arsenic; its supposed benign use for cosmetic reasons; the use of suicide as a defence to murder; and the ambiguous Scottish Not Proven verdict.

Despite rather indifferent contemporary reviews, Chatto & Windus, who had become Collins's main publishers, issued *The Law and the Lady* in the standard three-volume book form of the time. They continued to publish the novel in all of their cheap one-volume editions in 1875 and well into the twentieth century. *The Law and the Lady* was also translated into several European languages including French, German, Italian and Russian.

### **THE CHARLES DICKENS MUSEUM**

The Charles Dickens Museum at 48 Doughty Street, London also has an anniversary to celebrate. It goes from strength to strength and is currently celebrating its centenary following on from this time last year the highly successful Wilkie Collins and Charles Dickens exhibition to mark Wilkie's bicentenary. The driving force behind this was the Director Dr Cindy Sughrue who has just stepped down after eight highly successful years in the role. The new director is Frankie Kubicki who has herself worked at the museum for several years. There is a full write-up on the museum's website.

### **TAVISTOCK HOUSE THEATRICALS**

A unique collection of watercolours and drawings of Wilkie's plays *The Lighthouse* and *The Frozen Deep* was sold by Bonhams auctioneers. The sketches are by Dickens's neighbour Nathaniel Powell (1813-1873) of the performances by Dickens and his family and friends in what he called 'The Smallest Theatre in the World' at his home Tavistock House in June 1855 and January 1857.

It is not clear whether any of the figures in the drawings depict Wilkie himself. Kathleen Tillotson, one of the editors of the Pilgrim edition of *The Letters of Charles Dickens*, wrote in June 1984 to Powell's granddaughter – Miss Baker

who then owned them – that she thought one image (which looked as Wilkie did later in life when he had a beard) was not him but Frank Stone. That sketch depicted *Mr Nightingale's Diary*, the farce written in 1851 by Dickens and Mark Lemon, which was reprised to be staged after *The Lighthouse*. The Wilkie-like figure is shown here on the right. Mark Lemon is labelled on the left and Dickens correctly in the centre. But Wilkie's name above the righthand figure seems to relate to his authorship of *The Lighthouse* not the drawing itself. That sketch is also wrongly labelled 'Private Theatricals at Tavistock House 1857' when in fact the play was performed there in 1855 and not in 1857.

Writing to Wilkie about the plans to perform the plays Dickens wrote

My Dear Collins

I shall expect you tomorrow evening at Household Words.

I have written a little ballad for Mary—The Story of the Ship's Carpenter and the little boy, in the Shipwreck.

Let us close up with Mr. Nightingale's Diary. Will you look whether you have a book of it—or your part.

All other matters and things hereunto belonging, when we meet.

Ever Faithfully

CD

(to Wilkie Collins, 24 May 1855, *Pilgrim Letters*, Vol. VII, p. 628)

Wilkie played Lithers, the Landlord at the Water Lily public house.



The lot sold for £9600, including premium. It comes with a mass of provenance from Powell's descendants and a dozen or more other sketches of his.

### **WILKIE IN 'LONDON PARTICULAR'**

Wilkie featured in the November issue of 'London Particular,' the Newsletter of the Dickens Fellowship. It quoted from a recent article in the *Times* which in turn referred to the *Pall Mall Gazette* of January 1890. This had quoted Wilkie's comments on Dickens written in a copy of John Forster's *The Life of Charles Dickens*.

On the first page, where Forster proclaims "Charles Dickens, the most popular novelist of the nineteenth century", Collins adds: "after Walter Scott". Scott was one of Collins's 'three kings of fiction', along with Balzac and Fennimore Cooper – see Collins's letter [2182] to Miss R, 12 July 1883.

Wilkie ranked Dickens's works from worst to best. Barnaby Rudge was "the weakest book that D ever wrote". "No intelligent person could read Dombey and Son without astonishment at the badness of it". He considered *The Mystery of Edwin Drood* Dickens's "last laboured effort, the melancholy work of a worn-out brain". *David Copperfield*, regarded by many as Dickens's masterpiece, is simply "incomparably superior to Dombey", while *Oliver Twist* is a "wonderful book" held back by one defect: "the helplessly bad construction of the story". "The character of Nancy is the finest he ever did... That the same man who could create Nancy created the second Mrs Dombey is the most incomprehensible anomaly that I know of in literature." But at the top of the list was *Martin Chuzzlewit*, "in some respects the finest novel he ever wrote".

However, the main point of the mention in 'London Particular' was to make an appeal to readers which we are happy to repeat here. Forster's *Life* was sold at auction in 1890 and its whereabouts have been unknown since then. Now the Charles Dickens Museum is urging anyone with knowledge of its whereabouts to get in touch.

'London Particular' like the WCS Newsletter is always happy to receive any comments or contributions. In their case, you should contact Alison Gowans at [aligowans17@outlook.com](mailto:aligowans17@outlook.com).

## ALTERNATIVE DICKENS

A recent book casts a rather different light on Wilkie's great friend, Charles Dickens. Sometimes, biographies of Dickens veer towards hagiography. But *The Life and Lies of Charles Dickens* by Oxford academic Helena Kelly does exactly the opposite. She accuses him – backed up by 575 detailed footnotes – of making up and hiding things about his past, treating his wife abominably, and plagiarising plots and even parts of many of his best-known works. She also suggests that what he died of at the early age of 58 was something very different from the official diagnosis of a stroke – a condition he had kept secret for much of his adult life. And as the icing on the cake, she puts forward what she calls a 'plausible candidate' for the child which Dickens and Ellen Ternan are supposed by some to have had and for whom scholars have long searched.

Wilkie gets scant mentions – sometimes as the 'young buck' who tempts Dickens into 'bachelor wanderings' in the seedier parts of London and Paris, when the evidence from the letters of both of them is rather the other way round. But later she has a more serious accusation. In one of several sections on plagiarism she writes that a play called *Nobody's Child* by Watts Phillips which opened at the Surrey Theatre on 14 September 1867

“Featured a character falling into a ravine, a marvel of scenic art, according to the advertisements, a woman rescuing her lover with some unexpected abseiling skills, a missing will, and an uncle.” (Helena Kelly, *The Life and Lies of Charles Dickens*, London: 2023, p. 207).

She notes the similarities between that and *No Thoroughfare* especially the end of Act III where Marguerite is lowered on knotted ropes down the ravine, finds her lover Vendale on an icy ledge, and ultimately has him rescued.

Kelly did not seem to know when Dickens and Collins actually wrote *No Thoroughfare* which was around the time that *Nobody's Child* was first performed. Crucially, she did not know who had written which parts and said “the borrowing, if there had been any, might easily have been done by Collins rather than Dickens.” But she is wrong. The evidence is clear that the whole of that mountain rescue scene was written by Dickens. So, Collins – at least – is in the

clear. It is worth noting that Watts Phillip borrowed Wilkie's title for one of his own plays in 1864 called *The Woman in Mauve* – a sensation drama.

## **DICKENS AND THE LETTERS BURNING**

It is well known that Dickens burned all the letters he had received on a great bonfire at his home Gad's Hill on 3 September 1860. But the fact he continued to destroy them is perhaps not so well known. In several letters written in the 1860s letters he explained to friends seeking autographs why he had none. Possibly the last example of that before his death is to Dr James Muspratt on 5 June 1867

I have no autograph of Stansfield's left. I destroy all letters as I receive them, as the only safe way of keeping them out of print (*Pilgrim Letters* Vol. XI, p. 375)

Ironically, the work of publishing the letters which Dickens himself wrote to others continues to gather pace. There are now 14,142 known – a figure that corrects various estimates in the 12-volume Pilgrim edition of *The Letters of Charles Dickens* (OUP: 1965-2002). Another cache of perhaps 100 are in the queue to be published at dickensletters.com. Any member who would like a spreadsheet listing all the known letters and where they are published can get one from WCS secretary Paul Lewis – who has recently prepared it. Email paul@paullewis.co.uk.

## **THE LIGHTHOUSE - A NEWLY DISCOVERED EDITION IN FRENCH**

Dutch member, Pierre Tissot van Patot has once again discovered a new addition to Collins's overseas publications, this time for *The Lighthouse* first staged in England on 16, 18 and 19 June 1855 at Tavistock House with Charles Dickens and Wilkie Collins in leading roles.

*The Lighthouse* was never published in England until the edition by the WCS in 2013 with an introduction by Andrew Gasson and Caroline Radcliffe. It was however translated into French by Collins's friend Emil Forgues (1813-1883) who had been given a copy of the manuscript. It was first published as *Le Phare* in July 1856 in the Paris journal *l'Ami de la Maison*. It was subsequently included

with a specially written introduction by Collins in 1864 in *Une Poignée de Romans*, the French version of his collection of short stories *The Queen of Hearts*. This French edition was then used for a Dutch translation of the play as *De Vuutoren* in 1874 in *De Kerels*, a literary magazine published in Brussels.



Issue No 13 for 28 May 1904

Le Phare, No. 12, 21 May 1904

This newly discovered version, using the original translation, is therefore the third publication in French. It was issued in May and June 1904 in Volume 4 of *Les Lectures de la Semaine*, an obscure illustrated Paris periodical issued between 1901 and 1905.

*Le Phare* was announced in issue No. 11 for 14 May 1904 and published in five instalments: No. 12, 21 May 1904 pp. 284-287; No. 13, 28 May 1904 pp. 309-311; No. 14, 4 June 1904 pp.331-333; No.15, 11 June 1904 pp. 353-359; and No. 16, 18 June 1904 (this issue unavailable). The magazine can be seen at the French National Library located in Paris at the Arsenal Library in the Bastille district.

Only issues for 1905 are available online. Collins's introduction is missing from those issues examined but might have been included in Part 5. The interesting

illustrations are by Nelson-Diaz, a contemporary artist who regularly contributed to the magazine. Although the text was published three times in Paris, no performances in France have been found.

### **A FRENCH NEW MAGDALEN**

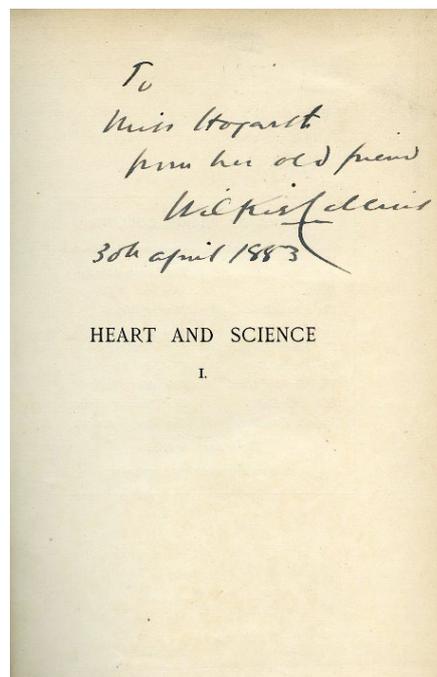
A free streaming service [tubi.com](https://tubi.com) has a French film from 2021 called 'Secret Name' adapted from *The New Magdalen*. The blurb says

A job as a Red Cross nurse in 1914 France becomes Nelie's ticket out of poverty, but her chance at wealth comes by stealing a dead woman's identity.

The credits confirm that the film is "librement adapté de Wilkie Collins The New Magdalen." The film is performed in French with English subtitles. Thanks to Leslie Katz for this information.

### **PRESENTATION OR INSCRIBED COLLINS BOOKS**

Until now the editors of the Wilkie Collins Letters have included as letters the presentation inscriptions on personal copies of his books that he gave to his friends and relatives. A good example is this one to Georgina Hogarth currently listed as letter [3369].



More and more of these have come to light and we now think they should be in a separate Appendix as presentation copies rather than letters. At the moment we

have around 40, a few of which are already in the Collected Letters – but are soon to be reassigned

So, if you have any signed Collins books – or know of any – which he has presented personally to someone please let Andrew Gasson know at his usual email address [apogee@apgee.co.uk](mailto:apogee@apgee.co.uk), preferably with an image of the inscription. We will be publishing them all in due course.

### **WILKIE ONLINE**

The New York Public Library has images of more than a million items in its collection freely available online. They include many images of Wilkie, some manuscripts, agreements with publishers, illustrations from his books, and images of numerous letters written by him to publishers. Find them at [digitalcollections.nypl.org](http://digitalcollections.nypl.org) search ‘wilkie collins’.

### **WILKIE IN HAMPSTEAD**

WCS member, Katherine Haynes, but perhaps better known for her supernatural connection with A Ghostly Company, notes a mention of Wilkie on the Talking Pictures television channel.

On Sunday 26th January, they showed a short film about Hampstead in 1936. When they got to Jack Straw's Castle [a famous local hostelry] there was mention of various famous people who had drunk there, including Wilkie Collins! It would appear that Collins was better known in the 1930s than he came to be later in the 20th century.

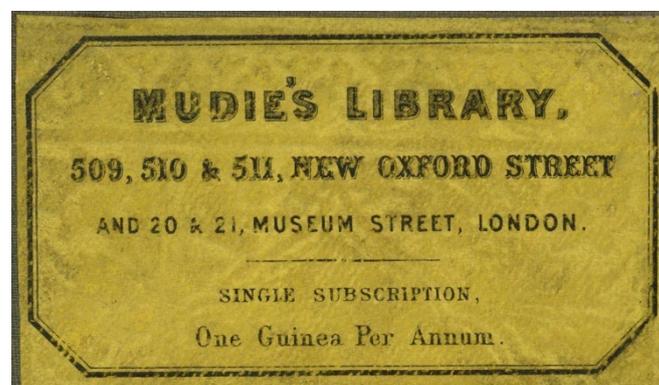
Other famous visitors include William Makepeace Thackeray, Bram Stoker and Charles Dickens who described it in a letter to John Forster

You don't feel disposed, do you, to muffle yourself up, and start off with me for a good brisk walk over Hampstead Heath? I know a good 'ous there where we can have a red hot chop for dinner, and a glass of good wine. (*Pilgrim Letters* Vol. I, p. 353)

Forster, in turn, also quotes it in his biography of Dickens, confirming it “led to our first experience of Jack Straw's-castle.” Forster (II, i, 93).

### MUDIE’S CIRCULATING LIBRARY

The major circulating library issuing Wilkie Collins books in the 19<sup>th</sup> century was Mudie’s Select Library of Oxford Street. A new study of the library’s work by Karen Wade of University College, Dublin has recently been published and updates an earlier book, *Mudie’s Circulating Library and the Victorian Novel* by Guinevere L. Griest published in 1970. This new work is a fascinating account of how Mudie supported and to an extent edited the reading habits of the 19<sup>th</sup> century as middle-class homes awaited the weekly or monthly ‘Mudie Box’. It sent out a thousand of them each week by rail all over the country. The annual subscription of one guinea (£1-1s or £1.05) was less than the price of buying one three-volume novel which cost a standard £1-10s-6d (£1.52). The study *Mudie’s Select Library and the Shelf Life of the Nineteenth Century Novel* can be downloaded free by searching ‘cambridge core mudies’ where you can also buy the paperback for £14.95.



A Mudie’s label affixed to the front cover of *The Queen of Hearts*, 1859

Wilkie gets few mentions in Wade’s book, but further research has found that 26 of his novels and the biography of his father, *The Life of William Collins, R.A.*, were available in Mudie’s January 1888 catalogue. It also offers bound editions of the books at prices ranging from 2s 9d to 4s each – or £3-6s to £4-16s the set – depending on the type of binding. They could also be bound on the premises ‘by careful and experienced workmen’ in ‘Ornamental Bindings’ suitable for ‘Drawing Room Tables...and for Wedding and Birthday Presents and School and

College Prizes'. The whole set of 24 titles could be had fully leatherbound with gilt edges for £10. A very grand prize!



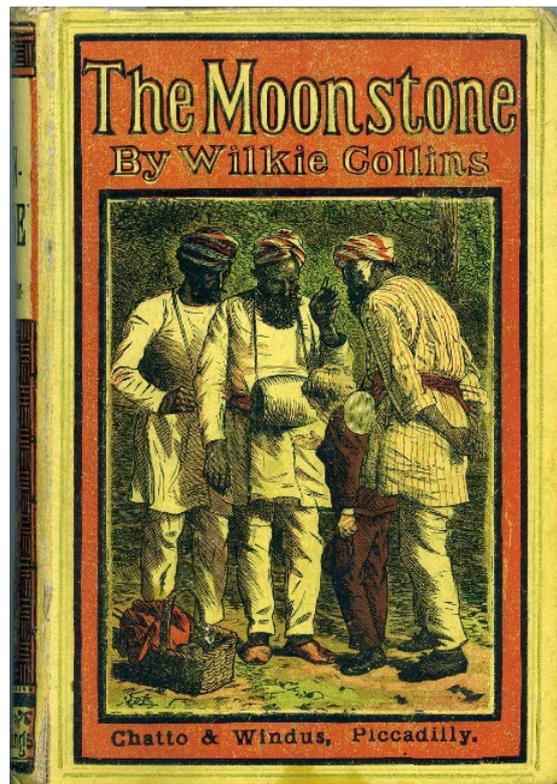
'Bound by Mudie' in a copy of *The Two Destinies* from 1891

Wilkie frequently complained about the stranglehold which Mudie had on the publishing world. It bought hundreds of copies of works as they came out and when the public interest lapsed sold them off at bargain prices. Its power was never diminished in his lifetime.

### **W. H. SMITH AND RAILWAY FICTION**

At the end of January W. H. Smith announced that it was selling its high street branches and all 480 have now been bought by the private equity group Modella Capital. It will rebrand them because W. H. Smith is keeping both the name and all its branches in hospitals and travel hubs such as ports, railway stations and the modern equivalent - airports. This takes W. H. Smith full circle back to its nineteenth century origins and would have been well known to Wilkie.

In the nineteenth century W. H. Smith was best known amongst the public for its railway bookstalls and sales of 'yellowbacks' otherwise known as railway fiction. These were cheap editions, the equivalent of today's paperbacks bound in strawboards with glazed yellow boldly illustrated covers. They were issued by most of the major publishers and usually priced at two shillings compared with five or six shillings for cloth bound copies. In Collins's case, although some were published by Sampson Low and Smith, Elder, twenty-nine titles were issued by Chatto & Windus well into the twentieth century.



Many nineteenth century editions in all formats are found with a W. H. Smith stamp on the front end-paper. The bookseller in combination with Mudie's lending library largely controlled the distribution of first editions. They also ventured into publishing and on 25 September 1867 Collins wrote to his mother:

Smith (the great railway bookseller) is in treaty for my copyrights in combination with Chapman & Hall. If we come to terms, having Smith interested in my books, will insure the pushing of them at every railway station in England.

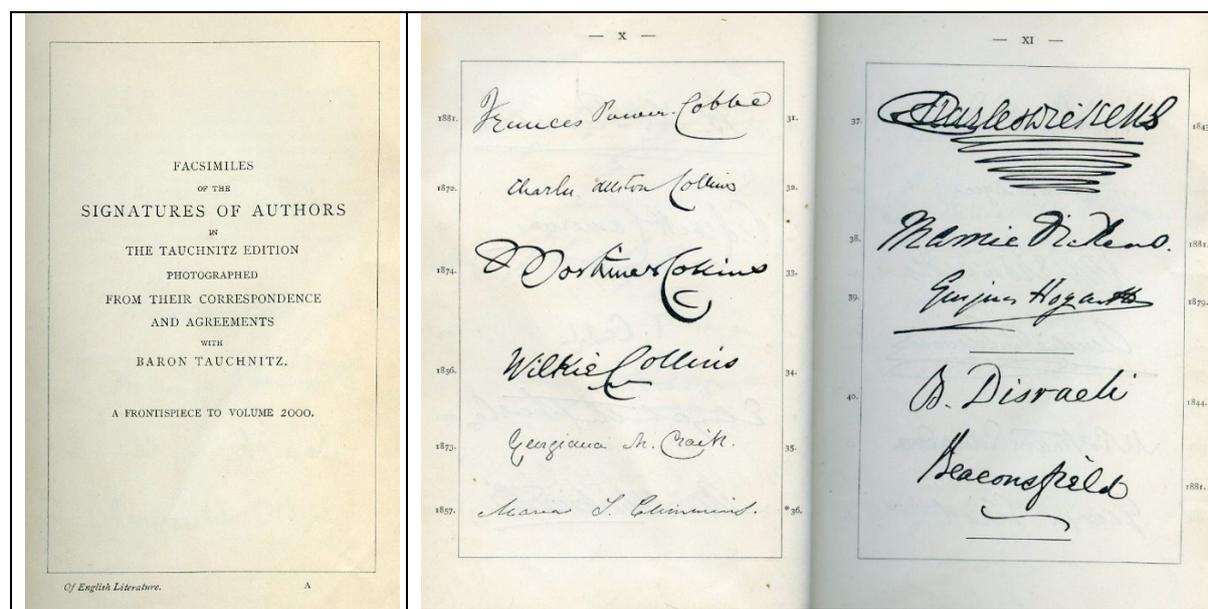
This didn't really come to fruition until 1873 when the collaboration of these two companies issued in hard back remainder copies of *The Dead Secret*, *My Miscellanies*, *The New Magdalen* and *The Frozen Deep*. W. H. Smith was no great friend to Wilkie since, in combination with Mudie's, they had ruined the sales of *Poor Miss Finch* by selling bound-up copies from the magazine serialisation rather than purchasing the Bentley book edition. Because of Smith and Mudie's undue influence Collins called them "these twin tyrants of literature."

## BERNHARD TAUCHNITZ

Travellers to continental Europe often purchased English language editions of their favourite writers published by Christian Bernhard Tauchnitz (1816–95). He founded his Leipzig publishing house in 1837 and quickly began to specialize in editions in English for a Continental audience. From around 1843 Tauchnitz began to ask British writers for permission and paid them long before international copyright conventions required him do so. Wilkie Collins was one of his most popular authors with 28 of his titles plus two of his collaborations with Charles Dickens and several of his short stories in reprints from *Household Words*. Import of these versions to England was not allowed, though of course many did leak back. Wilkie's accounts include numerous payments from Tauchnitz and he appears to have had a very cordial relationship with him.

Sadly, the Tauchnitz records were destroyed in World War II and only one letter from Wilkie to Tauchnitz exists in manuscript. Seven others, and three to his son Christian, are known from extracts published in a 1912 study of the Tauchnitz business by Carl Otto.

In 1881, to celebrate the publication of his 2000<sup>th</sup> volume, Tauchnitz sent a specially bound and personally inscribed copy to "Wilkie Collins Esq, with Baron Tauchnitz's kindest regards" in a volume with "Facsimiles of the signatures of authors in the Tauchnitz edition."



The signatures are set out in alphabetical order so that Wilkie's appears in distinguished company beneath that of Charles Collins and opposite Dickens.

The original MSs of 34 letters from Dickens to Tauchnitz were discovered in 1991 and have now been incorporated in the Dickens Letters Project. Sadly, the small horde of letters included none by Wilkie. One newly published letter from Dickens to Tauchnitz was written on 6 December 1856, just after Tauchnitz published his first book by Wilkie – *After Dark* in 1856. Dickens wrote to Tauchnitz on Wilkie's behalf about a foreign translation of the book. You can read the letter at [dickensletters.com](http://dickensletters.com).

The son of the man who made this discovery is Dr. Dietmar Böhnke of Leipzig University. He has edited a new book about Tauchnitz as a publisher *The Tauchnitz Edition...English Literature in Your Pocket*. There are only a few mentions of Wilkie. Perhaps the most interesting is a table showing he was only 17<sup>th</sup> in the number of volumes published by Tauchnitz. Mary Braddon was top and Dickens second. As a general guide to this German publisher it is very interesting but it costs a massive £140 from Palgrave Macmillan.

## **KENSAL GREEN CEMETERY**

Friends of Kensal Green Cemetery as usual have some interesting events planned for the summer:

On Saturday, 5 April: *I. K. Brunel and the Great Western Railway*. This is a special event, including a talk and book signing by Tim Bryan, author of *Iron Stone & Steam: Brunel's Railway Empire*. This will feature a guided tour and refreshments.

On Saturday, 21 June: *Brown's Hotel and Luxury Living Stories at Kensal Green Cemetery*. Another special event, exploring London's historic Brown's Hotel and notable figures connected to it. It includes a talk by Andy Williamson, the author of the book on this subject and a guided tour, visiting the memorials of the Brown family and other prominent hoteliers and famous personalities.

On Saturday, 9th August: *Joseph Locke and others - a Tour of Kensal Green Cemetery*: A guided walk, telling the stories of railway engineers and promoters buried here on the 220th anniversary of Joseph Locke's birth.

Full details are available on the FOKGC website: <https://www.kensalgreen.co.uk/> and booking can be made through Irina at [tours@kensalgreen.co.uk](mailto:tours@kensalgreen.co.uk). Irina led last year's excellent tour of Kensal Green to celebrate Wilkie's bicentenary.

### **FROM THE HEART OF EUROPE**

A rather unusual website called [fromtheheartofeuropa](http://fromtheheartofeuropa.com) gives one or two Collins mentions. It also looks at anniversaries in 50 year cycles 1825, 1875, 1925 etc. For 1875 it lists 10 books published in that year and rated according to 'Goodreads' and 'LibraryThing' as an estimate of how well known the book is. *The Law and the Lady* is number six in the list in company with titles by Louisa May Alcott, Anthony Trollope and Dostoevsky.

The website, in a different section, also discusses *The Moonstone* and quotes a paragraph from 'The First Period' in the book where Betteredge takes Penelope's advice "to set down what happened, regularly day by day." The website adds

What makes the book so memorable is that the story is told from many different points of view, and the first two are both very vivid – the old family servant, who believes that all wisdom can be found in *Robinson Crusoe*, and the crazy Christian relative, who annoys all the other characters. There is then a fine momentum which carries you through to the end.

### **DESERT ISLAND DISCS**

Mina Smallman is a campaigner for women's safety. Her two daughters Nicola Smallman and Bibaa Henry were murdered in a London park on 7 June 2020. Earlier this year she was Lauren Laverne's guest on *Desert Island Discs* on Radio 4 and her choice of a book to keep with her on the island was *The Woman in White*. She said "When I went back to college it was the English Literature text and it was the first time I had read anything like that. I loved it, so gripping. And it resonated with me on so many levels – dysfunctional relationships and everything." You can hear the episode on BBC Sounds – search desert island discs and look for 16 February 2025.

## ***THE WOMAN IN WHITE IN ITALY***

Andrea Mosti sends these publicity photographs from Italy. Her troupe is in the middle of a highly successful tour of *The Woman in White* at three separate venues in Tuscany this week. As she says: “We are very very excited for this play.”



**WALTER HARTRIGHT**  
*La donna in bianco*



**LAURA FAIRLIE**  
*La donna in bianco*



**CONTE FOSCO**  
*La donna in bianco*



**ANNE CATHERICK**  
*La donna in bianco*

\*\*\*\*\*

Andrew Gasson  
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[www.wilkie-collins.info](http://www.wilkie-collins.info)  
[www.wilkiecollins.com](http://www.wilkiecollins.com)



## *THE WILKIE COLLINS SOCIETY*

**PATRON** Faith Clarke

**Chairman** Andrew Gasson, 21 Huson Close, London NW3 3JW

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

**NEWSLETTER**

**SUMMER 2025**

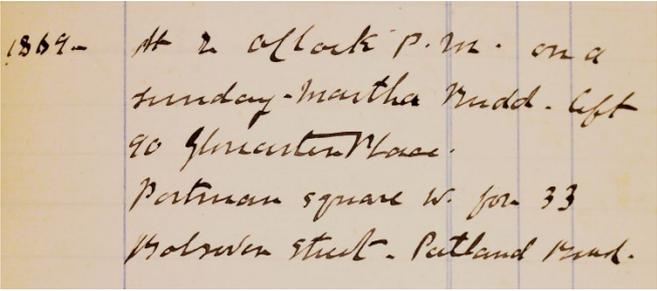
### **MARTHA RUDD'S EARLY DAYS**

Just 23 words written by Caroline Graves in a newly discovered accounts book give us a tantalising glimpse into the detail of Wilkie's turbulent love life in 1868 and 1869. We already knew that in those two years Caroline, his first long-term live-in lover, left to marry someone else; his new inamorata, Martha Rudd, became pregnant and gave birth to their first child; but around the same time his first lover moved back in to live with Wilkie.

Wilkie had shared his life with Caroline Graves and her daughter since the mid 1850s. In the summer of 1867, they moved to 90 Gloucester Place. But he had also become attached to Martha Rudd, a shepherd's daughter, whom he met in 1864 in Yarmouth where she was a barmaid. At some point after that she moved to London and by 1869 was living in lodgings at 33 Bolsover Street where, Wilkie reveals in his will, she gave birth to their first child, Marian, on 4 July 1869.

In Wilkie's accounts book – much of which has been torn out – Caroline recorded household bills and expenses. Two pages have a series of notable dates on them, mainly from the 1880s but one is about an earlier event which Caroline thought important enough to record next to her note of the time and date of Wilkie's death.

1869 – At 2 oClock p.m. on a Sunday - Martha Rudd. left 90 Gloucester Place. Portman square W. for 33 Bolsover Street. Portland Road.



1869- At 2 oClock p.m. on a  
Sunday - Martha Rudd. left  
90 Gloucester Place.  
Portman square W. for 33  
Bolsover street. Portland Road.

There, in Caroline's own handwriting, is not just the name of Wilkie's new lover but the previously unknown fact that she had been living with Wilkie at his Gloucester Place home before moving to Bolsover Street in 1869.

On 29 October 1868 Caroline had married a much younger man, Joseph Clow. Wilkie was present at the wedding in Marylebone parish church and one of the official witnesses was his friend and doctor Frank Beard. The marriage did not last long. Clow moved to Australia and in January 1870 a J. Clow is recorded arriving in Brisbane. That would put his departure from Liverpool in October 1869 and the end of the marriage before that.

Two tantalising possibilities emerge from Caroline's newly found note. Either Wilkie moved Martha into Gloucester Place earlier in 1868 and that was the catalyst which sent Caroline into the arms of Joseph Clow. Or he moved her in after Caroline had left to be with her new husband. In either case we now know that Martha did live with Wilkie in Gloucester Place sometime in 1868 and her daughter's birthdate indicates she got pregnant around the time of Caroline's marriage. No other record of Marian's birth is known but if the information in Wilkie's will is correct it means Martha was banished from Gloucester Place in the first half of 1869.

So, did Caroline move back into Gloucester Place when her marriage ended on condition the pregnant Martha move out? It was certainly a moment in her life which she felt important enough to record among nine dates in those two pages of the accounts book.

Caroline continued to live with Wilkie until his death in 1889. Beginning with Bolsover Street, Martha lived at three addresses within a mile of Gloucester Place with, eventually, their three children.

The accounts book and Wilkie's last Diary for 1889 are both in the Library at Pembroke College, Cambridge. The Diary consists mainly of Wilkie's own day by day account of his medications. Pembroke has kindly let us transcribe both and we will publish them in full in due course.

### ***THE WOMAN IN WHITE IN BENGALI***

The long-standing mystery of the Bengali translation of *The Woman in White* has now been solved by Wilkie Collins fan Nikhil Kumar who lives in India.

Wilkie mentions the translation in three letters he wrote in 1883. His agent A. P. Watt had been trying to arrange for "*I Say No!*" to be serialised in Anglo-Indian periodicals such as the *Calcutta Englishman*. Wilkie wrote to him on 25 November 1883 to suggest

It may not be amiss to tell them that my works are about to be translated into the Bengali language! The translator is at work on the *Woman in White* at Calcutta.

A few days later, on 29 November, he wrote to his friend Nina Lehmann

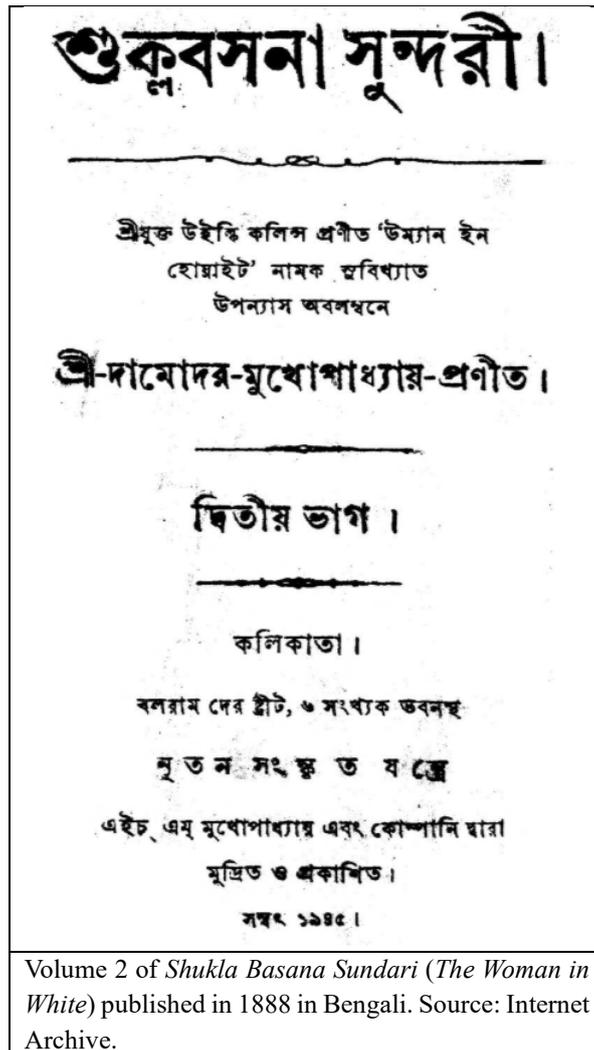
A boasting postscript – which you will understand. Only think! My novels are to be translated into the Bengali language and read by the native inhabitants of India!!!!

The boast continued a month later in a letter to his friend Sebastian Schlesinger on 29 December 1883.

By-the-bye, I have gained my little distinction, since you last heard of me. My novels are so popular among the native races of India (who can read English) that they are to be translated into the Bengali language for the native inhabitants who want to read me. The Series is to begin with "*The Woman in White*." There seems to be some promise, in this, of the stories being still alive when the story-teller is dead.

Despite these clear indications of its existence, the editors of Collins's *Collected Letters* had not identified it and added a foot-noted for the first mention of it as 'the translation into the Bengali language...has not been traced'.

But now it has, thanks to Professor Arup K. Chatterjee of the OP Jindal Global University. He discovered it was translated under the title *Shukla Basana Sundari* by Damodar Bidyananda Mukhopadhyay (1853–1907). He is described in the online *Banglapedia* as an editor, translator and general litterateur who began translating European novels into Bengali in 1883. So, *The Woman in White* may have been his first. He may have later regretted it as he joined a campaign group at the start of the 20<sup>th</sup> century opposed to the partition of Bengal and gave up all foreign products including sugar because it was British. *Shukla Basana Sundari* appears to have been published one volume at a time in 1885, 1888, and 1889, so local readers faced a long wait for the dénouement! Volumes 2 and 3 are available on the Internet Archive and Volume 1 on Wikimedia Commons.



Nikhil Kumar also tells us that *The Woman in White* was an inspiration for the 1877 novel *Rajani* by the author, poet, and journalist Bankim Chandra Chatterjee (1838-1894).

Nikhil's own language is Urdu and he also told us of two later translations into this language of other Collins titles.

Tirath Ram Firozpurī (1885–1954), an inveterate and prolific translator of Western crime fiction, translated *My Lady's Money* (as *Charagh Tale Andhera—Darkness Beneath the Lamp*) and *The Moonstone* (as *Devta Ki Aankh—The God's Eye*) in the 1930s.

He promised to let us know of any others he discovers.

Arup Chatterjee's own book is *The Great Indian Railways – a Cultural Biography* published by Bloomsbury in 2018 and available at online bookshops.

### **THE WOMAN IN WHITE IN FOREIGN LANGUAGES**

Apart from Bengali, and as an indicator of Collins's popularity, *The Woman in White* was translated into numerous foreign languages. During the nineteenth century, there were book editions in Dutch (1861), French (1861), German (1862), Italian (1866), Russian (1860), Spanish and Swedish (1861). There were also serialisations in most of these languages during the 1860s. The French book edition was issued by Hetzel rather than Collins's more usual publisher, Hachette, and had reached a 10<sup>th</sup> edition by 1881.

### **WOMAN IN WHITE ANALYSIS**

The chairwoman of the US Trollope Society, Claire Laporte, has published an interesting essay on her website entitled 'Narration and Voicelessness in The Woman in White' about Wilkie's use of multiple first-person narrators. Find it on the internet by searching 'claire laporte woman in white'. She also includes one of nineteenth century painter, Atkinson Grimshaw's dramatic works *A Moonlit Evening* from 1880, very similar to his painting used by OUP for the front cover of its 1996 paperback edition.

## **WILKIE'S 'MARINE RESIDENCE'**

Until 1870 Wilkie's favourite seaside town was Broadstairs. He wrote about the pleasures and perils of popular Kent resorts in 'Sea-breezes with the London Smack' in *Household Words* for 4 September 1858. There he referred to his 'marine residence'. He repeated that phrase four years later in a letter to his friend Elizabeth Benzon to accept a dinner invitation but confessing that he was "feeling a little fagged in spite of my marine residence at Broadstairs." He had been staying there in the Fort House writing *No Name* but the work was so hard he told her that now he was back home he was "a working man in sore want of a holiday!" The letter dated 3 November 1862 will be published in full in the second supplement to *The Collected Letters*, we hope in December this year.

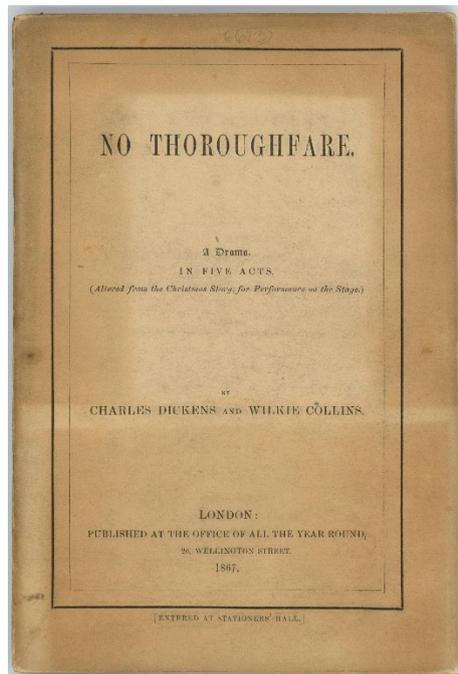
## **THE VERSE AND PLAYS OF CHARLES DICKENS**

Two books published on the same day by the same publisher are the first complete scholarly editions of Dickens's verse and of his plays. *The Verse of Charles Dickens* is jointly edited by Lydia Craig of Eastern Illinois University, USA and Emily Middleton of Leeds University in the UK. They have tracked down much new material written by Dickens in autograph albums for friends and fans as well as verses scattered among his published novels. It is of great interest to Wilkie fans because it reproduces the 'Song of the Wreck' and 'the Prologue' written by Dickens for Collins's 1855 play *The Lighthouse*. A year later Dickens wrote the short Prologue for another Wilkie play, *The Frozen Deep*.

Joanna Hofer-Robinson and Peter Orford, who edited *The Plays of Charles Dickens*, publish in full five of Dickens's plays including *Mr. Nightingale's Diary* which he wrote with Mark Lemon and in which Collins played the part of Lithers. The play was the drama after the main event of *Not So Bad As We Seem* performed in 1851 and 1852. The performances were to raise money for Dickens's charity the Guild of Literature and Art to help impecunious artists and writers fallen on hard times. It raised over £3000.

The book also contains *The Frozen Deep* from the 1857 prompt book, a play substantially written by Collins but amended for performance by Dickens. That is followed by *No Thoroughfare* (1867) undoubtedly written for the stage by Collins with help from the actor Charles Fechter and the producer Benjamin Webster. Dickens's contribution was relatively small although the printed copy

of the play gave Dickens and Collins equal authorship credits and they each received one eighth of the box office receipts.



Both books were published in March 2025 by Edinburgh University Press and typically for academic publishers are very overpriced at £95 and £125 respectively. Ask EUP if it will still do the two together for a hefty discount.

## PORTRAITS AND ARTEFACTS

Rather more reasonably priced is *Writers Revealed: Treasures from the British Library and the National Portrait Gallery, London* by Catharine Macleod and Alexandra Ault. (£24.95, hardback, but discounted online). It pairs portraits from the National Portrait Gallery with essays and artefacts from the British Library for 72 writers including Charles Dickens, William Shakespeare, Virginia Woolf, George Eliot, Bram Stoker and of course Collins. His entry includes the Millais portrait of him from 1850 and a page of the manuscript for his play of *The New Magdalen* from 1872. The exhibition accompanying the book – with the Millais portrait – is currently in Australia at Home of the Arts (HOTA) on the Gold coast but closes there on 3 August. After that the exhibition will go to Busan Museum, South Korea from 30 September 2025 to 18 January 2026.

## ***THE LAW AND THE LADY* – 150<sup>th</sup> ANNIVERSARY**

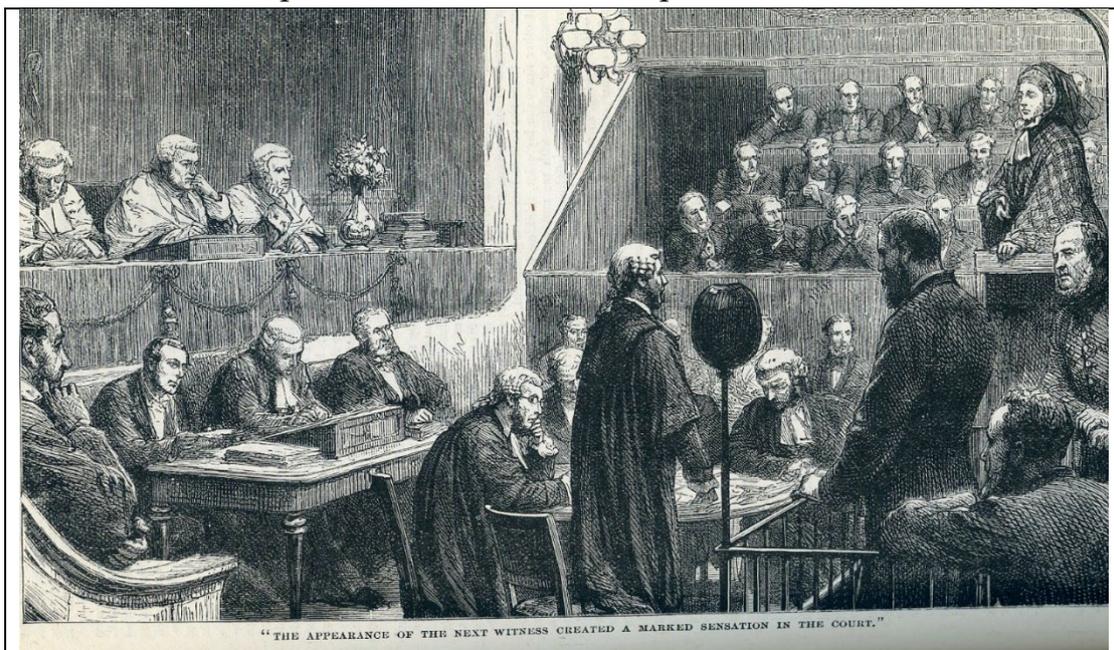
This year gives us the minor, sesquicentennial anniversary of the publication of *The Law and the Lady* in 1875. The novel is essentially a detective story featuring one of Collins's resourceful female characters, Valeria Woodville/Macallan. She is an atypical Victorian heroine with dark hair and eyes compared with the more

usual fair-haired lady protagonists in nineteenth century fiction. There are several similarities between the novel and the notorious trial of Madeleine Smith in 1857. Collins wrote on 20 June 1874 that he thought the novel had “a very strong domestic interest” and was “something quite new in the way of a story.”

*The Law and the Lady* was originally serialised in *The Graphic* from 26 September 1874 to 13 March 1875 and in the USA in *Harper's Weekly* from 10 October 1874 to 27 March 1875.

Although there had been correspondence concerning the book edition with Bentley during August 1874, negotiations through Collins's solicitor, William Tindell, confirmed that it would become the first of Collins's novels to be published by Chatto & Windus. Collins received £1,500 for a seven-year lease for all book editions down to 2s 6d from the formal publication date of 15 February 1875. Chatto printed 2,000 copies of *The Law and the Lady* in the usual three volume format but by August 1876 only 1150 had been sold within the first eighteen months. There is some evidence that first English edition might possibly have been preceded by the continental Tauchnitz edition.

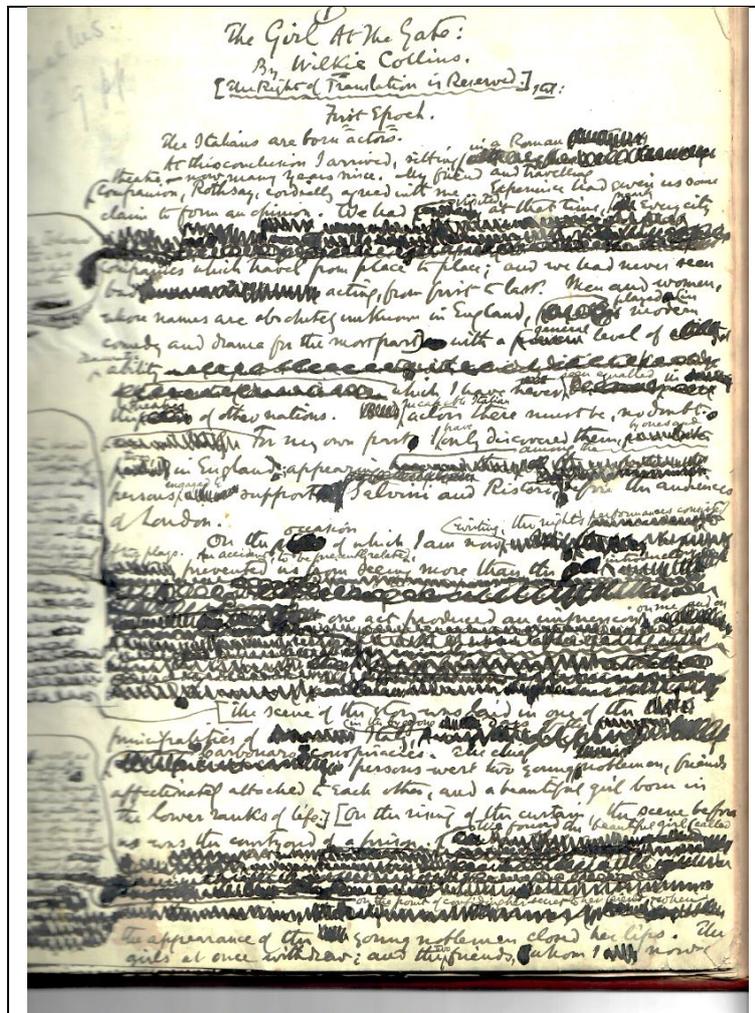
The article by Andrew Gasson which accompanies this Newsletter, ‘The Law and the Lady and The Trial of Madeleine Smith,’ was originally published in *Little Doric*, the Journal of the Aberdeen Branch of the Dickens Fellowship, May 2025, Vol. II, No. 3. It is reproduced with their kind permission.



The trial scene from the illustrated first US edition by Harper in 1875

## WILKIE'S AMANUENSIS

Scholars who study Wilkie's untidy and heavily amended manuscripts often wonder how the printer made head or tail of what he had written, scratched out, amended, written sideways up the margin, overwritten again, and then altered by new text denoted by a saltire.



A typical example of Collins's notoriously indecipherable handwriting and manuscript from 'The Girl at the Gate' in 1884.

A new discovery by Professor Robert Hanna of Bethany Lutheran College in Minnesota, casts light on this. He has identified two parallel manuscripts in the Humanities Research Centre in Texas for *The Dream-Woman* for its publication in 1874. One is Wilkie's original manuscript and the other is a copy for the printer in the hand of Carrie Graves, the daughter of Caroline Graves with whom he lived from the mid-1850s until his death in 1889.

Carrie – whose birth name was Elizabeth Harriet – referred to herself on several occasions as Wilkie’s amanuensis. From the time she left school aged 17½ until his death she fulfilled that role for him, even after her marriage in 1878 to the solicitor Henry Powell Bartley. Several small payments to her for this work are dotted around Wilkie’s bank account and a handful of his letters are known in her hand.

In 1888 Wilkie dedicated *The Legacy of Cain*, the last novel he was able to complete before his death, to Carrie (under her married name of Mrs. Henry Powell Bartley) to acknowledge “what I owe to the pen which has skilfully and patiently helped me, by copying my manuscripts for the printer.”

Thanks to Professor Hanna we now have a perfect example of Carrie’s painstaking work. This may solve the mystery of how the printers could typeset Wilkie’s manuscripts so accurately. Hanna is analysing the story’s development under the working title ‘The Fate of Wilkie Collins’s Ostler from “The Holly-Tree Inn” for publication next year.

### **‘MAD MONKTON’ ON THE RADIO**

One of Collins’s more dramatic stories, ‘Mad Monkton’ was broadcast on Radio 4Extra on 13 July. An excellent adaptation which may still be available on BBC Sounds, it featured John Castle as Alfred Monkton and Gary Bond as Piers Fortune.

The story has supernatural overtones and was first published as 'The Monktons of Wincot Abbey' in *Fraser's Magazine*, November to December 1855; it was subsequently included in *The Queen of Hearts* (1859) as 'Brother Griffiths Story of Mad Monkton'. The story was originally offered to *Household Words* in 1853 but declined by Dickens who thought the theme of hereditary insanity unsuitable for a family magazine.

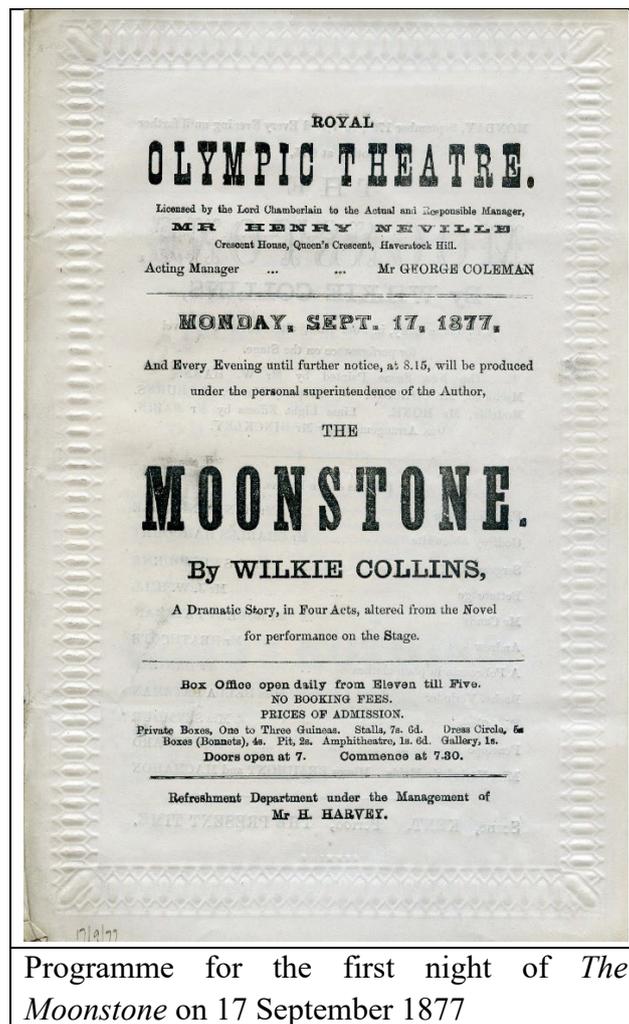
### **A GREAT COLLABORATION**

The latest edition of *The Dickensian* for Spring 2025 (Vol. 121, Part I, No. 525) reviewed the ‘Wilkie Collins and Charles Dickens’ conference held at the University of Buckingham on 20-21 June 2024 as part of Wilkie’s bicentenary

celebrations. It particularly mentioned contributions from WCS members Paul Lewis on the financial relationship between the two authors and Caroline Radcliffe on *The Lighthouse*. As the reviewer concluded, “This outstanding collaborative event illustrated what can be done when societies unite.”

## MORE DRAMATIC NEWS FROM ITALY

Straight from the success in Italy with a dramatic production of *The Woman in White*, Andrea Mosti writes that her company’s next excursion into Wilkie Collins will be a production of *The Moonstone*. This will be using Wilkie’s own version of the play originally staged at the Olympic Theatre from 17 September to 17 November 1877. Wilkie simplified his adaptation by restricting the action to a twenty-four hour period in Rachel Verinder’s country house which he moved from Yorkshire to Kent. The original production omitted Rosanna Spearman, Ezra Jennings and the Indians and despite its successful run had a mixed reception. More details as the Italian production develops.



## WHO READ WILKIE AND THE SHETLANDS

Pasted inside the front cover of an 1875 one-volume edition of *The Queen of Hearts* is the bookplate of ‘Herbert Anderton of Vaila.’

Herbert Foster Anderton (1862-1937), came to Shetland around 1892, where he bought the estates of Melby and Vaila. He used Vaila House as a summer home for many years, but in his latter years he had made it his permanent residence. Anderton was a Yorkshire mill owner which fits in with the bookseller’s ticket of G. F. Sewell of Darley Street, Bradford. Perhaps an indication of his character, the armorial bookplate carries the Latin motto, ‘Flectimus Nunquam’, which translates as We Never Bend.

The island of Vaila is on the west mainland coast of the Shetlands and features the listed Vaila Hall which includes a baronial hall, stained glass windows and a watch tower. It was originally built by James Mitchell in 1696 and incorporates an older laird's house. Owned and restored over 30 years by Richard Rowland and Dorota Rychlik, Vaila was sold in 2023 for around £1.75 million.

Wilkie also features in the far south of the Shetlands at Sumburgh Head. Here, running along the base of the old lighthouse, is a quote from the 1848 *Memoirs of the Life of William Collins, Esq., R.A.*

“The immense precipice of Sumburgh Head, hanging over as if it would fall into the sea, with the waves writhing about its jagged base, and hundreds on hundreds of sea-birds whirling above its mighty summit”

This is taken from Vol. II, Part IV, Chapter II, 1842–1844, pp. 217-218 and recalls the time when Wilkie visited the Northern Isles with his father in early 1842. William Collins had embarked on the trip with a commission to illustrate Sir Walter Scott’s *The Pirate* (1822), first published with his engravings about 1844 by Robert Cadell of Edinburgh.

Andrew Gasson

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Paul Lewis

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## *THE WILKIE COLLINS SOCIETY*

**PATRON** Faith Clarke

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

**NEWSLETTER**

**WINTER 2025**

### **MARTHA AT WILKIE'S FUNERAL**

A newly published diary entry claims that Wilkie's lover Martha Rudd and their three children were at his funeral at Kensal Green cemetery on 27 September 1889. Previously biographers have reported that they had stayed away and only sent a wreath of flowers.

Longstanding WCS member Katherine Haynes spotted the significance of this fascinating entry when she was reading the recently published diary of the poet A. C. Benson (1862-1925). She was surprised at the entry for 10 July 1912. It recalls an anecdote by A. E. Housman (1859-1936) that Collins's morganatic family (as Wilkie called it) was present at his funeral – and visibly so.

I dined with Winstanley. Laurence, Pym, Houseman [sic] the guests.... We had a pleasant evening with endless stories. The only one I remember was Housman's description of Wilkie Collins' funeral. There was a pause when the body was laid in the grave, when a woman & three boys in deep mourning came forwards & knelt down. In the silence the rich & bell-like voice of Holman Hunt was heard saying "Those are the bastards!". (*The Benson Diary*, Vol. II, p. 652, checked against the Ms held at Magdalene College, Vol.131, f. 35).

Holman Hunt was a principal mourner and other descriptions of his voice confirm it was ‘musical’. However, although contemporary reports put crowds of people at his funeral, none places the 30-year-old Housman there. And the anecdote is wrong in one key aspect – Wilkie and Martha’s children were not three boys but two girls and a boy.

At the time Marian was aged 20, Charlotte 18 and their only son William was 14. Martha and Wilkie had been lovers for more than 20 years and all the children were close to their father. It would be good to believe that this contemporary account is correct. It would have been very sad if propriety had not allowed them to pay their last respects. Especially as their names and details would soon be made public as all were explicitly listed in Wilkie’s will.

*The Benson Diary* edited by Eamon Duffy and Ronald Hyam, 2 volumes, published by Pallas Athene, 2025. The original 180 bound volumes of Benson’s four-million-word diary are at Magdalene College, Cambridge. Sincere thanks to their archivist Katy Green for her speedy help.

## **POST MORTEM COPYRIGHT**

Collins’s lifelong issues with copyright did not end at his death. One of his persistent problems concerned the copyright in plays. If a published novel was adapted for the stage by another writer and performed, then the copyright was lost. So, on many occasions Collins dramatised his novels as he wrote them and arranged a performance at a theatre just once to an audience of friends to protect his rights. (See the next paragraph on matinees for details of *The Evil Genius*). However, many dramatists ignored the law and his executors went to court to prevent an unauthorised version of *The Woman in White* written by an un-named actor from being performed on a country tour. On 6 December 1889 they were granted an injunction to prevent further performances and damages of £600, but when the case came to court on 11 December 1890 the damages of £600 were reduced to £100. The executors appealed and on 25 March 1893 the Court of Appeal granted them £250 in damages – say around £25,000 today – plus the costs of the action. It is not known if the damages were ever paid. The appeal is summarised in *The Weekly Notes* of cases in the Court of Appeal 1893, pp.57-58 which can be found free to read on Google books.

## WILKIE COLLINS AND THE MATINEE

Radio 4 Extra on 24 October discussed ‘The Matinee, the Creation of a Theatrical Institution’, a programme originally broadcast in 2003. It was interesting to learn that ‘morning’ in the nineteenth century was generally taken to last till about 5.00 pm and the term ‘afternoon’ was in the main used just by tradesmen. Hence the origin of ‘matinee’ for modern afternoon theatrical performances although in Victorian times they were described as a ‘morning Performance.’

ROYAL  
**OLYMPIC THEATRE**

Licensed by the Lord Chamberlain to the Author and Responsible Manager,  
Crescent House, Queen's Crescent, Haverstock Hill.  
Acting Manager ... Mr. GEORGE COLEMAN

**SATURDAY, OCT. 13, 1877.**  
And Every Evening until further notice, at 3.30, will be produced  
under the personal superintendence of the Author,

THE  
**MOONSTONE.**  
BY  
WILKIE COLLINS,  
A Dramatic Story, in Four Acts, altered from the Novel.

**MORNING PERFORMANCE**

In consequence of numerous inquiries, and for the convenience of families residing at a distance, a Morning Performance of the above successful Drama, by Wilkie Collins, will take place on  
**SATURDAY, October 27th, 1877.**  
Commencing at half-past Two. Carriages to be ordered for Five o'clock.

Box Office open daily from Eleven till Five.  
NO BOOKING FEES.  
PRICES OF ADMISSION.  
Private Boxes, One to Three Guineas. Stalls, 7s. 6d. Dress Circle, 5s.  
Boxes (Bamote), 4s. Pit, 2s. Amphitheatre, 1s. 6d. Gallery, 1s.  
Doors open at 7. Commence at 7.30.

Refreshment Department under the Management of  
Mr. H. HARVEY.

Morning performance in October 1877

TELEPHONE NO. 18.  
**THEATRE ROYAL**  
AND OPERA HOUSE,  
BRIGHTON. Mrs. H. NYE CHART.

Mrs. H. NYE CHART has much pleasure in announcing the Engagement  
FOR A LIMITED NUMBER OF NIGHTS  
OF THE EMINENT AND ACCOMPLISHED ARTISTE,  
**MISS ADA CAVENDISH**  
Who will make her Re-appearance in Brighton in the great Play (written expressly for her by the world-renowned  
Author, WILKIE COLLINS), entitled

**THE NEW MAGDALEN**  
A Company specially selected by herself to competently sustain the interest created by this extraordinary Drama.  
UNDER THE MANAGEMENT OF MR. F. CHARLES.

**A MORNING PERFORMANCE**  
OF "THE NEW MAGDALEN,"  
ON SATURDAY, NOVEMBER 10, AT TWO O'CLOCK.

On MONDAY, November 5th, 1883, and During the Week.  
The Performances will commence (at 7.30) with a Satirical Musical Sketch, by GEORGE GROSCORN, Junr., entitled  
**CUPS AND SAUCERS.**  
Mrs. Nankin Worcester ... Miss GLADYS HOMERBY  
General Dealah (another) ... Mr. W. T. ELWORTHY

At EIGHT o'clock, will be presented a Dramatic Story, in a Prologue and Three Acts, entitled

**THE NEW MAGDALEN**  
BY WILKIE COLLINS.  
PROLOGUE. PERIOD, 1870.  
SCENE—A COTTAGE ON THE FRENCH AND GERMAN FRONTIER.

CHARACTERS IN THE PROLOGUE.

Mercy Merrick.....	Miss ADA CAVENDISH
Grace Roseberry.....	Miss ROSE ROBERTS
Horace Holmercroft.....	Mr. EDWARD BECHER
Ignatius Wetzlar.....	Mr. FREDERICK KERR
French Captain.....	Mr. W. T. ELWORTHY
French Surgeon.....	Mr. CHARLES TALEBOT
Max.....	Mr. EDWARD MONTAGUE

AN INTERVAL OF FOUR MONTHS IS SUPPOSED TO ELAPSE.

THE STORY.  
SCENE—THE DINING ROOM & CONSERVATORY AT LADY JANET ROY'S.

CHARACTERS IN THE STORY.

Grace Roseberry.....	Miss ROSE ROBERTS
Lady Janet Roy.....	Miss GLADYS HOMERBY
Mercy Merrick.....	Miss ADA CAVENDISH
Horace Holmercroft.....	Mr. EDWARD BECHER
Julian Gray.....	Mr. MARK QUINTON
James.....	Mr. THORNTON
Police Officer.....	Mr. GEORGE SKIPWORTH

Box Office open daily from 10 till 4, under the direction of Mr. A. WHEELER, of whom Private Boxes and Places may be had

DOORS OPEN AT SEVEN. TO COMMENCE AT HALF-PAST SEVEN.  
Orchestra Stalls, 5s. Dress Circle, 4s. Pit Stalls (Bamote allowed), 3s. Boxes, 2/6. Pit 1/6. Amphitheatre, 1/2. Gallery, 6d.  
Recent Price at NINE o'clock—Orchestra Stalls, 5s. Dress Circle, 5/6. Pit Stalls, 5s. Boxes, 1/6. Pit, 1/2.

N.B.—Mrs. H. NYE CHART respectfully asks the occupants of the Pit Stalls to kindly make their exit at the close of the performance by the New Door on the right.

Acting Manager and Treasurer ... Mr. THOS. J. PHILLIPS. Assistant Stage Manager ... Mr. F. J. WATTS

Morning performance in November 1883

The morning performance of *The Moonstone* occurred during its original run from 17 September to 17 November 1877 with Henry Neville playing Franklin Blake, Thomas Swinbourne as Sergeant Cuff and Laura Seymour as Miss Clack. The performance for *The New Magdalen* took place during a revival tour featuring Ada Cavendish in her starring role as Mercy Merrick at the Theatre Royal and Opera House, Brighton in November 1883.

There was also an afternoon performance of *The Evil Genius* on Friday 30 October 1885, described as “a new and original drama, in Five Acts.” This was the sole public performance designed to secure Collins’s dramatic copyright. The cast included Marian Carr as Catherine Linley, Mrs Hendrie as Sydney Westerfield, Mr Morris as Herbert Linley and John Phipps as Captain Bennydeck. Collins had written on the manuscript, which has never been published:–

Dramatic Version of The Evil Genius. Version performed on one afternoon at the Vaudeville Theatre to secure my copyright in 1885. Since corrected and revised in 1886 on this copy. To be destroyed when the piece is again performed in its corrected form.

The radio programme also described how Marie Bancroft improved her Prince of Wales Theatre with the idea of making it more upmarket and therefore more acceptable for women.

## **JOURNEYS OF CHARLES DICKENS AND WILKIE COLLINS**

A talk by WCS Secretary Paul Lewis to SoCal – the Southern California Dickens Fellowship – on 18 October can now be seen on YouTube as delivered at <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=-d4terCwJpU>. It begins with a new analysis made especially for SoCal of Wilkie’s time in America. That is a work in progress, and of course, relies heavily on WCS member Susan Hanes’s thorough research published in her book *Wilkie Collins’s American Tour 1873-4*, London 2008. The talk was kindly recorded by Tim Clark of SoCal.

## **MORE ON THE NORTH**

A revised edition of *Dickens and the North* by Stephen Duxbury which we reviewed in the Summer 2022 Newsletter has just been published. It gives details of Charles Dickens’s visits to Scotland, Ireland, and the north of England, noting those with Wilkie Collins which include their 1857 stay at the Angel Hotel in Doncaster duly recorded in ‘The Lazy Tour of Two Idle Apprentices.’ Stephen promises 15% more material and all for the same price of £12.50 from the Grayswood Press website.



The Angel Hotel Doncaster, renamed with 'Royal' following the visit of Queen Victoria.

## THE GHOST STORIES OF WILKIE COLLINS

Rather late to the party – unable or unwilling to mount even a small celebratory exhibition – the British Library did manage to mark the Wilkie Collins bicentenary at the end of 2024 by issuing *The Ghost Stories of Wilkie Collins*. As the BL blurb has it:

Published to celebrate the bicentenary of Collins's birth, this new anthology presents eight tales of the unearthly to celebrate this lesser-known side of the writer's imaginative and ground-breaking fiction. Opening with a new introduction exploring Collins's talents for pushing the boundaries of genre writing, the classic stories collected here show a master storyteller at work as they pulse with awful visions, mortal dread and the strange wiles of restless ghosts.

Vengeful spirits, mysterious revenants, haunted objects and the odd benevolent phantom stalk the pages of Wilkie Collins's short fiction, and yet his reputation as one of the great Victorian sensation and detective novelists has long overshadowed his inventive contributions to the ghost story genre.

The stories are edited by Dr Xavier Aldana Reyes, Reader in English Literature and Film at Manchester Metropolitan University and co-president of the International Gothic Association. British Library Publishing at £14.99, ISBN: 9780712355964.

In a similar vein from the British Library, Wilkie apparently features in *Doomed Romances: Strange Tales of Uncanny Love* compiled by former *WC Journal* editor, Joanne Parsons. The British Library also publishes a wide range of facsimile editions of Collins's novels and otherwise unobtainable plays

### **RAMBLES BEYOND RAILWAYS**

An interesting new edition looks to be published by the Bodleian Library. It is entitled *Wilkie Collins on Cornwall* with a foreword by noted Cornish resident Rick Stein. The familiar blurb notes

Before the railway came to Cornwall, novelist Wilkie Collins and his artist friend Henry Brandling set out on foot from Plymouth to explore the then 'rarely visited' peninsula. In 1850, tourism was in its infancy and the pair had many adventures, visiting Land's End, Tintagel, St Michael's Mount and Loo Pool. A local guide took them on an extraordinary tour down Botallack mine, and another showed them how to scramble up the Devil's Bellows at Kynance Cove.

This charming account of their travels includes fascinating descriptions of legends and customs, pilchard fishing, ancient monuments, eccentric innkeepers and local cuisine, painting a vivid and affectionate picture of Cornwall as it was nearly 200 years ago.

This version is due to be published on 26 February 2026 in hardcover at £16.99; EAN/UPC 9781851246564.

The British Library has previously issued *Rambles Beyond Railways; Or, Notes in Cornwall Taken A-Foot ... With Illustrations by H. C. Brandling* in facsimile. The listings are vague but it seems to appear in a cumbersome, soft cover quarto format in two BL series, the 'History of Travel' and 'History of Britain & Ireland' at about £32.

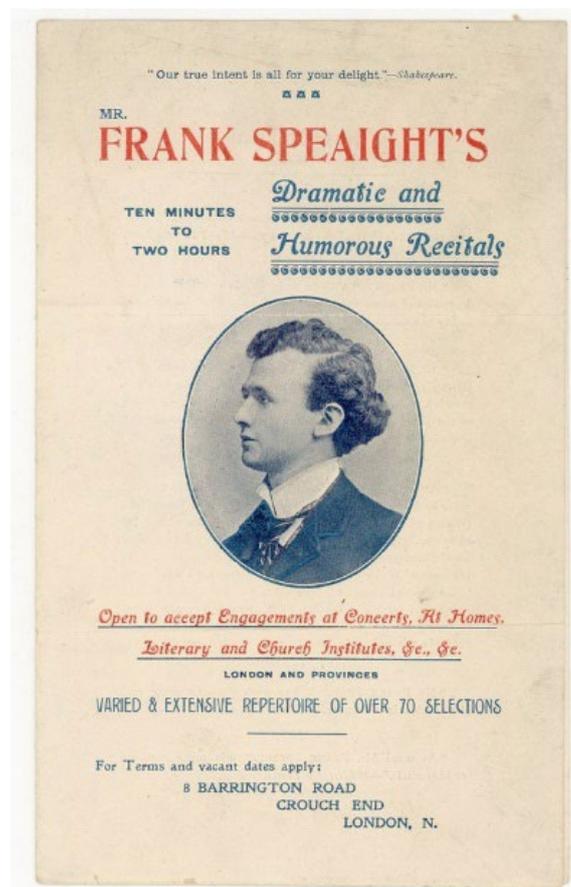
### **A SILENT *THE WOMAN IN WHITE* ON FILM**

Recently for sale on ebay was a very rare advertisement for the lost earliest film version of *The Woman in White* dating from 1912. There were, in fact, two different film versions of the novel in 1912. The earlier version by just two days was produced by the Thanhouser studio and released on 20 October. It was adapted by Lloyd Lonergan and starred Marguerite Snow as both Laura and Anne, James Cruze as Sir Percival and William Garwood as Walter Hartright. The other

key characters were eliminated from the screenplay. The film, alas, is lost as it was destroyed in a fire during 1913. Thanhouser, however, went on to make a new version in 1917, more usually known by its 1920 re-release title of *An Unfortunate Marriage*.

The second version of *The Woman in White* in 1912 was produced by the Gem division of Universal Studios and released on 22 October. This version has been preserved at the George Eastman Museum in Rochester, New York. More details of all of these silent films and their history can be found in Barry McCann's article which the WCS published last year in *Wilkie in Whitby*.

## FRANK SPEAIGHT



Frank Speaight prospectus

Frank Speaight was well-known in the early part of the twentieth century on both sides of the Atlantic for his dramatic readings as well as humorous recitals. These included particularly Dickens extracts from *David Copperfield*, *A Tale of Two Cities* and *Pickwick*, as well as pieces from Shakespeare and Wilkie Collins. Listed among his 'Dramatic and Humorous Recitals' is 'Major Namby'. So it seems likely that was the story which the *Hants and Berks Gazette* (22 March 1902, p. 5c) reported on as "the rollicking humour of... Wilkie Collins" which the audience at Basingstoke Town Hall "thoroughly enjoyed".

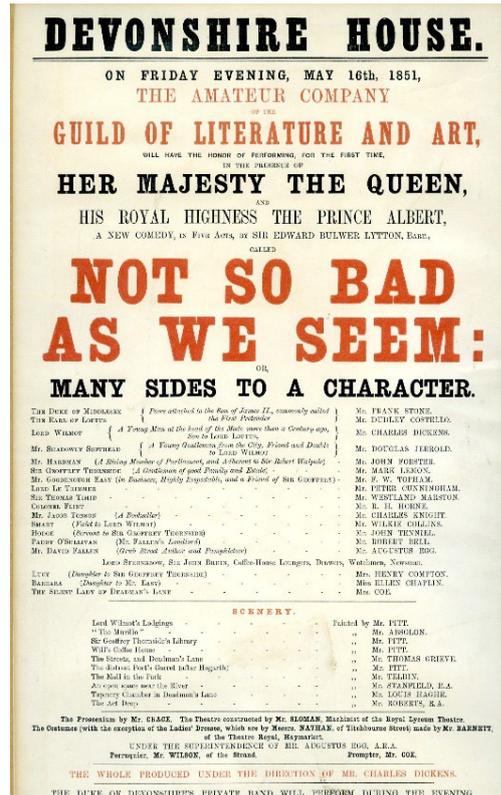
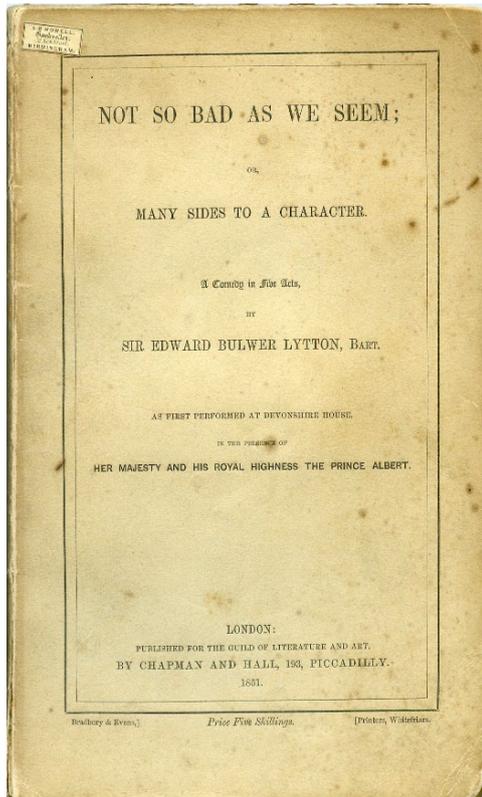
'Pray Employ Major Namby!' gave an account of the narrator's noisy military neighbour who conducts his domestic affairs from his front garden. It was first published in *All the Year Round* on 4 June 1859 and republished in *My Miscellanies* (1863).

It was subsequently reprinted in various collections intended for reading and recitation. These included *The Casquet of Literature*, Blackie & Son: London, Glasgow, Edinburgh and Dublin, 1896 and in Frank Speaight's own *Dramatic, Humorous, and Dickens Recitals, Third American and Canadian Tour*, Anderson Entertainment Bureau: Philadelphia, 1907. Speaight was also the author of *My Dickens Friends*, New York, James B. Pond, 1916.

## **GUILD OF LITERATURE AND ART**

Recently for sale on eBay is the very scarce original printed prospectus for the Guild of Literature and Art dated 12 April 1851. This Victorian charitable body was founded by Charles Dickens and Edward Bulwer-Lytton to support writers and artists who faced illness, poverty or old age. The prospectus makes reference to the dramatic performances to raise funds.

Expressly for these Dramatic Representations, which will be under the management of Mr. Charles Dickens, a New Comedy in five acts has been written by Sir Edward Bulwer Lytton, and by him presented to his fellow labourers in the origination of the present scheme.



There followed a list of fifteen named participating actors which included Wilkie Collins. The play was *Not so Bad as We Seem*, first performed on 16 May 1851 in Devonshire House before Queen Victoria. Dickens played the part of Lord Wilmot and Collins his valet, Smart and occasioned the first meeting between Dickens and Collins on 12 March following an introduction effected by Augustus Egg. After 24 performances the play raised more than £3000 for the Guild.

## DICKENS, PARKINSON AND COLLINS

An autograph letter dated 23 September 1869 from Charles Dickens to J. S. Parkinson came up for auction at Swann Galleries on 6 November and was bought for \$1905 (£1425) including premium. Joseph Charles Parkinson (1833–1908) was a journalist, civil servant and social reformer who contributed regularly to *All The Year Round*. Parkinson had proved very helpful to Collins while he was writing *Man and Wife*, answering several questions about boat and foot races, the use of athletic slang and introducing him to a sporting acquaintance, ([0914] to J. C. Parkinson, 30 September 1869).

*The Collected Letters of Wilkie Collins* are available on the WCS website and are freely available to search or download.

## C. S. REINHARDT

Apart from mainly new reprints, all sorts of Wilkie connections turn up on eBay. The most recent offering was an illustration of Tompkins Square, New York by C. S. Reinhart. Tompkins Square as shown in the print was the scene of a riot on 13 January 1874 during the financial ‘Panic of 1873.’ Collins narrowly missed the start of the Panic when he arrived in New York on the *Algeria* on 25 September 1873, just a few days after the financial turmoil had begun on the 18 September. By the 13 January he had arrived in Detroit for a reading at the Opera House.



C. S. Reinhart Illustration to *The New Magdalen*

Charles Stanley Reinhart (1844-1896) worked extensively for American illustrated periodicals, mainly *Harper's Weekly* and *Harper's New Monthly Magazine* from about 1870. He seems to have worked intermittently on Wilkie's novels for these magazines as he illustrated *The Two Destinies* in the *Library of Select Novels* as well as *Poor Miss Finch*, *The New Magdalen* and *The Two*

*Destinies* in the 1873 Harper's *Illustrated Library Edition*, issued to coincide with Collins's reading tour of America in 1873–74. The illustrations for *The New Magdalen* were subsequently used for the English one-volume edition by Chatto & Windus in the *Piccadilly Novels* from 1875.

## HANNOVER TERRACE

An elegant residence overlooking London's Regent's Park in Hanover Terrace, where the Collins family once lived, recently featured on television channel More4's 'Britain's most expensive Houses.' The house was on offer for £29 million with the expectation that it might be sold to a Chinese investor.



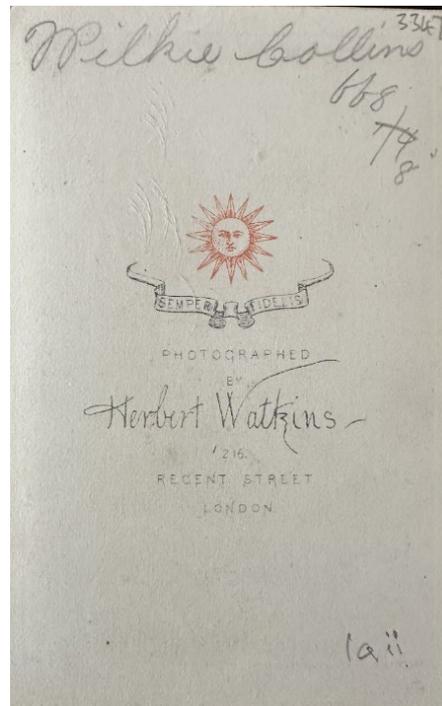
Hanover Terrace (from *The Bookman* of June 1912)

The appearance today is very much as it would have been in Collins's time and the address is now even more prestigious. He lived at number 17 with his mother, Harriet, and brother, Charles, from August 1850 to June 1856. The house became a regular meeting place for their literary and artistic friends such as the Dickens family, the Wards, Millais, Holman Hunt and other members of the Pre-Raphaelite group. It was later the home of writer Edmund Gosse.

The house was the starting point on the Society's occasional 'Wilkie Walk' which includes 18 places of Collins interest. The complete walk with a detailed map of locations is on the Society's website at [wilkiecollinssociety.org/wp/wp-content/uploads/2024/03/2000-09-Wilkie-Walk.pdf](http://wilkiecollinssociety.org/wp/wp-content/uploads/2024/03/2000-09-Wilkie-Walk.pdf).

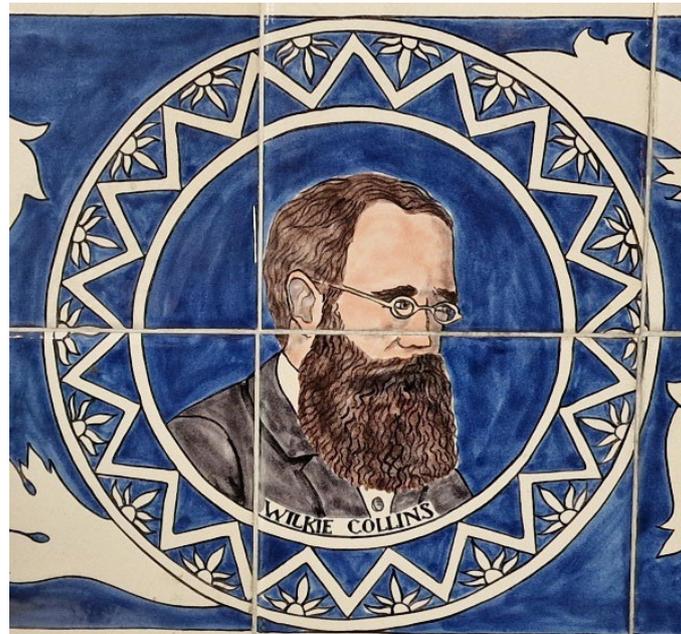
### PRICE OF AN IMAGE

Several photographers asked Wilkie Collins to sit for them so they could sell copies of the photos to the public as what are called CDVs or Cartes de Visite. They were small photographic prints 85 x 55mm mounted on slightly larger cards with the photographer's logo on the reverse.



One commonly found example was taken by Herbert Watkins of Regent Street in 1861 showing Wilkie standing by a chair holding a book in his right hand. A copy has come to light indicating how prices changed. A CDV could cost up to 2 shillings but typically were sold for less. This example was marked at 1s 4d but later sold half price as it shows the original price of 1/4 crossed out and replaced with 8<sup>d</sup> – eight pence. In 1862 Wilkie’s brother Charles wrote an unsigned piece for *All The Year Round* on the horrors of sitting for a carte de visite portrait: “The horrible necessity of keeping motionless [for] the thirty seconds which the light requires to take a likeness are so utterly exhausting” (*ATYR*, 26 April 1862, VII, pp. 165-168, available at [www.djo.org.uk](http://www.djo.org.uk)).

## WILKIE, WAITROSE AND GASTRONOMY



Within the entrance to Waitrose in central London’s Marylebone High Street is a gallery of past local celebrities. Wilkie is duly included and it is reassuring to find that during the supermarket’s recent refurbishment he remains in place keeping a watchful eye on his former homes in Marylebone. The portrait was produced by the Carmarthen based ceramic artists Carlo Briscoe and Edward Dunn. Their image may have been taken from an 1872 engraving used as the frontispiece of *Poor Miss Finch* published by Harper & Brothers in New York. Other celebrities with Marylebone connections are represented in the tiles and

include Arthur Conan Doyle, Charles Dickens, and the artist Joseph Turner. More than 100 images of Wilkie – including this and other modern ones – can be seen here [www.paullewis.co.uk/wilkie/wilkieimages/wcimages.htm](http://www.paullewis.co.uk/wilkie/wilkieimages/wcimages.htm).

Wilkie would no doubt have approved of the many supermarket comestibles since food and drink were a constant pre-occupation for him. To quote from his writings:

Properly pursued, the Art of Cookery allows of no divided attention. *The Law and the Lady*.

My business in this world is to eat, drink, sleep, and die. Everything else is superfluity - and I have done without it. *The Dead Secret*.

Whatever happens in a house, robbery or murder, it doesn't matter, you must have your breakfast. *The Moonstone*.

My hour for tea is half-past five, and my buttered toast waits for nobody. *The Woman in White*.

He also wrote about eating in his letters

At this festive season when the Plague of Plum pudding extends its ravages from end to end of the land, and lays the national digestion prostrate at the feet of Christmas...I had planned to give up eating and drinking until the return of Spring ([1044] to Miss [Mary Louisa] Frith, 27 December 1870).

I wish I knew of another cook to recommend – but, unless you will take me, I know of nobody. And I am conscious of one serious objection to myself. My style is expensive. I look on meat simply as a material for sauces. ([0865] to Nina Lehmann, 4 January 1869).

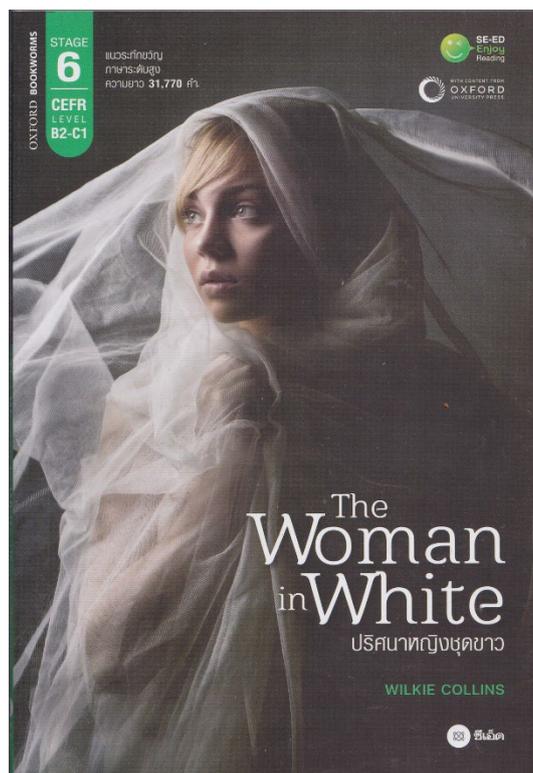
## WILKIE COLLINS AND ALBERT CAMPION

Our ever-alert member from Holland, Pierre Tissot van Patot, has come across another example of the name Wilkie Collins used for a character in a modern book. “I know quite a bit about Mr Wilkie Collins – the chap with the gun who outsmarted us.” This one appears briefly for a few pages in *Mr Campion’s Falcon* and there’s a mysterious ‘falcon’ diamond somewhere in the plot. The novel was published by Heinemann in 1970 and later reissued by Penguin. The author, Youngman Carter (1904–1969), was husband of Golden Age crime writer Margery Allingham and following her death in 1966 he took over her long established detective character Albert Campion. The book can be downloaded at [www.fadedpage.com/showbook.php?pid=20230308](http://www.fadedpage.com/showbook.php?pid=20230308).

This is a new addition to the numerous Wilkie Collins characters identified in ‘Parodies, Plagiarisms, and Imitations of Willkie Collins’ published by the WCS in December 2018 and available on the website under ‘Bibliographies’.

## WILKIE COLLINS IN THAILAND

Another update from Pierre, tells us that *The Woman in White* is available in Thailand from Se-Ed, a large book chain in several cities in the country. The edition is apparently an Oxford English language book with a simplified text. Originally published in 2009, it was reissued in 2024.



## **MICHAEL SLATER**

On a sad note, we have to report the death of Michael Slater, MBE who died at the end of November. He was for many years the doyen of Dickens studies and a good friend of the WCS, always happy to offer his extensive advice and expertise.

## **JARNDYCE CALENDAR**

Apart from their regular catalogues, specialist booksellers Jarndyce, have just produced their 2026 calendar. Good to note that the illustration for the month of February includes amongst the display of books a copy *Blind Love* in the Chatto & Windus series of the *Piccadilly Novels*.

## **FUTURE PUBLICATIONS**

Several publications are in the pipeline but not in time for this mailing. At the moment Wilkie's last diary from 1889 is being transcribed for publication by our chairman Andrew Gasson. It is a fascinating insight into Wilkie's medication and his final few months. WCS Secretary Paul Lewis is working on a pamphlet of all the verse that Wilkie wrote – or at least all that we know of. Both should be with you early in 2026.

After that we hope to publish Wilkie's 5200-word tribute to his friend the French actor Charles Fechter who died in 1879. It has never been republished since its first and only appearance in America in 1882. Wilkie was very fond of Fechter and collaborated with him on several occasions. But he pulls no punches in describing his defects! It is a lively and fascinating piece of Wilkie's non-fiction writing.

Also in 2026 we hope to publish the next update to the *Collected Letters*. Relatively few unrecorded letters have turned up recently so this is likely to be later in the year.

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