



## *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**

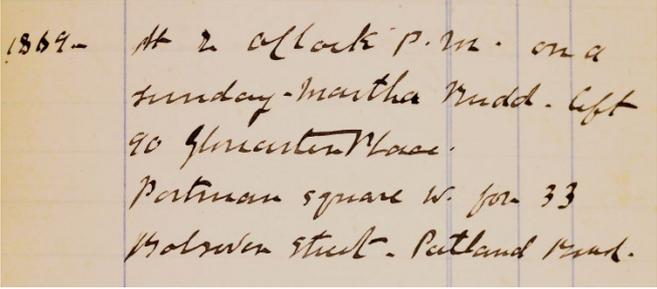
#### **MARTHA RUDD'S EARLY DAYS**

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

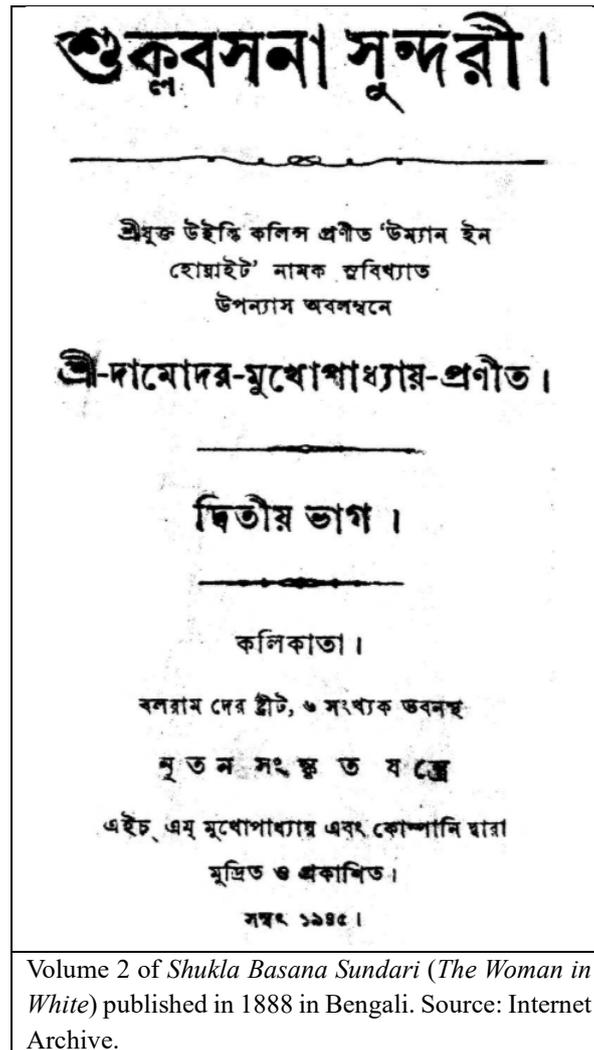
A boasting postscript – which you will understand. Only think! My novels are to be translated into the Bengali language and read by the native inhabitants of India!!!!

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.

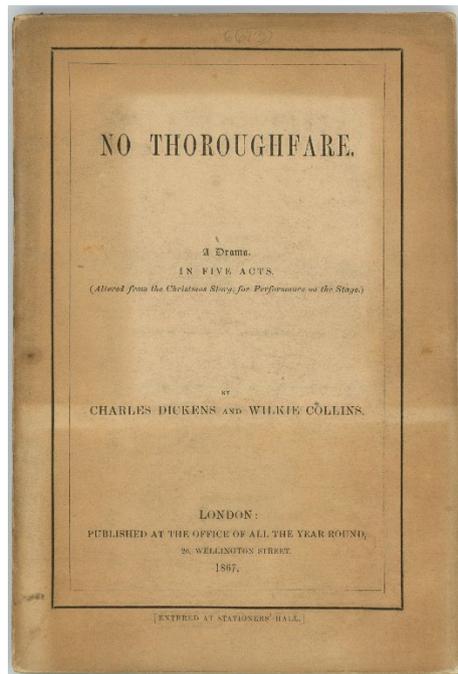
## **THE VERSE AND PLAYS OF CHARLES DICKENS**

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**

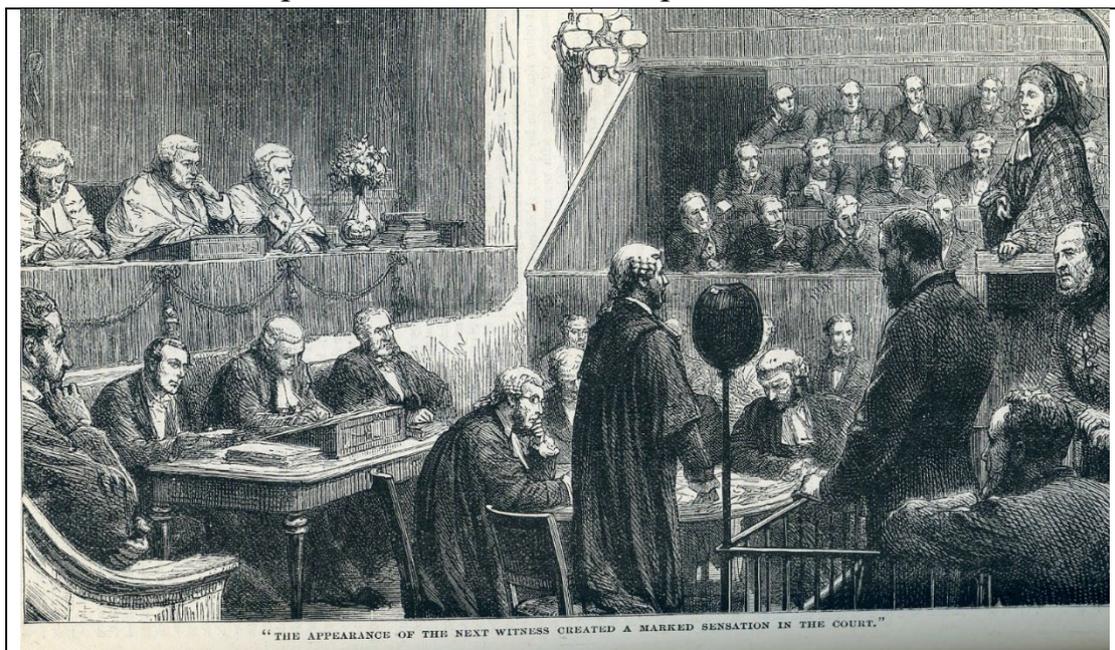
This year gives us the minor, sesquicentennial anniversary of the publication of *The Law and the Lady* in 1875. The novel is essentially a detective story featuring one of Collins's resourceful female characters, Valeria Woodville/Macallan. She is an atypical Victorian heroine with dark hair and eyes 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.

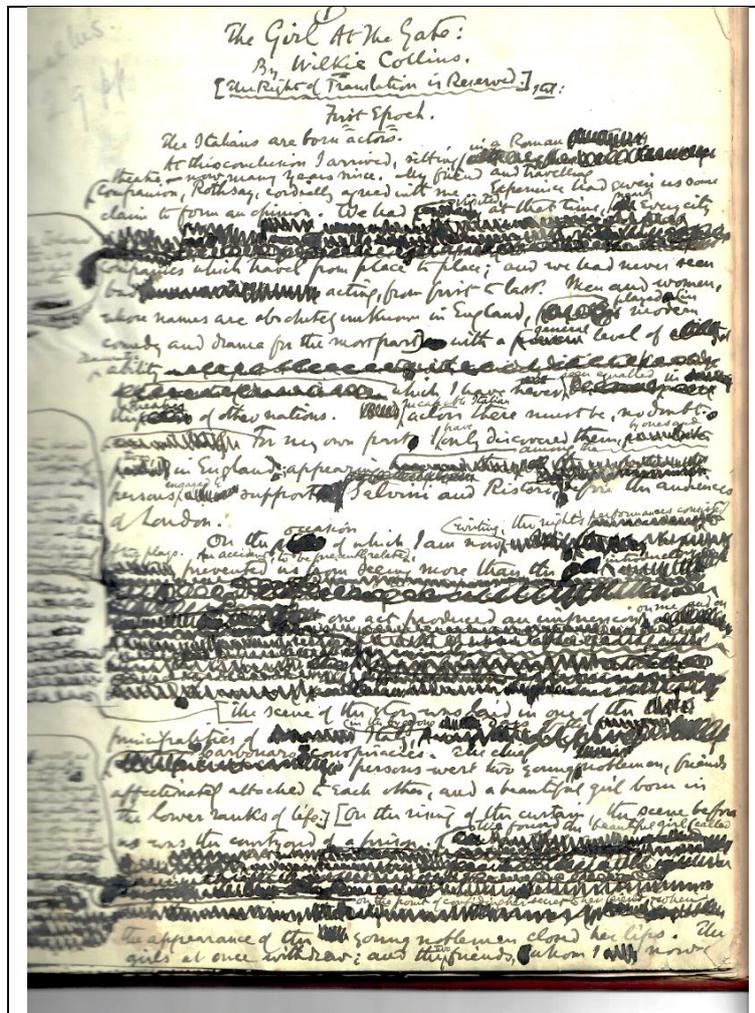
The article by Andrew Gasson which accompanies this Newsletter, ‘The Law and the Lady and The Trial of Madeleine Smith,’ was originally published in *Little Doric*, the Journal of the Aberdeen Branch of the Dickens Fellowship, May 2025, Vol. II, No. 3. It is reproduced with their kind permission.



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.

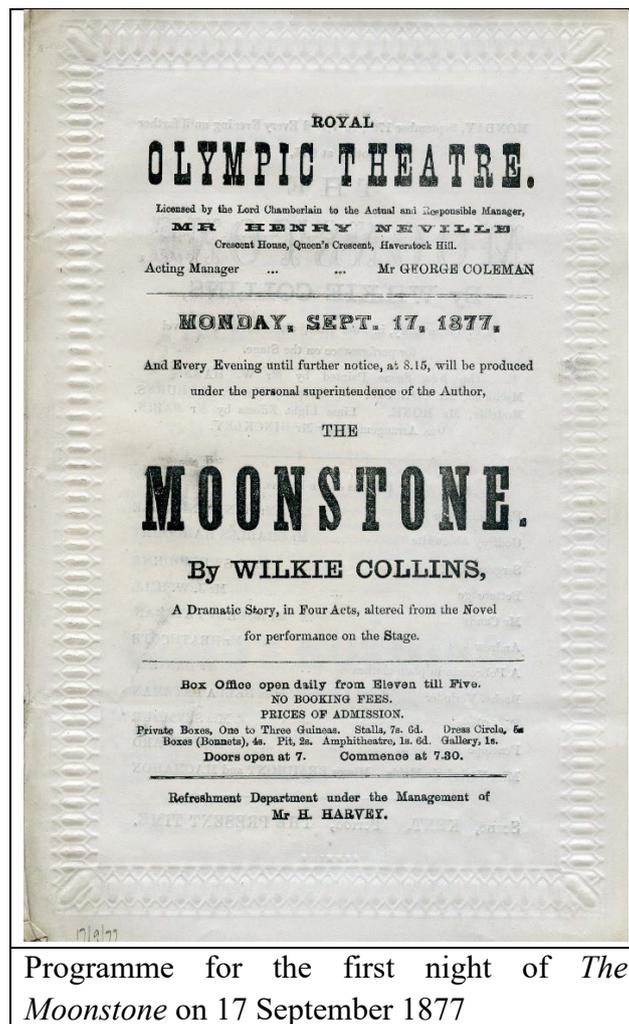
### **A GREAT COLLABORATION**

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.



Programme for the first night of *The Moonstone* on 17 September 1877

## 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

[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)