



Jules Verne and the Heroes of Birkenhead.

Part 19 The Secrets of Dakkar's Grotto.



The Lady's Cave Hilbre Island
(Dakkar's Grotto)

UBI FIDES IBI LUX ET ROBUR



Jules Verne and the Heroes of Birkenhead.

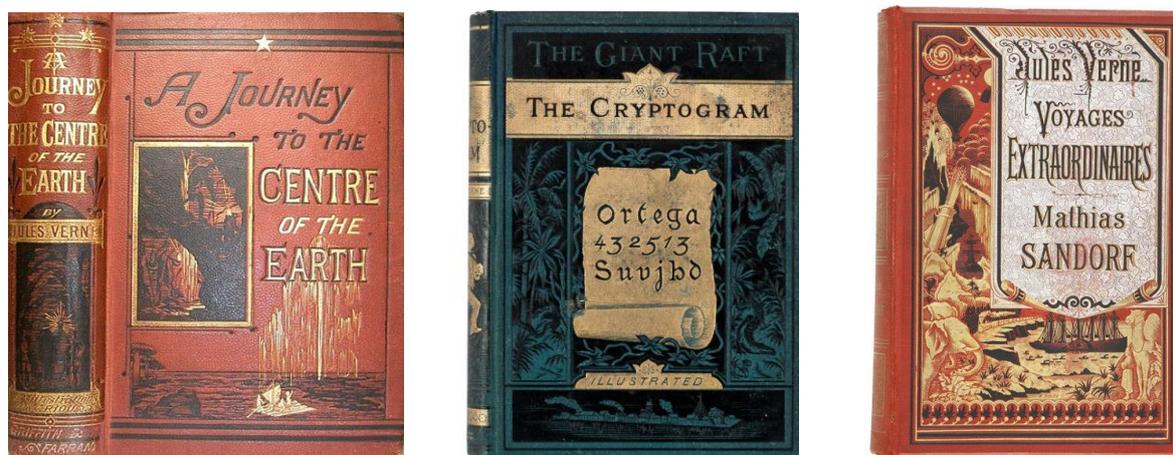
Part 19

The Secrets of Dakkar's Grotto.

The use of secret ciphers and codes in romantic novels gained popularity throughout the nineteenth century – it was embraced by many Victorian writers such as Edgar Allan Poe, Bram Stoker, Jules Verne, Rudyard Kipling, and Sir Arthur Conan Doyle.

To this day the tradition of secret ciphers lives on in the major movie series of *Indiana Jones*, *Harry Potter*, *Night at the Museum*, and many others.

Three of Jules Verne's novels in the *Voyages Extraordinaires* employ different types of cryptograms / secret ciphers, these are *A Journey to the Centre of the Earth* (1864), *The Cryptogram* (1881) and *Mathias Sandorf* (1885). These ciphers are all eventually solved by Jules Verne as part of the overall adventure.



In the text of the *Cryptogram* Jules Verne refers directly to Edgar Allan Poe's short story *The Gold Bug* (1843) as being the main inspiration for his novel. *The Gold Bug* was the most widely read of Poe's works in the nineteenth century and is credited with helping popularise both cryptograms and secret writing.

Edgar Allan Poe's *The Gold Bug* will return to play two very contrasting but significant roles as our own adventure story takes one twist after another.

During World War II, the military experts of the United States would certainly give Jules Verne praise for his use of secret codes.

When we look at into the types of cryptograms other writers of romantic tales and detective stories have employed, we must recognise that he stands head and shoulders above them all, not excluding even Poe...

...Verne's genius calls for admiration and respect – even on the part of professional cryptographers...

Jules Verne as Cryptographer Lt Colonel William. F Friedman. *The Signal Corps Bulletin* (1940)

Ж.АКІІІН	ХНАТНТТ	НТТТІБТ
НУТННУУ	ННТТТТТ	НІТБАГТ
ГТНТТТТ	ТТТТТТТ	НТТТТТТ
ТТТТТТТ	ТТТТТТТ	ТТТТТТТ

The Cryptogram of Arne Saknussem from Jules Verne's *A Journey to the Centre of the Earth* (1864).

In *A Journey to the Centre of the Earth* (1864) the 16th century explorer Arne Saknussem's secret message is written in a runic Icelandic manuscript as a 'transposition cipher' and must be translated from Latin and read backwards before it can lead Professor Lidenbrock to the Icelandic cave that in turn will lead him to the centre of the earth.

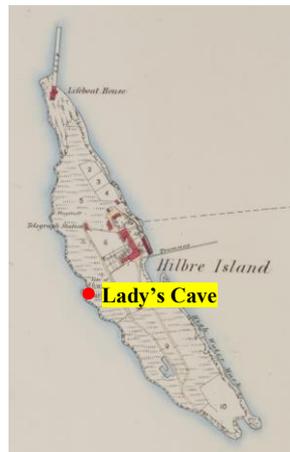
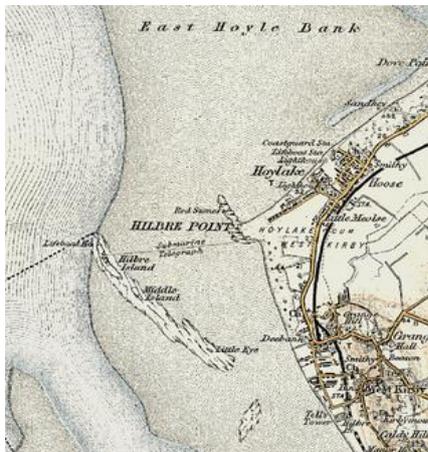
Arne Saknussem's name inscribed as a cipher in stone, greets Professor Lidenbrock at the entrance to a subterranean ocean inhabited by dinosaurs. Devotees of the 1959 movie *Journey to the Centre of the Earth* will remember James Mason and Pat Boone discovering a rather simpler message described as *The Three Notches of Arne Saknussem*.



Arne Saknussem! – Jules Verne (1864) and James Mason (1959).

In the 1970's the movie *Journey to the Centre of the Earth* was shown so many times on British television that the phrase 'Arne Saknussemm' became a running joke between myself and my brother Ken, it would be used whenever we saw any strange marks on an old piece of brick or stonework.

The phrase would assume a totally different meaning some forty years later as we crossed over the sands of the Dee Estuary to Hilbre Island to look at the strange inscriptions on the wall of the Lady's Cave on Hilbre Island – or in Jules Verne's world – Dakkar's Grotto – the final resting place of Captain Nemo and the *Nautilus*.



The telegraphic cable running from Bidston Hill to Hilbre Island and the Lady's Cave.

Our walk across the sands followed the rough line of the Bidston Hill to Hilbre Island telegraphic cable - the inspiration for Captain Nemo's cable that leads the colonists of Mysterious Island to Dakkar's Grotto and the *Nautilus*.



Almost 40 years earlier, I had entered the Lady's Cave for the first time.

Always the geographer, my eyes had looked at the backwall of the cave and seen a whole history of people's names carved deeply into the sandstone, most of those perpetrators, of course, having long since left us.

The Lady's Cave on Hilbre Island

I distinctly remember three names that stood out.

The Secrets of Dakkar's Grotto.



J RUSSELL



Sir John Scott Russell (1808-82)

UBI FIDES IBI LUX ET ROBUR

Sir John Scott Russell (1808-82)

- BUILT THE GREAT EASTERN IN PARTNERSHIP WITH ISAMBARD KINGDOM BRUNEL-
- DISCOVERED THE WAVE LINE THEORY OF SHIP DESIGN-
- INFLUENCED THE DESIGN OF CAPTAIN NEMO'S NAUTILUS-

These three names, engraved into the sandstone were not ‘normal’ carvings, as they were either too deeply indented at the very back of the cave, or, in the case of one particular pair of inscriptions they were improbably too high up and too intricately arranged.

The creators of this artwork could not visualise how far into the future that curious people such as myself would muse over their writings. Or perhaps, just perhaps one or two of these artisans were only too aware that they were leaving a message in the sandstone bedrock to be interpreted hundreds of years into the future, or at least as long as the relentless forces of the waves, tides and rockfalls would allow.

The names carved in the rock had remained a strange memory for thirty-five years, until on 7th September 2018 I decided to look at all these strange inscriptions once again.

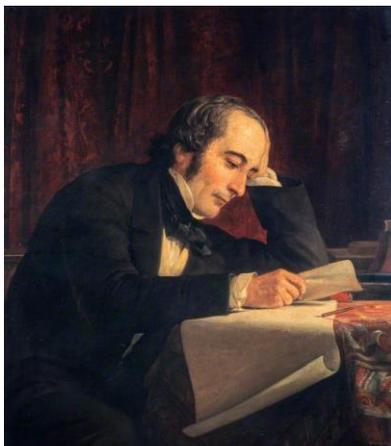
The first engraving from a certain *J Russell* 1855 had been so deeply carved into the sandstone at the back of the cave that more than 160 years later it could still be easily discerned.

Even higher up were carved the initials *W.C* .

J RUSSELL 1855, Lady’s Cave, Hilbre Island ... and a more recent W.C .



I thought how, despite a thousand storms, over 100,000 high tides and millions of waves breaking over these letters, the forces of nature had still failed to wear them away. Perhaps the people who wrote these messages had seen dates from centuries before and they knew exactly how long their own messages would last. In geology this is known as the *Principle of Uniformitarianism* where in this case the beating of the waves erodes away the rock at basically the same rate as in the past.



So, who was *J Russell* and why is the date 1855 important?

In terms of fitting our story - the inscription is most likely to refer to Sir John Scott Russell (1808 -1882), who between 1854 and 1859 worked with Isambard Kingdom Brunel to design and build his greatest ship – the partly Birkenhead financed *Great Eastern*.

Sir John Scott Russell (1808-82).

The *Great Eastern* and submarine telegraphic cables are of course a recurring theme in the works of Jules Verne. In the novel *Mysterious Island* Captain 'Nemo's telegraphic cable runs directly to this cave and to his submarine the *Nautilus*.

The SS *Great Eastern* was built at the Millwall Iron Works, London and was originally named '*The Leviathan*', at 22,500 tons and nearly 700 feet long, she was to hold the title of the world's largest ship for the next 40 years.

John Scott Russell (left), Isambard Kingdom Brunel (second right) and Prime Minister Lord Derby (right) at the launch of the SS *Great Eastern* in 1858.



John Scott Russell's work on the *Leviathan* bankrupted his shipyard in the year prior to launching and only the financial input of the engineer Thomas Brassey of Birkenhead finally resulted in the ship's completion in 1858. The stress of building the *Great Eastern* took its toll on Isambard Kingdom Brunel who died just a matter of weeks after the ship's launch.

John Scott Russell had previously developed the 'wave-line theory' method of ship hull design, whereby the sinusoidal bow shape minimised wave resistance. The design became very popular with many 19th century clipper ships and racing yachts – most notably the world-famous yacht *America* in 1851.



America's outstanding performance in beating all comers at the Isle of Wight in 1851 gave rise to the modern yachting competition known today as The America's Cup.

The Racing Yacht *America*. (1851)

John Scott Russell also discovered the physical properties of waves known as the 'wave of translation' also known as 'solitary waves' or 'solitons'.

In 1855 the first outline of Sir John Scott Russell's wave line hull for the *Great Eastern* would have been taking shape at Millwall on the River Thames – the *Great Eastern* on the Thames would later be described by Jules Verne in his 1859 novel *Backwards to Britain*.

In his 2017 article in *Physics Today*, the naval architect and historian Larrie Ferreiro acknowledges Sir John Scott Russell's contribution to the design of both the *Great Eastern* and to Captain Nemo's *Nautilus*.

... one of *Great Eastern's* passengers, *Jules Verne*, was so impressed with the ship's wave-line hull that it inspired a passage in his novel *Twenty Thousand Leagues Under the Seas*.

He describes his fictional submarine *Nautilus* as having "lines . . . sufficiently long and its run extensive enough for the displaced water to escape easily and to provide no obstacle to headway."

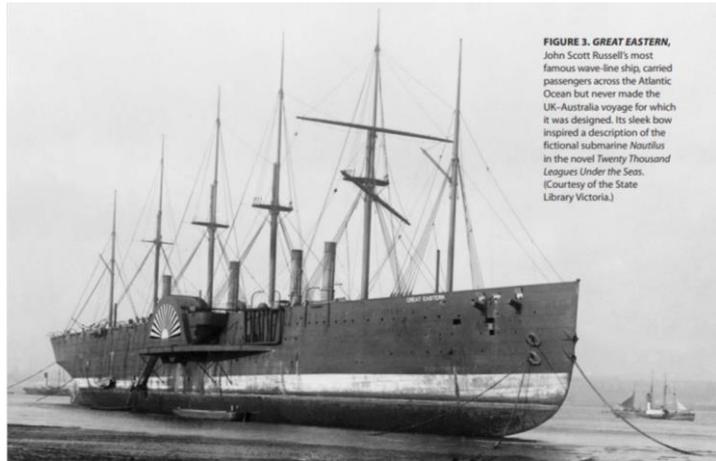
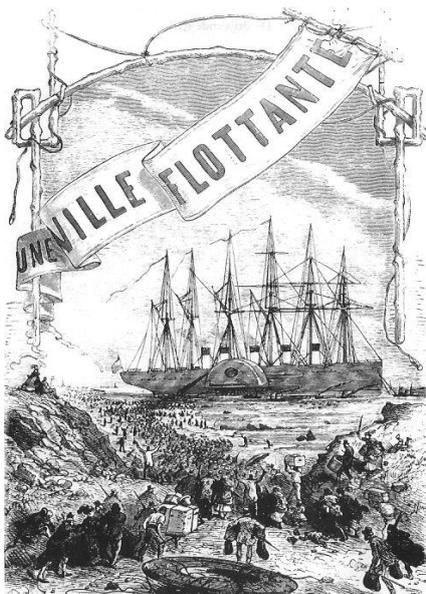


FIGURE 3. GREAT EASTERN, John Scott Russell's most famous wave-line ship, carried passengers across the Atlantic Ocean but never made the UK-Australia voyage for which it was designed. Its sleek bow inspired a description of the fictional submarine *Nautilus* in the novel *Twenty Thousand Leagues Under the Seas*. (Courtesy of the State Library Victoria.)

Clippers, yachts, and the false promise of the wave line.

Larrie Ferreiro and Alexander Pollara. *Physics Today* (July 2017)



After serving first as a passenger ship and then as a cable layer, the *Great Eastern* had been converted back to a passenger liner at New Ferry, Birkenhead for the Paris Exposition of 1867.

The *Great Eastern*, was to travel from Birkenhead to New York on a publicity drive and bring back rich Americans to the Exposition. There would also be one star attraction on board – the famous French author Jules Verne!

***Une Ville Flottante* (1871) by Jules Verne. The *Great Eastern* off New Ferry Birkenhead.**

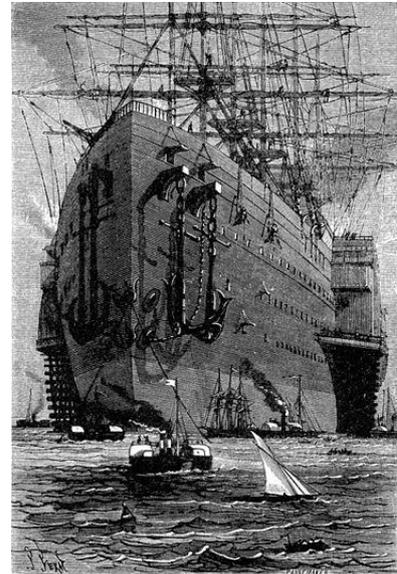
Jules Verne's journey on the *Great Eastern* features in the 1871 novel *Une Ville Flottante (A Floating City)* with Verne telling the story of his March 1867 journey from Birkenhead to New York.

.... *A quarter past one sounded from the Birkenhead clock towers, the moment of departure could not be deferred, if it was intended to make use of the tide.*

.... *There were thousands of spectators on both the Liverpool and Birkenhead sides, and boats laden with sightseers swarmed on the Mersey....*

..... *Our last salutation reached as from the platform of the lighthouse and the walls of the Bastion.....*

The *Great Eastern* and the Birkenhead Ferry Boats from Jules Verne's 'A Floating City' (1871)



The cave date of 1855, however, does not quite match up to 1858, the year of the launch of the *Great Eastern*, unless of course one 'closes the loop' of the last digit.



In 1889 the *Great Eastern* was scrapped on the shores of the River Mersey at New Ferry.

To this day the last remnants of John Scott Russell's wave line hull lie preserved in the Birkenhead mud.

The end of the *Great Eastern*, New Ferry, Birkenhead 1889.

Jules Verne will confirm that the name engraved on the back of Dakkar's Grotto is that of John Scott Russell, he will do it in a contextually baffling passage involving the rhythm of waves written into his novel *A Floating City* (1871) – a novel of course that starts off with the *Great Eastern* leaving the port of Birkenhead.

The passage in the novel will explain all three inscriptions in Dakkar's Grotto, so let us now look at the other two names from the last resting place of Captain Nemo and his *Nautilus*.

The Secrets of Dakkar's Grotto.

The Links to Queen Victoria.



AMORRIS.

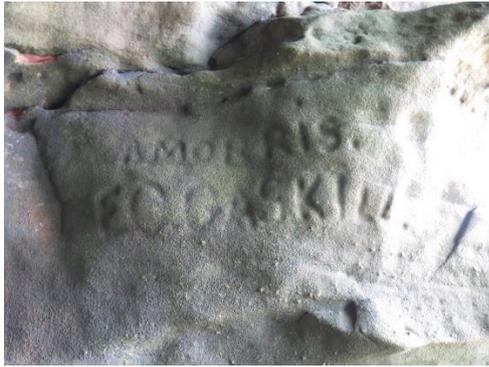


Queen Victoria (1817-1901)

UBI FIDES IBI LUX ET ROBUR

Queen Victoria (1817-1901)

-PATRON OF THE ROYAL MERSEY YACHT CLUB OF TRANMERE BIRKENHEAD-



These obviously come as a pair in what seems to be a formal Victorian fashion. The upper carving is smaller in its lettering and simply said one word, *AMORRIS.* which instantly struck me as being Latin and not a name at all. The full stop at the end and the proximity of the A to the M seemed to confirm that this was one word.

AMORRIS.

After photographing the inscriptions which luckily had survived a nearby rockfall, I looked up the Latin translation of *AMORRIS.* on the modern cable network that is 'Google'.

I typed 'AMORRIS LATIN TRANSLATION' into Google and I found the answer was the Latin for 'LOVE,' but only if you get rid of one 'R', gladly thought I, as I fully embraced the idea of the 'nearly clue' which seems so beloved of Jules Verne and reminiscent of the words spoken by Gerrit Smith when he bailed Jefferson Davis out of prison.

Looking at the engraving again, the spacing between the A and the M is the same as all the other letters, there is also a heavily indented full stop at the end of *AMORRIS.*, the reader is therefore 'drawn to love.' However promising this was to our overall story, I could not help thinking that there was something more to uncover, and again I turned to the internet.

I tried again but this time I typed in *A MORRIS GREAT EASTERN NAUTILUS* into the 'Google' search engine, 97% of whose modern information is transmitted via submarine cables.

To my utter astonishment this is what I discovered on the Royal Museums website at Greenwich, London.



The *Great Eastern* St Ship Lying in the River Mersey.

The inscription carved on the nautilus shell with a common penknife by C. Wood of Liverpool reads;

Engraved nautilus shell depicting the SS 'Great Eastern' and with an inscription to Albert Norris. One side inscribed: 'The Great Eastern St Ship lying in the river Mersey'. The ship is shown with six masts, four funnels and small vessels in the foreground, and the dimensions are listed. 'The embellishments on this shell are executed with a common penknife by C. Wood who had the distinguished honour of presenting a similar shell engraved with the same rude graver to her Majesty the Queen.'

The other side has the Royal Standard and American stars and stripes and the inscription: 'Presented to Mr Albert Norris by Mr George Tansley as a tribute of respect for his kind and gentlemanly behaviour towards myself and all shipmates who had the pleasure of enjoying his company on board the Great Eastern Stm Ship during the two eventful voyages in laying the submarine telegraph cables across the Atlantic..... Signed Capt J Anderson Commander George Beckwith Engineer.'

Royal Museums website at Greenwich

Albert Norris was the second engineer on the *Great Eastern*, but the ship itself, the long association with Verne's eternal favourite, the Transatlantic 'cable' and the stunning Nautilus shell itself, all seem to point towards our story.

A near identical shell dedicated to Mr George Tansley by Mr Albert Norris turned up at Willingham Auction House in Cambridge in June 2018.

Nautilus Shell dedicated to Mr George Tansley.



And yet for Jules Verne *AMORRIS*. is surely a classic 'nearly clue' as an 'M' had to dubiously become an 'N' for us to find Albert Norris, and that is the whole point. In solving most codes we look for the perfect solution and if we do not find it, we dismiss it perhaps we need to show more faith.

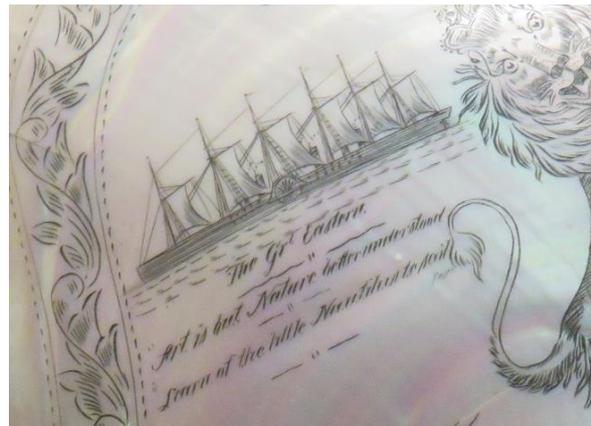


One other link with Queen Victoria, the *Great Eastern* and the *Nautilus* can be found on display in the Walker Art Gallery in Liverpool along with another tantalising clue.

Presentation cup 'Proposed by Her Majesty Queen Victoria' made from a Nautilus shell on electroplated silver stand carved by C. Wood of Liverpool presented to the Mayor of Liverpool Thomas Hutchison in 1862.

The inscription beneath the *Great Eastern* reads;

The Great Eastern. Art is but Nature better understood. Learn of the little Nautilus to sail.



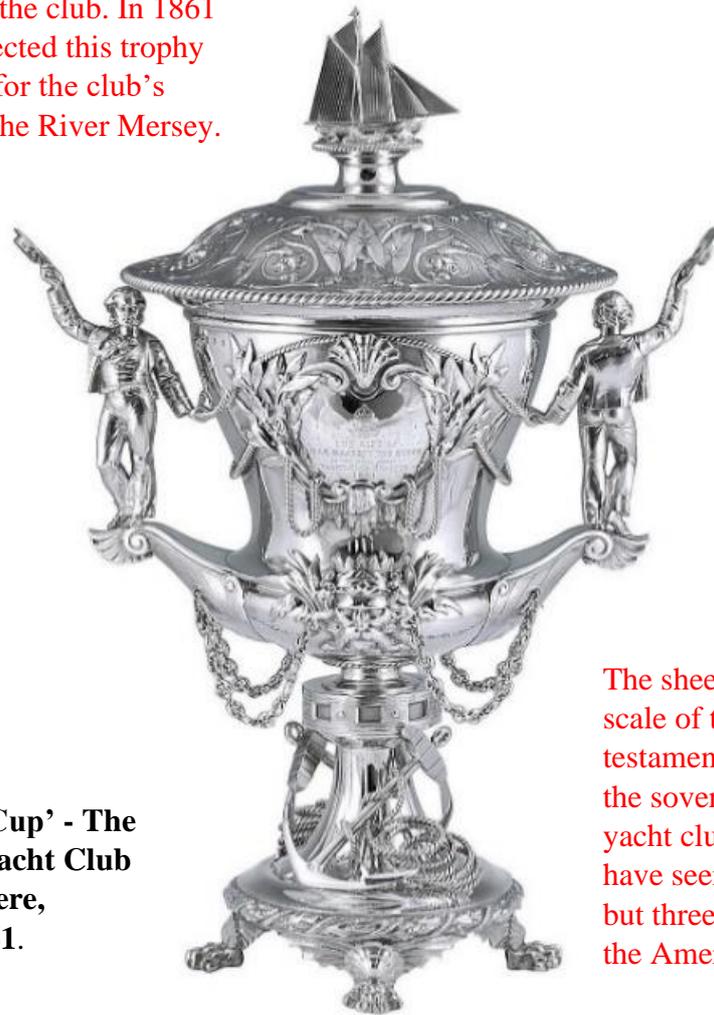
Having travelled on the *Great Eastern* just a few months after the laying of the 1866 submarine telegraph cable across the Atlantic, Jules Verne wrote about Captain James Anderson in his novel *A Floating City* (1871) and it is quite possible that Verne had the acquaintance of both Mr Albert Norris and Mr George Tansley.

Captain Anderson was a sailor of great reputation in English trade. It is to him that we owe the laying of the transatlantic cable. It is true that if he succeeded where his predecessors failed, it was because he operated under very otherwise favourable conditions, having the Great Eastern at his disposal. In any case, this success earned him the title of "sir", which was granted to him by the Queen.

***Une Ville Flottante* (1871) by Jules Verne.**

The beautiful Nautilus shell, its presentation to Queen Victoria and its preservation in the National Museums in Greenwich does suggest that this was an artefact designed to last a very long time, or at least as long as the inscriptions on the wall of Dakkar's Grotto shall survive the relentless onslaught of the waves. Physical stresses will destroy one but we must have faith that the latter will be in the Royal Collection for a very long time and so the mysteries of Jules Verne will be solved somehow within 'our own time'.

Queen Victoria was the patron of The Royal Mersey Yacht Club at Tranmere, Birkenhead and had previously visited the club. In 1861 she personally selected this trophy as a one-off prize for the club's annual regatta on the River Mersey.



'Her Majesties Cup' - The Royal Mersey Yacht Club Regatta, Tranmere, Birkenhead. 1861.

The sheer quality and scale of the silverware is a testament to how highly the sovereign thought of a yacht club which, as we have seen, played not one but three pivotal roles in the American Civil War.

It is a magnificent work of Art with the Royal Cypher engraved upon the sides and was presented to the winner Mr Charles Tennant Couper of Glasgow in his cutter 'Aeolus'.

The engraving on the trophy reads;

'The gift of Her Majesty the Queen to the Royal Mersey Yacht Club Regatta 1861'



At this point, it may be timely to look at the close relationship that many of the protagonists in our mid nineteenth century adventure had with Queen Victoria and the Royal Family - starting with The Dingle Group of abolitionists.

Queen Victoria on board the Birkenhead ferry boat 'Claughton'. (1886). (Royal Collection).

The abolitionist Peer Lord Denman, father of Margaret Cropper of Dingle Bank, Liverpool was one of the most trusted members of the young Queen Victoria's inner circle and was Lord Chief Justice, the most elevated legal mind in the British Empire, between 1832 and 1850.



Thomas Denman, First Baron Denman (1779-1854)



Lord Denman's son the Rear Admiral Joseph Denman (1810-74), brother of Margaret Cropper of Dingle Bank, Liverpool was the burner of the slave forts of Sierra Leone and the man who administered the last rights to slavery's hated Middle Passage. Joseph Denman became Queen Victoria's groom in waiting and commanded her Royal Yacht *Victoria and Albert* between 1853-60.

Rear Admiral Joseph Denman (1810-74)

The abolitionist William Wilson of Price's Candles of Birkenhead was granted the Royal Warrant by Queen Victoria and the company still holds it today.

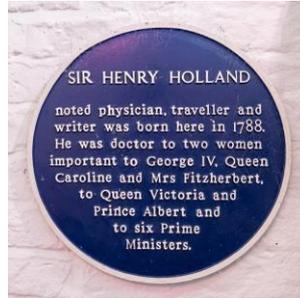
In Jules Verne's *Mysterious Island*, the colonists use Wilson's unique patent to make their own stearine candles.

The wedding of Queen Victoria to Prince Albert and Price's candles (far right).





Sir Henry Holland was the Royal Physician to Queen Victoria and six Prime Ministers. He was the cousin of both Charles Holland of Vale House New Brighton and the novelist Elizabeth Gaskell.



Sir Henry Holland (1788-1873) and his commemorative plaque at Knutsford, Cheshire.

Our fifth and final novel will largely be set in and around Charles Holland's home at Vale House, Vale Park, New Brighton.



Liscard Vale House c1860.

Our fifth novel will use the same Jules Verne 'Wirral in metaphor' creative writing technique that we have already seen in *Mysterious Island* (1874) and *The Floating Island* (1895).

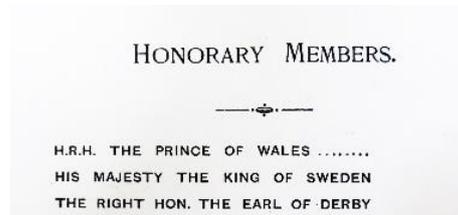


The novelist Mrs Gaskell will, via one of her many associates and the codeword 'cable' lead us directly to our fifth novel.

Vale House still stands today in Vale Park, New Brighton.

Liscard Vale House, New Brighton.

Queen Victoria's eldest son Bertie, Prince of Wales, later King Edward VII was an honorary member of the Royal Mersey Yacht Club of Tranmere, Birkenhead (see below), situated at Rock Ferry slipway. Rock Ferry slipway plays Jules Verne's *Flotsam Point* in the *Mysterious Island*.



Edward Prince of Wales, later King Edward VII (1841-1910) and his 1873 membership of The Royal Mersey Yacht Club of Tranmere, Birkenhead.



John Cumming Macdona's dog Tell, immortalised in stone at Tell's Tower, West Kirby, plays the role of Top the dog in Jules Verne's *Mysterious Island*. Tell's pup, Hope was presented to Alexander, Princess of Wales, later Queen Alexander, wife of King Edward VII.

The family of John Cumming Macdona and 'Tell'.

Queen Victoria's third son, Arthur, Duke of Connaught (1850-1942) was the patron of the Royal Liverpool Golf Club at Hoylake, the *Switzerland modelled in sand* on Jules Verne's *Mysterious Island* where Captain Nemo placed Cyrus Harding for safe keeping after he fell from the escapees' balloon.

As a friend of Robert Baden Powell, The Duke of Connaught also opened the World Scout Jamboree at Arrowe Park, Birkenhead in 1929. Arrowe Park played the role of the *Falls River* in *Mysterious Island*.

Prince Arthur Duke of Connaught (1850-1945)





Queen Victoria's grandson King George V, opened the pathway, known as 'King Georges Way,' on the southern flank of Bidston Hill on Wednesday 25th March 1914.

**King George's Way
Bidston Hill.**

King George V (1865-1936)



This route plays a major part in Jules Verne's novel *Mysterious Island* as the 'southern flank' of Mount Franklin, it also features as a major routeway in our fifth novel.

King George's Way, Bidston Hill.

Intriguingly King George V did not attend the opening of the footpath personally but opened it via an electric signal from the Town Hall at Hamilton Square, Birkenhead. possibly via the electric telegraph from Bidston Observatory that connected to the Birkenhead One O'clock Gun at Woodside.

In Jules Verne's *A Floating Island* (1895) a telegraph wire is connected from the town hall (based on Birkenhead Town Hall) to the observatory (based on Bidston Observatory) to fire a cannon at the observatory.

Commemorative medal struck to celebrate the visit of King George V and Queen Mary to Birkenhead.



In Jules Verne's *Mysterious Island* the Birkenhead telegraph to the One O'clock Gun was represented by the colonists' telegraph between the Corral and Granite House.



The First Earl Brassey (1836-1918), the son of the engineer Thomas Brassey (inspiration for the engineer Cyrus Harding in *Mysterious Island*) and was another member of the Royal Mersey Yacht Club of Tranmere, Birkenhead.

Brassey, in the true style of Jules Verne was the first person to sail around the world in his own private yacht. Brassey also served as Lord in Waiting to Queen Victoria from 1893 to 1895.

The First Earl Brassey (1836-1918)

Edward Smith Stanley the 14th Earl of Derby (1799-1869) of Knowsley Hall, Liverpool was Queen Victoria's Prime Minister of the United Kingdom at the time of both of Jules Verne's documented visits to Birkenhead in 1859 and 1867.

In the last year of his life, he was visited by one of the real-life characters from *Mysterious Island*.

Edward Smith Stanley the 14th Earl of Derby (1799-1869).



His son Edward Stanley, the 15th Earl of Derby was an honorary member of the Royal Mersey Yacht Club of Tranmere, Birkenhead at the time of the writing of *Mysterious Island*. He was Queen Victoria's Foreign Secretary from 1866-68 and 1874-78.

The Derby family's role in our adventure, which started in the time of William Shakespeare, will last well into the mid - twentieth century.

Edward Henry Stanley 15th Earl of Derby (1826-93)

Despite all these disparate links with the very highest ranks of British society, it will fall to their counterparts in the United States to lead us back to Birkenhead and provide more evidence of a secret alliance in literature between the United States, Britain and France.

The Secrets of Dakkar's Grotto.

Elizabeth Cleghorn Gaskell



EC.GASKILL.



Elizabeth Cleghorn Gaskell

(1810-65)

UBI FIDES IBI LUX ET ROBUR

Elizabeth Gaskell (1810-65)

-THE CONNECTING THREAD TO OUR FIFTH NOVEL-

And so, we come to the third name carved in Dakkar's Grotto, that of *EC. GASKILL*. If we type this into the 'Google' search engine, the modern version of the communications cable instantly come up with the English author Elizabeth Cleghorn Gaskell, of whom we are very well acquainted due to her strong links with Birkenhead, the authors Harriet Beecher Stowe and Charles Dickens together with the abolitionists John Cropper and William Wilson.

Time again to invoke the Birkenhead Motto;

Ubi Fides Ibi Lux et Robur - Where there is faith there is light and strength.

So where shall we find the answer to *J. RUSSELL, AMORRIS*. and *EC.GASKILL*.?

All three engravings are 'nearly correct' in fitting with our story, they either miss a number or a letter, and it is this uniformity of error which struck me as being an almost conscious act – I was not, however, able to find a viable solution to the cipher for another three months.

And here is the complexity of Jules Verne – the solution to the mystery of *J RUSSELL, AMORRIS*. and *EC. GASKILL*. can in fact be found in the random thoughts of the character 'Fabian' in *A Floating City* (1871).

In the semi-autobiographical novel, Jules Verne encounters his old friend Fabian at Tranmere, Birkenhead, just returned from India, full of remorse and self-doubt, particularly over a mysterious woman.

Fabian.



In Chapter XI, after leaving Birkenhead, Fabian stares into the paddle wheel waves of the *Great Eastern*, the ship designed on the principles of John Scott Russell's 'wave line theory'.

Fabian was looking at the magic of the waves without speaking. What did he see in this liquid mirror, which gave scope to the most capricious flights of imagination? Was some vanished face passing before his eyes, and bidding him a last farewell? Did he see a drowning shadow in these eddying waters? He seemed to me sadder than usual, and I did not ask him the cause of his grief....

.... Thus we remained leaning over the sea, and as I turned my head I saw the great paddles emerging under the regular action of the engine.



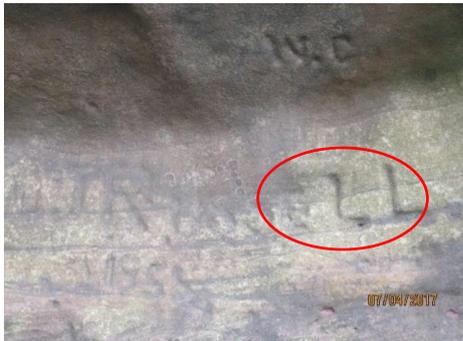
Once Fabian said to me, 'this track is indeed magnificent. One would think that **the waves were amusing themselves with tracing letters! Look at the l's and the e's. Am I deceived? No, they are indeed always the same letters.'**

Fabian's excited imagination saw in these eddyings that which it wished to see. **But what could these letters signify?**

What remembrance did they call forth in Fabian's mind?

Fabian and the mystery woman.

The 'liquid mirror' may refer to a mirror galvanometer, a device patented by Lord Kelvin in 1858 to amplify the signal waves of the current from the 1857 Birkenhead transatlantic cable and convert them into letters. Jules Verne is asking a direct question, - *But what could these letters signify?*



Look at the l's and the e's.



Am I deceived?

Look at the l's and the e's.

And as the waves of 100,000 tides have long since amused themselves with tracing the *l's and the e's* of *J RUSSELL* 1855 on the back wall of Dakkar's Grotto, so can we now confirm that this inscription does indeed refer to Sir John Scott Russell, the designer of the *SS Great Eastern* and the inventor of wave line theory?

But what about *AMORRIS.* and *EC. GASKILL.*?

Am I deceived – not anymore, the AM is the actual deception, and it should read AN as in A NORRIS and the I is also a deception as it should read as an E as in E.C. GASKELL.

The secret of Dakkar's Grotto has been revealed. It suggests that Jules Verne worked with some of the great authors and scientists of the day, and that includes the novelist Elizabeth Cleghorn Gaskell, who we know already had close links to Jules Verne's favourite author Charles Dickens, together with Harriet Beecher Stowe and the Cropper abolitionists of Dingle Bank.

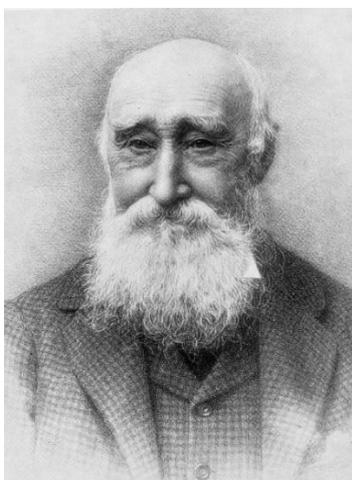
Our fifth novel will link directly to Elizabeth Cleghorn Gaskell and pay tribute yet again to the abolitionist James Cropper by immortalising in print that stunningly beautiful part of Dingle Bank in Liverpool that the extended Dingle Group of abolitionists knew so well – a group that included at least two members who were both close to Queen Victoria - Lord Denman and his son, Admiral Joseph Denman.

Elizabeth Gaskell was one of the great socialites of early Victorian Literature and her wider circle of friends included many other writers, social reformers, and scientists.

Her extended family also included the Wedgwood family of abolitionists in the Stoke potteries as well as the world-famous scientist Charles Darwin.

Wedgwood Pottery “Am I not a man and brother”

Josiah Wedgwood pendant 1787



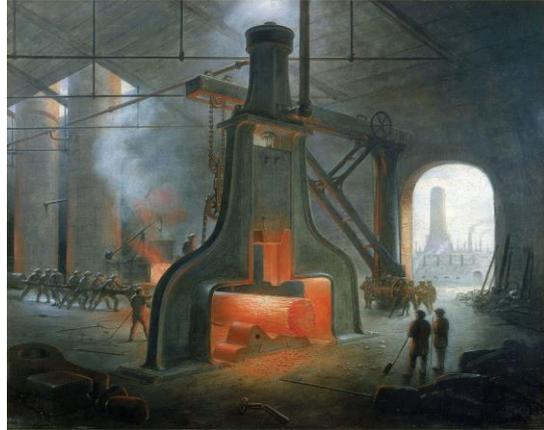
Holbrooke Gaskell (1813-1909), a prominent chemist, industrialist, and plant collector, was born in Wavertree, Liverpool, he was a cousin of Elizabeth Gaskell's husband, William Gaskell and a member of the Royal Mersey Yacht Club at Tranmere, Birkenhead.

His son Holbrook Gaskell II later became Rear Commodore of the Royal Mersey Yacht Club.

Holbrooke Gaskell (1813-1909)

Holbrooke Gaskell also helped found Liverpool's famous orchid collection. In the mid nineteenth century Gaskell was the victim of a celebrated case of industrial espionage.

As a partner in Naysmiths, Gaskell & Co of Bridgewater, Gaskell showed plans of Naysmith's famous steam hammer to a delegation from Le Creusot Ironworks in France, who rather than buying the product as he hoped, simply copied the idea.



James Naysmith's Steam Hammer.

A bitter and protracted public dispute then broke out between Naysmiths and Le Creusot.

The words of Jules Verne and Captain Nemo would therefore come back to haunt Holbrooke Gaskell.

*“But how could you construct this wonderful Nautilus in secret?”
‘Each separate portion M. Arronax was brought from different parts of the globe. The keel was forged at Creusot,*

Jules Verne *Twenty Thousand Leagues Under the Sea* (1869)

The serialisation of Elizabeth Gaskell's last novel, *Wives and Daughters*, began in August 1864, however Elizabeth Gaskell sadly died of a heart attack in 1865 and *Wives and Daughters* was published posthumously in 1866.

Gaskell may have left one intriguing and unique Birkenhead clue in her final novel.

After he had put up his horse, he went in by the backway to the house; the “House” on this side, the “Towers” at the front.

He saw his patient give his directions to the housekeeper, and then went out, with a rare wildflower in his hand, to find one of the ladies Tranmere in the garden ...

... how lovely the Towers must look in spring.

***Wives and Daughters* (1866) by Elizabeth Cleghorn Gaskell.**



... how lovely the Towers must look in spring.

The Towers at Tranmere Village, Birkenhead. c1870.

If Jules Verne was to immortalise Elizabeth Gaskell by carving her name in stone in Dakkar's Grotto, then such a famous name as E.C. Gaskell would of course arouse suspicion, and so Verne would spell it E.C. Gaskill – a simple deception, that would divert attention for 160 years.

The abolitionist novelist and social reformer Elizabeth Gaskell still has one major part to play in our adventure and she will take us via the history of Cyrus Field's 1857 cable, directly to our fifth novel, also set in Birkenhead, West Kirby and New Brighton. It is for this reason that the inscriptions in Dakkar's Grotto demand so much attention.

Our fifth novel is set partly around E. C. Gaskell's sister in law's house at Vale Park New Brighton (as well as Dingle Bank – the home of James Cropper) – so it does seem very probable that the inscriptions in Dakkar's Grotto – the last resting place of Captain Nemo and his *Nautilus* do go some way in implicating several abolitionist writers in our story.

Gaskell will also be linked by a codeword to our fifth novel – that codeword will be 'cable'.

And finally, in his own humorous way, Jules Verne would remind us as to just how difficult it had been to put up those inscriptions on a high backwall in a small cave on an island such as Hilbre. He would do so in another adventure that set off from Birkenhead, this time set in the high Arctic - *The Adventures of Captain Hatteras* (1864).

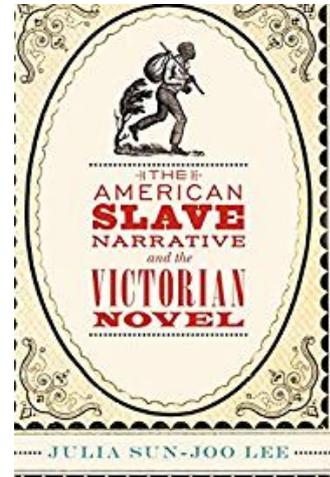
It was really only an islet without importance, arid and deserted; but the old mate was no less delighted to have his name attached to a few rocks lost in the sea. He even wanted to engrave it on an elevated rock, and almost broke his neck doing so.

Jules Verne *The Adventures of Captain Hatteras* (1864)

The USS *Hatteras* was the only Unionist warship sunk by Captain Raphael Semmes and the Birkenhead built CSS *Alabama* during the American Civil War.

Elizabeth Gaskell and Jules Verne – a Common Link to Frederick Douglass.

In her book *The American Slave Narrative and the Victorian Novel* (2010) Julia Sun-Joo Lee cites five authors including Elizabeth Gaskell, Robert Louis Stevenson and Charles Dickens as having hidden slave narratives in their novels.

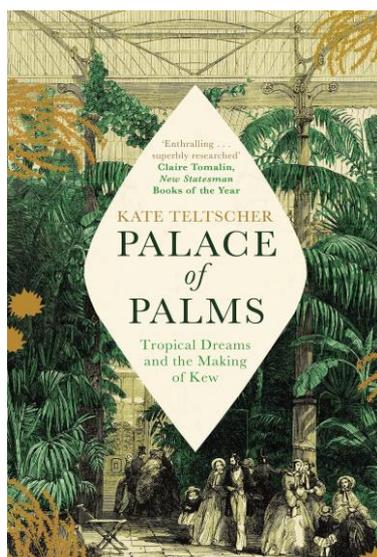


The American Slave Narrative and the Victorian Novel (2010) Julia Sun-Joo Lee.

Each author in this study found the slave narrative compelling for different reasons...For Gaskell, the slave narrative was a source of inspiration for North and South (1855) and its depiction of the English working class and the geographic and economic divisions that plagued the British nation.....

The American Slave Narrative and the Victorian Novel (2010) Julia Sun-Joo Lee.

As we have already seen it is highly likely that Elizabeth Gaskell gained the inspiration for the novel *North and South* from the Birkenhead factory of Price's Candles.



The novelist Elizabeth Gaskell, who was greatly concerned with factory conditions, was much taken with the report, and proposed to Dickens that she write an article on Price's for Household Words. Dickens encouraged her but Wilson (who Gaskell knew) did not want the factory to become a show place, so Gaskell dropped the idea. The following year, however, Gaskell visited the works in the company of the American abolitionist and author Harriet Beecher Stowe (who had recently published Uncle Tom's Cabin). The example of Wilson's regime at Price's, the critic Stephen Gill has argued, influenced Gaskell in the composition of her great Novel North and South (1854-55).

Kate Teltscher. *Palace of Palms: Tropical Dreams and the Making of Kew* (2012).

Professor Paul Giles throws further light on the novel.

Division between the North and South of England as represented in Gaskell's novel, disconcertingly mirrored those between the northern and southern parts of the United States: on both sides of the Atlantic, the industrial north found itself pitted against the more traditional south.

***Virtual Americas: Transnational Fictions and the Transatlantic Imaginary* Paul Giles 2002**



Charles Dickens also suggested the title 'North and South' for Gaskell's novel.

In a letter to Gaskell, Dickens wrote, "North and South appears to me a better name than Margaret Hale. It implies more and is expressive of the opposite people brought face to face in the story."

***The American Slave Narrative and the Victorian Novel* (2010) Julia Sun-Joo Lee.**

Jules Verne would take the 'north-south' link further and make a humorous comparison between the north and south of England and the north and south of the United States in his novel *Mysterious Island* (1874).

On *Mysterious Island* Jules Verne bases the character of the American Unionist and northern engineer Cyrus Harding on the Birkenhead engineer Thomas Brassey – a man who had built a railway to aid the siege of Sebastopol in the Crimean War.



In Mysterious Island Cyrus Harding is described as...

...a first-class engineer, to whom the Government had confided, during the war, the direction of the railways, which were so important at that time. A true northerner
....

Jules Verne, *Mysterious Island* (1874)

Yes ... a 'true northerner' from Birkenhead.

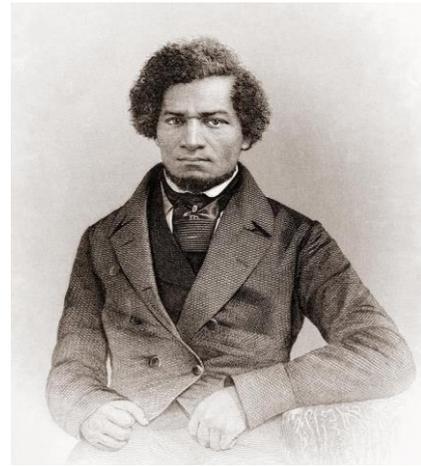
Cyrus Harding at Richmond Omnibus Station / Woodside Ferry, Birkenhead – *Mysterious Island* (1874) by Jules Verne.

In addition to setting his science fiction masterpiece *The Mysterious Island* in Birkenhead and the Wirral Peninsula, Verne will base the entire cast of the book's characters (including, as we have seen, even Top the dog) on real-life figures who have in some way contributed to the rich history of the town of Birkenhead.

The engineer Cyrus Harding is in fact 'played' by two 'actors' who were business partners in real life – the engineer Thomas Brassey of Birkenhead and the American telegraphy entrepreneur Cyrus West Field. Both were instrumental in laying the first successful telegraphic cable across the Atlantic in 1866.

Jules Verne uses the first name of Cyrus as a tribute to Cyrus Field– a stressed first naming technique that copies Elizabeth Cleghorn Gaskell's tribute to Frederick Douglass in her novel *North and South* (1854).

The literary historian Julia Sun-Joo Lee emphasises the influence of the freed American slave Frederick Douglass on the book's character of Frederick Hale, including the use of common first names.



Frederick Douglass 1818-95.

Julia Sun-Joo Lee writes of Gaskell's novel *North and South*

Frederick Hale's story bears some striking resemblances to Frederick Douglass's narrative, beginning with their shared first name. ...Frederick Hale finds refuge in Cadiz, a port city in the heart of Moorish Spain, where he changes his surname in order to preserve his anonymity.

Frederick Douglass likewise changes his name after fleeing the North, adopting "Douglass" to replace his given surname "Bailey". Indeed, Frederick Douglass and Frederick Hale cum Dickinson share not only the same name but the same initials.

The American Slave Narrative and the Victorian Novel (2010) Julia Sun-Joo Lee.

Frederick Douglass as the 'Black O'Connell' will form one of the 'souls' of Captain Nemo staring down upon the captain in judgement from the bedchamber of his Birkenhead built *Nautilus*.

If Elizabeth Gaskell is actively involved in our adventure, then it seems inconceivable that she would not include her friend, her mentor, fellow author, and fellow contributor to *Household Words* – the author Charles Dickens.

The Secrets of Dakkar's Grotto.

The Links to Charles Dickens.



Charles Dickens (1812-1870)

UBI FIDES IBI LUX ET ROBUR

Charles Dickens (1812-70)

-COLLEAGUE AND MENTOR TO THE NOVELIST ELIZABETH CLEGHORN GASKELL-

-SPOKE HIGHLY OF 'BEAUTIFUL' BIRKENHEAD-

Charles Dickens (1812 -1870) was the greatest novelist of the nineteenth century. His works such as *Oliver Twist*, *A Christmas Carol* and *Great Expectations* are still widely read today and form a massive part of our popular culture.



After London, Liverpool was Dickens's favourite town, St George's Hall was his favourite venue, and the Adelphi Hotel was his favourite hotel. Dickens's biographer George Dolby wrote after a reading in Manchester;

Dickens chose to take the train back "the same night to Liverpool," in order to eat and sleep at his favourite hotel, the Adelphi.

Charles Dickens (1812-70)

Charles Dickens first visited Liverpool in 1838 after holidaying in Llangollen, North Wales. In 1842 he made his first visit to America travelling to Boston from Liverpool aboard the Cunard steamship *SS Britannia*. A ship called *Britannia* would later play a significant part in both Jules Verne's novels *The Children of Captain Grant* (1867) and *The Mysterious Island* (1874).

In 1858 Dickens gave the first of his many Liverpool 'Penny Readings' at St George's Hall. During this time he was also a publisher and editor while contributing to journals such as *Household Words* and *All the Year Round* (1858–1870).

The Small Concert Room at St George's Hall, according to Charles Dickens - *the most perfect room in the world.*



In 1859, the same year that Jules Verne first visited Liverpool, Charles Dickens returned to the port to research a book, *The Uncommercial Traveller*. Dickens joined the Liverpool Police Force for a brief time as a special constable and roamed the docks seeking inspiration for the setting of the novel and his character 'Mercantile Jack'.

Charles Dickens was also very familiar with both Birkenhead and New Brighton.

Dicken's first recorded visits to Birkenhead are recorded in letters he sent from the Adelphi Hotel on January 28th, 1862, and April 13th, 1866, on both occasions after performing readings at St Georges Hall.

I slept horribly last night, and have been over to Birkenhead for a little change of air to-day.

Charles Dickens, Tuesday January 28th, 1862.

This is the first very fine day we have had. I have taken advantage of it by crossing to Birkenhead and getting some air upon the water. It was fresh and beautiful.

Charles Dickens

Friday April 13th, 1866.

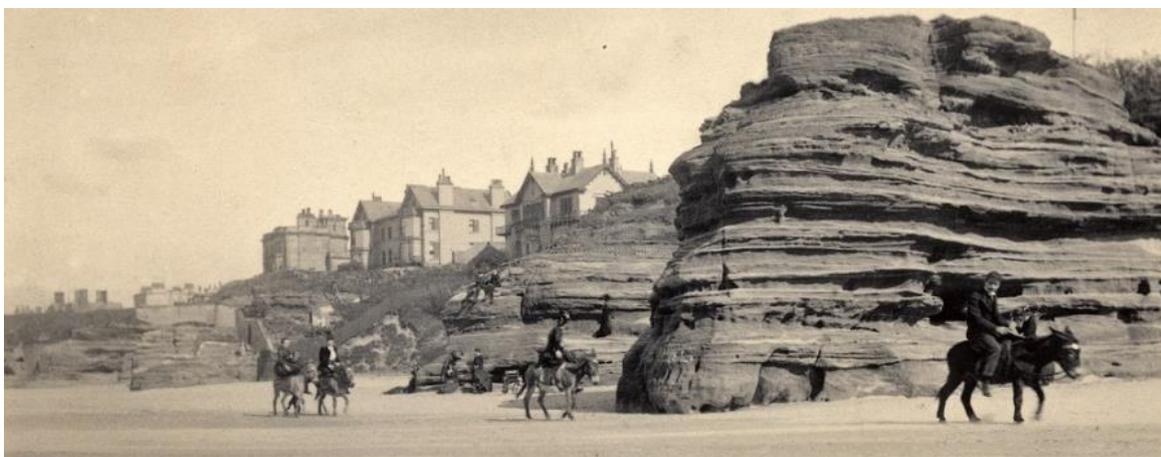
The Birkenhead Ferry c1880.



On Friday 15th February 1867, Dickens was back in Liverpool and writes;

The day has been very fine, and I have turned it to the wholesomest account by walking on the sands at New Brighton all the morning.

Charles Dickens, Friday 15th February 1867



The Red Noses, New Brighton (*The Chimneys* in Jules Verne's *Mysterious Island*).

Jules Verne would say of Charles Dickens.

My favorite author, however, is, and always has been, Dickens. I don't know more than a hundred words of English, and so I have to read him in translation. But I declare to you, sir"— Verne laid his hand upon the table with emphasis—*"that I have read the whole of Dickens at least ten times over."*

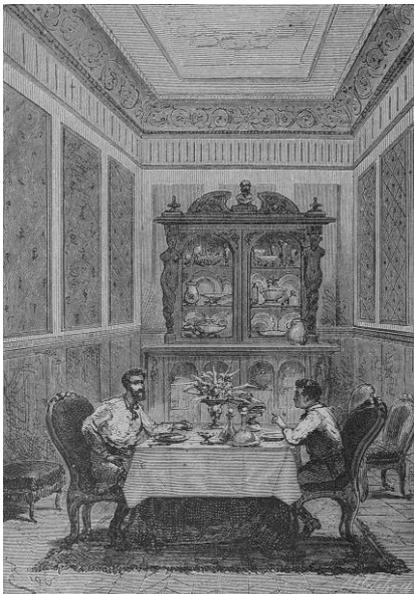
Jules Verne at Home: His Own Account of His Life and Work.

R. H. Sherard in *McClure's Magazine*, January 1894.

Jules Verne also shared Charles Dickens's love of the Adelphi Hotel and stayed there for eight nights from March 18th to 25th 1867 just four weeks after Dickens had vacated the very same hotel. *In Twenty Thousand Leagues Under the Sea* Jules Verne would quote Doctor Arronax aboard Captain Nemo's *Nautilus*;

I could have fancied I was in the dining room of the Adelphi Hotel at Liverpool, or at the Grand Hotel in Paris.

Doctor Arronax *Twenty Thousand Leagues Under the Sea.* Jules Verne (1869).



The first Adelphi Hotel (1826-75)

The Dining Room Aboard the *Nautilus*.

Some two years after the end of the American Civil War, in November 1867, Charles Dickens set sail from Liverpool on the Cunard steamship *Cuba* for his second reading tour of America.

He landed at Boston on the 19th November and spent the rest of the month in a succession of celebratory dinners. Dickens would write from Parker House, Boston on November 21st 1867.

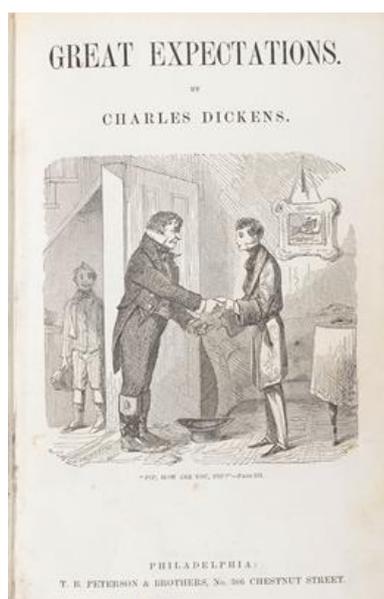
I dine to-day with Longfellow, Emerson, Holmes, and Agassiz. Longfellow was here yesterday. Perfectly white in hair and beard, but a remarkably handsome and notable-looking man. The city has increased enormously in five-and-twenty years. It has grown more mercantile—is like Leeds mixed with Preston, and flavoured with New Brighton; but for smoke and fog you substitute an exquisitely bright light air.

The New York Times December 1867

MR. CHARLES DICKENS.
His First Reading in Boston—A Cordial Welcome and a Complete Success.
Special Dispatch to the New-York Times.
BOSTON, Monday, Dec. 2.
Mr. CHARLES DICKENS' first appearance in America as a reader was the great event here this evening. Tremont Temple, one of the largest halls in the city, was filled in every available part by perhaps one of the most appreciative, fashionable and brilliant audiences ever assembled in New-England. At an early hour, the fortunate holders of the prized tickets of admission flocked into the hall, and before the appointed hour of 8 o'clock, every seat and the side aisles were occupied. The excellent police arrangement prevented any confusion or disturbance attendant upon the grand rush into the hall.

Between 1868 and 1869, Dickens gave a series of "farewell readings" in England, Scotland and Ireland and attended a banquet given in his honour at St George's Hall, Liverpool on the 10th April 1869.

As the tour continued, he suffered bouts of giddiness and fits of paralysis. He suffered a stroke on 18 April 1869 in Chester. He collapsed on 22 April 1869, at Preston in Lancashire, and on doctor's advice, the tour was cancelled. On the 8th of June 1870 Charles Dickens suffered a stroke while working on his last novel *Edwin Drood*, he never regained consciousness and died the next day.



One quote from the character of Pip in Charles Dickens's *Great Expectations* (1861), a novel that Jules Verne must have read *at least ten times over*, may point to the inspiration for the name of the caves in *Mysterious Island* known as *The Chimneys*.

In *Mysterious Island* the name 'chimneys' also doubles up as a metaphor when referring to the smokestacks of Liverpool. Verne may have taken his inspiration from Charles Dickens.

'he appeared to mean up the chimney, but I believe he intended to refer me to Liverpool.'

***Great Expectations* by Charles Dickens (1861)**

Charles Dickens was one of the earliest chroniclers of the evils of slavery in the south of the United States, both in his autobiographical *American Notes* of 1842 and his novel *Martin Chuzzlewit* (1842-44). According to Julia Sun-Joo Lee (2012).

Slavery sickened Dickens and underscored what he saw as the hypocrisy of America, a democracy in which African Americans were treated undemocratically....

...Frederick Douglass, speaking to a British audience in 1846, urged them to “read the chapter on slavery in Dickens’s Notes on America” for proof of the slave’s plight. Two years later Dickens returned the literary favor, recommending that Macready read a copy of Douglass’s narrative before his tour of America.

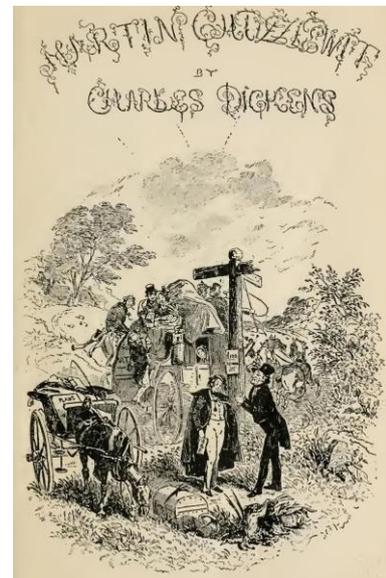
The American Slave Narrative and the Victorian Novel (2010) Julia Sun-Joo Lee.

Charles Dickens would also commit his views to his fictional writing;

*Dickens communicated his abhorrence of slavery far more directly in 1843 in the American chapters of *The Life and Adventures of Martin Chuzzlewit*. Siding with the Abolitionists, Dickens again employs sharp satire and withering sarcasm, but this time in direct defence of the American Negro, a life-long prisoner in a Republic in which, supposedly, all people have been created equal, and are entitled to life, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness.*

Professor Philip V Allingham (2019)

Martin Chuzzlewit by Charles Dickens (1844).



On 20th December 1852 Charles Dickens wrote to the lifelong abolitionist Margaret Cropper of Dingle Bank, Liverpool about the subject of slavery.

Margaret Denman Cropper (1815-99).

... If I wanted to exhibit myself on this subject, I know perfectly well that a few pages of fiery declamation in Household Words would make their way (wafted by the Anti-Slavery Societies) all over the civilised earth. But I want to help the wretched Slave. Now I am morally certain that when public attention has been called to him by pathetic pictures of his sufferings and by the representation in deservedly black colors of his oppressors the way to save him, is, then to step in with persuasion and argument and endeavour to reason with the holders, and shew them that it is best, even for themselves, to consider their duty of abolishing the system.

I can imagine nothing more hopeless than the idea, while they are smarting under attack, of bullying or shaming them. You might as well fire pistols at the Alps. Further than this, I apprehend there will soon be a war in Europe. The only natural alliance for England then, is with America. If the slavery issue should then be so full of green wounds as to hold America aloof, I think I plainly see that the great man of our people will say, "we have thrown this great and powerful friend away for the sake of the Blacks"-and that the Blacks will for a long time afterwards have a very small share of popular sympathy. All these points I take into consideration to the best of my ability, wrong or right...

Letter from Charles Dickens to Margaret Cropper of Dingle Bank, Liverpool - 20th December 1852.

Charles Dickens having written at length on the evils of slavery (certainly enough to earn the praise of Frederick Douglass), feels that *persuasion and argument* was now the best way forward to seek the abolition of slavery in the United States.

Dickens is also prescient in that while he denounces slavery outright in the United States, he believes it was also in Britain's interest to cultivate a 'special relationship' with *this great and powerful friend*.

And it is to that 'Special Relationship' that we now turn – a special relationship that Jules Verne would also wish to encourage.

I do so love America and the Americans. As you are writing for America, be sure to tell them that if they love me – as I know they do, for I receive thousands of letters every year from the States – I return their affection with all my heart. Oh, if I could only go and see them all, it would be the great joy of my life!

Jules Verne at Home: His Own Account of His Life and Work

R. H. Sherard McClure's Magazine, January 1894.

The Secrets of Dakkar's Grotto.

The 'Special Relationship'



UBI FIDES IBI LUX ET ROBUR

The solution to the cipher in Dakkar's Grotto seems to rely on some type of royal patronage. The evidence is mounting that Jules Verne and at least one other world-famous author appear to have been recruited as 'writers and historians in residence' in Birkenhead during and after the American Civil War, and most remarkably seem to have been given access to both sides in the conflict.

The results of these endeavours are seen in some of the most famous adventure novels ever written and they include *Journey to the Centre of the Earth* (1864) *Twenty Thousand Leagues Under the Sea* (1869) *The Mysterious Island* (1874), *The Floating Island* (1895), and our fifth and final novel.



They all have one thing in common ... they are all linked to Birkenhead, the American Civil War, the abolition of slavery and a French author named Jules Verne. Verne endeavours to heal the rifts caused by the American Civil War, help atone for the legacy of slavery and ultimately bring together black and white people in a spirit of reconciliation that hopefully we can all embrace today.

The novels weave a secret history and move on to a complex story of repentance, reconciliation, rediscovery and ultimately one must believe, the 'pursuit of happiness'.

Given the delicate nature of the subject matter, it seems that royal and other patronage may have been given to Jules Verne and other authors as some degree of literary 'insurance' - after all their secret writings could have been discovered at any time. Further evidence for this idea will come not from Britain or France but from the United States.

The mid nineteenth century was a period of almost unprecedented political upheaval in both America and Europe. By far the best chance to promote liberty equality and fraternity throughout the world lay with the United States, Britain and France. However, attempts at building alliances between these three countries were thwarted by bloody revolutions in France, a civil war in the United States or simply Britain being at war with one or both of the other two.

Matters came to a head in the latter half of the 19th century with the growing threat from the east, mainly from a soon to be unified German state.

The most obvious manifestation was France's defeat in the Franco Prussian War of 1870 and the catastrophes that were later to engulf Europe in 1914 and 1939.



**The German Victory Parade in Paris.
March 1st 1871.**

Britain, France and America needed to form an alliance, but how could such an alliance grow when America still enslaved its own people? The United States was soon to be engulfed in a horrendous civil war and did not have a monarchy that could be married into.

So perhaps, in the meantime there was to be a *secret bond in literature* between Britain, France and America, it would be hidden in plain sight and capable of being discovered by anyone at any time. If Jules Verne was not the instigator of that secret bond, then he was certainly a genius of a recruit – and, as we shall see, he would not be the last.

That bond would be sealed publicly with the *Alabama Claims* in 1873, whereby Britain paid over \$15million in damages for the ravages of the Birkenhead built 'pirate ship' the CSS *Alabama* and other Confederate craft in the American civil war – in return there would be a bond of 'perpetual friendship' between the United States and Great Britain.



The newly blossoming two-way relationship between Britain and America was strengthened in 1880 when Queen Victoria gifted President Rutherford B Hayes the *Resolute Desk*, which today sits at the symbolic heart of American power –the Oval Office of the White House in Washington D.C.

President Barak Obama at the *Resolute Desk* in the Oval Office January 2009.

In 1886 the Republic of France made a similar symbolic gesture when it gifted to the American people the greatest symbol of their freedom – the Statue of Liberty, designed by the sculptor Frédéric Auguste Bartholdi and its internal skeleton built by Gustav Eiffel.



The Statue of Liberty in Paris prior to shipment to the United States c1885 (left).

The Statue of Liberty on its plinth at Liberty Island, New York. (right)

And perhaps, just perhaps, throughout it all, a secret ‘bond’ in world literature already existed between America, Britain and France to continually bind these three great countries together.

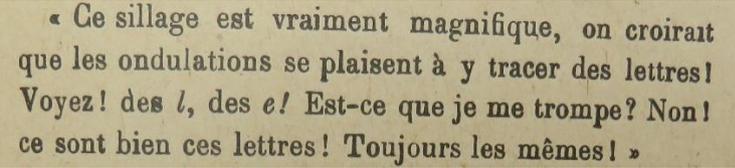
This three-way bond would reach its zenith with the D-Day landings of June 6th 1944. A date that was originally computed from the observatory at Bidston Hill, Birkenhead – the hill that plays the volcano Mount Franklin in Jules Verne’s *Mysterious Island* and will also feature prominently in our fifth novel.



The D-Day Landings June 6th 1944.

And on one final point, the reader may have spotted something rather obvious about the deciphered inscription in Dakkar's Grotto. Let us look at the original French edition of *A Floating City* titled *Un Ville Flotante* as Jules Verne writes about the 'l's' and the 'e's' in the wave trail of the *Great Eastern*.

Ce sillage est vraiment magnifique, on croirait que les ondulations se plaisent à y tracer des lettres! Voyez des l, des e! Est-ce que je me trompe? Non! ce sont bien ces lettres? Toujours les memes!



« Ce sillage est vraiment magnifique, on croirait que les ondulations se plaisent à y tracer des lettres! Voyez! des l, des e! Est-ce que je me trompe? Non! ce sont bien ces lettres! Toujours les mêmes! »

The French translation.

The cipher cannot be solved in French!

Est-ce que je me trompe? must be first translated into the English am I deceived to solve the mystery inscriptions engraved into the rocks.

And all this by a man who stated *I don't know more than a hundred words of English*.

Perhaps Jules Verne, to quote his favourite playwright William Shakespeare *doth protest too much*.

..... and who is W.C ?

Next on Jules Verne and the Heroes of Birkenhead

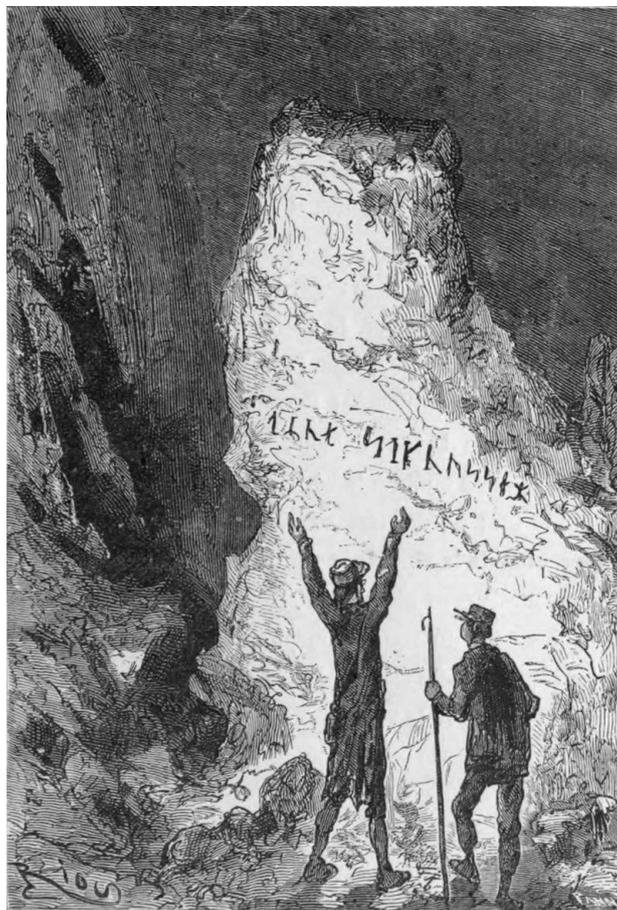
Article no 20 – The Mad Commodore.

-Illustrations-

Part 19

The Secrets of Dakkar's Grotto.

-Acknowledgements-



Page	Photograph Acknowledgement	Page	Photograph Acknowledgement
1a	TRIXES Large French Flag	16c	Wirralmapreproductions Ordnance Survey
1b	Pending	16d	Ebay
1c	Talbot Flags	17a	John Lamb
1d	Heraldry-wiki.com	17b	rct.uk
1e	Pending	17c	Artnet.com
1f	Talbot Flags	17d	Commons.wikimedia.org
1g	Historic Society of Lancashire and Cheshire.	18a	Royal Collection Trust
1h	Flag and Bunting Store	18b	John Lamb
1i	pond5.com	18c	Wirralmapreproductions Ordnance Survey
1j	VectorStock	18d	Bidstonhill.org.uk
1k	shutterstock.com	19a	artuk.org
1l	Wikiwand.com	19b	wikipedia
1m	Barnet Scouts	19c	Lookingbackathistory.com
2a	julesverne.ca	20a	Heraldry-wiki.com
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