

L'ILE MYSTERIEUSE

Jules VERNE



Jules Verne and the Heroes of Birkenhead.



Part 6

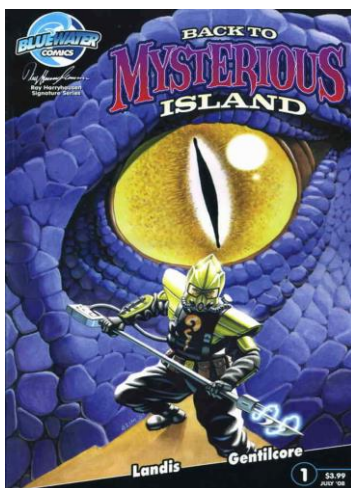
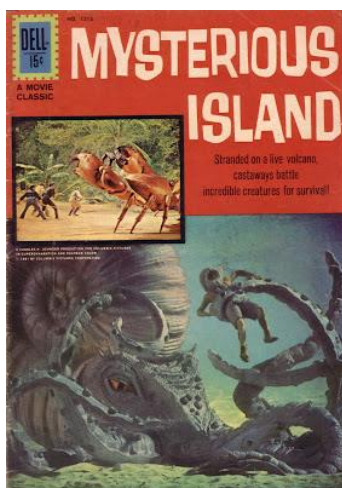
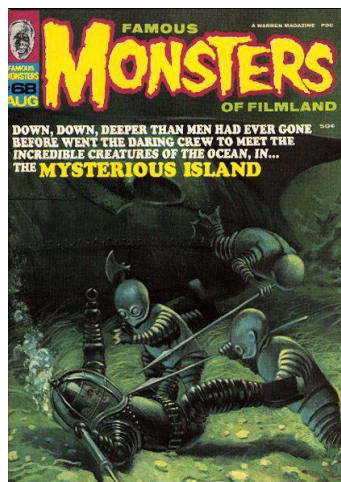
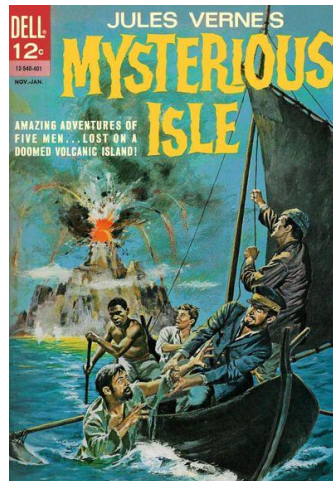
Jules Verne sets his Classic Novel
'The 'Mysterious Island' in Birkenhead.

By John Lamb

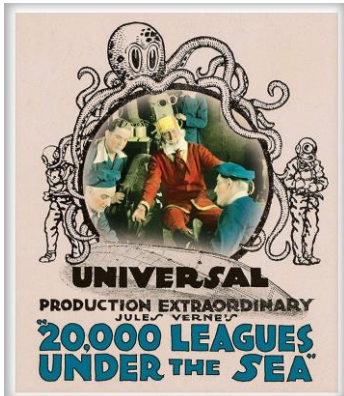
(Former Head of Geography, The Liverpool Blue Coat School, England).

The Mysterious Island

The story of *The Mysterious Island* (1875) has been adapted into film, television, books, and comic books on more occasions than any other Jules Verne novel. It is the sequel to Verne's classic novel *Twenty Thousand Leagues Under the Sea* (1869) and is notable for the return of the infamous Captain Nemo and his Birkenhead built submarine – *The Nautilus*.



Mysterious Island in Cinema and Television.

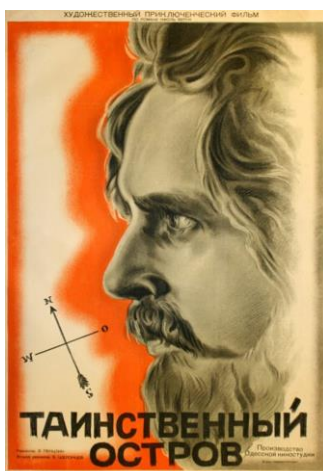


In 1916, Universal Studios combined the storylines of both *Twenty Thousand Leagues Under the Sea* and *The Mysterious Island* to create an adventure on both land and beneath the sea.

Twenty Thousand Leagues Under the Sea (1916)

The Mysterious Island (1929) by Metro Goldwyn Mayer is an early example of both a Technicolor movie and a part talking picture.

The Mysterious Island (1929)



Mysterious Island / Таинственный остров (1941) is a Russian film version of the novel and noteworthy as being the most faithful to Jules Verne's original storyline.

Mysterious Island / Таинственный остров (1941)

Mysterious Island (1951) is a 15-part 'Columbia Super Serial'.

It features Rulu – a woman from the planet Mercury who is intent on conquering Earth. Costumes were recycled from earlier editions of *Flash Gordon*.

Mysterious Island (1951) by Columbia Pictures.

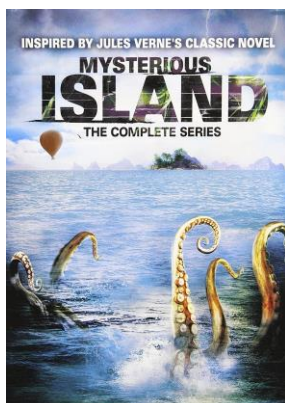
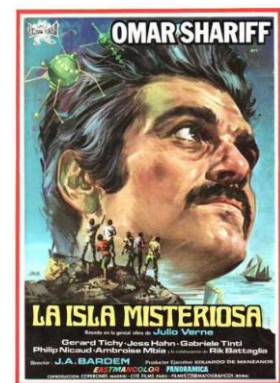


The definitive 1961 film of *Mysterious Island* features the special effects of the legendary Ray Harryhausen.

Mysterious Island (1961) by Columbia Pictures.

Omar Shariff plays the role of Captain Nemo in the 1973 Spanish language film *La Isla Misteriosa*.

La Isla Misteriosa (1973)



In 1995 a joint Canadian and New Zealand television production of *Mysterious Island* ran for 22 episodes.

Mysterious Island (1995)

Hallmark Channel's 2005 film version of *Mysterious Island* features *Star Trek*'s Patrick Stewart in the role of Captain Nemo.

Mysterious Island (2005)



The Syfy Channel's 2012 adaptation of Jules Verne's *Mysterious Island* re-imagined one of the world's most beloved literary adventures.

Mysterious Island (2012)

Journey 2 the Mysterious Island (2012) stars Dwayne Johnson, Michael Caine, Josh Hutcherson and Vanessa Hudgens.

Journey 2 the Mysterious Island (2012)



Dwayne 'The Rock' Johnson was last seen piloting Captain Nemo's Birkenhead built Nautilus back to civilization where the legendary vessel has not been seen since... until now.

The last recorded sighting of Captain Nemo's Nautilus can be found here.

[Journey 2: The Mysterious Island Official Trailer #1 - Dwayne Johnson, Vanessa Hudgens \(2012\) HD - YouTube](#)

Journey 2 the Mysterious Island (2012) – Warner Bros. Pictures.

Part 6.

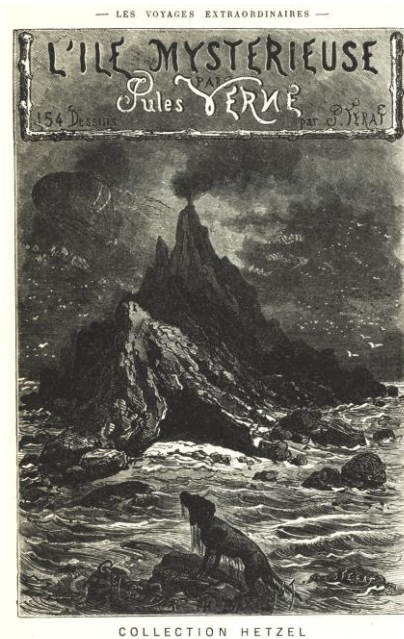
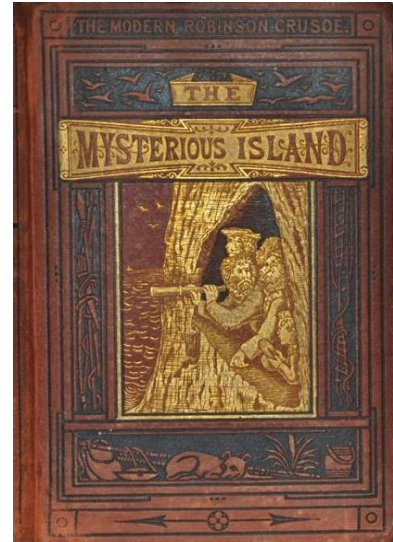
Jules Verne Sets His Classic Novel

‘The Mysterious Island’ in Birkenhead.

At just under 200,000 words long, *Mysterious Island* (*L'Île mystérieuse*, 1875) is Jules Verne's longest and most complex work. It is the sequel to his masterpiece *Twenty Thousand Leagues Under the Sea* (1869) and features the return of Captain Nemo and his Birkenhead built submarine *The Nautilus*.

The working title of the novel was originally ‘*Uncle Robinson*’ however it was later rewritten within a background of the American Civil War and renamed ‘*The Mysterious Island – The Modern Robinson Crusoe*’.

***The Mysterious Island – The Modern Robinson Crusoe* (1875).**



Mysterious Island follows the adventures of five Unionist prisoners of war, who, during a great storm, escape in a balloon from the Confederate Capital of Richmond, Virginia.

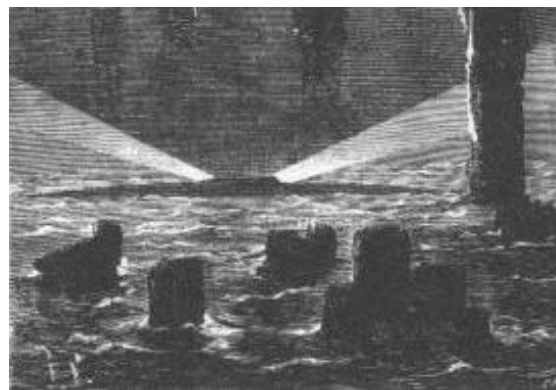
The storm sweeps them southwestwards for five days until they land on an uncharted volcanic island in the South Pacific.

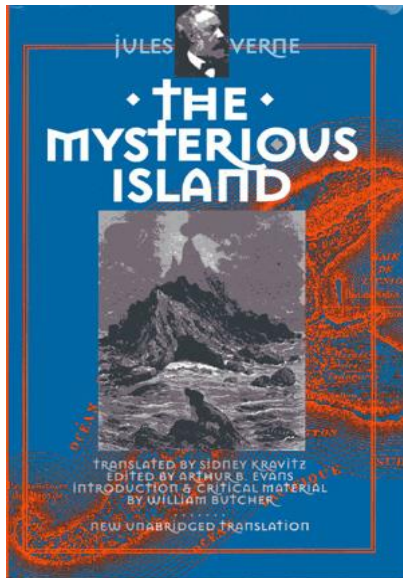
The five begin to establish a new colony, where all (including the freed black slave Neb) are treated as equals and work hard to create the ‘New America’ that Abraham Lincoln envisaged before being so cruelly cut down by an assassin's bullet – the colonists call their new island ‘Lincoln Island’ in his honour.

The Mysterious Island - Frontispiece.

One man already lives on the island, his name is Captain Nemo, and his submarine, the *Nautilus* is trapped in a massive sea cave. He observes the castaways and is so impressed with their efforts, that he resolves to help them in any way he can without revealing his presence on the island. Nemo finally makes contact with the colonists when the erupting volcano threatens them all.

The Nautilus





After 150 years, the secrets of Jules Verne's *Mysterious Island* are about to be revealed as the entire novel is set in Birkenhead and the Wirral Peninsula 'in metaphor'.

Jules Verne – a true genius of world literature, a true genius of France!

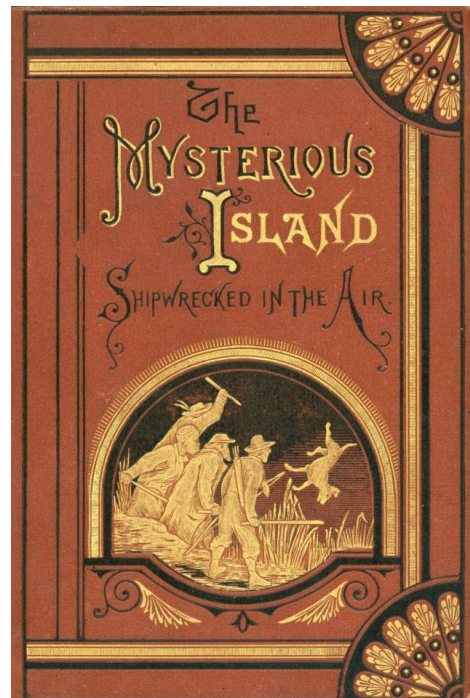
***Mysterious Island* the Sidney Kravitz (2001) unabridged translation.**

The translation used throughout these articles will be the Sidney Kravitz (2001) unabridged version of *Mysterious Island* and considered the most faithful to Jules Verne's original manuscript.

This is not available online, but the Kingston (1875) English translation is a fine source of reference and is occasionally quoted here as supporting evidence.

It can be found at ...

[The Mysterious Island, by Jules Verne \(gutenberg.org\)](http://www.gutenberg.org).



Part One – Shipwrecked in the Air.



UBI FIDES IBI LUX ET ROBUR

Where there is faith there is light and strength

Mysterious Island ('Lincoln Island') – The Players



Pencroft – an adventurous, petulant but well-meaning sailor. Pencroft is a patriotic northerner, eager to escape from his Confederate open prison in Richmond, Virginia. He is the unofficial stepfather to the young boy Herbert.



Cyrus Harding – a brilliant officer and engineer in General Grant's army, the resourceful Harding has been captured by the Confederates during the prolonged siege of the Confederate Capital Richmond.



Neb – born to slave parents but freed by the abolitionist Cyrus Harding. Neb nevertheless cannot shake off the emotional ties to his old 'master' and has travelled to Richmond to be with his great friend - the captive Cyrus Harding.



Gideon Spillett. A Unionist newspaper reporter of the *New York Herald*. Spillett is held prisoner by the Confederates while reporting on the siege of Richmond. He is a friend of Cyrus Harding.



Herbert Brown. A young orphan of about fifteen years of age. Herbert is the adopted son of the sailor Pencroft and has a passionate interest in natural history.



Top. The faithful and intelligent dog belonging to the engineer Cyrus Harding. Top has a keen sense of smell and an uncanny knack of sensing the close presence of Captain Nemo.



Ayrton. A pirate later rescued by the castaways from nearby Tabor Island where he has been exiled. Ayrton is determined to atone for his piratical past. A wretch who has been saved.



Jup the orangutan. Jup is captured by the colonists when a tribe of orangutans invade their home, he is quickly domesticated and put to work by the castaways. Jup is loyal, well liked and almost like one of the family.

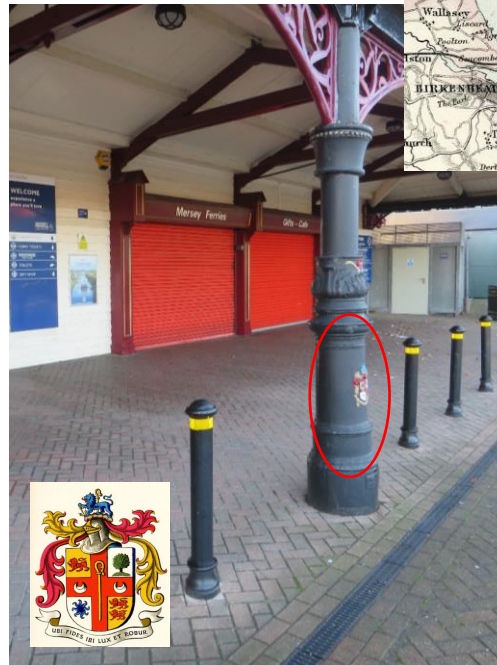


Captain Nemo – A scientific genius and creator of the *Nautilus*, a man who is struggling with his conscience and has sought exile beneath the waves. Nemo is the revolutionary Indian Prince Dakkar and secretly aids the castaways build a 'New America' on the aptly named 'Lincoln Island'.

Mysterious Island. Part One – Shipwrecked in the Air.

It is February 1865 and at the height of the American Civil War, two Unionist prisoners of war plan their escape from the Confederate held capital of Richmond Virginia. Cyrus Harding is a captured officer and engineer in General Grant’s army, while Pencroft is a northern sailor who has also fallen into Confederate hands. Both can walk the streets of Richmond, as the besieged town is a prison to all, Confederate and Unionist alike.

Cyrus Harding and Pencroft discuss their plans outside the offices of the Richmond Omnibus company (below) however in *Mysterious Island*, all is not what it seems, as the whole storyline of *Mysterious Island* is now played out in Birkenhead and Wirral ‘in metaphor’.



“Mr Harding, would you like to escape?” Woodside Ferry Terminal, Birkenhead.

Pencroft and Harding are not really in Richmond Virginia at all, they are standing at Woodside Ferry Terminal, Birkenhead.

Woodside was also the start of Europe’s first tramway, built by George Francis Train - the first person ever to travel around the world in eighty days. The metal pillar on Jules Ferat’s sketch of Richmond replicates the Birkenhead town crest at Woodside.

There is a great storm raging and Pencroft suggests escaping by means of a balloon currently tethered in the *great square of Richmond*.

They risked nothing in its execution but their lives. The storm was at its height, it was true, but an engineer as skilful as Cyrus Harding would know how to navigate a balloon.

Cyrus Harding insists on bringing two fellow prisoners with him, the first is his own servant Neb, previously a slave, but one who the abolitionist Harding had long since given his freedom. The second is Harding's great friend Gideon Spilett, a reporter on the *New York Herald* who is also a prisoner of the southern Confederates.

Pencroft agrees, but he too wishes to bring someone along - a fifteen-year-old orphan named Herbert, whom he loved as if he had been his own child. There will be five escapees.

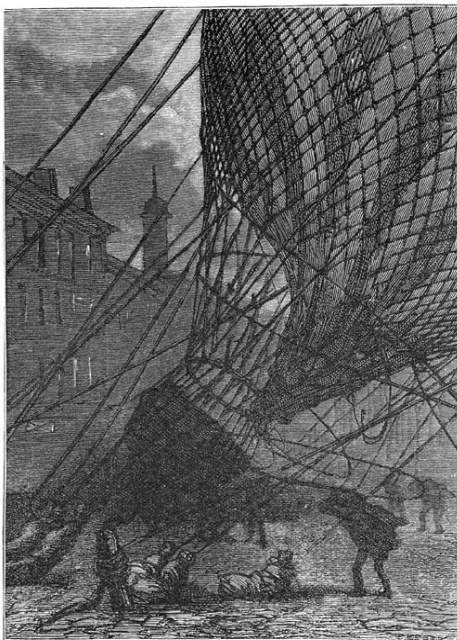
The streets of the city were deserted. In this horrible weather, it did not even seem necessary to guard the square where the balloon was floundering. Everything obviously favoured the escape of the prisoners; but to journey thus, in the midst of this furious storm.....?

At half-past nine, Cyrus Harding and his companions crept in from different corners of the square. The gas lanterns, extinguished by the wind, left them in complete darkness.

Without saying a word, Cyrus Harding, Gideon Spilett, Neb, and Herbert took their place in the basket, while Pencroft on an order by the engineer, detached the bags of ballast. This took but a few moments, and the sailor rejoined his companions.

At that moment a dog dashed toward the basket. It was Top, the engineer's dog, having broken his chain, had followed his master. The engineer, fearing the excess weight wanted to send the animal away.

"Bah! What's one more," said Pencroft, throwing two sacks of sand out of the basket. Then he cast off the cable and the balloon rose at an angle and disappeared into the sky after the basket knocked down two chimneys in the fury of its departure.



The Great Square at Richmond.



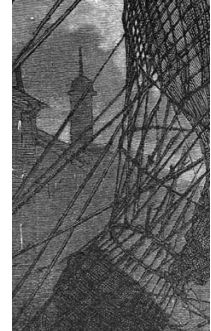
Hamilton Square, Birkenhead.

The balloon does not escape from the Great Square of Richmond, but from Hamilton Square Birkenhead. The space left by the two 'knocked down' chimneys can still be seen today.

At the time of Jules Ferat's 1874 illustration, Birkenhead town hall, had yet to be built in the space left for it by the Scottish architect Gillespie Graham.

Verne's illustrator Jules Ferat instead uses Gillespie Graham's 1825 architect's drawings showing a much narrower taller tower (below) and replicates it in a similar style.

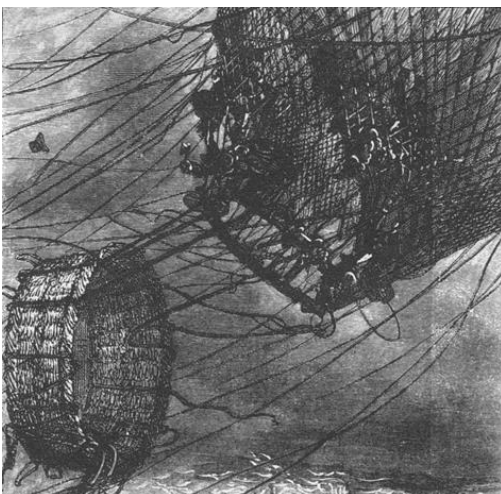
As for the 'Great Square' in Richmond Virginia, there has never been a 'Great Square' in Richmond Virginia.



Gillespie Graham's original plan for Birkenhead Town Hall and the 'Richmond spire'.

From the 20th March to the 24th March the balloon carries the five escapees south westwards over a distance of many thousands of miles towards the Pacific Ocean. On the fifth day a tear appears in the envelope of the balloon, and it begins to descend rapidly.

They had to keep the balloon, at any price, from dropping into the waves. But despite their best efforts, the balloon kept falling, sometimes rapidly, while being carried along by the wind from northeast to southwest.



In a frantic last attempt to lose weight and gain height the five unfortunate men climb on to the rigging of the balloon and cut their basket free.

The five passengers hoisted themselves on to the ropes above the ring and, holding on to the balloon's rigging, they looked down at the abyss below them. The gas was escaping through a tear that was impossible to repair.

At four o'clock, it was obvious that the balloon could no longer stay aloft.

It grazed the surface of the sea. Several times already the crests of enormous waves licked the bottom of the ropes making it still heavier. Like a bird with a wounded wing, the balloon could barely remain airborne.

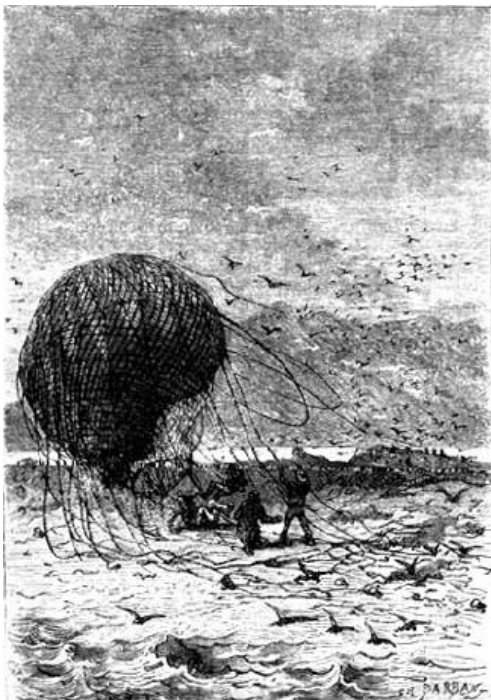
In close sight of land, Cyrus Harding is thrown into the sea, and Top, the ever-faithful dog jumps in after him.

The balloon is briefly swept up into the air once again, before it lands in a secluded sandy bay of a small islet.

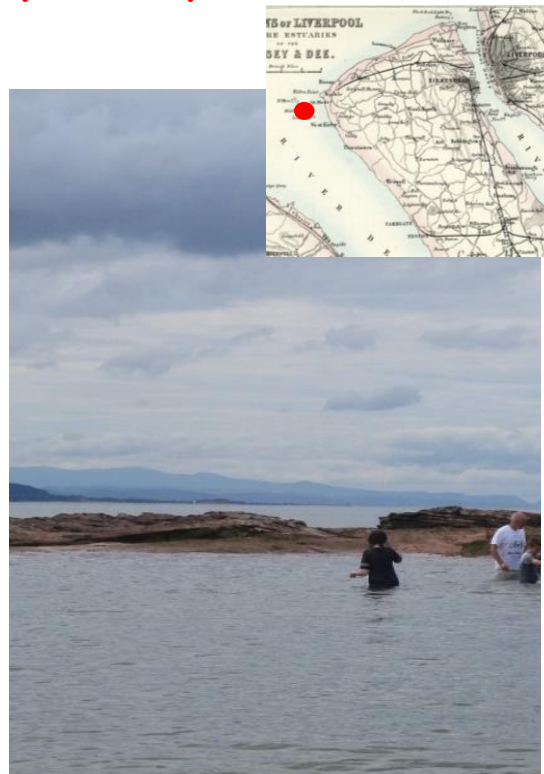
Finally, two minutes later, it approached the coast obliquely, then dropped down on the shore out of the reach of the waves. The passengers, helping one another, managed to untangle themselves from the balloon's rigging.

The basket had contained five passengers and a dog, but only four were dropped onto the shore.

The balloon does not travel 7,000 miles from Richmond, Virginia to land in the Pacific Ocean, instead it travels just over seven miles from Hamilton Square, Birkenhead to land on the south beach of Hilbre Island on the nearby Dee Estuary.



The balloon fell onto the shore.



The South Beach of Hilbre Island

The artist Jules Ferat copies the local rock formations and the Welsh mountains behind the castaways to confirm that the Wirral is indeed Jules Verne's *Mysterious Island*. This is one of over twenty visual clues that Ferat will conceal in his illustrations. It is not known whether he visited Hilbre Island with Jules Verne or worked from photographs.

Kingston's (1875) translation quotes a '*sandy beach out of the reach of waves*'.

As a geographer, Jules Verne will use the unique 'fingerprint' of Wirral's rock formations as geological clues on several more occasions.



The seven-mile journey from Birkenhead (left) to the small sand bay on Hilbre Island (above).

The missing person had evidently been swept away by the wave that struck the deflated balloon, an event that allowed the lightened balloon to rise one last time and, a few moments later to reach land.

The castaways as yet do not know they have landed on a small islet, separated from the mainland by a tidal channel. Meanwhile, Cyrus Harding and Top the Dog having been prematurely thrown into a raging sea and been cast ashore on a coast of wild sand dunes, are the first to set forth on the mainland of Jules Verne's *Mysterious Island*.



The sand dunes are located at the Royal Liverpool Golf Club at Hoylake - Hilbre Island itself is in the background.

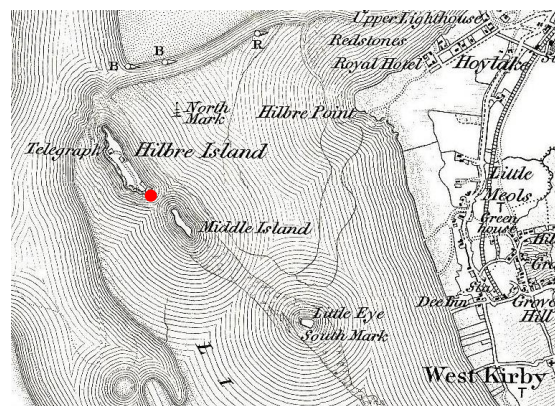
Royal Liverpool (the venue of the British Open Golf Championship in 2023) is the second oldest golf club in England and was founded in 1869, some five years before *Mysterious Island* was written.

The Royal Liverpool Golf Club at Hoylake with Hilbre Island in the background.

Five men left on the 20th March. Four of them were now thrown, on the 24th March, on a deserted coast more than 6,000 miles from their country.

And the one who was missing, the one the four other balloon survivors were now running to rescue, was their natural leader, the engineer Cyrus Harding.

The sand beach where the balloon landed.



It was nearly six o'clock. A fog had just rolled in, making the evening dark. The castaways proceeded northward along the eastern coastline of this land upon which they had been thrown by chance, an unknown land whose geographical location they could not even guess

at. They trod upon sandy soil, mixed with stones, which seemed to be deprived of every species of vegetation.

From time to time, the castaways stopped to shout and listen for some sound not made by the ocean. It was possible that, if they were near the place where the engineer had landed, they might hear Top's barking if Cyrus Harding was unable to give some sign of life.

But no cry was heard above the growling of the waves and the crashing of the surf.



They shouted in Unison. Far Left.

Left. Hilbre Island – The islet - the castaway's route around Hilbre - from their landing point and back again.

After a walk of twenty minutes, the four castaways were suddenly stopped by the foaming waves. Solid ground vanished and they found themselves at the extremity of a sharp point of land where the sea broke with great fury.

The sharp North point at Hilbre.



From the north end of Hilbre Island, the castaways then head back along the western side of the island.

"We're on a small island," said Pencroft, "and we have surveyed it from one end to the other."

Forgetting themselves for the sake of their leader, hoping, always wanting to hope, they went back and forth across the barren islet, always coming back to its north point, closest to the place of the catastrophe.

Night passed. About five o'clock in the morning, the 25th of March, the upper levels of the sky began to change colour slightly. The horizon was still dark but, with the first light of day, an opaque fog rose from the sea and reduced visibility to no more than about twenty feet. Large heavy wreaths of fog rolled in.

“No matter,” said Pencroft, “if I don’t see the coastline, I can feel it ...It is there there... just as surely as we are no longer in Richmond”.

But the fog, only a fine haze, soon lifted. A warm sun heated its upper layers, and this heat filtered down to the surface of the islet.

Between the islet and the coast, separated by an open channel a half mile wide, a rapid current flowed noisily. The Islet occupied a narrow strip of the sea and, although larger in scale, resembled the body of an enormous whale.



The body of an enormous whale – Hilbre Island and the open channel a half mile wide.

Facing the islet, the shoreline opposite them was composed of sand scattered with blackish rocks. It was a flat plateau like the one which overlooks Capetown, at the Cape of Good Hope, but much smaller. At least so it appeared as seen from the islet.



The flat plateau of Caldy Hill as seen from Hilbre Island.

Neb decides to swim for it and start his search for Cyrus Harding.

One of the castaways following his heart, immediately threw himself into the current, without asking the opinions of his companions and without saying a single word. It was Neb.

Pencroft then went to him: “If we throw ourselves into this channel, we’ll risk being carried out to sea by its extremely violent current. If I’m not mistaken, it’s ebb tide. The sea is going down on the beach. Let’s have patience. At low tide, it’s possible we’ll find a fordable passage.



Hilbre is a tidal island, and it is possible to walk to the mainland at low tide. The thirty feet height difference between low and high tide at Hilbre Island is one of the greatest in the world.

Neb’s route from Hilbre Island to Hilbre Point.

There are no discernable tides in the South Pacific where *Mysterious Island* is supposedly set. Jules Verne stated as much in his novel *Robur the Conqueror* (1886).

Off the southwest coast was an islet and a range of rocks. On the shore there were no tidemarks, and this tended to confirm Robur in his opinion as to his position, for the ebb and flow are almost imperceptible in the Pacific.

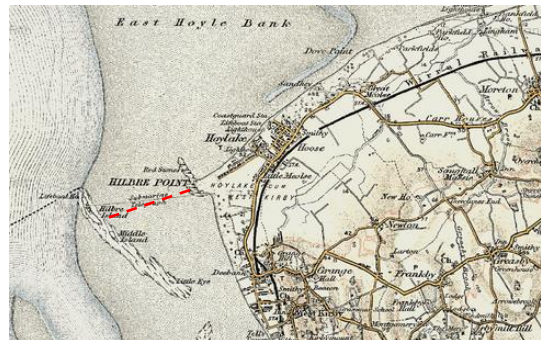
***Robur the Conqueror* by Jules Verne (1886)**

During this time Neb was struggling against the current. He crossed it at an angle. They saw his black shoulders emerge at each stroke. He was swept at an extreme speed but he also got closer to the shore. It took him a half hour to cross the half mile that separated the islet from the mainland.

Neb set foot at the base of a high granite wall and shook himself vigorously. Then, running, he soon disappeared behind a pile of rocks that extended into the sea.



Hilbre Point, Neb's pile of rocks.



Neb's route to the *Mysterious Island*.

Neb is roughly following the route of the old Liverpool – Holyhead submarine telegraph cable, he will follow the same route towards the end of the novel.

Pencroft was not wrong in his prediction. Three hours later at low tide, most of the sand that formed the bed of the canal was uncovered. Between the shore and the islet there remained only a narrow channel which would be easy to cross.

The rest of the castaways follow Neb across to the rocky point. While Neb and Gideon Spilett go in search of Cyrus Harding, the other castaways, Herbert and Pencroft look for shelter.

“Very well,” replied Herbert, “I’ll look for a cave among these rocks. I’m sure to find some hole that we can curl up in.”

After a long walk Herbert comes across a cave, this is actually the Wormhole Cave at New Brighton, some eight miles from Hilbre Island – like a film director, Jules Verne is moving the scenery to suit his needs.

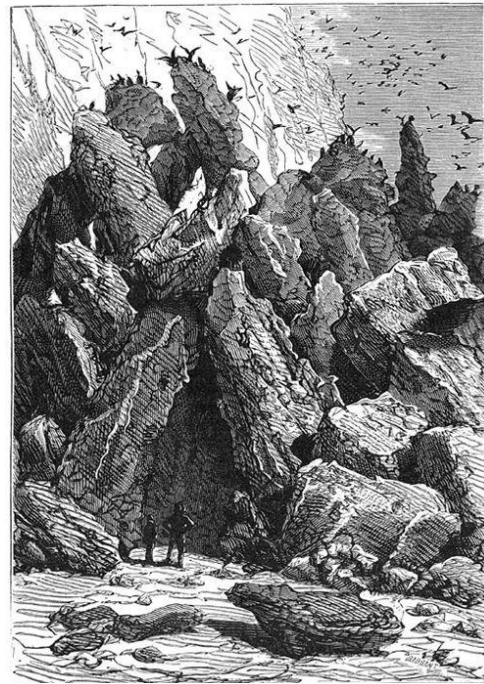
Above the line of high tide, landslides had formed a pile of enormous rocks, like those often seen in countries with much granite, which are called “chimneys.”



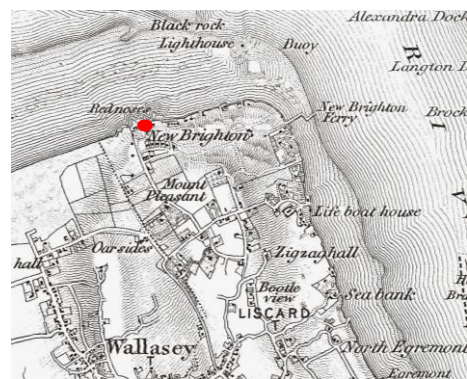
Wormhole Cave, New Brighton c1840.

The artist Jules Ferat has used an 1840's coloured lithograph of Wormhole Cave (left) and simply changed the angle of view for his 1874 representation (above right). Ferat has retained the unusual triangular shaped entrance to the cave, together with the large boulder to the right.

The site of Wormhole Cave at New Brighton.



The Chimneys.

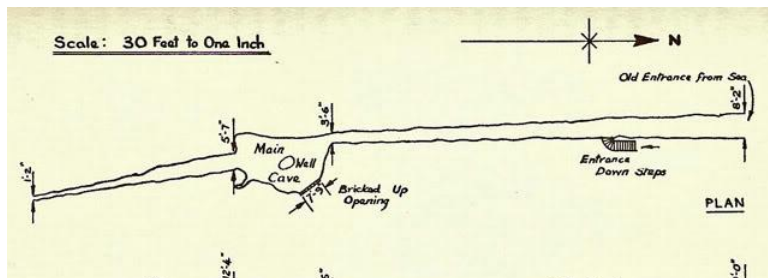


Pencroft and Herbert went far in among the rocks, along the sandy passages where light was not lacking because it entered through various openings amongst the granite rocks.

“This is our best bet,” said Pencroft, “and if we ever see Mr Harding again, he’ll know what to make of this labyrinth.”

Along the sandy passages, Wormhole Cave New Brighton.

“We will see him again, Pencroft,” exclaimed Herbert, “and, when he returns, he’ll find a halfway decent shelter here. It will be so if we can build a fireplace in the left passage and keep an opening for the smoke.”



A plan of Wormhole Cave New Brighton (left) and the ‘fireplace’ in the left passage.

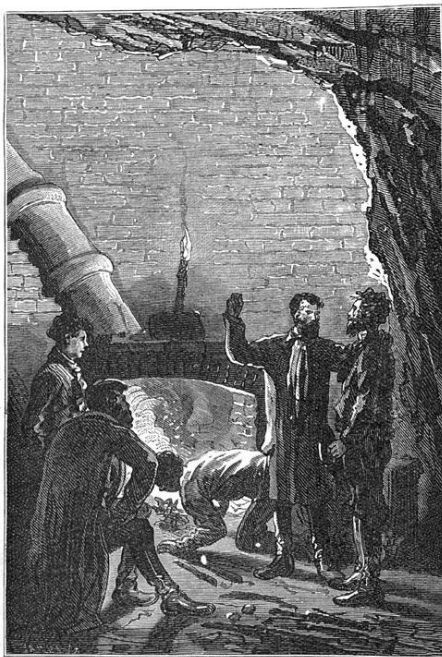
The castaways decide to spend their first night in the comparative warmth and shelter of the ‘Chimneys’, the location of which will become a metaphor for the adjacent city of Liverpool.

the double landscape of Liverpool and Birkenhead studded with manufactory chimneys.

Jules Verne, *Une Ville Flottante* (1871)

Later in the novel the colonists will build their fireplace in the left passage and the bricks will present the same contour with the bedrock as at Wormhole Cave. The charcoal scorch marks in Wormhole cave (below) inspire Verne to run a flue from the top left-hand corner of the fire grate (or did he add the scorch marks himself?).

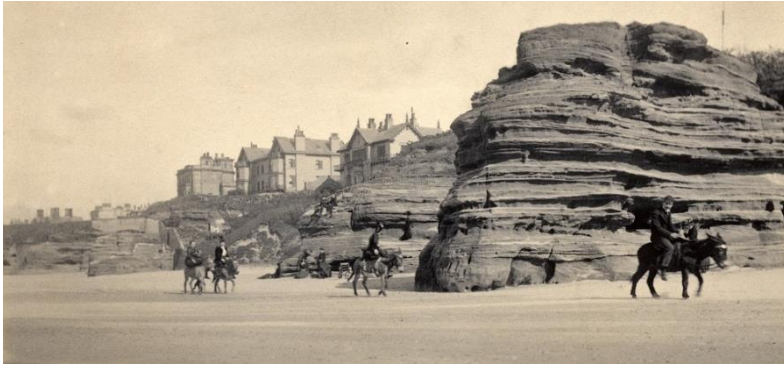
Intriguingly the image below does not represent the ‘Chimneys’ but the inside of the settlers’ second cave dwelling called ‘Granite House’. Verne is recycling his stage props and so Wormhole Cave will inspire two entirely separate locations on his *Mysterious Island*.



Granite House



Wormhole Cave – Similarities Beyond Coincidence.



The chimneys were divided into three or four rooms, if one could give this name to such gloomy dens where a wild beast would hardly be content.

The Red Noses cliffs, New Brighton with wild beasts.

The Kingston translation of *Mysterious Island* (1875) seems to make a more direct reference to the fact that we are really in the seaside resort of New Brighton.

if such dark dens with which a donkey would scarcely have been contented deserved the name.

After much trying, Pencroft, Herbert and Spilett manage to light a fire in the Chimneys, while Neb is still looking for Cyrus Harding.

The fire burned well on a fireplace of flat stones. The smoke went up easily through the narrow passage, the chimney drew the smoke, and a pleasant warmth soon filled the shelter.

Kingston's 1875 translation says *the flat stones made a capital fireplace*. Herbert and Pencroft's 'fireplace of flat stones' could still be seen in 2011 (below).



The fireplace of flat stones – Wormhole Cave, New Brighton as viewed in 2011.

Breakfast on this day was composed only of pigeon eggs and lithodomes. Herbert found some salt left behind in the crevices of the rocks by evaporation and this mineral substance was put to good use.

Some salt left behind in the crevices of the rocks - Wormhole Cave New Brighton.



The Kingston translation of *Mysterious Island* (1875) states that *partitions of wood and mud* were eventually established in the Chimneys.

Partitions of wood and mud in Wormhole Cave, New Brighton as viewed in 2011 - note the two storm tide lines.



Wormhole Cave was fronted by a beautiful dry sand beach until the construction of the Kings Parade Seawall in 1930-39.

Aerial view of Red Noses cliffs, and Wormhole Cave (circled), New Brighton c1919.

Today, Wormhole Cave is situated behind the New Brighton mini golf course. It is landlocked and preserved as a 'time-capsule'.

Wormhole Cave, New Brighton.



On the second night, a storm is gathering its strength out to sea.

"We're going to have a bad night, Mr Spilett!" said the sailor. "Rain and wind are the joy of petrels."

The New Brighton Coast is the foremost birdwatching site in Europe to view Leach's Petrels. Jules Verne, both as a geographer and an ornithologist has obviously done his homework.

Pencroft crawled to the opening.

During the storm, a noise can be heard over the crashing of the wind and the waves against the walls of the Chimneys – there is an unexpected arrival.

“It is Top! shouted Herbert.

It was indeed Top, a magnificent anglo-norman crossbreed who inherited from these two species both speed and odour sensitivity, the two prime qualities of a hunting dog.

It was Cyrus Harding’s dog.

But he was alone! Neither his master nor Neb was with him!

How had his instinct been able to lead him to the chimneys which he knew nothing about? This appeared inexplicable, especially on such a dark night, and in such a storm! An even more inexplicable detail was that Top was neither tired nor exhausted, not even soiled with mud or sand!.....

“If the dog has been found, the master will also be found!” said the reporter.

It will be revealed that Captain Nemo has rescued Cyrus Harding from the waves and taken him to a sheltered excavation in the sand dunes. Nemo has taken Top to the Chimneys so the faithful dog may then guide the castaways back to their engineer friend.

They had no doubt that Neb had found his master and had sent the faithful dog to them. But was the engineer alive, or was Neb only summoning his companions to render the last rites to the body of the unfortunate Harding?



Top subsequently leads the castaways back along the modern-day north Wirral coast, from New Brighton towards Hilbre Island, the point where Cyrus Harding was last seen.

On the journey the castaways pass three well known Wirral landmarks. The first is when they pass the end of the Leasowe Embankment (see map below) – a sandstone sea defence built by Sir Edward Cust of the nearby Leasowe Castle in 1822.

This long breakwater would no longer protect the coast which was directly exposed to the onslaught of the open sea.



The Leasowe ‘Breakwater’ at Moreton.



The Leasowe Embankment.

On the left, the land was composed of several uneven dunes bristling with thistles, offering a rather savage appearance in this vast sandy region.



The ‘Duans’ sand dunes at Dove Point.

Hoylake Dunes – a vast sandy region.

Here the castaways are still making their way westwards towards Hoylake and have come across the second landmark - The Downs (‘The Duans’) at Great Meols - a vast sandy region.

They followed a very flat shoreline bordered on the open sea by a line of rocks whose tops alone emerged.



The ‘Redstones’ or Red Rocks Reef near Hilbre Point represent Jules Verne’s *line of rocks whose tops alone emerged*. The Castaways are now very near the site from where Cyrus Harding fell from the balloon.

The Red Rocks reef will be used again by Jules Verne, but the novel will not be *Mysterious Island*.

Here and there, one or two twisted trees could be seen, which were leaning towards the west with their branches extending in this direction



Windswept Branches leaning towards the east – Royal Liverpool Golf Club near Hilbre Point, Hoylake.



At this moment, Top gave obvious signs of agitation. He went on ahead and then returned to the sailor as if urging him to hasten his steps. The dog left the beach and, guided by his admirable instinct and without showing a moment's hesitation, he ran to the dunes.

Left. The Royal Liverpool Golf Club at Hoylake - he ran to the dunes.

They followed him. The country appeared to be absolutely deserted. Not a living creature anywhere.

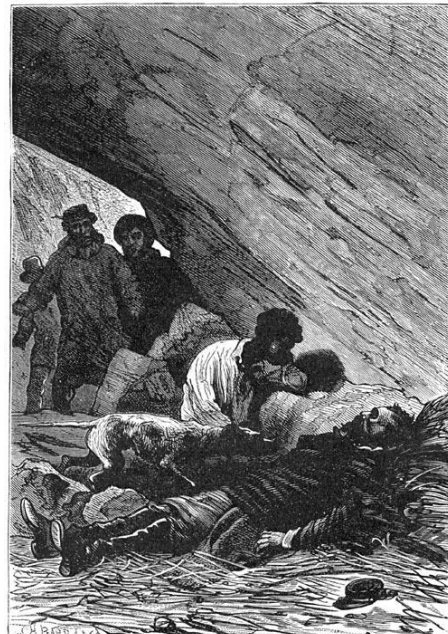
This very wide area of the dunes was composed of hillocks and scattered hills, like a miniature Switzerland in sand, and nothing less than a dog's superb instinct was needed to find one's way through it.

*Five minutes after having left the beach, the reporter and his companions arrived in front of a **sort of excavation hollowed out in the rear of a high dune.** There Top stopped and barked loud and clear. Spilett, Herbert, and Pencroft dashed into the cave.*

Neb was kneeling next to a body lying on a bed of grass. ...

The body was that of the engineer Cyrus Harding.

The body was that of the engineer.



In 1871, three years before *Mysterious Island* was written, the scattered sand hills of the Royal Liverpool Golf Club were extended to 18 holes.

The golf club received its 'Royal' status as early as 1871 due to the patronage of the Duke of Connaught, a son of Queen Victoria. The course has since been the home of twelve British Open Golf Championships. The fairways at Hoylake are so narrow that when Tiger Woods won his first British Open here in 2006, he used a wooden golf club on only one occasion.

The Kingston translation of *Mysterious Island* would agree with Tiger Woods in that a *superb instinct was needed to find one's way through it.* The Kingston translation (1875) also refers to a *landscape modelled in sand.*

It will be revealed that none other than Captain Nemo has rescued Cyrus Harding from the storm-tossed ocean and taken him to *a sort of excavation hollowed out in the rear of a high dune* – this can only refer to a bunker on the Royal Liverpool course at Hoylake - but which one?

Jules Verne will now pinpoint the exact bunker as Cyrus Harding is found lying in *a miniature Switzerland in sand*.

The eleventh hole at Royal Liverpool is the most photographed golf hole on the course and gives stunning views towards Hilbre Island, the landing site of the castaways' balloon.

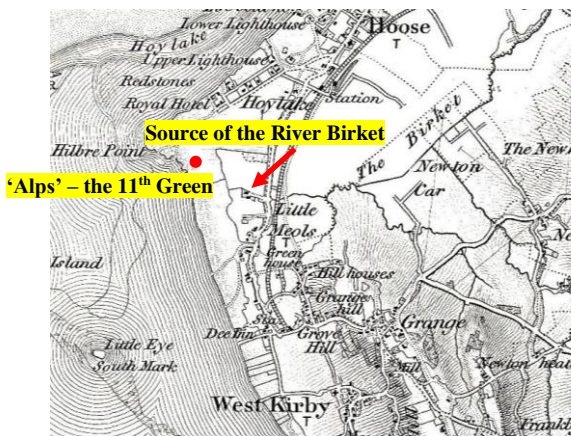
The eleventh hole is indeed *like a miniature Switzerland in sand* and for that reason it was given a simple name when the course was first laid out....

.... 'Alps'.



'Captain Nemo's Bunker'.

Herbert ran outside to look for water. A hundred feet away he found a clear stream, evidently very swollen by the rains of the previous evening which filtered through the sand.



But there was nothing he could use to carry this water, not a shell among these dunes. The boy had to content himself with dipping his handkerchief into the stream, and he ran back to the cave.

The location of the 11th green 'Alps' at Royal Liverpool and the source of the River Birket.

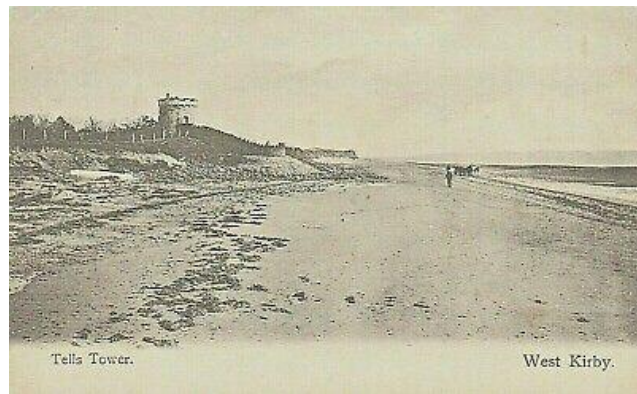
Herbert seems to have stumbled across the source of the River Birket (above), this river, which eventually flows through Birkenhead, will become known as 'Red Creek' in Jules Verne's *Mysterious Island*.

There is one final story to be told and that is the story of Top.

Neb pronounced the reporter's name several times, the one that Top knew best of the engineer's companions. Then he pointed south and the dog darted off in that direction.



One mile directly south of the eleventh hole of Royal Liverpool Golf Course, in the town of West Kirby there is a local landmark called Tell's Tower. This memorial was built to commemorate the love that one man had for his pet dog. When Tell died in 1871 John Cumming Macdona erected a commemorative tower in a small corner of his garden, next to the shore.



Tell's Tower, West Kirby. c1900.

Macdona created the 'modern' St Bernard breed after the severe winters of 1816-1818 killed many of the original dogs in the Swiss Alps. He later became president of the Kennel Club, with over half of the Club's cross bred St Bernards' stock being from Macdona's own kennel, including the Prince of Wales's dog 'Hope'. Edward, Prince of Wales (later King Edward VII) was an honorary member of the Royal Mersey Yacht Club at Tranmere, Birkenhead.

Macdona was also an M.P. and a member of the Royal Liverpool Golf Club at Hoylake.



The base of Tell's Tower c1890

John Cumming Macdona (1836-1907) from Gordon Bennett's Magazine *Vanity Fair* (8th February 1894).

Tell is buried beneath the tower and Macdona commissioned a lifelike sculpture of Tell to adorn the base of the monument with a small inscription dedicated to his beloved pet.

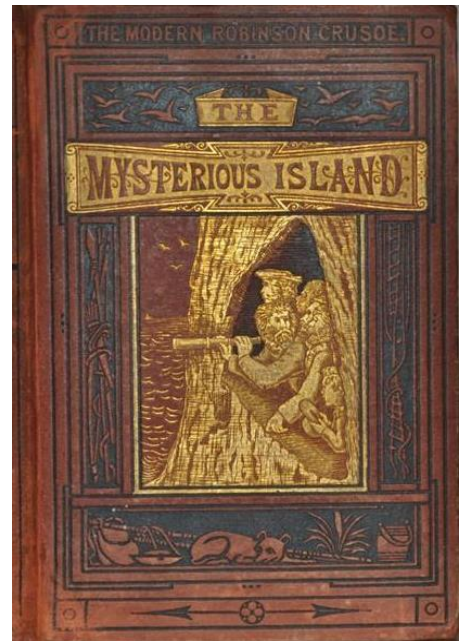
"Ancestor of most of the rough coated champions of England, and himself winner of every prize in the kingdom. He was majestic in appearance, noble in character, and of undaunted courage."

One look at the statue of Tell and it seems we have seen him somewhere before.

Tell



Top



Jules Verne – a true friend of Birkenhead – a true genius of France!



UBI FIDES IBI LUX ET ROBUR

Where there is faith there is light and strength



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Mr J Lamb

www.wirral.gov.uk

Date: 20th September 2021

Your
Ref:
Our
Ref:
Service
Department of Regeneration & Place

Dear John,

Many thanks for your recent presentations given to Wirral Borough Council regarding the French author Jules Verne's close links to Birkenhead and the Wirral Peninsula.

We would like to confirm that we fully endorse your findings and are excited at what possibilities this may bring in the future as we go about the regeneration of Birkenhead. To find a book as important as Mysterious Island is set on the Wirral and has so many obvious connections to both our physical geography and Victorian heritage has surprised us all.

Congratulations on your findings and we look forward to hearing about the many other connections you say exist between the " Father of Science Fiction " Jules Verne and the Wirral Peninsula.

Kind regards

Yours sincerely

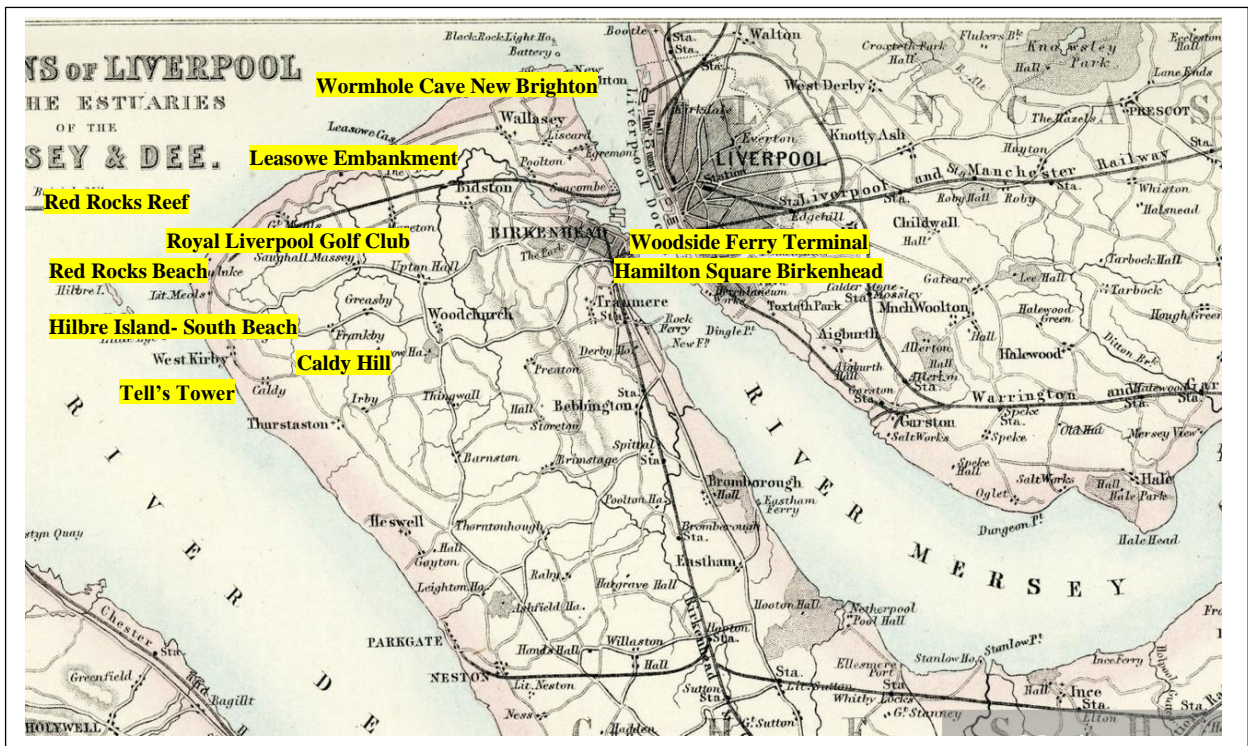
A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Alan Evans".

Alan Evans
Director of Regeneration & Place

Next on Jules Verne and the Heroes of Birkenhead.

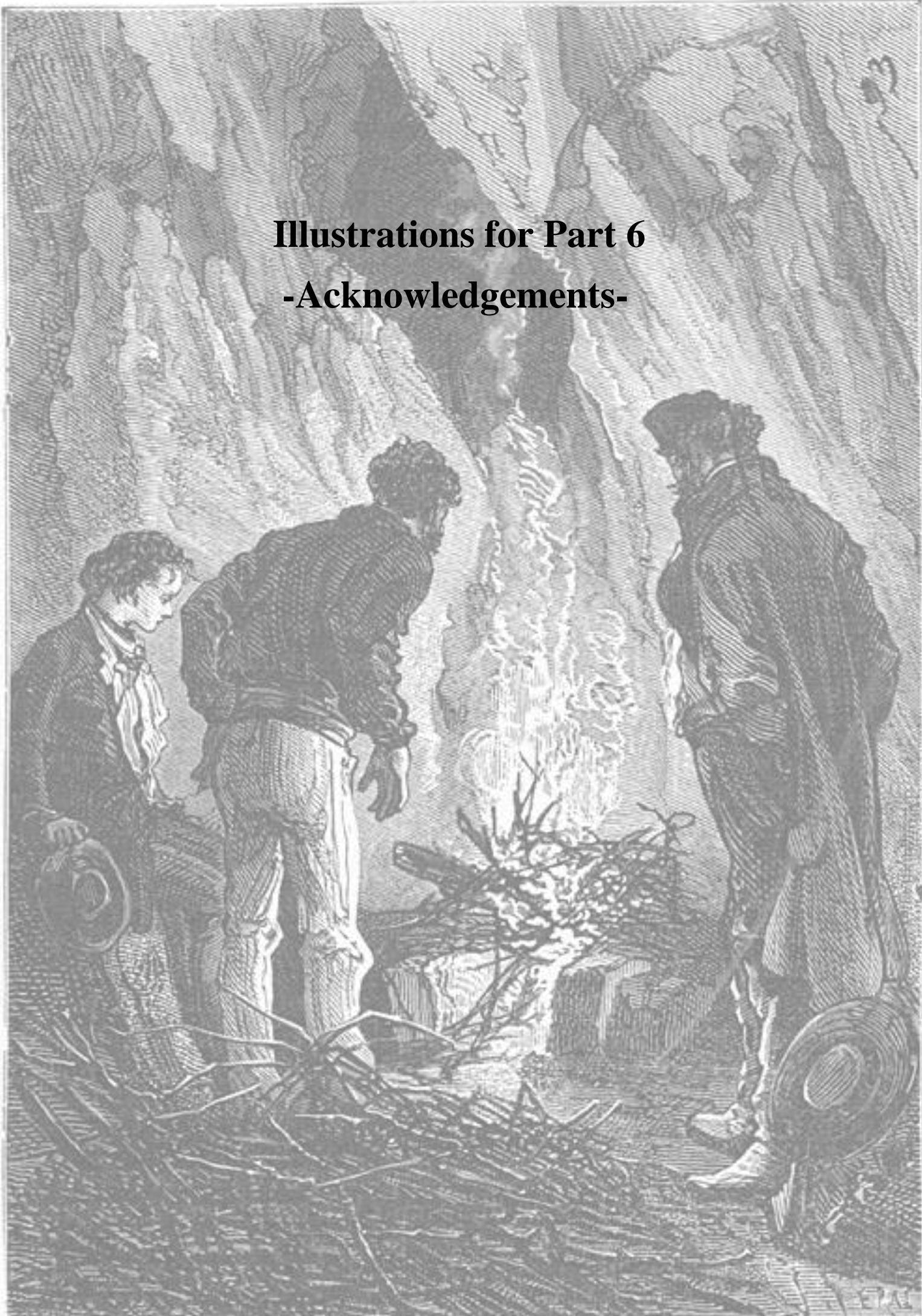
Part 7. The Ascent of the Volcano – A Climb up Bidston Hill, Birkenhead.

The Locations Used by Jules Verne in the Opening Chapters of Mysterious Island.



The Wirral Peninsula in c1875

Illustrations for Part 6
-Acknowledgements-



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