



Friends of High Wycombe Libraries

supporting our local community libraries

Newsletter

Issue 11 December 2008

Dear Friends,

WELCOME to this Winter 2008 edition of our newsletter. In these pages you will find the usual mix of reports of previous events, a profile of a member of the Library staff, and details of our programme for next Spring. I would especially draw your attention to the AGM on April 23rd, followed by a talk by Julian

Hunt. You might like to put this date in your diary now, or at least in the new 2009 diary you get for Christmas!

We are intending to launch a campaign to attract new members of Friends. If any of your friends are interested in our activities and the support we provide to the Library, please encourage them to join. We are offering you an incentive to do this – see inside

this newsletter for further details! We also need more members on our Executive Committee; perhaps **you** would consider taking a more active part in our work.

I hope you all have a very happy Christmas and New Year.

Mike Dewey
Chairman

SWOP – Bringing History To Life With Photographs

Our Chairman Mike Dewey gave us a very entertaining and interactive talk on the project Sharing Wycombe's Old Photographs.

The SWOP website currently contains over 18,000 images of High Wycombe and the surrounding towns and villages in South Buckinghamshire. These images illustrate events and the changing scenes in the region over the 130 years or so from the 1870s to the early 2000s. Photos from over 100 photographers are included in the collection.

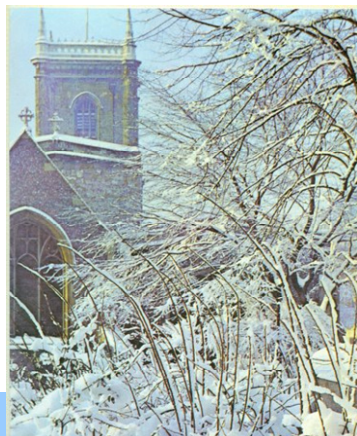
The SWOP project has been, and still is, a truly collaborative venture. The Heritage Lottery Fund provided the initial financial sponsorship and a number of organisations have allowed their photograph collections to be included. These include the Library,



Wycombe Museum, Bucks Free Press, High Wycombe Society, Marlow Society, and Bourne End Residents Association. Around 30 volunteers, many of whom are members of Friends, have freely given of their time, knowledge, and expertise in order to accurately describe the images. The project is continuing on a self-funded basis, and additional photographs are being sought from members of the public.

Mike showed around 50 photos

from the website under three themes – *The Changing Face of Wycombe*, *Did You Know That*, and *How It Used To Be Done* – which resulted in a high level of audience participation! This was followed by a photo quiz. Two people correctly identified all 12 photos, with member Denise Lindsay winning the tie-breaker to claim the prize. The SWOP website can be viewed online at:



www.buckscc.gov.uk/swop





May We Have A Word?

It was good to see old and new faces for the first event organised by Friends in the new Library on 17th September, when we had a welcome return by Ronald Swains and Annie Hill.

Taking the theme *What's in a Word?* Ronald and Annie had many years of experience to draw on: Annie with the Fourways Drama Group and the Masque Players, and Ronald in charge of English at Bucks College and as a senior tutor for the Open University.

Ronald began by protesting that he was not, despite rumours, 'getting old'. He was, however, happy to acknowledge that he might be 'growing old – blossoming, flourishing, maturing; at last!' The theme for the evening was to be how we use words, sometimes carelessly, sometimes unadvisedly and often imaginatively, and how their meanings change over time.

We moved from Shakespeare's Cleopatra's disdain for the fine words of Octavius Caesar – 'He words me girls, he words me' – to the ubiquitous modern clichés: 'one has to say', 'looking at an issue' – expressions of just nothing at all. The suggestion by a telephone receptionist to 'bear with me' did not, sadly, mean an offer of telephone sex!

Two Irishmen, Wilde and Sheridan, used their witty words to comment on the education of women, a controversial subject in their day. The imperious Lady Bracknell, interviewing Algernon, opined, 'I do not approve of anything that interferes with nature's ignorance.' Mrs Malaprop, that great mistress of the wrong word, declared libraries to be "vile places indeed." A 'supercilious knowledge in accounts', being 'a mistress of orthodoxy' and having the ability to 'reprehend the true meaning of words' were the essential requirements of a well-brought-up girl! A moving quote from the young Wordsworth writing about the French Revolution – 'Bliss it was in that dawn to be alive, but to young was very heaven!' – led Ronald to wonder, 'Is childhood innocence an overrated conceit?' It certainly inspired many poets, from Vaughan ('Happy those early days, when I shined in my angel-infancy') to Laurie Lee's misunderstanding on his first day at school in *Cider with Rosie*.

Poems can have their own meanings according to their reader, something



acknowledged by T.S. Eliot when replying to a reader's question: 'Well madam, if you felt sure that is what it meant, then that is what it must have meant.'

The *meeja*, in its many forms, is a central part of our lives today and – for good or bad – affects our use of words. Ronald's example of the change in the use of *evacuated* had the audience laughing again: in the past, he noted, places and houses were evacuated, their contents removed. But recently, he observed, he heard a report, 'The Channel Tunnel has been evacuated.' People had been evacuated into the service tunnel. 'Imagine the task of clearing it up!'

Local interest was provided by two poems by Sally Brocklehurst. The first was a delightful sonnet in half-rhymes, *Jam*. Its rich description of the fruit in their 'velvet coats' turned to 'iridescent drops that pearl down the wooden spoon' was so appropriate for an Indian Summer. The second was an evocation of a young girl's feelings in *Sally Goes Home After Ballet*.

Who could have been the writer of the poem, *Hi, Wycombe*, when we were taken on a walk along the High Street visiting places long gone such as Sherriff's tearooms and Davenport Vernon's garage? The audience was not too young to enjoy the references.

To end, Ronald and Annie treated us to words from that master of nonsensical words, Lewis Carroll. *The Jabberwocky*, although so familiar, was performed with such verve it could have been newly written. Likewise, *The Lobster Quadrille* showed us how the combination of imaginative words and two talented performers can

stimulate the mind to wonderful fantasy. We had been treated to a truly delightful and stimulating evening with much laughter. It was a pleasure to be taken away for a short while to a world where poetry and prose were so loved and appreciated. Ronald and Annie will be performing at next year's Wycombe Arts Festival. You will certainly enjoy an evening in their company.

Hi! Wycombe – Past and Present

*Shall we walk down the High?
No, not that in Oxford's fair city
But where painter Constable, (so pretty!)
Once came for a military interview
And if they'd applauded
His cart might have forded
Our Wye in the Combe. Look there
Where once was Sweetland Photographer
Now near a printer that's Pronto
And always a Building Soc.
Though not Northern Rock!
And here's Lloyds' Bank now turned to 'Coral'
You can bet in there there must be a moral
Quite handy for – gosh what a turn on! –
The garage of Davenport Vernon
Smiths' in a mo – but not the old facia
With papers and mags in the porch – nothing racier
Than 'Tit Bits' and 'Lilliput' for gents in grey maccs
On the opposite bank the dear old Red Lion
Once painted white in a student rag
Where glorious Winston once straddled a sill
To tell us, of course, it was in the bag
If, in our wisdom we'd vote him in.
We didn't, we couldn't, we wanted a change
But not of our Guildhall – how strange
To widen congested A40
They threatened removal – how naughty!
The Co-op has hopped it – one searches
And finds that the 'Falcon' still perches
But lets look for the pub in White Hart Street
Now we've seen the past in retreat
Since we've meandered al-fresco
And in Eden at last here is Tesco*



Family History Afternoon

Wednesday 21st January
2pm - 4pm

Name Games
Angela Hillier

Angela will be talking about name variations and how to solve those mysteries.

Come and do some family history research. Beginners are welcome.

Entrance charge is £1. This event will be taking place in the Local History section on the second floor of the library.



Encourage A Friend To Become A Friend

We are trying to increase our membership, with a target of 150 by June 30th 2009. Until then, all members who are responsible for a friend joining Friends (single or joint membership) will be given a voucher allowing them free entrance to a Friends event of their choice.

Notice Of Thanks

Many thanks go out to Mike Dewey, Brian Furner, Mary Woodman, Margaret Simmonds, Ronald Swains, and Antony Bone for contributing to this issue of the newsletter.

Future Talks / Events

If you have any ideas for future talks or events or have heard a good speaker at another event, please contact a member of the Committee. Friends is *your* society and we would like members to have a programme of varied talks and events to look forward to.

Memories Of The 20th Century

On Wednesday the 18th of November Kate Bradford hosted a talk at the library, entitled *Memories of the 20th Century*. Whilst it was not strictly a learned or informative talk, it was certainly one of the most thought provoking I have heard.

We were told about whalebone corsets, and the shocking behaviour of Edward VIII and Alice Keppel. We were reminded about Friday night being Amami night, but we preferred not to remember the other Friday night 'treat' – syrup of figs! Dr Williams Pink Pills for Pale People were brought back to mind, as well. The advertisement to the right shows just how things have changed – you wouldn't expect to see something like this in your local newspaper today!

Supermarkets were unheard of in the earlier half of the 20th Century – more familiar were shops like Arkwright's, made famous by Ronnie Barker in *Open All Hours*.

Overall, it was a thoroughly enjoyable evening, with mince pies and coffee to round it off.

Miraculous Cure

Richard D. Creech, of 1062 Second St., Appleton, Wis., says:

"Our son Willard was absolutely helpless. His lower limbs were paralyzed, and when we used electricity he could not feel it below his hips. Finally my mother, who lives in Canada, wrote advising the use of Dr. Williams' Pink Pills for Pale People and I bought some. This was when our boy had been on the stretcher for an entire year and helpless for nine months. In six weeks after taking the pills we noted signs of vitality in his legs, and in four months he was able to go to school. It was nothing else in the world that saved the boy than Dr. Williams' Pink Pills for Pale People. — From the Crescent, Appleton, Wis.

Dr. Williams' Pink Pills for Pale People

Spring 2009 Programme

January 15th – *Land of the Long White Cloud* by Margaret Deakin
A stunning journey through the amazing diversity of New Zealand.

February 19th – *Three Voices of 20th Century Women* by Maureen Dennis
A talk covering three women from Wycombe's history: Mrs Ivy Tilbury, daughter of a Wycombe chairmaker, Miss Emily Davies, pioneer for university education for women, and Dame Frances Dove, founder of Wycombe Abbey School.

March 19th – *History of the Rye and Holywell Mead* by Francis Alexander
A fascinating look at the history of our well-known landmark.

April 23rd – Annual General Meeting
followed by *Buckinghamshire's Rotten Boroughs* by Julian Hunt
A look at bribery and corruption in Parliament elections before the Reform Act.

May 7th – *Bucks Cottage Crafts* by Mrs J Dineen (Wycombe Arts Festival)

May 14th – *Preserving the History of the Furniture Industry* by Prof. Jake Kaner and Sharon Grover, Bucks New University
Saving images and text through the High Wycombe Electronic Furniture Archive.

May 23rd – *Moving up the Hill* by David Thorpe (Wycombe Arts Festival)
An introductory presentation at Wycombe Museum followed by an accompanied walk, to trace how the middle classes in late Victorian & Edwardian Wycombe moved from the town centre to the Amersham & Castle Hill areas.

All meetings, except the one on May 23rd, will be at the Library in Eden, starting at 7.30pm. The event on May 23rd will commence at 2.00pm with a short presentation at Wycombe Museum, Priory Avenue, followed by a walk of approximately one hours duration.



Antony Bone : Library Assistant (ICT Support)

The staff profile in this issue of the newsletter is of Antony Bone, who works mainly on the second floor of the library.

Describe your average day at work

The first thing I do in the morning is wander round and start up all of the PCs on the 2nd floor. Once they are all up and running I stamp and staple the daily newspapers and put them on the rack. After we open I pretty much go wherever the timetable tells me to, solving whatever IT problems pop up.

How long have you worked for Buckinghamshire County Council and what did you do before?

I'm brand new with the new Library! Before I came here I worked as weekend staff at WHSmiths in Aylesbury, and before that I was a bakery assistant! Also, I've just finished a Multimedia Technology course at Bucks New University.

The first record you bought?

How embarrassing! I think it was *Cruel Summer* by Ace of Base.



Recommend a book you have recently read

I love to read Elizabeth Moon's *Vatta Wars* series. Really good Sci-Fi.

Your favourite food?

Chilli – the hotter the better!

Your favourite film?

It changes... *Cloverfield* or *Dark Knight* at the moment.

Your happiest memory?

I don't have one particular happiest memory, but family holidays are really up there!

Your favourite TV programme?

Bones or *Stargate Atlantis*.

Any interesting skills?

I can spin pens around my thumb... does that count?

Any interesting hobbies?

Swimming and Power Kite flying.

Your favourite place?

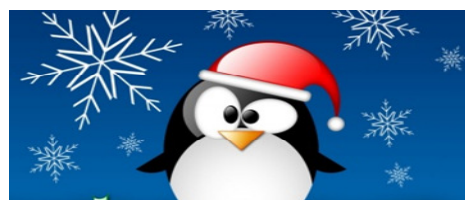
Center Parcs.

Childhood hero?

I'm told it was Superted when I was tiny!

What is the best bit of advice you have ever been given?

Don't spend all your time looking behind you. You will miss the opportunities coming towards you.



Quiz Night

Due to insufficient numbers a decision was taken to cancel this event. This was unfortunate as the event last year attracted a record attendance and number of teams.

Executive Committee Vacancies

We have vacancies on the Executive Committee for two important positions:

Member Liaison Officer – responsible for liaising with members to ensure that the interests of each member, as declared on their initial application form, are recognised and where possible utilised by the Executive Committee. Also responsible for working with the Library when Friends volunteers are needed to help at special Library events.

Programme Officer – responsible for arranging Friends programme of talks and other events.

Each position requires an average involvement of some 3-4 hours each month, plus a monthly report to the Executive Committee, although it is not necessary to attend every meeting.

Increase in Ticket Prices for Evening Talks

Ever since the formation of Friends over 4 years ago, the ticket price for our evening talks has been £2. Recently, some talks have been run at a loss, which defeats one of the objectives of Friends, which is to raise funds for the Library. Therefore, in order to avoid this and maintain the quality of speakers, we now find it necessary to increase these prices to £3 for members and £4 for non-members. These prices will come into effect from January 2009.



For more information on the work and activities of the Friends of High Wycombe Libraries, please phone Mike Dewey on 01628 525207.

If you would like to join the Friends please ask for a joining form at High Wycombe Library.

Alternatively, log-on to the Friends website for details on membership of Friends, forthcoming events, past editions of the newsletter, and much, much more!

www.fohwl.plus.com