

THE MORRAB LIBRARY NEWSLETTER

July 2025 - SUMMER



Welcome

Dear Members,
Welcome to our Summer Newsletter. As the year rolls by apace, we've really enjoyed welcoming you to our fairs, supporting the LitFest and hosting a wide variety of talks and classes, as well as providing reading matter and spaces to create and work. And while you'll notice a few changes in the coming months, we look forward to seeing you to enjoy our beautiful spaces, to read, research, and learn.



Summer view from the window

NEW BOOKS IN THE LIBRARY

For those who missed them in the monthly links emails, here are links to the fiction and non-fiction books the library has purchased this year to date. The Book Selection Committee is meeting again shortly, so keep an eye out for new titles on the shelves soon. Don't forget to keep your suggestions coming by adding them to the book at the front desk.

We do also add a small number of donated books to the collections, but please talk to staff before bringing any in to us.

FROM THE CHAIRMAN...

I hope many of you will have had the opportunity to visit the newly opened Gardener's House in recent weeks. Now that the scaffolding has gone and the barriers removed, it is clear that a wonderful architectural conversion has taken place to create such an inspiring and uplifting space. The Sensory Garden is such a joy to experience too. The Morrab Library look forward to working alongside the Gardener's House for many years to come.

I am pleased to welcome two new Trustees to our discussions around the table. Doreen Pinfold joins us after a long association with Falmouth University and senior positions in the library world. Bertie Herrtage brings experience of crowd funding and his youthful outlook will certainly be a welcome blast of new thinking and ideas. I wish them both well in their Trustee careers.

Two future dates to remember are Thursday 28th August which is the launch of our new OPAC. This is a very exciting and historic step for the Morrab and is just the sort of development an independent library should be taking. The second John Le Carre Memorial Lecture is on the 16th November at the Acorn Theatre. Nick Harkaway, JLC's son, will be speaking this time, and we look forward to a fascinating insight to the writing of espionage fiction. Tickets are already on sale from the Acorn. Both events will be publicised further in the future.

We launched the Friends of the Morrab Library recently. It is such a worthwhile cause and I would urge you, if possible to consider joining. Details can be accessed here:
<https://morrablibrary.org.uk/become-a-friend/>

I was very saddened to lose both my dear old cats within a few weeks of one another in the Spring. Sometime later this notice appeared on the board in the Members kitchen and I am now glad to tell you that Misty has settled into her new home – as can be seen below. My thanks to the Morrab Cat Homing Agency. Have a very good Summer. Harry Spry-Leverton.



FIND OUT MORE...

Learn more about our Trustees and Staff via their dedicated pages on the website. You'll also find pages on our President and Patrons.

DATES FOR THE DIARY

- Thursday 28th August, 12.00-3.00: KOHA launch - drop in to see our new online catalogue
- Thursday 4th September, 10.00-3.00: Rare Books Open Day
- Tuesday - Saturday, October 14th-18th: Claire Lucas, Artist-In-Residence
- Sunday 16th November, 6.30pm - the second John le Carré Memorial Lecture with Nick Harkaway
- Saturday 22nd November, 10.00-2.00: Morrab Library Christmas Fair
- Saturday 8th December, 1.30-3.30 - Library Members' Christmas Party

More information on each of these will be sent out in due course. And keep an eye out for our upcoming talks and workshops via our website: <https://morrablibrary.org.uk/events/>

FRIENDS OF THE MORRAB LIBRARY

You will know that we have recently launched our Friends of The Morrab Library scheme. An enormous thank you to everyone who has already signed up and are making monthly contributions - we are incredibly grateful for your generosity and support. All donations we receive will help the library to meet day-to-day running costs, and continue offering the services, space, and collections that make the library so special. If you'd like to consider signing up, have a look at our [webpage](#) for more information.



JOIN US TO CELEBRATE AN IMPORTANT DAY

Save the date - history is being made! We are excited to announce that on Thursday afternoon the 28th August from 12.00-3.00, we will launch the first stage of the library's Online Public Access Catalogue via KOHA - where you will be able to search for more than 12,000 of the library's book collections online! This is a momentous day in the history of our library, and it's thanks to the efforts of staff and volunteers who have worked so hard over the last few years to catalogue so many books in the collection so far. More details will follow, but the afternoon drop in session will allow members to see the new catalogue in action and learn how to access it - and there will be cake! While there is a very long way to go, and many, many more titles to add to KOHA, making some of our collections searchable now represents a significant step in the path to making all of our book collections accessible to you, and to the wider world. Stay tuned!

THE 2ND JOHN LE CARRÉ MEMORIAL LECTURE



Nick Harkaway, author of the Sunday Times Bestseller 'Karla's Choice' and son of John le Carré, will deliver the second John le Carré Memorial Lecture at the Acorn Theatre on Sunday 16th November at 6.30pm.

Nick has published eight other novels including 'The Price You Pay' which is currently being televised as "Kill Jackie". He is working on a sequel to 'Karla's Choice' and in this lecture will speak to us about his life with his parents, the place that Cornwall holds in his heart, and writing into his father's world.

Proceeds from the talk will support the library. Tickets are available directly from The [Acorn Theatre website](#) and Box Office.

HELP US WHILE YOU SHOP

If you shop online, you may like to consider signing up with EasyFundraising. They partner with over 8,000 brands who will donate part of what you spend to the Morrab Library if you nominate us. It won't cost you any extra. [Click here](#) to find out more.



We're going digital!

PROGRESS IN THE ARCHIVES

Our archives volunteers continue to make great progress with adding our holding records to the National Archives catalogue - and we can see from the number of enquiries we are receiving from around the world that listing them there is making our collections accessible to so many more people. You can search our records at: <https://discovery.nationalarchives.gov.uk/>. Collections online include those of J.T. Blight, the Borlase, Tremenhoe and Quiller-Couch families, records of the Penzance Orchestral Society, our historic science and map holdings, and so much more.

The library has recently been invited to feature as a case study in archival best practice in a forthcoming publication by the National Archives, showing how their support, and our volunteers' brilliant work, is an example to other organisations about what can be achieved whilst working within a small budget.

RARE BOOKS OPEN DAY - 4TH SEPTEMBER

Drop in to the library on Thursday 4th September when we host our next Collections Open Day. It is the turn of the treasures from our Rare Books holdings to be highlighted. Events like this provide the opportunity for you to learn about the very important, unique and eclectic collections we hold which you may not know about. The books will transport you to ancient Egypt, the Alhambra Palace, the world of sea dragons, and many more magical places. And you'll see this book below...

A FASCINATING NEW ACQUISITION TO THE LIBRARY'S COLLECTIONS

We recently purchased a book which holds special importance to us, linking four people who played important roles in its history and collections - Arthur Quiller-Couch, J.T. Blight, J.O. Halliwell-Phillips, and John le Carré. We've written a blog on our website to explain the fascinating story of the ownership of Richard Carew's 1811 edition of his Survey of Cornwall, and explore the authorship of its mysterious annotations! Read the [blog here](#).



John le Carré pictured with Morrab Library colleagues in 1975

NEWS ON OUR RESIDENCIES

Our Writer-in-Residence, author and poet Peter McAllister, continues his time with us, hosting creative writing workshops each month. He will also be writing in response to the library and will be creating a piece for the library's archive in perpetuity.

Fellow library member and local artist Claire Lucas will feature as our Artist-in-Residence from October 14th-18th. "In my Element", will be a celebration, in portraiture and poetry, of finding our way back home to ourselves through books, memories, community and creative pursuits. In the meantime, if you use the library as a base for creative work, or feel like it's a place where you can 'come home' to yourself, and would like to be drawn or written about, let us know and we'll put you in touch with Claire.

LETTERBOX RETURNS

We have had a few members leaving their returned library books in our letterbox when the library is closed. This presents a couple of problems - firstly most have no note attached, so we don't know who has returned them, leaving our volunteers with the unenviable task of sifting through all of our loans tickets to find the borrower. And secondly, the letterbox isn't watertight, which causes damage to the books. We would be very grateful if you might hold on to the books, and phone or email us to extend your loan, then return them when you are able. Or get in touch if you feel you may have difficulty returning them to the library at a different time. Thank you!

OUR NEW NEIGHBOURS

A big welcome to the Gardener's House team, who opened in spectacular fashion on the 21st June. The beautiful transformation of the almost ruined building by the great team from Jewell Construction now houses community spaces hosting wellbeing workshops, green projects, a sensory garden and a living archive. Drop in or find out more at: <https://thegardenershouse.org/>.

OUR CHILDREN'S SHORT STORY COMPETITION

A huge thank you to everyone who entered our children's short story writing competition this year (and to all the parents, carers, teachers and family that encouraged them too!).

The competition has now closed for entries and we've handed your stories over to the judges. We'll notify the shortlisted writers in early September and winners will be announced on our website by the end of that month.

We are very grateful to library member Nigel Castle who has sponsored the competition, and writes: "I am honoured to sponsor this competition. Cornwall is a land of mystery, magic, legend and lore. Is it any wonder so many accomplished writers spent numerous years living in this delightful county? I wish all of the entrants the best of luck with their stories".

NEW BOOK ABOUT THE LIBRARY

The Penwith Local History Group have undertaken research into our local area's history and stories for many years, and they meet at the library every month. They have produced numerous fascinating books, and their latest is extra special to the library. 'Beyond the Bookshelves: Hidden Histories in The Morrab Library' takes the reader on a journey into our own rare and unique collections, including those of Hilda Quick, Humphry Davy, Prebendary Philip Hedgeland, Ernest and Mary Oldham and many more. It will soon be available to purchase via the library or directly from the PLHG. Contact them via their [website](#).

RELAXED BOOK GROUP

Our new Relaxed Book Group has proved a happy experience for its attendees - it's a friendly gathering for anyone who loves books but would prefer not to join a traditional book club. Rather than reading a specific book, they share what's on their bookshelf or simply come for tea, biscuits and company in our beautiful spaces. Audiobook listeners are just as welcome as traditional readers. The group explore all types of books, swap titles and share recommendations, with discussion focussing on what readers look for in a book and whether and when, they've found it. They meet on the last Tuesday of the month, from 2pm-3pm (recommencing in September). To join the group contact Jo Buckingham by email jo.buckingham.palace@gmail.com , or [read more here](#).

FEATURE COLLECTION: CORNISH FICTION

Soon to be searchable online, the Cornish Fiction collection, located in the Jenner Room, is one of the library's treasures. Dating from the nineteenth century through to the present, the books are full of adventure, daring and romance. Alongside Winston Graham and Daphne du Maurier, you'll find works by Sabine Baring Gould, Arthur Quiller-Couch, Crosbie Garstin, through to modern fiction writers such as Wyl Menmuir, Jane Johnson and Alan Kent, with lots of Cornish crime too. Don't forget to drop in and have a browse.

La Voz de Galicia

WE'RE FAMOUS IN GALICIA!

We recently welcomed a visitor from Galicia in Spain. Professor Cristobal Ramirez is an expert on medieval pilgrimage and a journalist, and he came seeking information about our own place of pilgrimage, St Michael's Mount. He had such a pleasant experience that he wrote an article about us in his local newspaper "La Voz de Galicia". An excerpt is here:

" I headed to the legendary Morrab, in the center of Penzance. Located in the middle of gardens, the noble building dazzles, and one enters with an extra dose of respect. The interior is saturated with books —the verb is well used—and using them involves very little cost. What is interesting, surprising, and enviable is the story, which they tell with passion: an entity created by private initiative in 1818 through the merger of two old reading clubs (for ladies and gentlemen), public libraries eventually emerged, and the library became a non-profit charity so as not to have to squander its magnificent and select collections and continue providing a service. It is supported by membership fees and contributions from organisations, with a few professionals receiving salaries and, pay attention, seventy (yes, you read that right, seventy) volunteers in a city of only twenty-one thousand inhabitants who constitute, I don't know if it's the lungs, but certainly the soul of Morrab."
You can read Dr Ramirez's piece in full [here](#) (in Spanish).

LIBRARY POETRY GROUP

The library's poetry group, meets fortnightly on alternate Thursday afternoons from 1.30pm. There are places for new or returning members when it reconvenes in September. The group reads and discusses poems by a variety of poets, chosen by a member of the group. Contact the Group's convenor, George Care, by email (mlpoetrygroup@gmail.com) if you would like to find out more information and/or join this thought-provoking group.

OUR MYSTERY PHOTO

Can you help us discover **where** this photo was taken?

Part of the Photo Archive's Barbara Beckerleg collection, this image shows Barbara, daughter of Marjorie and Wilfred. Reggie Richards, of Richards Photographers, also features in many of these family photos. Barbara, who was deaf, was born in Penzance on 18th February 1936 and attended St. Gertrude's School. Her mother raised her after her father left. She married David Thomas and had a son, dying in 1995 at St. Julia's Hospice, Hayle.



Morrab Library reference: MG.566

IN BRIEF...

- **Gazebos** - We have been very grateful to various groups around Penzance for the loan of their gazebos for our fairs - if by chance any member has one they no longer need, or know where to borrow more from, please contact Lisa.
- **Journals donations** - if you subscribe to any journals which may be of interest to other members, please consider donating the latest issues to the library when you have finished. We display them on our journals trolley in the Reading Room for others to enjoy, before recycling them.
- **Chair cushions** - a huge thank you to all of our members who donated new seat cushions for the library - they have made a world of difference!
- **Another thanks** - to the staff, 23 volunteers and the many who attended the Summer Fair in June - we raised more £1,200 for the library and welcomed some new members too!
- **Morrab Library, the film!** If you haven't already, don't forget to have a look at the film about the Morrab Library made last year by the students at Penwith College - it's viewable on our [website](#).

LOOKING FOR GIFT IDEAS FOR FAMILY AND FRIENDS?

We have a range of gift options for sale, all of which will help support the library's work.

Gift Memberships - these are available for household, life or student memberships. Share your love of the library! (£20-£500)



Second hand books - a great selection of pre-loved books for sale, a perfect gift for a like-minded book lover (prices vary).



Morrab Library Pens - quality black ink pens with the library logo and name embossed on them. (£2.50)



1841 Map of Penzance - A high quality reproduction of the 1841 map of the Borough of Penzance (£20)



Morrab Library Postcards - choose from 1 of 3 different views of the beautiful interiors (60p each)



John Trigg prints - Choose a high quality print from one of twelve beautiful images, taken from the collection of drawing books donated to the library by the artist and library member, John Trigg (£65)



Greetings cards - a range of blank cards featuring photos of local landscapes and features, created by one of our volunteers (£1.50)



And coming soon - keep an eye out for new items soon to be available:

Tote Bags - The Morrab library tote bag is not far away - a must have accessory!

Hilda Quick notecards and postcards - a selection of images from our Hilda Quick archives, showcasing the local artist's wondrous engravings.

The Photo Archive books - a series of small booklets showing different collections from the Photo Archive. The first of these will be about the working lives of the people living in and around Penzance over the last one-hundred-and-fifty years.

Some highlights from 2025 so far!



FINALLY...

Thanks to you, as always, for your continued support of our library. If you have any views, suggestions or feedback, please don't hesitate to get in touch and we shall do our best to help.

If you would prefer a plain text, or paper copy of the newsletter, please contact the library.

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