

# THE MORRAB LIBRARY NEWSLETTER

## December 2025 - Winter



### Welcome

Dear Members,  
Welcome to our Winter Newsletter. As another year draws to a close, it's a time to reflect and celebrate another year in your library's 207 year history, and look towards a new one. As ever, we'll face our challenges head on, and with your support, embrace 2026 and share the joys of reading, learning and coming together.

Lisa and the Library team



*Winter light from the library window*

### CHRISTMAS OPENING HOURS

The Library will close at 4.00pm on Saturday 20th December for the Christmas break, and re-open at 10.00am on Friday 2nd January 2026.

Please hold on to any loans you have during our closure period and return them to us in the new year. Most importantly, please don't leave them in our letterbox, where they become prone to serious damage from damp. We don't charge overdue book fines!

### FROM THE CHAIRMAN...

This year the Trustee Board has been joined by Doreen Pinfold, Daniel Garside and Bertie Hertridge. They all bring various talents and life experiences to our discussions around the table and it is also very reassuring to now have three former professional Librarians addressing the interests of the Morrab Library. Bertie also has the added advantage of considerably reducing the average age of Trustees. I wish them every success in their Trustee careers.

Congratulations to both our Assistant Librarians, Harriet and James, on the maternity and paternity fronts respectively, in recent weeks. Welcome to Oula and Rowan. It has been anxious times for some and we are very grateful to the Membership for your forbearance over staffing at what has been a particularly "busy-as-ever" period. The John Le Carré lecture at the Acorn Theatre on 16th November was a lovely Penzance occasion, a great memorial to our former Patron and friend and something which we must definitely repeat in the future.

I hope you will have noticed the KOHA online catalogue terminal newly arrived in Reception. It (he?, she?) looks minuscule when compared to the 5" x 3" catalogue cards, stacked row on row, around the room. KOHA will grow in use and importance over the years and take on new roles: borrowing, reservations and so on. It has been a small but important step for the Morrab to take.

We move rapidly into the Christmas season - starting ever earlier it seems - and I hope to see many of you at our Christmas party on 6th December at 1 p.m. It is also peak Membership renewal season and I would like to thank you for your continuing support to the Morrab Library.

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

With best wishes

Harry Spry-Leverton,  
Chair of Trustees



*Our Morrab Library Board of Trustees*

### 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](#).



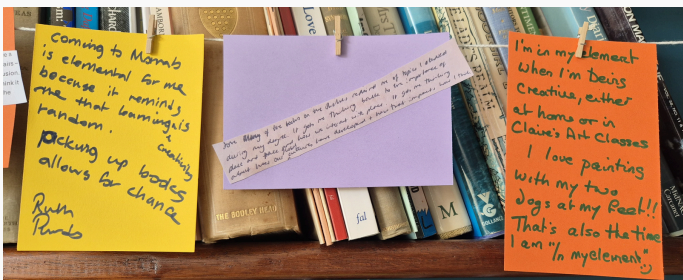
## MORRAB LIBRARY MEMBERS CHRISTMAS PARTY - 6<sup>TH</sup> DECEMBER!

Join us at the Morrab Library Members Christmas Party on Saturday 6th December from 1:00pm - 3:30pm for some festive fun! There will be a donations bar serving wine, fizz and soft drinks (cash or card accepted). And there'll be some excellent literary prizes in our raffle.

This year, as our membership continues to grow, and we face increasing operational costs to maintain the library, **we are asking members to bring a plate of food with them to share - savoury or sweet, any contribution (shop bought or home made) would be welcome.** At 2.00pm, our friends from the Mousehole Male Voice Choir will return to perform some festive carols and shanties. Come and celebrate another happy year at The Morrab Library.

## BEYOND THE BOOKSHELVES

The Penwith Local History Group (PLHG) undertake important and fascinating research into West Cornwall and are based here at the library, meeting regularly and making use of our collections. They recently launched their latest publication, *Beyond The Bookshelves*. It is particularly special to us, as it reveals and celebrates some of the important collections held here in our library. They tell some intriguing stories about people of West Cornwall whose records are lodged in the Morrab Library archive. Included are a ground-breaking female librarian, some rebellious Methodist ministers, Penzance's own Sir Humphry Davy - and his passion for angling, artists who designed bookplates and etched beautiful wood block prints, and even an autograph album with celebrity-drawn pigs! Copies are on sale at the library for £15, with a share of proceeds being generously donated to us by the PLHG, so you'll learn more about our extraordinary collections while supporting the care of them.



## OUR CHILDREN'S SHORT STORY COMPETITION

September saw the winners of our Children's Short Story Competition announced at a wonderful ceremony in the library (picture below). You can read all about the winners and read their stories [here](#), or drop in and read the entries at the library. Judge Sarah Connors wrote: "I was genuinely struck by the exceptional standard of entries we received – the creativity, imagination, and originality on display were truly inspiring. From atmospheric Gothic landscapes to vivid portrayals of mythical creatures, and everything in between, the stories transported us into entirely new worlds." An enormous thank you all the children who took part, our sponsor Nigel Castle, and to our four judges for their help and support.



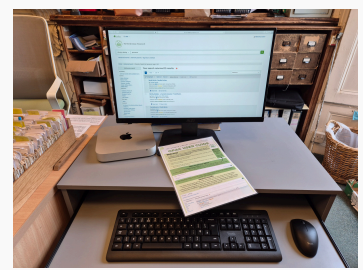
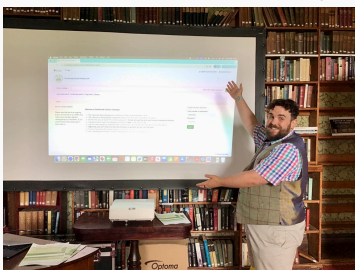
## NEWS ON OUR RESIDENCIES

Our Writer-in-Residence, author and poet Peter McAllister, continues his time with us, currently leading a project with some of our members to create stories using records in our Archives collections - more soon!

It was a complete joy to host our most recent Artist-in-Residence, Claire Lucas in October, when she exhibited her work in the Elizabeth Treffry Room and delivered a talk about her time with us (pictures at left). She drew pencil portraits of members, volunteers and staff, and captured their thoughts about the library. You can read more about her time with us [via this link](#), and watch a film of her talk [here](#).

## KOHA - OUR NEW ONLINE CATALOGUE

At the end of August, the library launched our Online Public Access Catalogue (OPAC), taking its first steps towards our book listings becoming fully digital - and of course we celebrated with cake! Over 12,000 of the library's book titles (around 20%) can now be searched online via our website. [Follow the link](#) for more information, including how to access it, or drop in and chat to staff.





## WHAT HAVE WE BEEN UP TO?

Quite a lot actually! The last few months have seen:

- Seven talks, on subjects including bellringing, Medieval church wall paintings, the Nicholson sisters, cathedrals, the history of Penzance, Frankenstein, and the story of the St Aubyn family, and more;
- Super 'Spooky' Storytime for our young members, enjoying the story and activities around Winnie the witch and Wilbur the cat's haunted house adventures;
- We've hosted classes on watercolor painting, creative writing, the world of Anglo-Saxon England, t-shirt printing, embroidery and bookbinding;
- We welcomed students from Helston Community College for a study morning, and members of both the Pendeen, and Perranuthnoe & Gwidden Women's Institutes;
- We displayed a selection of some of the most rare and fragile books in our collections at our Rare Books Open Day;
- Our Christmas Fair saw us welcome a record 458 visitors and raised over £2,000. We are so grateful to the 29 volunteers who helped staff make it happen, and to you, our members, for your support by spending your money, making cakes for our refreshments room, and bringing along your friends and family. A special thank to our stallholders, and the local businesses who donated such brilliant raffle prizes.



## LOOKING FORWARD...

Our staff and volunteers will work hard to bring you a new year of Morrab Library reading and learning opportunities - and some fun! Look forward to more Fairs in Spring, Summer and Winter, new books in the collections based around your suggestions, classes and workshops on a plethora of subjects for every age, Open Days exhibiting our rare collections, and of course more regular talks. We already have some lined up in 2026, on subjects highlighting our Photo Archive collections, Cornish folk tales, poetry, Daphne du Maurier, and a doctor and lighthousekeeper's life in the 19<sup>th</sup> century on the Isles of Scilly. Contact staff to find out more on what's coming up. And there'll be many more, keep an eye on our 'What's On' calendar on the website. We'll also continue to catalogue our indexes to bring the guides to our collections into the light to share more widely with the world. With your support in 2026 we can enjoy another happy year and ensure our collections and spaces thrive.



## WAYS TO HELP THE LIBRARY

We are always looking for ways to increase our income to address the operational deficit under which the library operates. Here are some of the ways you can help us - any contribution or purchase, big or small, is welcome and received with thanks.

### Join the Friends of The Morrab Library

You will know that we launched our Friends of The Morrab Library scheme earlier this year. We're grateful to everyone who has already signed up with monthly contributions. The regular income 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, or talk to staff or Trustees.

### Must-Have Merchandise

Don't forget 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-£550);

**Morrab Library Tote Bags** - made from natural cotton, with a design by our own Harriet-Jade Harrow, these are perfect for carrying your library loans home with you, or filling up with treats and gifts from one of our Fairs. More info [here](#). (£10)

**Hilda Quick Cards and Notecards** - Five notecards and five postcards featuring the work of Cornish artist, illustrator, wood-engraver and ornithologist, Hilda Quick, whose collections are held in our archive. (£1 - £10) More info [here](#);

**Working Lives** - Our Photo Archive volunteers have selected a range of 26 beautiful and extraordinary images from our collections to create a book depicting the working lives of local people and families. (£8);

**Christmas Cards** - This year, we have gone retro, bringing back some of our most popular cards from previous years, and introducing a special new addition from our Hilda Quick collection. [Find out more here](#) (£1.50);

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

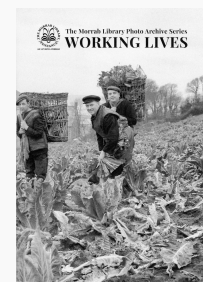
**Morrab Library Postcards** - choose from 1 of 3 different views of the beautiful interiors (60p each);

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

**Second hand books** - a great selection of pre-loved books for sale, a perfect gift for the bibliophile in your life (prices vary);

**1841 Map of Penzance** - A reproduction of the 1841 map of the Borough of Penzance (£20);

**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 John Trigg (£65). [Find out more here](#).





## DISCOVERING HIDDEN TREASURES

One of our wonderful Library volunteers, Michael Malone-Lee, recently happened upon an unusual, witty, anonymously published poem in an innocuous volume in the Theology Room, dating from 1811. Enchanted and intrigued, Michael delved deeper to uncover its author, the Revd. C. Valentine Le Grice (1773-1858), and in his article, he explores the background to his entertaining piece, 'The Petition of an Old Uninhabited House in Penzance to its Master in Town'. Read Michael's [blog here](#).

## JOHN LE CARRÉ MEMORIAL LECTURE

It was an honour to host Nick Harkaway for the second John le Carré Memorial Lecture in November. Nick is an author, and son of our late former President and Patron. A packed Acorn Theatre were enthralled by Nick's amusing, insightful and poignant relating of his childhood, taking on the challenge of writing in his father's style, and the family's links to West Cornwall. We are grateful to him and his family for their time and support for the library. Nick's, and his father's, books are available to borrow - you can [search our catalogue online](#) to discover our holdings.

Nick Harkaway at The Acorn



## OUR MYSTERY PHOTO

Can you help us discover more information about this rather special photo?

A group of men stand proudly on the steps of St John's Hall are wearing medals and military ribbons, possibly having just been honoured by the mayor at a civic reception. Their various hats contrast with the smart top hats of the dignitaries behind them, but they have all dressed up as best they can for the occasion. But who are they? And what were they being honoured for? If you have any ideas please get in touch.

## DID YOU KNOW...

...that we record a lot of our talks? If you can't make it to one or didn't get a ticket in the ballot, be sure to [check out our website](#) to see if we have a recording. From Cornwall feasts to Children's books, daring expeditions, to ghosts and ghouls - the growing collection of recordings is a treasure trove of inspiring talks. If you can make a donation after watching, no matter how small, it would help the library greatly.

## NEW BOOKS IN THE COLLECTION

Autumn saw us purchase a swathe of new books for the library's collections, based largely on your suggestions (we have a book at the front desk if you'd like to recommend any for the future). You can view the list on our [website via this link](#). Get in touch to reserve any titles that pique your interest.

## PHOTO ARCHIVES NEWS

It has been an interesting year in the Photo Archive. While we have been continuing to scan the remains of the collection and create records we have also started phase two of the project. From the early days of digitising the photographs we have also had in mind that many of the records needed refining and adding to. This has now started in earnest and we are tackling the way in which members and friends can find what they are looking for - expect new instructions on the website in the course of 2026.

There is an exciting exhibition of photos from the Serena Wadham collection being planned and we will keep you informed on that.

This year, in time for Christmas, we have made the first of a planned series of booklets of photographs from the collection. Entitled 'Working Lives' it shows people in and around Penzance at work, resting from work or pausing to have their photos taken. The photos date from the 1880s to the 1950s and it is on sale now for £8. 'Working Lives' is dedicated to the memory of Glyn Richards - Seafarer, Local Historian, inspirational and much missed member of the photo archive team. David Puddifoot, Photo Archives Manager



Some image from 'Working Lives'

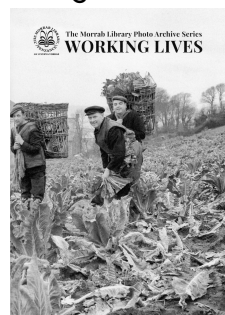


Photo Archive Reference: M.3004



## BOOKING DESK SPACES

Regular library visitors will know that there has been increased pressure at times on the demand for desks by members at which to work and write. You can book a desk by emailing or calling in advance and letting us know how long you would like it for - please do arrive at the time you have booked for. Importantly, if you do need to cancel and no longer require the desk you have booked, please let us know ASAP, as there will be other members looking for a space. Please also remember that phone calls, ZOOM and in-person meetings are not permitted in the library spaces - it is too disruptive to your fellow members. We are grateful for your cooperation.

## HONOURING OUR VOLUNTEERS

This year, the library has achieved a lot - we're heading for 900 members, we've digitally catalogued more than 2,400 books (out of more than 13,000 in total), added many hundreds of new titles to our collections, catalogued more archival records, cleaned and repaired many hundreds of books, and much more.

And of course, not one single bit of this could have happened without our volunteers - all 73 of them. They are valued and respected, and the library is extremely grateful to them. It would be impossible to name all the tasks they undertake here, but here are just a few:

- Conservation, cleaning and repair of the books;
- Cataloguing books;
- Front desk welcomes;
- Working in the Photo Archive;
- Archives cataloguing and digitisation;
- Trustees and their governance;
- Managing book sales;
- Running events;
- Checking for pests (of the insect kind!);
- Auditing the newspaper and journals collections;
- SO much washing up!;
- And much, much more.

So we want to acknowledge each and every volunteer and thank them for their work, their inspiration, their ideas and most of all, their brilliant company.



*Just some of our magnificent team of Morrab Library volunteers*



## WISHING ALL A HAPPY CHRISTMAS

Christmas represents many different things to people, but we hope that however you choose to celebrate, or perhaps not, that you enjoy a peaceful and happy time. Be sure to drop in before 4.00pm on the 20th December to borrow some festive reading.

We look forward to returning on the 2nd January and welcoming you back to your library. Happy Christmas!

With warm wishes, Lisa, James, Alison, Harriet and Laura.

**Contact us:** The Morrab Library, Morrab Gardens, Penzance TR18 4DA Tel: 01736 364474  
Email: [enquiries@morrablibrary.org.uk](mailto:enquiries@morrablibrary.org.uk) / Website: [www.morrablibrary.org.uk](http://www.morrablibrary.org.uk)  
Facebook: @TheMorrabLibrary, Instagram: @morrablibrary or Twitter: @morrablibrary

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