

THE MORRAB LIBRARY NEWSLETTER

April 2026 - Spring



Welcome

Dear Members,

After a dramatic, stormy start to the year, we hope that Spring brings plenty of sunshine and opportunities to escape our somewhat enforced hibernation. And hopefully your library will inspire you to do just that, whether it's to find a quiet place to read and contemplate, or to attend our variety of forthcoming events.

Lisa and the Library team



Spring flowers in the library

IMPORTANT REMINDER - LIBRARY CLOSURE

As reported with this newsletter, the library will close from Tuesday 28th April to Friday 1st May while the library is used for a film shoot. We're sorry for any inconvenience but appreciate your understanding as the library seeks to raise vital income.

FROM THE CHAIRMAN...

It was a very proud moment when I chaired my first meeting of Trustees in February. I am very grateful to my colleagues on the Board for their belief in me and I look forward to repaying that trust.

Our former Chairman, Harry Spry-Leverton leaves the position in a very good place, having steered the Board through the challenges of the after effects of Covid and our conversion to CIO status amongst others, and we are all very grateful to him for that. I'm pleased to say that he remains on the Board as Honorary Librarian.

Thank you also to Christina Carson who has taken over as Honorary Secretary, and to Doreen Pinfold who is now Vice-Chair.

The board is pushing hard on a number of fronts, including aiming to balance the books with increased income from events, merchandise and the generosity of our supporters, alongside renovations of the building and the preservation of the amazing archives and rare book collections.

Our AGM is on May 11th at 11.00. Attendance by members is really appreciated - we love to meet you and your feedback is very important to us. If you can arrive earlier, there will be coffee and an opportunity to meet and chat to the trustees, from 10.30. One other date for your diaries - our annual Summer Fair is on June 20th.

You will have read that the library will be acting as a film location and closing for four days in late April. We thought long and hard about this and in the end decided that it was an unmissable opportunity, despite knowing that it would cause some inconvenience. We sincerely apologise for that and hope that you understand our decision.

One of the first things I wanted to do when I became Chair was to meet and get to know the 72 incredible volunteers at the Library, and see the work they are doing - cataloguing, preserving, renovating, cleaning, providing a welcome at reception, and so much more. Most of this goes on unseen by members and visitors. Our volunteers are the life-blood of the Morrab Library, and it is so interesting finding out what they get up to behind the scenes. I have a way to go in my ambition to meet them all, but hopefully I will achieve it sometime in 2026!

With best wishes

Stephen Oliver,
Chair of Trustees



FIND OUT MORE...

Get in touch if you would like to learn more about our Trustees, Patrons and Staff or search their dedicated pages on the website.

SAVE THE DATES!

- Tuesday 28th April to Friday 1st May. The library will be closed for a filming project.
- Monday 11th May, from 10.30am - Morrab Library Annual General Meeting
- Thursday 25th June, 10.00am - 3.00pm - Rare Books Open Day
- Saturday 20th June, 10.00am - 2.00pm - Morrab Library Summer Fair
- Saturday 27th June - the library is closed for Mazey Day
- Wednesday, 25th November - John le Carré Memorial Lecture

STAFFING NEWS

We are incredibly sad to share the news that Laura Clayton, our Housekeeper, is leaving us for pastures new.

Laura has been with us for three years keeping the library spick and span, and she will be sorely missed.

Never fear though, our much-loved colleague will still be seen around town with her accordion, leading the Golowan Band at various Summer events. Meur ras Laura!



SPRING FAIR ROUNDUP

An enormous thanks to all of our members for your support for the library's Spring Fair in March.

Despite internet AND hot water issues, we welcomed more than 530 visitors over four hours and raised more than £1800, a brilliant result. It not only highlighted the importance of our volunteers and how much we rely on their commitment, loyalty and endless support, but that of our members too, who responded so wonderfully to our call for donations of plants and cakes (and cash!) for the event.



MEET THE VOLUNTEERS

This month we thought we'd feature the work of one of our volunteers.

Andrew Moth joined us last year to work on a challenging but vital project to complete an audit of our newspaper collection.

Not only does the Morrab hold a number of editions of local Cornish titles not held anywhere else, we hold many that aren't yet digitised on the British Newspaper Archive, and are therefore difficult to access.

Andrew is undertaking the massive task of listing each individual issue of every title we hold, noting its condition and availability elsewhere, including online.

This will allow us to make future decisions about the care of our collections, and potential partnerships and collaborations with external institutions.

He has become a spreadsheet guru and is a valuable member of our team of 72 incredible volunteers. Thanks Andrew!



*Andrew at work
in the
Newspaper
Room*

WINDOW WORK

The coming weeks will see the team from Jewell's Construction onsite at the library undertaking some refurbishment work on our external windows, which have suffered various amounts of wear and tear from the ravages of the southerly winds over the years. A couple of windows may need to leave us for a while for some serious repair, so some views may be a little impeded for a spell, but apart from the noise of a woodsaw now and again, there should be minimal disruption.

COLLECTIONS NEWS

If you've been up to the first floor recently, you may have noticed a new addition. Using a special bequest from the late Dr Stephen Clark - a dear friend of the library and former Trustee - we have purchased a conservation-grade, secure display cabinet. This allows us to exhibit some of the library's rarest and important collections, which we'll continue to do on a rolling basis, changing items on display every few months. We have started with a real treasure - King Henry's VIII's Great Bible of 1539, which came to us via the Borlase family. Read the enclosed document to find out more about the case, and the Bible.

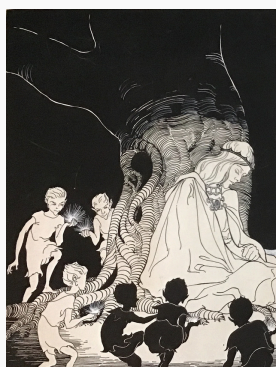


Our new display case, up on the first floor

The case will remain a constant reminder that the library holds some very special books and archives. Our collections' Open Days allow us to show many more, albeit for one day only. We recently displayed some treasures from the Archives, and will do the same for our Rare Books on 25th June, so do save the date. Don't forget that members and researchers can make appointments to view any materials from our rare collections - talk to staff to find out what we hold.

The project to add the index of our archives holdings to the National Archives Catalogue continues through the brilliant work of our six volunteers - with 33 collections now searchable online. This has resulted in queries from across the UK and the world, including Australia, Sweden, County Durham, Bristol, Oxford and Liverpool, as well as our own members and locals. You can search the holdings added so far yourself through the National Archives' DISCOVERY catalogue: <https://discovery.nationalarchives.gov.uk/> .

Our archives also feature in a new exhibition at the Cornwall Museum and Art Gallery in Truro. 'Cornish Myths and Legends' explores the folklore of the region through nine tales, and a number of images by Hilda Quick depicting fairies and mythical creatures are on show throughout. The exhibition runs until 1st November if you're up that way.



Hilda Quick - QUI/41. One of many images on display at the Cornwall Museum and Gallery

We've not been neglecting our book collections by any means. Our eight KOHA volunteers are also toiling away admirably, adding more library books to the online catalogue (OPAC), where you can search online from home: <https://morrablibrary.org.uk/morrab-opac/> . Over 14,000 titles have now been added, so you can search our Fiction, Art, Natural Sciences, Children's and most of our Travel and Geography titles so far. The rest of our books are still searchable via the card indexes. A reminder that the OPAC can't yet tell you if the book you want is out on loan, but you'll know we hold it.

Enclosed you will find a list of new books, Fiction and non-Fiction, added to the library so far in 2026 (both purchased and donated), many of which were suggested by you. These include new titles donated to us through our support for the Winston Graham Historical Prize for Fiction.

NEWS FROM THE PHOTO ARCHIVE

Our booklet 'Working Lives' has stimulated a lot of interest in the Photo Archive and the response has been favourable both for general interest and also personal memories.

This has also encouraged some small donations to our collection. We are really pleased to receive photographs where we have information about the places and the people - it all adds to the social history of West Penwith.

I know it is a bit shocking when we find that our own lives are a part of local history but if we don't write down the information about the photos in our own collections it will eventually be lost. So look after your old photos and document them! If you need any advice pop in and see us any Thursday morning - you would be most welcome.

David Puddifoot, Photo Archive Manager

OUR MYSTERY PHOTO

With Artemis II circling the moon recently, we thought this month's Mystery Photo was particularly pertinent! This is the class Christmas Party at Alverton School in 1969. A few children are dressed up, others just in party clothes. The teacher is pointing out a model Father Christmas riding on a rocket!

Are you in the photo, or do you recognise anyone who is? Please let us know!

M.3056 - Alverton school rocket 1969



EVENTS AT THE LIBRARY

2026 has started with a stellar lineup of events and happenings - see what's been going on so far!



ARCHIVES OPEN DAY

THE MORRAB LIBRARY

THURSDAY 12TH MARCH

FIND OUT MORE: morrablibrary.org.uk/events

This poster features a collage of historical botanical illustrations and a photograph of a woman. The text includes the title 'ARCHIVES OPEN DAY', the library name 'THE MORRAB LIBRARY', the date 'THURSDAY 12TH MARCH', and a website link for more information.



MRS DELANY - THE CORNISH CONNECTION.

WITH LIZ WOODS

WEDNESDAY 4TH MARCH 2026
2PM-3PM. READING ROOM AT THE MORRAB LIBRARY

This poster features a portrait of Mrs Delany and a photograph of a plant. The text includes the title 'MRS DELANY - THE CORNISH CONNECTION.', the name 'WITH LIZ WOODS', and the event details 'WEDNESDAY 4TH MARCH 2026' and '2PM-3PM. READING ROOM AT THE MORRAB LIBRARY'.



MAZED TALES

WEBSITE LAUNCH

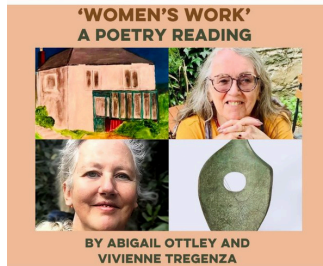
This poster features a photograph of two people in a field and a map. The text includes the title 'MAZED TALES' and 'WEBSITE LAUNCH'.



LEWIS CARROLL: STRANGE BUT TRUE

WITH SARAH MENAGE

This poster features a book cover for 'Lewis Carroll: Strange But True' and a photograph of a woman. The text includes the title 'LEWIS CARROLL: STRANGE BUT TRUE' and 'WITH SARAH MENAGE'.



'WOMEN'S WORK' A POETRY READING

BY ABIGAIL OTTLEY AND VIVIENNE TREGENZA

This poster features a photograph of a woman and a photograph of a plant. The text includes the title ''WOMEN'S WORK' A POETRY READING' and the names 'BY ABIGAIL OTTLEY AND VIVIENNE TREGENZA'.



SUPER STORYTIME

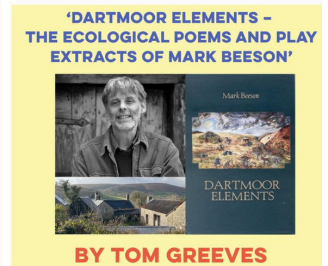
SUPER 'SPRING' STORYTIME

BUSY SPRING

NATURE WAKES UP

WITH STORYTELLER JAK STRINGER

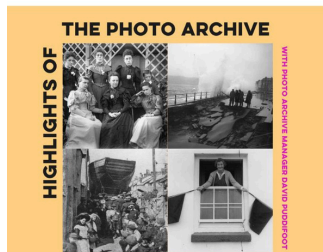
This poster features a circular illustration of a child and a dog in a field. The text includes the title 'SUPER STORYTIME', 'SUPER 'SPRING' STORYTIME', 'BUSY SPRING', 'NATURE WAKES UP', and 'WITH STORYTELLER JAK STRINGER'.



'DARTMOOR ELEMENTS - THE ECOLOGICAL POEMS AND PLAY EXTRACTS OF MARK BEESON'

BY TOM GREEVES

This poster features a photograph of a man and a book cover for 'Dartmoor Elements'. The text includes the title ''DARTMOOR ELEMENTS - THE ECOLOGICAL POEMS AND PLAY EXTRACTS OF MARK BEESON'' and 'BY TOM GREEVES'.



THE PHOTO ARCHIVE

HIGHLIGHTS OF

WITH PHOTO ARCHIVIST ANNE HARRISON

This poster features a collage of historical photographs. The text includes the title 'THE PHOTO ARCHIVE', 'HIGHLIGHTS OF', and 'WITH PHOTO ARCHIVIST ANNE HARRISON'.



Spring Fair

THE MORRAB LIBRARY

Saturday 21st March
10am - 2pm

This poster features a colorful illustration of a fair. The text includes the title 'Spring Fair', 'THE MORRAB LIBRARY', and the date and time 'Saturday 21st March 10am - 2pm'.



RELAXED BOOK GROUP

AT THE MORRAB

This poster features a photograph of a bookshelf and a cup of tea. The text includes the title 'RELAXED BOOK GROUP' and 'AT THE MORRAB'.

Get in touch with staff, or keep an eye out for emails from us, or check the What's On page of our website to learn about future events: <https://morrablibrary.org.uk/events/>

NEWS IN BRIEF

- Library Member Diana Wayne spent her Summer travelling on Canadian railways, and found inspiration in a special book she found in the library. Read about her adventures and the book she found in the enclosed blog she wrote for us.
- Many members will recall Jodie Hollander who was with us as Poet-in-Residence last year, supported by the Myner Trust. A poem she wrote here at the library during her stay, 'The Ouija Board', was published in the Los Angeles Review Of Books recently. It's enclosed with the newsletter.
- Our friends next door at the Gardener's House have all sorts of brilliant activities going on all the time - drop in to see them when you visit us, or check their website to find out more: <https://thegardenershouse.org/>. We're particularly looking forward to their Magnolia Festival!

SUPPORT US

As ever, we are always so grateful that you have chosen to support us through your membership. If you find you are able to help us further, you might consider joining our Friends of the Morrab Library scheme, or perhaps purchase some of our gift options to help us raise more vital income. Any donation, no matter how large or small, goes a long way to help us survive another 200 years!

AND FINALLY...

We wish you a happy Spring and Summer, and look forward to seeing and/or hearing from you in the coming months. Get in touch if you want to find about anything more about your library. With warm wishes, Lisa and the library team.

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

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