



THE MORRAB LIBRARY NEWSLETTER

August 2026 - Summer

Welcome

Dear Members,

Well then. Our wish for a sunny Summer after the dramatic stormy start to 2026 came true in spades! Love it or hate it, the hot weather has certainly got everybody talking. And it hasn't stopped your library from bringing you all sorts of talks, events, workshops and reading. And thankfully with the windows refurbishment near completion we can open more windows to catch the sea breeze!

Lisa and the Library team



Summer views from the Hedgeland Room

STAFFING NEWS

We are delighted to welcome Harriet back from Maternity Leave, which means we are back to a full complement of staff - the team is back together!

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

FROM THE CHAIRMAN...



Chair of Trustees, Steve Oliver

We are very sad to say farewell to our fellow trustee Richard Davies after four years on the Board. Richard has been a key member with a focus on Human Resources; staffing, legislation and the recruitment of new trustees being some of his many contributions. He will be missed for his carefully considered wisdom and well-chosen words at Board meetings. At the same time we are very pleased to welcome Kay Driver who will be joining us in September.

Kay brings a wide range of experience in management and finance, both in Cornwall and beyond, and will be a great addition to our pool of expertise.

Many thanks to the members who attended the Annual General Meeting in early May, and to those who contributed with questions and feedback. Your support is very important to us.

Also in May it was a pleasure to welcome His Royal Highness, Prince Richard, the Duke of Gloucester to the library. The Duke met myself, our President Michael Grandage, our Honorary Librarian, Harry Spry-Leverton, and our Librarian Lisa Di Tommaso, as well as staff, volunteers and members. Lisa had prepared a display of rare books and documents of interest and gave him a tour of the library. He showed great interest in the collections and enjoyed his time with us. My thanks to Harry and to Sir Edward Bolitho, Lord Lieutenant of Cornwall, and all those who helped to arrange the visit.

One of my loveliest recent memories is of the Rare Books Open Day at the end of June, where we displayed a range of our most special, oldest and unique volumes. Many congratulations to Lisa, staff and volunteers for their hard work on this - another great showcase of the treasures that we have at the Morrab.

We are, little by little, increasing our fundraising efforts to sustain the long-term financial resilience of the library. Coming up in September is our new crowdfunding initiative 'Miles for the Morrab', in which members, joined by their family and friends, are invited to get their walking boots on and cover ten sections of the Cornish coast path to raise funds. We hope you can join us!

With best wishes,

Stephen Oliver,
Chair of Trustees

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

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Penzance TR18 4DA
Tel: 01736 364474**

**Website: www.morrablibrary.org.uk
F: @TheMorrabLibrary I: @morrablibrary
T: @morrablibrary**

SAVE THE DATES!

Saturday 21st November, 10.00am - 2.00pm - The Morrab Library Christmas Fair

Wednesday, 25th November - John le Carré Memorial Lecture

Saturday 5th December, 1.00-3.30pm - Library Members' Christmas Party

EVENTS TO LOOK FORWARD TO

We have a lot of excellent events coming up at the library and beyond in the next few months - here's a few to whet your appetites:

Serena Wadham Exhibition at Tremenheere Sculpture Gardens - 1st August to 5th September.

Serena Wadham (1930–2006) was a pioneering photojournalist who documented Britain's defining social movements — feminist activism, peace protests, working-class life, famous artists and ordinary people. The Photo Archive holds a significant collection of her images in our collections, and this exciting exhibition highlights just a few of them.

Carolyn Savidge's Biscuit Tin of Memories workshop - 26th August.

Join Carolyn as she uses objects to evoke emotions and senses from memories.

Explore Dr. Faustus with Mary Cahill - 19th August.

The day will include an introduction to Marlowe's tragically short life, the literary and social-political context of the play, its sources, and just why it is considered so influential.

Other upcoming events include...

Look out for upcoming workshop classes including Laura Miucci exploring Bodmin Moor's archaeology, and watercolour classes with Nigel Haward.

The rest of the year will also see talks on Haile Selassie, Cornwall's Henry Jenner, the Newlyn Tidal Observatory, flora images from the Photo Archive, a women's history of Modernism told through clothes, and more!

This year's annual John le Carré Memorial Lecture at the Acorn Theatre is on 25th November and features the great author's literary agent and good friend, Jonny Geller. Tickets are on sale via the Acorn Theatre.



THE YEAR SO FAR

Here's a recap of what's been happening in the last few months at your library...

First of all, a huge thank you for your patience and understanding while we closed the library for a filming project. It is not the greatest secret in the world to know that we were one of the locations for the latest Rosamunde Pilcher telemovie for German television, 'Merren Cove'. While we can't reveal any more details until the film screens in Germany later in the year, you'll be delighted to know that, just as in real life, a cup of tea in the library features strongly - here's a sneak preview of it's starring role (below). And the film crew has gifted us the actual prop, alongside a thank you card to all of our members for your support.



A still from the latest Rosamunde Pilcher telemovie

We were delighted to welcome a visit from HRH Prince Richard, the Duke of Gloucester in May. The Duke met staff, volunteers and members, and was given a tour of our building and its collections. We've created a permanent gallery of images to remember the day, which you can view on our website.



The Duke of Gloucester enjoys exploring the library's rare book collection, overseen by our Honorary library and the Lord Lieutenant

Penzance's Literary Festival was another highlight, with the library hosting ten writing workshops. It was also a joy to welcome numerous authors over the week (for some, their first visit) who signed their books and enjoyed a tour. You can borrow all their books from us.

Left (and clockwise from top left): Deborah Tomkins, Harriet Tyce, Jill Dawson, Liz Fenwick, Emylia Hall, Nicola Upson and Mandy Morton

MILES FOR THE MORRAB

We hope you are planning for this September's fundraising challenge for the library. Members and friends are invited to take part in 'Miles for The Morrab', a way of celebrating both our wonderful library and the beautiful landscape that surrounds it. You're invited to walk sections of the SW Coast Path and if you'd like to participate, we ask you to please make a donation and invite at least five friends or family members to do the same to support you. If every walker reaches just a handful of people, together we can raise vital funds, introduce new people to The Morrab Library, and make a real contribution towards protecting its future.

The route covers more than 50 miles of West Penwith's spectacular coastline and countryside, starting and finishing at The Morrab Library. We've divided it into ten (approximately) 5-6 mile sections, each of which can be completed during September 2026 at a time that suits you. It's an open invitation to walk with friends, family, your dog, or simply to enjoy some time alone in the great outdoors. You can take on one section or all ten!

if you can't undertake the walks, there are opportunities through the Crowdfunding page's Rewards scheme where you can still help to support us.

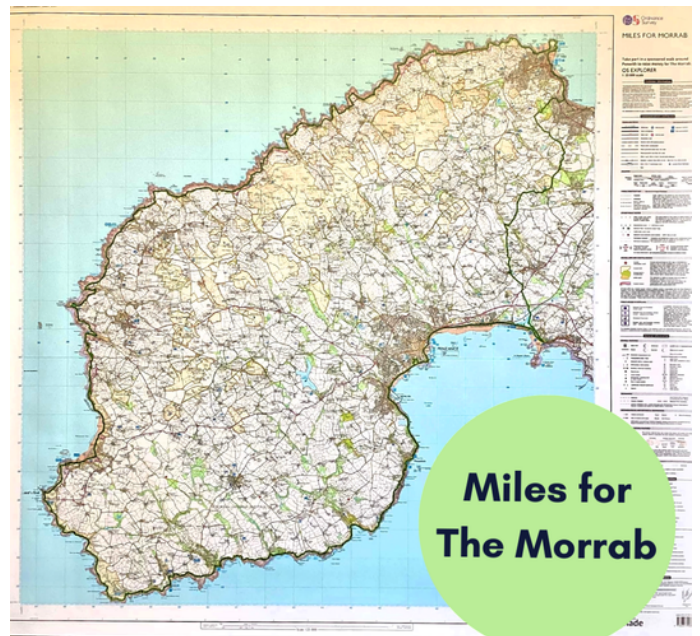
Follow this link to find out more and to register.

SUPPORTING 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 financially, 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. Choose from our lovely library tote bag, a John Trigg print, an assortment of notecards and postcards featuring both our library and our Hilda Quick archive collections, copies of the beautiful Photo Archives' 'Working Lives' book, library pens, Penzance maps, and more! Any donation, no matter how large or small, goes a long way to help us survive another 200 years.

BOOKING ROOMS IN WHICH TO WORK

Our members who use the library regularly will know that there has been increased pressure at times on the demand for desks at which to work and write. You can book a desk by emailing or calling in advance and letting us know when and for how long you would like it for - please do arrive at the time you have booked for. Importantly, if you do need to cancel as you no longer need the desk you have booked, please let us know ASAP, as there will be other members looking for somewhere to work. 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. Please also eat anything other than biscuits available from the kitchen either in the member's kitchen, or enjoy the Gardens on a sunny day. We are really grateful for your cooperation.



Walk the Coastal Path for the Morrab!

NEWS IN BRIEF

The refurbishment of our windows is nearing completion - it proved a mammoth task to repair, fill and paint our Grade II listed windows that have seen all sorts of weather over the years. Thank you to members for your patience throughout the process and to the team at Jewell's Construction and Kevin Symons, painter extraordinaire, for their hard work.

A huge thank you as well to all who supported our Summer Fair, which raised almost £2,000 in income for the library. A special shout out to the 24 volunteers and staff who made it happen. Save the date for our Christmas Fair on 21st November!

The wonderful Penwith Local History Group produced their magnificent book, 'Beyond The Bookshelves: Hidden Histories in the Morrab Library' last year. Many congratulations to them as it was recently shortlisted for the 2026 Holyer an Gof Publishers' Awards by Gorsedh Kernow. Copies are available to purchase in the library.



Window work in the Literature Room

COLLECTIONS NEWS



ON DISPLAY

The current exhibition in the display case on the library's first floor displays some of the more famous signatures held in our collections. Through donations, bequests and purchases over two centuries, we hold a somewhat serendipitous array of manuscripts, correspondence and volumes. As a result, a number of notable people's signatures have been discovered, including those of William Wordsworth, Winston Graham, Charles Kingsley, William Gladstone, John le Carré and a very unusual one from Ernest Shackleton. [Read our blog to find out more](#) and drop in to see the items - they'll only be on display for a few more weeks.



Our new display, up on the first floor

NEW BOOKS

We have been steadily adding a range of new books (both purchased and donated) to the collections, many of which were suggested by you. Our Book Selection Committee has met very recently, so look out for a swathe of new titles soon.

CATALOGUING CONTINUES

Our volunteers are working very hard to add more library books to the online catalogue (OPAC), where you can search online from home.

We have now added over 15,000 titles, so you can search our Fiction, Art, Natural Sciences, Children's, the Elizabeth Treffry Collection 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.

More of our volunteers are also progressing with the project to add the index of archive holdings to the National Archives Catalogue. You can [search the holdings for yourself](#) through the National Archives DISCOVERY catalogue.

THE ELIZABETH TREFFRY COLLECTIONS

We are excited to say that the majority of the contents of the Elizabeth Treffry Room are now available to search online: [here](#). This special collection of fiction and non-fiction books by and about Cornish women was donated to The Morrab Library by the late Melissa Hardie-Budden from the Hypatia Trust in 2018. For the first time, all books in the room will not only be searchable online but can also be borrowed by library members.

The Library also holds The Hypatia Trust Archive collection, an important assortment of primary and secondary resources relating to women with a connection to Cornwall, also donated by Melissa. More details of our holdings can be found in this document: [here](#). Left: photograph of some of the fiction now available to borrow.

COLLECTIONS BLOGS

Our volunteers have been busy of late, writing a number of blogs about our collections. If you haven't seen them already, click on these links to read them on our website:

Jane Prince has written [this fascinating article](#) about Daphne du Maurier and her novel 'The House On The Strand'. Jane has explored how du Maurier used actual Cornish history in her writing, and also deviated from it for literary purposes.

We've loved hosting our Photo Archive intern Samuel Hill for the last three months. He has been helping research maritime images and help make them easier to search for. He also managed to write us no less than five blogs, four of which compare Penzance past and present. Sam's final blog is a lot more personal, exploring links to his forebears:

[Penzance Then and Now: Market Jew Street and Chapel Street \(Part 1\);](#)

[Penzance Then and Now \(Part 2\): Promenade and Alexandra Road;](#)

[Penzance Then and Now \(Part 3\): Alverton and Western areas of the town;](#)

[Penzance Then and Now \(Part 4\): Pubs, Taverns and Inns of Penzance;](#)

[The working lives of the people of the Isles of Scilly explored through my third great grandfather Samuel Jenkins Guy.](#)



A big thank you to Sam!

NEWS FROM THE PHOTO ARCHIVE

Our booklet 'Working Lives' has sold out but, good news, it has been reprinted! Because of the enthusiastic response we had from members and the general public we were able to update some of the information about the photos in the captions at the back. Excitingly, we are working hard on our next booklet (we will give you more information soon) but it will be ready for the Christmas Fair so you can start your Christmas shopping then!

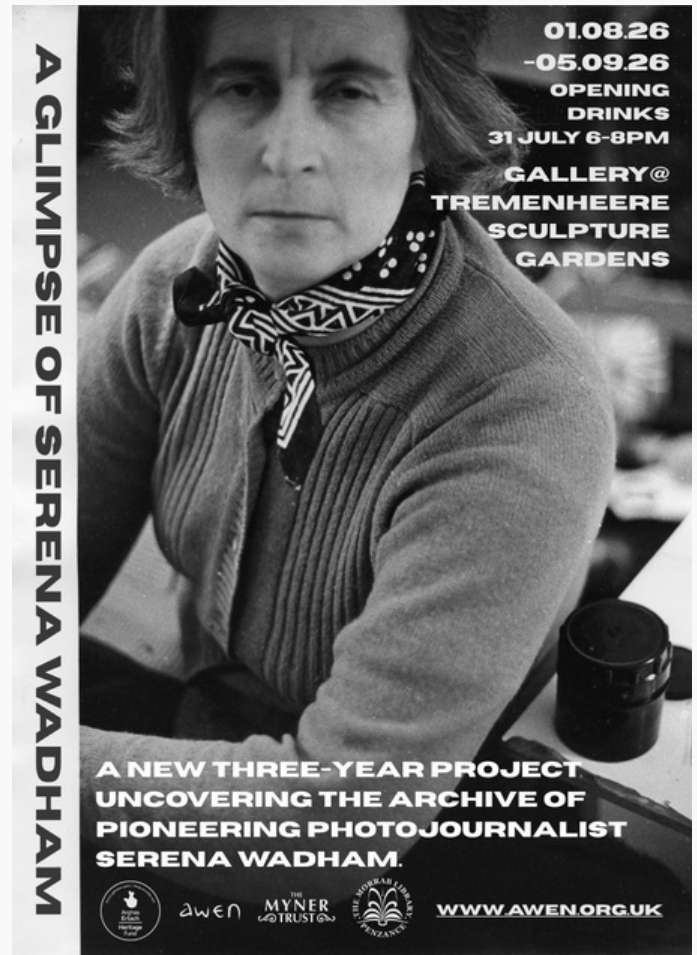
The team working on the Serena Wadham Collection have worked very hard to deliver an exhibition of her work at Tremenheere Sculpture Gardens, running throughout August. You'll find information about it on page 2 of this newsletter. 'A Glimpse of Serena Wadham' is funded by the National Lottery Heritage Fund and The Myner Trust, the latter of which is also an important supporter of our library.

Some of our oldest photos, Cartes de Visites taken by Robert Preston, of the professionals and merchants in Penzance in the 1860s, are my focus at the moment. They are fascinating but very difficult to copy as they were printed on thin paper and pasted onto thin paper. The outcome is very crinkled photos! These are starting to appear on line so if you are interested have a look - you'll find them in the [Geoffrey Harvey Album](#).

David Puddifoot, Photo Archive Manager

CAN YOU HELP? OLD VHS TAPES

The library has been donated some old VHS tapes which we would love to be able to watch and possibly add to our collections in a more modern format. Do any members have the capacity, or know of anyone who can help, to convert old VHS tapes to DVD or even better, straight to digital files? Please contact Lisa if you can advise!



OUR MYSTERY PHOTO

It's Christmas time in the old telephone exchange on Princess St, Penzance, and the telephonists are sitting exams. The third person from the left standing at the back is Miss Beryl Richards, who became Night Manager of the exchange in 1976. Her family were from St Just, and Beryl, born in 1928, lived in West Penwith all her life, and died in 2024. But who were her colleagues? Get in touch if you can help us!



BR.015 - Telephone Exchange, Penzance. Do you recognise anyone?

RARE BOOKS OPEN DAY

These are images from just some of the beautiful, rare and fascinating books on display when we held our Rare Books Open Day on 25th June. Thank you to all who came along to explore them, and to our volunteers who were on hand to answer questions. The display included works by Cervantes, Conrad Gesner, Mrs Delaney, William Borlase, Pliny the Elder, Daniel Defoe and more. Ask Library staff if you'd like to know more about our Rare Books collection, and make an appointment to view anything that is of interest. And keep an eye out for future collections Open Days.



Some images from the books on display at the Rare Books Open Day

FILMED TALKS

You'll be aware of the range of talks we host at the library, delivered by very generous people who give up their time freely to help us raise income. Many of our speakers allow us to film their talks, and you'll find them on our website. From Shakespeare and Frankenstein, Poetry, Literature and Science to Cornish History, Heritage, Photography and People, you are certain to find a talk that interests you.

LIBRARY TOURS

Don't forget that free tours of the Morrab library are held most Friday afternoons from 2.00pm. Join Linda or Liz (or visit twice!) to find out about the history of the library, its people and characters, the collections we hold and how they came to be here. Bring friends and family and show off your library to them, or come along yourself to find out more.

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/>

OUR CHILDREN'S PAGE

Have you seen our Children's Page on the website? It's full of games, activities and information about our collections - a great way to introduce the little ones in your life to the library.



AND FINALLY...

We hope the rest of your Summer is happy time, and we look forward to seeing and/or hearing from you in the coming months. Please get in touch if you want to find about anything more about your library. With warm wishes, Lisa and the library team.