



Post-Lib

RPG Committee 2020

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Now more than ever we want to make sure we stay in touch. If you haven't already, you can sign up to receive email alerts from RPG at <https://lnkd.in/d4DQCqe?> Or, if you would like help, please contact David Byrne on **07850 791002**.

For changes in membership circumstances contact **membership@cilip.org.uk**

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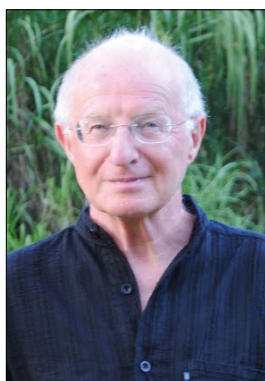
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Ian Orton

A note from the Chair

It is not possible to talk about the last three months without thinking how Covid-19 has changed our world and wondering about when will things settle and what will we have learnt from the experience.

Your committee were quick to realise that we had to continue meeting during the pandemic and virtual meeting of the RPG Committee have been held on 8th April, 16th June and 11th August to develop our future role. As you know CILIP have asked that the Members Network reflect on the way they provide support at present and how we will plan for the future. Your Committee had agreed that the RPG wish to remain as a full member of the Members Network.

As part of the future we realised we needed more partner work both to broaden our base and as part of this approach RPG have taken part in a joint promotion with CILIP K&IM, CILIP South West and U3A supporting Professional Development that was held on 26th August.

We are working with K&IM Group, RPG and Creative Groups UK and have held a Hands on Workshop to Unlock Creativity at Work which was held on Monday 28th September 2020.

Discussions have started with Riviera Travel commission, who already work with the U3A to offer travel opportunities at special rates for RPG members.

David Byrne, our new Committee Member has worked hard to develop the start of our partnership with other organisations and groups and the rewards will keep RPG in business and the Committee are grateful for his enthusiasm.

This emphasis on partnership is related to money. Covid-19 has affected income to CILIP as well as many other organisations and this will have an

impact on groups such as RPG. Should CILIP have to reduce or stop our funding we need around £1000 a year to produce three editions of *Post-Lib* and a face to face AGM so hopefully partnership funding will help.

The visits to other libraries are all on hold because of Covid-19 but Charmaine our Visits Organiser is putting together some visits for next year, but if anyone knows of a new or exciting facility that will appeal to RPG members please let Charmaine know on: **charmainebourton11@hotmail.co.uk**

Our Annual Lunch for 2020 was moved from April to 22nd September and a lot of you wished to attend but the concerns were about travel so the Annual Lunch has now

been re-arranged for Tuesday 6th April 2021 at the Civil Service Club. Kate Thompson the author is working on a book about the Second World War Bethnal Green Underground Public Library and will talk about the help she has received from several RPG colleagues in the preparation of the novel.

As you may gather, we are trying to make RPG a force for the future but a Marketing and Communications Officer would help! Does anyone have a few hours a month to help us make RPG more vibrant? Would welcome an email from you.

Please let me have your views on anything to do with our group I can be reached **chair.rpg@cilip.org.uk PL**



Christiana Ikeogu

Welcome to the 92nd edition of CILIP RPG's *Post-Lib*

Welcome to the *Post-Lib* issue 92. What can we say about the state of our world today? With trepidation, countries are opening and shutting their borders as they fight against our common enemy, the Covid-19. Yet one area that is freely expanding with a breakneck speed is 'infodemic', an excessive amount of information that is adding extra salt to the injury.

However, we should remain optimistic because what we cannot control in life is change. As you read through this issue, you will agree with me and the contributors who have kindly shared the changes and challenges they confront.

I thank Nicola Scull for sharing what a lot of employees have faced and feared about furloughing, loss of jobs and their effects on

individuals and their families. As she affirms, we should stride forwards regardless of our circumstances. Please visit Gingercubes on twitter and Instagram to learn more.

I am not sure about you, but I was moved by the efforts, courage and determination Sian King poured into securing her Ph.D. Well done Sian. You will certainly inspire many of our readers to step out and leave fears of the unknown behind.

David Byrne is, no doubt, a great negotiator, considering how much he has achieved in connecting us with the other SIGs and U3A and giving us a taste of an effective partnership through the IT Zoom workshop of 26th August. Please see Sian's review on the event and dates for planned future activities.

As we move forward, it is essential to reflect on the past and the friendship we fostered as we journeyed through library profession. With much appreciation, I received John Tiernan's story about the amazing relationship he had with John Sultana. I hope it brings back memories of those you bumped into in your own career.

I invite you to walk down the memory lane of my childhood in raffia craftwork and costume accessories. You might want to share yours later on this platform.

Many thanks Alan, for sharing the artistic work of Jono Hey on Tsundoku and the 'Armchair Heritage' project for your area. I am sure many of us can relate to similar rainy day acquisitions.

Michael Gorman also deserves great appreciation for highlighting past prominent colleagues such as Stanley Snaith whose contributions in literature

were often forgotten. You may know of other people like Snaith that need to be recognised.

Finally, please do not fail to check out the Events and Announcements section. We missed out on a number of social activities this year because of Covid-19, but our committee members, Charmaine Bourton, David Byrne and our able Chair, Ian Orton have been busy working hard to ensure that 2021 opens with a big bang.

Please forward articles for next issue in word document before December 21st to the editor via email – **christieikeogu@gmail.com**. You can also call her on **07957726215** for enquiries or postal contact at 130 Elphinstone Road, London E17 5EX.

Please note that neither the editor nor RPG committee members are responsible for articles in this magazine.

Wishing each one a healthier and safer future! **PL**

News and views

Never Too Old To... Embark on a Ph.D.!

One Information Professional's story

by Sian King

Having a love of research, learning and writing, I have rarely ceased from pursuing courses and qualifications, both to enhance my professional knowledge, and to build on my interests in the field of history. Whilst working full-time, this translated into an M.A. in the History of the Book (London University), a course which I would thoroughly recommend. Then, with more time on my hands following retirement and moving to Wales, I started considering further study. Approaching the local University of South Wales on an 'open day', I discussed with a member of their teaching staff the possibility of another M.A. in some aspect of local history. After several conversations, he strongly encouraged me to apply to do a doctorate. Initially I was very sceptical about this... I did not feel I had that potential, or could

ever reach the required academic standard, but I was eventually persuaded to the contrary and, with self-confidence duly boosted, made my application for the five-year part-time study, with this same member of staff to be my supervisor. His academic speciality was Early Modern Britain, so, with his support, a little preliminary research and a lot of thinking, I arrived at some sort of idea of a thesis title.

I had already decided to focus on the history of the area in which I lived, as I knew that visits to local archives and academic libraries would be an important requirement. During my M.A. studies I had become interested in the chapbook genre, especially in the seventeenth century. Thus, following further research, I wrote a proposal entitled

"To what extent was the spread of literacy, religion and commerce in seventeenth century south Wales influenced by distribution and ownership of chapbooks?", and was accepted. So began a rewarding and fascinating journey into the mental world of seventeenth and early eighteenth century chapmen who were itinerant pedlars, selling many things, including small books, from door to door, at markets and at fairs. Having found very little evidence for this activity in south Wales, my research expanded into an examination of mercers' shops (through probate documents), the printing and distribution of other 'cheap print' such as newspapers, almanacks and school textbooks, the transport routes used for distribution, the influence of the vernacular Welsh language and the ownership and readership of popular print against a background of religious revival and expanding educational provision. Chapbooks themselves, in this period, were mainly printed in London, and reached very high levels of popularity. They were small, cheap, often illustrated little volumes in which the content was entertaining, informative or admonitory, reaching a wide unspecified audience. A typical example, based on a popular folktale, is illustrated here, along with a measure to indicate its size.

Over the five year period, my research took many unexpected twists and turns. For example, I carried out an in depth examination of a printing press set up in Gloucester in 1722, about which very little had been known but which distributed newspapers and chapbooks to adjacent Welsh areas. I visited seven county archives, several academic libraries and the National Library of Wales as well as two private country house libraries. I used a number of online databases, thus enabling a great deal of research to be carried out from home. Throughout the process, I had regular sessions with my supervisor who was supportive, encouraging and accessible, giving detailed and timely feedback on all my writing.

Challenges? My supervisor moved to another university in my third year. I had the choice to stay put with a new supervisor, or transfer to the University of Birmingham. I chose the latter,



Title page from Laurence Price *The Witch of the Woodlands* (London: W. Thackeray, 1680).

since his support and expertise were critical. A less definable difficulty was the near absence of an academic community in which to nurture my developing knowledge and conceptual approaches, receive critical feedback and learn from others in a similar field. I was a mature self-motivated student, working alone and at a distance from my university. Mostly, I enjoyed the study – a whole day in a library or archive all to myself! But nevertheless I recognised that the end product of a seventy thousand word thesis might have been improved by more scholarly collaboration.

The final challenge was completing and submitting during lockdown! I was permitted to submit electronically owing to the closure of the university campus, including the print shop. My viva, with an internal and external assessor, took place six weeks later via zoom. It went well (but nerve-wracking of course) and the outcome was 'a pass with minor corrections', which I have now been completed. Thus I became 'Dr' although, for me, the journey was much more important than the arrival. There is now something of a vacuum in my life, so I am trying to work out my next project! **PL**

Striding forwards: a blog

by Nicola Scull



Small business owner – GingerCubes; and
Head of Academic Development at The
London Institute of Banking and Finance

Back in February my life was good. I had my little problems and challenges but I was doing ok and felt good about it. And then things changed, like they did for all of us. Today is a special day for me. It marks an end to the difficult period of time I've had since then.

On the career front:

Working from home > Furlough > Potential Redundancy > New part-time role.

On the family front:

Expected death, lockdown, unexpected death, serious mental deterioration, & realisation of how much I mean to them and they mean to me.

On the personal front:

Sadness, anger, feelings of abandonment and uselessness, energy and activity; followed by fatigue and laziness, loss of confidence, realisation of resilience and robustness.

And then there are the global nightmares of racism, poverty, climate change etc.

On Monday I return to work. It's a new role, and a part-time role. I am really excited about it and am really looking forward to making a difference in my organisation again.

I won't be wasting the extra time I have. During August I'll be launching my new Etsy business. For years I have crafted and made things for friends and family. "You should sell this", they say. I'm going to give it a try. **Follow GingerCubes on Twitter and Instagram to keep up to date.**

So, I have survived these months. The difficult times may not be over, & undoubtedly we'll all face more challenges, but I feel proud to have ridden the storm of my own Covid-Hell, and to have come out the other side with my positive energy and enthusiasm back and a smile on my face.

Life ahead will be different in many ways:

I'll certainly be poorer financially. But, more importantly, I have found an inner peace and riches in the form of those people and things that matter most.

I embark on my new "portfolio career" with genuine excitement and enthusiasm. Watch this space...

I hope you too have found a positive focus to come out of these troubling times. If not yet, I am sure you will. We must each stride forward. **PL**



Some hair slides Nicola has made to sell.

RPG and U3A: Collaboration and Growth

by David Byrne

RPG has been working with a range of groups within CILIP to drive professional development. We are keen to engage with a broad range of members including those on career breaks, part-timers and portfolio careerists. We have also collaborated with various groups outside CILIP including the University of the Third Age (U3A). RPG worked with U3A members, K&IM and the South West region of CILIP on our latest workshop that was called "Everything You Always Wanted to Know About IT and Online* (*But Were Afraid to Ask).

What is the U3A?

The U3A is a nationwide network of learning groups aimed at encouraging people to share their knowledge, skills and interests in a friendly environment. There are no exams and no homework, just regular lessons or study groups. It's learning for fun, not with the aim of gaining qualifications.

There are no age limits but the U3A is for people in their 'third age' - retired or semi-retired. For this reason it attracts a lot of members aged 50 and over. However, there's no lower age limit to becoming a member.

U3A aims to be as accessible as possible – classes are held in various locations. Groups meet either at somebody's home, or in a room in a local library, church or community centre or online using WhatsApp and Zoom. If you live in an isolated town, are unwell or have difficulty leaving your home, you may prefer either the Virtual U3A (an online learning and discussion forum) or Trust U3A (an online U3A community launched in April 2020).

There's a wide range of subjects you can learn at U3A and on the Virtual and Online Trust U3A. These include:

- arts
- history
- literature and language

- crafts
- gardening
- photography
- computer and digital technology skills.

The main U3A groups also cover various sports. Sometimes U3A groups arrange trips to museums, concerts or theatres. If there's enough demand in your area for a certain subject, you can start up a group yourself. I was keen to play chess and so I joined a chess group in one U3A and helped to set up chess groups in another U3A as well as creating a chess group for the new online U3A community (called Trust U3A).

Each group has its own volunteer leader or co-ordinator who has a particular interest or expertise in the particular subject. For language classes, the group leaders tend to have specialist knowledge although sometimes group members will follow text book and audio instruction together.

Each U3A class is different, so membership fees vary. The fees are often much lower than those of most adult education courses because each U3A is run by volunteers. No one makes any money out of running an U3A group. Fees are to cover the cost of room hire and any essential materials.

Trust U3A Now Online

It has never been easier to join the U3A now that the Trust U3A (the online U3A community) is online. Trust U3A launched in April 2020 to meet the continued demand to become a member of the U3A movement while face to face contact is limited. Once the social distancing measures have been lifted you will also be able to join a local U3A near where you live. **PL**

Reference

Trust U3A (the online U3A community) -
<https://u3asites.org.uk/trustu3a/>

Library Friendship with John Sultana

by John Tiernan

A recent internet search revealed that John Sultana, a librarian friend from Malta, who I hadn't heard from for some years, had died in 2014. Sorrow at hearing of his passing so long afterwards, reminded me and Diane my wife of the many happy hours we spent in his company from the mid-80s to the early 2000s. I have tried to sum up these memories here.

In the early 1980s Diane and I took the first of many holidays in Malta, a place we quickly grew to love. We stayed in Marsascala, a seaside village in the south of the island. We hired a car and having overcome - to some extent - the terrors posed by Maltese drivers (who are alleged to drive in the shade, rather than on the left), headed to the capital, Valletta. Malta was firmly in the grip of the autocratic government of the charismatic and erratic Labour prime minister, Dom Mintoff, and a vague feeling of menace hung over the whole country (sometimes described as 'Cuba in the Med' by western commentators). In the centre of the city in the Republic (previously Queen's) Square was a large statue of Victoria, seated amidst café tables in front of the baroque National Library (formerly the Royal Malta Library). Being librarians who always take the opportunity to visit an unknown library we had a brief look at its imposing reading room and resolved to devote more time to examine it more closely on a future occasion.

Before our next visit to Malta in 1986 I wrote to the National Librarian (John Sultana), explaining the reason for our interest and asking for a tour of the building and its collections. A courteous

reply invited us to visit him for a tour of the library, and in return he asked if I would talk to library diploma students at the university (these were part timers - a full time course was established some years later). I prepared a lecture on metropolitan public library services in the UK, complete with OHP slides (very hi-tech in those days.)

On our arrival John greeted us in his cool office with an open window with views of the square below and the renowned Café Cordina on the opposite side in Republic Street (formerly Kingsway) - next door to Marks and Spencer! He outlined the history of the institution, built by the then rulers of the island, the Order of the Knights of St John in 1776, whose records were an important part of the library's collections, along with incunables, other rare items of Melitensia and other archives and reference books. He showed us around the impressive reading rooms and we saw up-to-date journals (including the *Library Association Record*). John took us for lunch (pastizzi - hot cheesecakes in pastry - a Maltese delicacy) in the Café Cordina, where we absorbed the atmosphere of the city and its inhabitants and where John told us about his career. He was a graduate of the then (Royal) University of Malta, studied librarianship at Aberystwyth, became Librarian of the Malta College of Science and Technology, and Deputy Librarian of the University on MCAST's amalgamation with the latter, then National Librarian. Taking an active part in the fledgling group of library professionals he was one of the founding members of the Malta Library Association (now

the Malta Library and Information Association) in the late 60s, and was now editor of the Malta National Bibliography.

Following this midday break we visited the public library HQ in the neighbouring town of Floriana, where we met Joseph Boffa, head of public libraries – another British trained librarian (and a proud FLA). The public library service was very much in a state of development under Joe's enthusiastic, community library orientated management.

This very full day concluded with a visit to the beautiful Manoel Theatre, back in Valletta, built by the Knights in 1732 and renowned as the oldest purpose-built theatre in the Commonwealth. Our guide, who showed us behind the scenes, as well as taking us into the stunning interior, was John's friend Francis Ebejer, Malta's foremost poet, writer and dramatist. On later visits to Malta we attended a performance by the Kirov Ballet (with the Sultanas) and a concert by the Malta Philharmonic Orchestra – both very enjoyable events,

John then insisted that he took us to Gozo, Malta's sister Island, his birthplace. So several days later we took the car ferry to Gozo – a smaller, quieter and more unspoiled island. In its bustling capital Victoria, we met the Gozo Librarian, Paul Cassar, and were shown the Public Library, had lunch, and then set off to explore this compact island, packed with secluded coves, picturesque villages, baroque churches and amazing viewpoints over the bright blue Mediterranean. Our return ferry to Valletta followed the Malta coastline taking in attractive views of the larger island from the sea.

Next day, we set off to the Malta University campus, some way out of the capital, where I delivered my talk to an attentive audience, who asked many searching questions on topics including censorship in the UK – a particular problem in Malta due to a combination of Mintoff's repressive attitude towards media freedom and the Catholic Church's desire to preserve doctrinal purity. John introduced us to Dr Paul Xuereb, the University Librarian (who had qualified at UCL). Joe Boffa was also there. The next day Dr Xuereb gave us, John and Joe, lunch at the University dining room.

Later, during the holiday, John took us to the National Archives, based in the old hospital of Santo Spirito in Rabat - at the heart of Malta - and again, along with the archivist, we were treated to lunch.

We had dinner with John and his wife Lina at our hotel and before we left Malta for home, we also received hospitality at their house on the outskirts of Valletta, where we met their sons Stefan, a medical student, Ian and Simon. Stefan and his future wife Natalie, also a doctor, later moved to England to enhance their qualifications, and where they practised.

Over the next few years we visited Malta frequently and were always given a warm welcome by the Sultana family, with John showing us more sights of the islands, including a memorable evening spent at a Festa – the Maltese islands' exuberant celebrations of a local parish saint's day, complete with fireworks, while the statue of the saint (in this case saints Peter and Paul) – is carried around the village or town. We had several other meals with John and Lina, at their home, at our hotel, and more day time visits to the Cafe Cordina, plus some superb pizzas in Valletta. A visit to the seaside with the Sultanas and friends one beautiful Sunday afternoon was abruptly ended by a spectacular storm a fairly common occurrence in the islands!

The relationship with John wasn't all based on Malta, though. In the early 2000s, before I retired from Liverpool Libraries, John visited Liverpool for a day after attending a conference at the British Library. On a fine Sunday morning Diane and I met him at Lime Street Station and firstly took him to see the Central Library which I was able to open specially for him. He signed the Visitor's Book and we proudly showed him the Picton Reading Room, the beautiful Hornby Library and its stunning collection of books, prints and fine bindings, as well as the library's most valuable books – the four volumes of Audubon's Birds of America. We then headed to the Albert Dock, followed by a visit to Liverpool's two cathedrals and then the seven miles out of the city to the Tudor half-timbered Speke Hall, with lunch in the café there. We took him home and we all sat in the garden for afternoon tea. After a most enjoyable day I drove John back to

Lime Street for his train back to London. No sooner had I arrived home than a thunderstorm of Maltese proportions broke out and it poured with rain!

We visited John in Malta at least once more a year or so later, doing more exploring and enjoying John and Lina's hospitality. Since our first visit we had exchanged Christmas cards, but one year we did not receive one and despite sending another the next year we didn't get one in return. We heard no more from John, but we learned on a visit to Malta that in his later years he suffered from illness, much to our regret.

John was a lovely man, a dedicated professional, self-deprecating and with a fine dry sense of humour. We miss meeting him and Lina very much and visits to his fascinating island are inevitably less interesting than before. **PL**

At the time of our first meeting with John Sultana, John Tiernan was Assistant City Librarian (Central Libraries), later Assistant Director, Liverpool Libraries and Arts and Diane Tiernan was Co-ordinator of Children's Services, LL&A.

Trending

Living the Lockdown Life: Online craft workshop

by **Christiana Ikeogu**

In the midst of the challenges we have confronted in the last six months come some inspirations and in this case a reflection on the path I once threaded as a child.

In one of my WhatsApp chat groups, I saw an advert to join an online weaving craftwork with raffia materials. It was not the first time I'd



Lucy raffia weaving.

seen weaving craftwork, but that threw my memory back into what we used to do during my primary education. The advert specified no age limit, so I quickly texted my details to the organiser/trainer, Lucy Isaiah. I had no time to visit a craft shop to check on raffia materials, because I saw the message

only two days before it was due to start. But as I have a live raffia palm tree in my garden, and following my recollection on what we used back in those days, I cut a branch of the tree and trimmed some of the leaves in readiness for the first of the six sessions as specified.

As we started, now being shown the materials online, I felt a bit deflated as I tried to use the raw and rough materials to weave. However, the excitement picked up again when Lucy announced that the first four people who registered for the training would be sent a pack of the raffia materials worth around ten pounds free of charge. I therefore waited for the stuff to arrive.

Four days later, the second session commenced but the package did not come. We almost lost hope of receiving it, but Lucy apologised and told us she would chase it up. We sketched and made notes following her instructions in readiness for the practical application.

The materials arrived and the third session brought back all the excitement. I was like a little girl being shown how to hold knitting needles and wool for the first time. It was very fiddly but I persevered and worked through the art of creating a coaster.

The group had only three more classes left. Lucy therefore speeded up to show us how

to create fashion accessories – a pendant with matching earrings and scrunchies for hair dressing using clothing fabrics (see right). The scrunchies are handy for my granddaughter and other girls in the wider family.

There are some positive outcomes from the exercise – the social interaction with everyone in the group, and the actual production of the crafts which was therapeutic. It was so nice to reconnect with my childhood fun activities. Unfortunately my granddaughter was not available to join the workshop but I plan to coach her. **PL**



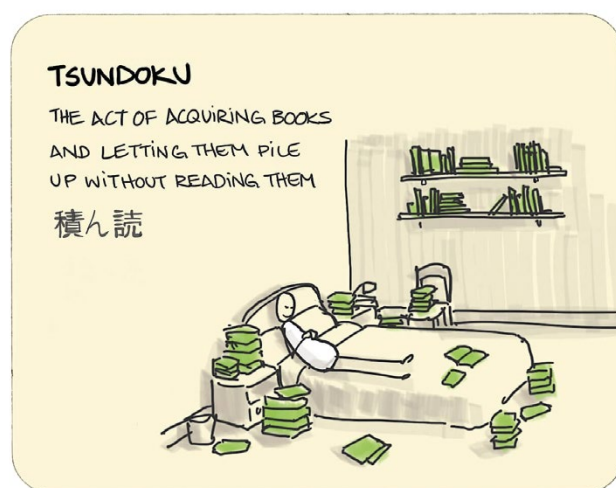
The finished articles.

Recommendation

Armchair Heritage: 1958 and 1959 in Literature

by Alan Cooper

This year is possibly an opportunity for many of us to open the books on our shelves which we were meaning to get round to one day. Here are some classics which are still in print after more than six decades since first published in 1958 and 1959.



sketchplanations

Tsundoku by Jono Hey – sketchplanations.com

1958 in literature

Recommendation

First my personal recommendation:

The Dud Avocado by Elaine Dundy

Sally Jay Gorce is a woman with a mission. It's the 1950s, she's young, and she's in Paris. Having dyed her hair pink, she wears evening dresses in the daytime and vows to go native in a way not even the natives can manage. Will our heroine be forced back to the States to fulfill her destiny as a librarian, or can she keep up her whirlwind Parisian existence?

Gore Vidal described it as "One of the funniest books I've ever read". Elaine Dundy (1921 - 2008) later contributed to *That Was the Week That Was*

and *The New York Times*, and wrote biographies of Peter Finch and Elvis Presley.

Confession

And now my confession – sitting on my shelves unread:

A Short Walk in the Hindu Kush by Eric Newby

This is an autobiographical account of Eric Newby's adventures in the Nuristan mountains, a remote corner of Afghanistan where no Englishman had ventured for 60 years.

Critics have found it comic, intensely English, and understated. While Newby's *Love and War in the Apennines* is arguably a better book, *A Short Walk*

was the book that made him well-known. Eric Newby (1919-2006) was later Travel Editor for *The Observer* and received a CBE.

Other books from 1958 still in print include:

- *A Bear Called Paddington* Michael Bond
- *The Bell* Iris Murdoch
- *Breakfast at Tiffany's* Truman Capote
- *The Leopard* Giuseppe Tomasi di Lampedusa
- *Mrs 'Arris Goes to Paris* Paul Gallico
- *Our Man In Havana* Graham Greene
- *Saturday Night and Sunday Morning* Alan Sillitoe
- *Things Fall Apart* Chinua Achebe
- *Tom's Midnight Garden* Philippa Pearce

1959 in Literature

Recommendation

First my personal recommendation:

Absolute Beginners by Colin MacInnes

Moving in this world of coffee bars, modern jazz and rock 'n' roll, and Italian scooters and clothes, and snapping every scene with his trusty Rolleiflex, is a young photographer, whose unique wit and honest views remain the definitive account of London life in the 1950s and what it meant to be a teenager then.

The novel was adapted into a musical film with Patsy Kensit and David Bowie. Paul Weller chose the book when he appeared on *Desert Island Discs*.

Colin MacInnes (1914-1976) served in the British Intelligence Corps during the Second World War and worked for BBC Radio until he could earn a living from his writing.

Confession

And now my confession – sitting on my shelves unread:

The Sirens of Titan by Kurt Vonnegut, Jr.

The Sirens of Titan is a comic science fiction novel which revolves around a Martian invasion of Earth. It largely deals with questions of free will and the lack thereof which became major themes in Vonnegut's later novels. His second novel, it is simple in syntax and sentence structure and established the style for which Vonnegut is known. He sold the film rights to Jerry Garcia of The Grateful Dead, but the film was never made.

Kurt Vonnegut (1922-2007) called George Orwell his favourite writer. "I like his concern for the poor, I like his socialism, I like his simplicity". The Kurt Vonnegut Museum and Library was established in 2011 in Indianapolis, Indiana.

Other books from 1959 still in print include:

- *Arabian Sands* Wilfred Thesiger
- *Asterix the Gaul* René Goscinny and Albert Uderzo
- *Cider with Rosie* Laurie Lee
- *The Logic of Scientific Discovery* Karl Popper
- *The Longest Day* Cornelius Ryan
- *The Loneliness of the Long-Distance Runner* Alan Sillitoe
- *The Manchurian Candidate* Richard Condon
- *The Naked Lunch* William S. Burroughs
- *Psycho* Robert Bloch
- *Starship Troopers* Robert A. Heinlein
- *The Tin Drum* Günter Grass **PL**

Contribute

If you would like to contribute articles and pictures for the next edition, or future editions, of *Post-Lib* please contact the editor at christieikeogu@gmail.com or phone **07957 726 215**.



The Forgotten Librarians/Poets: PYLON POET? Stanley Snaith, 1903-1976, poet, librarian, and mountaineer

by Michael Gorman

*Over the tree'd upland evenly striding,
One after one they lift their serious shapes
That ring with light. The statement of their steel
Contradicts Nature's softer architecture.
Earth will not accept them as it accepts
A wall, a plough, a church so coloured of earth.
It might be some experiment of the soil's.
Yet are they outposts of the trekking future.
Into the thatch-hung consciousness of hamlets
They blaze new thoughts, new habits.*

This poem is called *Pylons*. It was published in 1933 and was written by Stanley Snaith, who shared initials and a poem about pylons with a much more famous poet. Stephen Spender's enigmatic poem *The Pylons*, also published in 1933, is a rarity in that it gave rise to the name of a loose group of British poets united only by the fact that their work embraced modernity, specifically technological modernity, and rejected nostalgia and aestheticism. The "pylon poets" were generally socially and politically engaged poets of the left who found inspiration in the industrial landscape and the fears of the dark period between the two world wars. Stanley Snaith, considered one of that group, is one of those writers who, now rarely written about, are invariably described as 'forgotten' (that is one rung below the category of 'neglected' and one rung above those who are not written about at all).

A History of the Association of Assistant Librarians, 1895-1945, by Michael Ramsden might not seem the most promising place to begin a search for a poet, forgotten or otherwise. There he is, however, at the centre of a dispute concerning a column that he had written in The Assistant Librarian in 1930 denouncing the booklists of the Coventry and Croydon public libraries. Tempers ran high. At one point Snaith appears to have called for a duel. Then he resigned as a columnist and disappears from the annals of AAL.

A number of qualified librarians have also been poets (and a number of poets have worked in libraries, but that is another story). Some, Philip Larkin and Fleur Adcock come to mind, have been widely published and read and internationally lauded. Many others are less known. I doubt very many in either category have also been well-known mountaineers and writers about mountaineering.

In the 1950s, I worked, as a very young man, in Hampstead Public Library of blessed memory. The name Stanley Snaith evokes vague memories of that time. A well-read acquaintance told me of a librarian who was also one of the lesser-known thirties poets who were, even then, overshadowed by Auden, Spender, MacNeice, and the rest (known collectively and derisively as "McSpaunday"). Not only that, but he was still working at that time in another London public library. In fact, Snaith (1903-1976), born in Kendall in Cumbria, was a Fellow of the Library Association (FLA), then the highest professional qualification in the UK, and worked in Bethnal Green public library (Bethnal Green, in the then poverty-stricken East End, is now part of Tower Hamlets), becoming Deputy Borough Librarian in 1944 and the Borough Librarian in 1952.

Despite Snaith's "forgotten" status, his now little-read poetry appeared in distinguished company. Church and Bozeman's *Poems of Our Times*, 1900-1942 (Dent, 1945) contains four poems by Snaith amid work by Eliot, Auden, Robert Graves, and Dylan Thomas. *Poems of Today, Fourth Series* (Macmillan, 1951) finds his poetry with that of such disparate but celebrated poets as Auden, Anne Ridler, Stevie Smith, Yeats, John Arlott, Laurie Lee, Day-Lewis, MacNeice, Masfield, and Roy Fuller.

Snaith was no Bloomsbury (in class or style) and identified in the 1930s with those poets whose modernism was in open revolt against

the Bloomsberries. Despite this, the Woolfs, those literary aesthetes, chose to publish him as I discovered recently.

Here is an advertisement for a book (which sold for £2000):

"Snaith, Stanley. A flying scroll. Hogarth Press, London, 1928. First edition. One of 'probably' 275 copies, hand printed by the Woolfs, of which 119 were pulped ten years later. Yellow decorated boards with title label, spine rubbed at top, corners good. Page edges are slightly foxed, as are occasional pages, but foxing is faint [sic]. Woolmer catalogue 178."

VERY SCARCE. This copy has the name 'Norman D Snaith' on ffl. He was the poet's brother.

If you are interested in the Bloomsbury Group and the ways in which literary reputations fall and rise, I can recommend a book called *Bloomsbury Pie* by Regina Marler (Holt, 1997). In a late chapter, she writes of another topic close to bibliophiles—the market for Bloomsburiana and the keen rivalry between collectors. One couple, the Traubs in California, are described as "avid collectors." When Ms Marler visited them, they had just completed their set of hand-printed Hogarth Press books with the purchase of the "notoriously elusive *A Flying Scroll*" and were crestfallen to discover that a rival English collector also owned a copy.

For someone who published a number of books of poetry and on mountaineering, libraries, and local history and whose poems are found in well-regarded poetry anthologies, Snaith is an oddly elusive figure. For example, a search of the complete online archive of *The Times Literary Supplement* (TLS) reveals no articles about the poet. There is an article about him in the *Wilson Bulletin for Librarians* in December 1934. It is illustrated by a picture of a young man with a pile of unruly dark hair, open-collared white shirt over a dark jacket in the mode of the time, and the then inevitable pipe, standing on a Heathcliffian moor. Snaith was a fell-walker as well as a serious mountaineer. An article on scything (who knew there was or is a British Scything Association) in the *New York Times* in 1986 tells us that the handle of a scythe is called a "snath" and the "aptly named Stanley Snaith" wrote a poem called *"The Scythe"* (1937) that begins:

*"A scythe purges the hands of awkwardness.
It has its own instinct, a subtle weighting ..."*

This modernist clearly had time for ancient technology. In fact, there is much more to Snaith's poetry than the stereotypical 1930s concerns and settings. He writes movingly of landscapes, especially the landscapes of the North of England, and of mountains – as might be expected of the author of the books *The mountain challenge* (1952) and *At grips with Everest* (1946) – of nature and wildlife, of music and art, and of other poets (Emily Dickinson, W.B. Yeats, and others), as well as the to be expected scenes and themes of modern life.

As with almost all such labels, calling him a 'pylon poet' fits only one aspect of his art and that at a particular period. Snaith's writing career continued in the post-WWII period, long past the preoccupations of the 1930s. His poems were models of precision and form, embodying a deep humanism rooted in both a love of nature and a reverence for life. As with all true poets, this librarian and mountaineer was his own person, transcending all attempts to label and to pigeon-hole.

The private and inner lives of librarians are as rich and complicated as those of anyone else. Still, I wonder how many of the good people of Bethnal Green knew that the deputy head of their public library had scaled mountains and written this of loss, humanity, history, and pub darts?

In The Tavern

Not casting about for words to answer me.

Darts in hand he looked me in the face

'You're going soon?' A crestfallen grimace.

A gesture of the thumb toward the seas.

Embarrassedly I spoke of something else,

Conscious that I had wronged him, in that his eye

Betrayed with desolate lucidity

The secret that no soldier ever tells.

And that was all between us. Yet I knew

The mintage of Thermopylae and Troy

Rang no less purely in that tongue-tied boy

For all he cast no gauntlet to his fate,

But turned his back upon it while he threw

With anxious nicety for double eight.

(July 1944)

(All of Stanley Snaith's books are out of print.) **PL**

Michael Gorman is a retired academic librarian.

Everything You Always Wanted to Know About IT and Online (But Were Afraid to Ask):

A review of an IT Zoom Workshop on 26th August 2020

This webinar, ran by David Byrne with support from other colleagues, was structured around four topics:

- **Is Technology the answer?**

Question: How has your use of IT and online changed since lockdown?

- **Kit: wires and boxes**

Question: What is the one IT or Online piece of kit / resource or website you could not live without and why?

- **Documents and Files overview**

Question: What is your top tip for any of the documents related tools mentioned?

- **Social: Sharing Files, Data and Documents - overview**

Question: What unusual or quirky use do you make of IT / technology on a regular basis?

For each topic, there was an introduction from David, followed by a five-minute discussion amongst the 20 participants divided into randomly assigned breakout groups. Each group then informally fed back comments to the larger group. The one hour session finished with a concluding summary, followed by an emailed document which contained further details on all the topics, as well as some instructions and advice.

Compared to a face-to-face workshop, this session via zoom seemed a poor substitute. There is, of course, no choice at present although CILIP has been using this technology for webinars and meetings for several years. The breakout groups were a good idea, especially to encourage reluctant speakers, although trying to speak in a zoom group is always difficult. The topics were well chosen, and clearly stimulated a good variety of responses. The zoom technology let us down from time to time, with poor connections for some. For example, I was unable to access the breakout groups, for unknown reasons. Helene Russell was running the session, which was a wise decision, leaving David free to convene. The use of quick opinion polls was interesting in itself. The follow-up notes were, perhaps, the most valuable part of this event, since it was difficult to take in everything that was said.

The title assigned to this workshop was a little ambitious, but I'm sure we're getting there! There will be further webinars, building on experience from this, and I would certainly recommend them as a cheap and accessible way of sharing the challenges some of us face with different aspects of IT, and getting useful tips and advice.

Sian King, August 2020.

A Note from David Byrne on the IT Zoom Event

Thanks to Helene Russell, Dion Lindsay, Charmaine Bourton and Emma Holmes for all of their hard work in the run up to this event. Thanks also to the CILIP K&IM and RPG groups who organised this workshop in conjunction with the CILIP South West Region and the University of the Third Age. If you are a member of CILIP please make sure that you do not miss on news of the next webinar in

this series by signing up to K&IM Group and RPG news alerts using the page at: <https://lnkd.in/d4DQCqe?> (You may need to copy that link into your browser – RPG is still down as Retired Members Group and does not reflect the change of name to RPG). If you are not a CILIP member, I would strongly encourage you to join so that you can support the professional body that is already working

for you. Membership is just £8.33 per month. www.cilip.org.uk/page/JoinAsAMember. If you have any questions or further suggestions for future webinars please get in touch. David Byrne – david.f.byrne@icloud.com – Tel: 07850 791002.

The Feedback Poll showed that for 84 per cent the workshop met expectations and 100

per cent would recommend the workshop to others.

We are planning future workshops in the same series. The next one will cover “Everything you need to know about social media” and that will run twice – Tuesday, 21st October 5 to 6.30pm and on Friday 23rd October 12.30 to 2pm.

Visits and Tours

Presently confirmed visits for 2021

Moravian Church House library and archives

Visitors can also see Chapel and Church

Date: Monday, 22nd March 2020

Time: 2 pm; Cost: Free – donations accepted

Venue: 5-7 Muswell Hill, London N10 3TJ

The library contains printed books relating to the history of the Church both in Britain and abroad, biographies, Moravian hymn and tune books and theology. The archive material consists of records relating to certain congregations particularly those no longer in existence, mission reports, Synod minutes and much more. Places for 10 to 12 guests.

For more details contact Charmaine Bourton:
email charmainebourton11@hotmail.co.uk



Railway Correspondence and Travel Society library (RCTS)

Date: Friday, 16th April

Time: 11 am; Cost: Free – donations accepted (Library costs £12,000 per year to run)

Venue: Stationmaster's House, Station Approach, Leatherhead, KT22 7SQ

Opened on 6th October 2018 at a cost of £30,000 – the library and archive consists of six rooms housing a comprehensive collection of books, periodicals, annuals, photographs, timetables, track plans and many other items.

NOTE: The rooms are what was the station master's house. It is opposite the Wates HQ and there is a side entrance which is treated as the main entrance. Leave Leatherhead station by the Platform 1 exit via the booking hall and the library is on your right. A member of staff will be on the platform to make sure you don't go to Horsham or Guildford! Places for 10 to 12 guests (expect small rooms at venue).

Parking: There is a station car park which is expensive but several cheaper car parks around.

For more details contact Charmaine Bourton: email charmainebourton11@hotmail.co.uk

Retired Professionals Group Annual Lunch 2021

Following the issues relating to Covid-19, this ever popular Lunch has been shifted to Tuesday, 6th April 2021 at:

Venue: The Civil Service Club, Old Scotland Yard, London SW1A 2HJ

For more details contact Ian Orton:
email ianorton5@gmail.com phone 07841 577991



PLEASE NOTE: The RPG's Annual General Meeting for 2019 postponed from June will now take place online on Tuesday, 10th November 2020 at 2.30 p.m. Please email Ian Orton – ianorton5@gmail.com to request the zoom link to join the meeting.