

Tavistock

SUBSCRIPTION LIBRARY

Established
1799



NEWSLETTER

DECEMBER 2020

A few words from the Chairman:

"The year for some of us seems to have flown by, but for others this interminable drag has tried our patience and health as well as our souls. A measure of how we all have been individually affected in so many ways.

We are still experiencing challenging times and remain living through a period of worry and great uncertainty as well as having been through a second lockdown of the pandemic. Covid measures have been established in the library reading room and track & trace regulations are adhered to with the QR Code and logging into the visitors' books as well. I hope that everyone is well and safe as well as coping with a difficult time with the pandemic.

Clearly we are having very few members calling in. I visit daily to empty the dehumidifier and I am greatly assisted by another member in that respect. A joint application has been submitted by the library and museum to WDBC for a new and more effective downpipe and wall rendering which should hopefully resolve the damp situation in our lobby.

Following on from our AGM in the autumn we received a further sum to the Covid grant from the council and this has given us an opportunity to reflect upon where we are and what we proposed to do with our premises and way of providing a service to members for the future. I hope that this will start our thoughts and dialogue on plans for our future now that the Guildhall project is coming on quite a pace with hopes for opening next year.

Activities have halted quite understandably but the running and administration of the charity continues quietly in the background with potentially exciting times ahead. As and when plans are clear and structured we can share those with members.

A Blessed Yuletide and Christmas to all our members with the hope for health and safety in the coming months. Thank you for your continued support and patience for all that is being done to keep the library viable and safe for all.

New Books in the Library include:

"From 1899 to 1927 three different forms of transport - steam, gravity and horse were needed to convey a train the full length of the railway. During the years from 1947 to the final closure in 1960 only the lower part of the line remained open, where horses were used, and which thus outlasted the other forms of power."

The line ran from Cholwich Town works, through Lee Moor Village, connected with the Wotter tramway and another branch off to the brickworks, then off down the Cann Wood Incline, passed the Tecalemit Works at Marsh Mills to Laira Junction and on the Sutton Harbour. The booklet contains some lovely photos including some of horse drawn wagons.

If anyone else has any publications they wish to see introduced to our members they would be most welcome to let Jess know with a short introduction.



*The Lee Moor
Tramway*

R. M. S. Hall

Excursion Papers Number Nineteen

Published by The Oldwood Press

Price 2.50

Proposed Name change

It has been proposed that the name of *Tavistock Subscription Library* be changed to better reflect what the library represents to the town of Tavistock today. Members are invited to give their views and suggest names that they feel would best embody the library and its facilities before the end of January, with a final decision being approved at the AGM on 19 April 2021. Trustee Bill Lane is collating responses via the Library.

Retirements

A huge thank you to Bill Lane, who has recently retired from his position as Treasurer after more than 8 years of service. He will be replaced by Penny Gardiner, who will continue his important work. We would also like to thank Juliet Hill, who has now retired as a Trustee. Juliet has, during her time on the Committee, served in many roles most recently as Membership Secretary.

Facebook Group

A small number of members (8) have been trialling a Facebook page for the library, containing articles and notices of interest, and it has had positive feedback. Following the recent Committee meeting, the continuation and expansion of this venture has been approved, and therefore those who are interested, as members of the library, are invited to access Tavistock Subscription Library Facebook group by searching on Facebook or using this link [Tavistock Subscription Library | Facebook](#).

Digital Preservation

Recently a pilot of the digital preservation project, on the Gulworthy parish magazines, has been carried out in the library, and following approval at the Committee meeting, this project will be rolled out.

2021 Subscriptions

At the Committee meeting, the 2021 subscription rates have been approved, with existing members, due to the pandemic, being offered a free year for 2021 (although should members wish to donate they can do so). New members will be asked to pay: Individual £14, Family (2 adults) £21, Family Plus (2 adults) £21 + £7 (per additional adult), 50% discount from 1st October 2021. Bank details for internet payments and arrangements for Gift Subscriptions from the Treasurer Penny Gardiner on pmgardiner.21tr@gmail.com or via the Library.

Acquisitions

Ruth Blowey, the Librarian, has asked for a volunteer to help her recatalogue the Mrs Bray collection, helping her to lift them down and go through them to check editions, condition etc. Could you contact her via the Library at Court Gate PL19 0AE. She also notes that a number of acquisitions have been made this year including Mrs Bray's *Trials of the Heart*.

Sales

Ruth Blowey, the Librarian and Penny Gardiner, the Treasurer met with Nigel Smith, a Library member and a local bookseller of old and rare books and he will be selling a small number of donated books for us on commission.

An Art Detective on the case!

Simon Dell reports that on 14th July he received an intriguing email from Diane Bilbey, Art Detective Officer (Sculpture) of Art UK: *"...I am just trying to tie up some loose ends as I've been working on the backlog for Art Detective sculpture enquiries, and as my contract ends in about a month or so, I am just doing some following up. There is just one outstanding query relating to the bust of John Russell at Tavistock Subscription Library: **John Russell** Accession number: ART1 <https://artuk.org/discover/artworks/john-russell-17661839-6th-duke-of-bedford-270096> **Comment from member of the public:** Going by the NPG list of all known portraits of this sitter (link below), and by a process of elimination, this must be a version of the bust by John Francis (1780-1861) shown at the RA in 1832, the original of which is supposed to be at Woburn Abbey <https://www.npg.org.uk/collections/search/personextended?linkid=mp00338&tab=iconography> This is not the earlier bust by Nollekens, a version of which can be seen at the Royal Collection website. For confirmation, however, the Tavistock collection should check this bust for a confirmatory signature*

She then continued: *Do you have any further information in your records relating to the sculptor, or would it be possible, when you are able to return to the Library, to check to see if it is signed?* Simon popped down to the Library and sure enough found a signature and sculptor's details hidden on the rear of the bust. Indeed Francis London 1886 is on the back. In-between the Francis and London looks like SC. Upon receiving the photograph of the signature, Diane Bilbey replied: *"...it does look like we can firmly attribute this bust to John Francis, so that is very satisfying! Looking at the inscription from the photos you kindly supplied, I think it reads: J FRANCIS SC. LONDON 1836. I think the '3' is badly executed, but it can't be an '8' as 1886 would be too late for the sculptor John Francis, who died in 1861, and it can't be a zero as that is possibly too early. Francis seems to have been most active from the 1820s until the 1850s.*



Also, the bust seems to show the Duke of Bedford as an older man, and as he died in 1839, a date of 1836 seems plausible. Another bust of the Duke of Bedford (not by the same sculptor, but dated 1839) shows the Duke at a similar age.

https://artuk.org/discover/artworks/john-russell-17661839-6th-duke-of-bedford-member-of-the-planning-committee-for-bedford-infirmary-258235/view_as/grid/search/works:john-russell-17661839-6th-duke-of-bedford-member-of-the-planning-committee-for-bedford-infirmary/page/1 . Anyway, I will now update the entry for this bust. Thanks very much for all your help!" So, as Simon Dell says, the mystery of our bust in the lobby has been solved!

Excerpt from E.A. Bray's 1799 Collection of 'juvenile' poems (available in the library)

The Abbot*, erst by monks rever'd,
Amid the walls by Orgar rear'd,
Oft Morwel! o'er thy furrow'd grounds,
Pursu'd the hare with panting hounds;
Or mid thy woods delighted chac'd,
The stag with branching antlers grac'd.

Wafted by the evening gale,
Along the windings of the vale,
Music's melting strains I hear;
And Echo tells the Minstrel near.
From yonder boat the sounds proceed,

That ploughs the waves with winged speed,
And bears a young and sprightly crew,
Who, Tamar's varied scenes to view,
Forsook, whilst Pleasure led the way,
The crouded Tower, at break of day;
And now the shades of Eve descend,
Their winding circuit homeward bend.

* Bray notes that The Abbot of Tavistock possessed a hunting seat at Morwel, which he notes was still in good preservation at the time of writing. It is noted that this building (Morwell Barton) still remains in good condition to this day and is listed at Grade I.

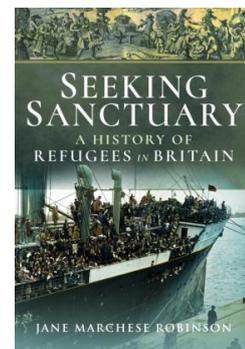
Dackelogenesis (Anon)

When the good God had made the animals –
the elephants and apes and crocodiles –
He finished by creating Man and Wife
and breathing into them the breath of life.
But a small lump of clay had not been used.
“Aha!” said God: “What shall I fashion now?”
It was the seventh – and a holy-day,
in which we are supposed to take our rest.
But we are free to spend it any way
we fancy, just as long as we're amused.
So God the Father said: “Now that the job is done
of serious work, I think I'll have some fun!”
And so He formed a sausage – medium size –
and stuck four crooked legs in it. In front
He put a pointed head with laughing eyes;
a tail upon its rear end He appended,
and covered it with brown shoe-cream all over,
and rubbed and polished it until it shone. When it was finished, He
began to laugh,
and cried: “This chap is really quite a clown!
He grabbed a cycle-pump, and blew
the breath of life into the little one,
and lo, the miracle began to run,
and God enjoyed watching it come and go.
He didn't mean to send it down to earth.
He wanted to make some improvements to it.
He whistled – but the creature wandered off
and fell over the edge before He knew it.
So that is how we got this miracle –
this Sunday-child of God: the wilful, loving Dackel!



New publications by members of the Library

As mentioned in February's newsletter, Jane Robinson's *Seeking sanctuary, a history of refugees in Britain* is due to be published by Pen and Sword at the end of November. It is written by Jane Marchese Robinson, a member of the Tavistock Subscription Library. It tells the story of people who sought refuge in Britain from persecution elsewhere from the 16th century onwards. Of interest is the fact many people came to the West Country. Huguenots from the west coast of France came to the towns of Plymouth, Exeter, Bideford and Barnstaple. Their skills in weaving, metallurgy and clockmaking boosted the economy of these towns. During the First World War some 250,000 Belgians fled here from the advance of the German tanks. Devon was the first county to receive the refugees and over time the Belgians stayed in many towns and villages. There is a plaque from the refugees in Tavistock Guildhall.



Jess would welcome any pictures, book reviews on recent acquisitions in the library, articles stories etc for the next newsletter so do please get in touch with her at jessfmaslen@gmail.com if you would like to submit anything or get involved

