

Newsletter – September 2008

Reading Groups: please enquire at the shop if you are interested in joining any of the reading groups listed below.



I had a holiday...

... much like [the one promoted by Lionel Shriver](#) While I don't think I feel quite as strongly as she does (after all I have always enjoyed my holidays wherever they might be!) I must say that this year's "at home" holiday was the best ever! We camped for a couple of nights at Cwm Nantcol with friends from Finland.. We visited the Red Kite feeding centre at Gigrin Farm, near the Elan Valley



I did lots of reading (all four of the Boudica books by Manda Scott - for the third time (bliss)! The new PD James - Private Patient and the soon to be published John le Carré - Most Wanted Man (both very good). The Road Home and Sacred Country (both brilliant) by Rose Tremain. And Hil did lots of weeding!



We also went to three parties, a 50th a 60th and a welcome home, and we went to see Mama Mía: my verdict? At the same time as my head was saying 'oh dear this is awful', I was laughing and crying and having to restrain myself from clapping!!



A week back at work and then we were off for a long weekend in Dingle, south-west Ireland where we spent a lovely few days walking, resting, eating, drinking and hanging out with our friends and watching the Dingle dolphin:

For more information about this amazing wild creature that has lived freely in the waters near Dingle for over twenty years visit <http://www.irishdolphins.com>

Back to work!

Charity Fund Raising Event For The Deaf Africa Fund

We are very pleased to announce that there will be a charity supper at the Bilash Indian restaurant in Much Wenlock on Tuesday September 30th. Tickets are £18.50 and all profits will support work with deaf children in Africa. This will be a fun night with fabulous food, a raffle, a quiz and even a karaoke! So come prepared to have fun! We are most grateful to Ram Aston for organizing this event for us. Tickets are available from the bookshop. Please support this very good cause.



Jackie Kay

We are very excited to be offering an evening with Jackie Kay at The Guild Hall on Friday September 19th at 7.30pm.

Jackie (b. 1961) is an award-winning writer of fiction, poetry and plays, whose subtle investigation into the complexities of identity have been informed by her own life. Her latest work is *The Lamplighter* - an original drama for Radio 3, written to mark the 200th anniversary of the United Kingdom's abolition of the slave trade. Writing this, Jackie said that she felt as though she was writing a love letter to her ancestors; she wondered how she would ever write about anything else.

Jackie Kay's *The Lamplighter* takes us on a journey through the dark heart of slavery. It is both a radio and stage play and a multi-layered epic poem. This edition includes a CD of the much acclaimed BBC radio play.

Four women and one man tell the story of the fort, the slave ship, the middle passage, the life on the plantations, the growth of the British city and the industrial revolution. *The Lamplighter* focuses on parts of history other books rarely touch upon, revealing the devastating human cost of slavery for individual people.

Constance has had to witness the sale of her own child; Mary has been beaten to an inch of her life; black Harriot has had to become a high class whore; the Lamplighter was sold twice into slavery from the ports in Bristol. All four very different voices tell their story, along with Macbean, the zeitgeist.

'*The Lamplighter* was epic. Huge, sprawling, ambitious, defiant, angry and gripping, Jackie Kay's dramatised poem told the bitter story of slavery through the experience of four women. It began, and pointedly ended, with the voice of an 11-year-old girl, snatched from her home to be sold after a long sea voyage to Britain: "I am a girl, I am in the dark, I don't know how long I have been kept in the dark."

'This was dramatically towering stuff, full of rousing prayer and sad song, and choruses sung in helplessness and revolt, as Kay's women defied cruelty, death and silence. The superb Mona Hammond played Mary, a woman who defended herself from rape and was then punished with torture and death: left out to die for three days, she says, "to break the spirit

of anyone whose spirit might need breaking". This highly charged production, full of true stories that have been left unheard too long, had quite the opposite effect. Its circular structure ended brimful of hope, with Mary merrily cackling to herself, "I survived them all." – Elisabeth Mahoney, *The Guardian*

Jackie will give a short performance of this work, followed by a question and answer session with the audience. Seats are £7.50 and there will be complimentary drinks and nibbles. Please book your place in advance if at all possible, to avoid disappointment.

Poetry Group

The next poetry group meeting at Little Wenlock is on Friday September 26th at 7 o'clock.

Reading For Pleasure

- *Our children's reading group will meet on Friday September 5th at 4.30pm to discuss the Adventures of Huckleberry Finn.*
- *The monthly Reading for Pleasure group will discuss The Inheritance of Loss by Kiran Desai on 10th September at 2pm, and on 24th September at 7pm. (There are vacancies in both these groups at the moment, so if you fancy joining us here at the bookshop, just let me know.)*
- *The Classics Reading Group (this is a closed group) starts meeting on 18th September to read Henry James' Portrait of a Lady.*
- *The Persephone Reading Group, which meets every three months, is meeting to discuss Miss Pettigrew Lives for a Day on October 8th at 7pm, and on October 15th at 2pm. There are places in either of these groups so please do come if you'd like to join in. (You may be interested to know that the film of Miss Pettigrew Lives for a Day is on at the Old Market Hall in Shrewsbury from August 29th - September 4th.)*

Next year, starting from January, our afternoon reading groups are going to be held on the second Wednesday of the month with an optional soup lunch at the church first. We are looking forward to combining the very great pleasures of good food, good company, good books, and "good works"!



Gillian Clarke

National Poet of Wales, Gillian Clarke, will be at the Edge Arts Centre on Friday October 3rd at 7.30pm. Tickets are £7.50 (special deal for students at William Brookes) and are available from the Edge or from the bookshop. Gillian has recently published a book of essays about her writing life: At the Source. Gillian will be talking about poetry, writing, living in Wales, plate tectonics, language and much, much more. Gillian has been guest of honour at our last two Reader's retreats in Wales and she is inspiring and passionate - this evening will be a real treat.

How Fiction Works

Our weekly seminars run by Betty James start again on October 7th. This course is full, but do let me know if you are interested in future courses. Participants will study James Wood's How Fiction Works and will apply it to The Good Soldier by Ford Maddox Ford.

Venice

Our next trip to Venice is June 2nd - June 6th 2009. Bookings need to be in by the end of the year. Please ask at the shop for more details and visit this link to read about our first trip there: <http://wenlockbooks.blogspot.com/2006/11/readers-trip-to-venice.html>

Readers Retreat

Our next Readers' Retreat in west Wales will be held from February 25th - March 1st 2009. Both these holidays are likely to book up very quickly.

[More details on the blog](#)

As always, lots going on: do join us! (I'm already getting excited about our annual candle-lit reading of the Night Before Christmas on Christmas Eve!)

Anna