



Lewes Children's Book Group Newsletter Spring 2012

AGM

At the AGM in January, the following were elected to the Committee for 2012.

Jenny Maidment (Secretary)

Diana Rogers (Treasurer and Acting Chair)

Jean Burke and Vivienne Macey

Ana Guevara was re-appointed as the Library link.

The future of the Book Group depends on more people giving active help.

There are still vacancies on the Committee and co-option is possible.

It was agreed that 3 Book Swops would go ahead this year.

We welcome recent new members and hope to do more.....

Can you help—committee or not? If you are interested in joining the committee, then please phone Diana Rogers on 474964 or email Jenny Maidment on jennymaidment@yahoo.co.uk. If you don't feel able to join the committee at this time but have some good ideas or suggestions about events/fundraising, please do contact us.

Have you paid your 2012 subs?

Before the AGM, Laura Atkins of the National Centre for Research in Children's Literature, outlined her personal journey from the liberal west coast of the USA, where she was made aware of the importance of reflecting the many strands of society and cultures in books for the young, to New York where she worked in mainstream publishing and continued to press for diversity and inclusion before coming to the UK. Through research, teaching and personal contact she encourages readers, writers, illustrators, publishers and students to share a rich variety of values and stories.

Examination of UK publishers and editors reveals their extremely low ethnic diversity, which means that their often 'mainstream' views are reinforced and it is still hard for non-white or multi-cultural voices and stories to get into print.

According to the Office of National Statistics in 2006 the Black and Minority Ethnic population in England and Wales was 9.1 million people, or almost 17% of the overall population. In London, where much of the UK publishing industry is based that grows to almost 30%.

All children should have the chance to read some stories where they can recognise people like themselves, but also find out about other ways of seeing the world.

The comments of writers interviewed by Laura and others present at the AGM confirmed that progress is very slow. Stereotypes and tokenism are still on view: more cultural sensitivity is needed. It is clear that decisions about what gets published are increasingly driven by commercial pressure and the growing competition from rival non-book technology. This has led to a growth in self-publishing and the need for self-publicity by people determined to reflect and appeal to multi-ethnic audiences.

Diana Rogers

PS. It is especially interesting to read later in this newsletter how LCBG member Miriam Moss values the range of languages and countries she encountered as a child...

In February the **Red House Children's Book Award** was presented to **Patrick Ness** for "**A Monster Calls**". The Ceremony at London's South Bank Children's Literature Festival was attended by 3 representatives from Lewes. Sasha, age 10, writes:



In February there was the Red House Children's Book Awards. These are the only book awards where only the children vote for the winners. This time the award ceremony was in the South Bank centre in London. Me and my Mum went up by train. When we got there all the authors were signing their books. Most of them had long queues and you had to wait a long time to get the books signed. We were getting them signed for the Lewes book group.

After the signing they gave each of the shortlisted authors portfolios of their work. Then, after a short delay because they had problems with the ovens, we had lunch.

After lunch we went into the Queen Elizabeth Hall for the award ceremony. First Michael Morpurgo gave a very interesting speech. Then James Campbell, the announcer, brought in each group of authors in turn and asked them questions.

The winner of the young children's category was Chris Wormell for his book *Scruffy Bear and the Six White Mice*. The winner of the middle group was Liz Pichon with *The Brilliant World of Tom Gates*. And the winner of the older group was Patrick Ness for *A Monster Calls*. He was also the overall winner. At the end we all blew squeaky things that were on our chairs to celebrate. I could hardly hear myself think!

Sasha Dam March 2012

Going to the Red House Children's Book Awards was a real privilege. The venue was impressive – the lunch was in the foyer of the Queen Elizabeth Hall – and there was a real buzz about the place.

It was good to meet the authors as they signed their books and fun to meet other people and children from other book groups. We sat on a table for lunch with some children from the Oxford group. Each table had to complete a quiz sheet which included identifying which Harry Potter quotes came from which of the books. Luckily, our table had several Harry Potter fans and we managed to complete the quiz, although we didn't win the prize for the most answers correct.

During the award ceremony itself the authors were asked lots of questions about their writing and how they thought of their ideas and it was really interesting to hear about their lives and inspirations. Michael Morpurgo's speech about children's book writing was really inspiring. James Campbell was compering the event and he was extremely funny and managed to get the whole 900 strong audience giggling – and the authors were enjoying it too!

The Red House website has all the shortlisted books on it and they were all fabulous. What really came across was how much it meant to the authors to have had their books chosen by children and not by a committee of adults. These were people who devote their working life to writing for children and having children vote for them was like the ultimate accolade.

Lewes Children's Book Group has been involved in the testing process for this award for many years and it was really fun to see the culmination of all that frantic running around Lewes with bags of books that goes on in the preceding months! It is good to feel part of a national event that spans all ages of children. And the award this year took place as part of the Imagine children's festival, with events all over the South Bank centre - from comedy shows to author talks to craft activities. Well worth a visit if you are ever bored at February half term!

Emily Kramers (Sasha's Mum)

Childhood Stories and Poems

Miriam Moss

I grew up on a myriad of nursery rhymes sung and spoken, on Beatrix Potter and *Grimms'* and *Hans Andersen's* fairy tales. At bedtime, our parents read us *The Water Babies*, *Aesop's Fables*, *The Wind in the Willows* and *Alice in Wonderland*. They recited poetry, too. We loved A. A. Milne's bad King John:

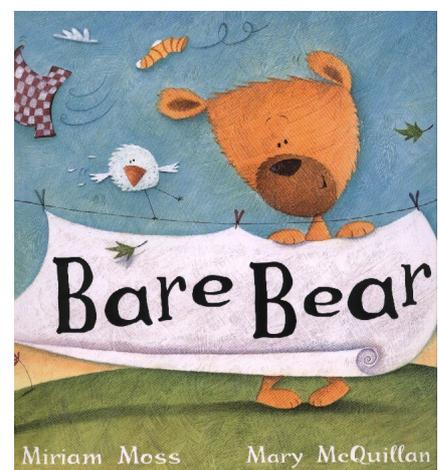
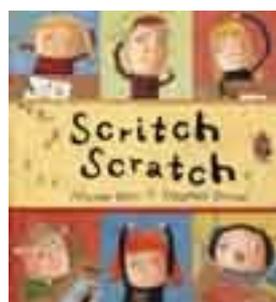
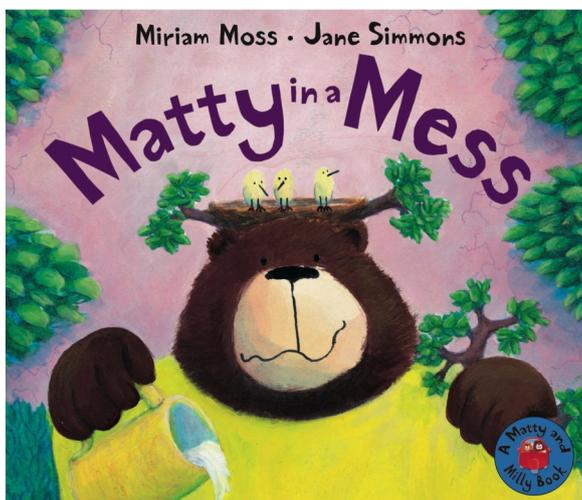
*'King John was not a good man –
He had his little ways.
And sometimes no one spoke to him
For days and days and days.'*

Juxtaposed with these classics, and because we lived abroad as children, we absorbed the rhythms and colours of African, Arabic and Chinese languages; at one point creating our own language and calling it *Callejuna*.

As well as being immersed in this rich linguistic soup, our parents delighted in playing ever more complex word games, beginning with reversing parts of words to see if we noticed, and they set their own example by reading books themselves with enthusiasm and pleasure. They also gave us, I think, the most valuable thing of all: private space and time in which to develop our own individual imaginations.

With all this to draw on when my own children arrived, I was delighted also to discover the wonderful array of picture books available. Such variety and brilliance there to share! In time, I was bound to try writing one myself

Miriam is now the author of many picture books, which can be viewed on her website at www.miriammoss.com



Book Sale—March 24th

The Book Sale raised £516 plus a little more to come in from the sale of some Malcolm Saville books to a specialist shop in Rye.

The 1948 copy of Eve Garnett's "In and Out and Roundabout—stories of a Little Town" raised £50.

The reasons for holding the Sale were twofold—to raise funds and to publicise Lewes Children's Book Group. There was a lot of interest shown in the books on sale and several people who came to the sale proved to be interested in the group as well—so a positive outcome all round.

The next **Book Swop** will be held on **2nd June** (Jubilee weekend!). We hope some of you will have time to come to the **Nutty Wizard Community Cafe** from **10.30 -12.30** bringing your books to swap for free!

There will also be some books (vintage and modern) for sale,

Adult Reading Group

Contact Vivienne Macey on 01273 478867 for further information on this group.

The **Federation of Children's Book Groups** has forged a partnership with the **Guardian Children's Book Web Site**.

For more information, go to <http://www.guardian.co.uk/childrens-books-site> and take advantage of free books, author interviews, reviews and other opportunities available from the Guardian.

Not yet a member? It's easy to join

Download a membership form from our website (<http://leweschildrensbookgroup.weebly.com>) and send with a cheque for £12 (Lewes residents) or £16 (postal membership) to Diana Rogers at the address on the form.

Our aim is to promote the enjoyment of and interest in children's books and we regularly organise Book Swops and author events.

The benefits of membership include: discounts at Bags of Books (Lewes) and Much Ado Books (Alfriston), Carousel—a nationally produced magazine with news and reviews of children's books, and National Conference where you can meet and listen to high-profile children's authors and illustrators.

For more information about the Lewes Children's Book Group, look at:
<http://leweschildrensbookgroup.weebly.com> or phone Diana Rogers on 01273 474964



Membership Renewal 2012

Please complete and return this slip with cheque or cash to Diana Rogers, 48 South Way, Lewes. BN7 1LY

Name.....

Address.....

Postcode..... Tel:.....

Email address.....

Your email address can help us save money (and paper!) and is useful to remind members about Book Swops and events. By providing your email address you agree to be contacted occasionally by email about Lewes Children's Book Group events. We will not pass on your details to any other individuals or organisations.