

Enid Blyton Celebration Week 29th June – 7th July

Saturday 29th June –

Noddy Weekend at Bekonscot Model Village

See a full sized working Noddy car.

Treasure hunt with prizes and much more.

Tuesday 2nd July - A Social Evening for Society members and their guests has been arranged at Bekonscot Model Village (Warwick Road entrance) starting at 6.30 pm. The evening will include an entertaining talk by Jacqui Hogan entitled 'Enid Blyton – life, literature and lashings of language'. Wine and light refreshments will be served. Cost £5 per head for members and their guests. Please make your booking using the tear-off form to be found on page 5 after the Society Matters section. Numbers are limited.

Thursday 4th July- Enid Blyton Evening 7pm, at the National Film and TV School
Portraits of Enid in film - £10 suggested donation to support the Enid Blyton festival
To include a complimentary welcome drink.

Tickets available from Beaconsfield Library Reynolds Road Beaconsfield HP9 2NJ

Tel 0845 2303232, email:lib-bea@buckscc.gov.uk or via www.beaconsfieldsociety.org.uk

Saturday 6th July - Children's Activities at Beaconsfield Library

Creative writing workshop, Enid Blyton talk, special story time and a Green Hedges Party with lashings of lemonade and sticky buns. Quiz and colouring competition prizes to be announced.

Enid Blyton and Beaconsfield *Kari Dorme*

There are few reminders of the connection between Beaconsfield and the world famous children's author Enid Blyton. This is about to change as The Beaconsfield Society is organizing an Enid Blyton Week from 29 June-7 July 2013 celebrating the 75th anniversary of Blyton's arrival in Beaconsfield. This is part of the society's remit to preserve, protect and promote the best of Beaconsfield.

In 1973 Green Hedges, Enid's home was demolished. Today the area where it used to stand at Penn Road is called Blyton Close and is the only clue to the fact that she lived here until her death in 1968. Enid and her first husband Hugh Pollock bought an eight-bedroomed house set in two and a half acres, and in 1938 paying £3000 for it. As a trained teacher she was already building a reputation as a writer with stories and articles regularly appearing in magazines. She invited her *Sunny Stories*' readers to name her new home, and from the young readers' suggestions she chose the name Green Hedges. She received a large postbag every week, particularly from teachers and schoolchildren who found her poems and stories inspiring. She answered most letters herself with Green Hedges becoming a world famous address.

Despite a blossoming career, she had personal problems and a rocky marriage. By 1943 she had divorced Hugh and married the surgeon Kenneth Darrell Waters. They were very happy together and Enid became an increasingly prolific and popular writer.

During her years at Green Hedges she wrote all 21 *Famous Five* books as well as all the *Secret Seven* and *Adventure* series. In the 1950s, she created her most successful character: Noddy, who was born in Beaconsfield! Noddy with Big Ears and Toyland sold over 20 million copies alone.

In Beaconsfield Enid was involved in many local charities, particularly the Shaftesbury Society Babies Home for babies from the East End of London. And she contributed a portion of her royalties to the Great Ormond Street Hospital for Children. She loved to take her children Gillian and Imogen to Bekonscot Model Village and she even wrote a small book about it called *The Enchanted Village*. At Enid's centenary in 1997 a beautiful model was made of Green Hedges for Bekonscot. The family loved the town and both daughters attended High March School.

Enid became one of the most successful writers of the 20th Century being translated into over 40 languages. In 1957 it was estimated that she was earning £100,000 a year and today her books are still selling by the millions.

However in the 1960s, Blyton suffered a major setback: she was criticised for being politically incorrect, xenophobic, even racist in her writing. Trouble makers were 'golliwogs' or foreigners, boys were dominant and in the *Little Black Doll* (1937) a doll wanted a pink face. Her books were banned in some library authorities. But since the early 1990s all newer editions of her books have been

updated and the language and the text changed to reflect modern speech and attitudes. Golliwogs have disappeared.

Enid should be appreciated as a marvellous story teller, who encouraged hundred and thousands of children to read for pleasure. Recognition should be made of the great contribution she has made to children's literacy and it is time to honour her legacy. The town can and should be proud of her. The Society gratefully acknowledges generous sponsorship of our celebrations by **The Frost Partnership**.



Report on Enid Blyton week June/July Kari Dorme

Something for all generations spanning two weekends!

29–30 June: Noddy weekend at Bekonscot Model Village

Bekonscot Model Village was an ideal place to begin our celebrations. Enid Blyton knew the Village well and wrote a book especially for it, *The Enchanted Village*, which is still on sale there. And you can see a fine model of Green Hedges. Over the thankfully sunny weekend, hundreds of families flocked to the Village to meet Noddy, see a real, roadworthy version of Noddy's car, and go on a special treasure hunt organised by the Village's enthusiastic staff. Gerrards Cross bookshop had a stall displaying a large selection of Enid Blyton books.

The celebrations began in style with our grand opening ceremony, as our Town Crier, Dick Smith, boomed out in the traditional way: "Oyez! Oyez!, the beginning of Enid Blyton Week and Noddy Weekend!". Mayor Sandy Saunders welcomed all and especially our guest of honour, nine-year-old Olivia Cannings. A huge Enid Blyton fan, Olivia had been upset by some initial controversy and opposition to the celebrations in the papers. So she set up an e-petition to support the festival and campaign to have a plaque for the author. On behalf of the Beaconsfield Society, I presented her with a gift of a Noddy doll.

Tuesday 2nd July: Society Social Evening at Bekonscot Model Village

This was a unique opportunity for Society members and their guests to see Bekonscot on a quiet summer's evening when it was closed to the public. We met first in the cafeteria for drinks and a warm welcome from our Chairman Mike Elliott. Maura Buckland, the Village's Marketing Manager gave us a brief and interesting history of Bekonscot, followed by an entertaining talk by Jacqui Hogan entitled "Enid Blyton: life, literature and lashings of language" (during which we learned, among other things, that Enid *never* wrote about 'lashings of lemonade'). There was plenty of time to explore Bekonscot and an opportunity to take a ride on their train. A big thank you to all the Bekonscot staff, who stayed on to look after us so well.

Thursday 4th July: Gala Evening at the National Film and TV School.

The Gala Evening of three films about Enid Blyton provided an opportunity for local Beaconsfield residents, whether genuine fans or just intrigued by her, to find out more about her life and work, meeting beforehand, having a drink and seeing a display loaned by the National Centre for Children's Books in Newcastle. The audience of nearly 100 also included many who had travelled a long way to join us. One party of three friends included Lucie Nottingham, who had come all the way from Cornwall and who had apparently been the inspiration for "*Lucy Loud Voice*" as a noisy next-door neighbour of Green Hedges!. Our Chairman Mike Elliott welcomed everyone and introduced Mike Shaw, the producer of the first film, *Enid Blyton: The Beckenham Years*, an authenticated account of Enid's early life. Mike and his team from Footprint Productions had travelled up especially from Kent

to be present. They made the film in 2012, but this was its premiere in front of a large audience. Mike was keen to stress the care they had taken to ensure the film's accuracy, which showed a bleak childhood broken by parental rift. Fantasy was her escape.

The second film, an addition to the advertised programme, was loaned to us by the Programme Director of the *Seven Stories* exhibition, a recent event at the National Centre for Children's Books in Newcastle. This was a documentary made for their exhibition featuring many interviews with modern-day Blyton fans of all ages and backgrounds, who explained why they loved her work and what it meant to them. We also saw both Imogen Smallwood (Enid's daughter) and Sophie Smallwood (her granddaughter) talking to camera.

After those two short films we showed *Enid*, the BBC biopic starring Helena Bonham Carter. Many people were shocked by its characterisation of Enid Blyton as an unfeeling mother and wife, driven by her work and a sense of 'duty' to her readers, but there were many comments afterwards that the first documentary had helped them to understand why she was like that. They said it made for a very well balanced evening.

Saturday 6th July: A day of activities at Beaconsfield Library

The Library put together a most enjoyable, action-packed day for children. A creative writing session in the morning was followed by an Enid Blyton talk from Jacqui Hogan. In the afternoon, actress and writer Jan Moran Neil vividly read a special Noddy story, after which the Director of High March School, Belinda Avery, presented prizes for all the week's children's art competitions. Our thanks go to the school, which organised and sponsored all the prizes. (Both Enid Blyton's daughters attended High March.)

The afternoon, and our Enid Blyton Week, drew to a sunny end with a Green Hedges party for the children, with – of course – lashings of lemonade, cakes, sticky buns, doughnuts, and sandwiches. All the party food was kindly provided by Jungs of Beaconsfield. Wonderful weather made for an outdoor picnic. The Noddy car was on the forecourt and Noddy himself was there to entertain the children all afternoon. Our Mayor, Sandy Saunders, and County Councillor Adrian Busby also joined in the party. Adrian had very kindly found money from the BCC Community Leaders Fund to buy new Enid Blyton books for the library.

Our thanks go to all who helped to make this celebration week such a success: our major sponsor The Frost Partnership for covering the main expenses of advertising, BCC for their kind grant and recognition, Brian Newman MD and Maura Buckland Marketing Manager at Bekonscot for their hard work and enthusiastic contribution to the event and Micheline Katts, Librarian, and her staff at Beaconsfield Library.

I would also like to thank our Town and County Councils, and the County Library, all officially behind the Enid Blyton Week celebrations. Special thanks go to Mayor Sandy Saunders and his wife Rosemary, who attended every Enid Blyton event. I really appreciated both the formal and informal support they gave. And a final grateful thanks for all the help from my fellow Committee members whilst working on this successful Enid Blyton Week. With the promise of a commemorative plaque now confirmed, I feel that Enid Blyton has at last been properly acknowledged by, and belongs to, Beaconsfield. Let us all keep her flag flying.

