



The Book Den: Read all about it!



by Roger Linn

The strange thing about second hand bookshops is that they operate in a different time zone from everywhere else.

How else can you explain why a 5 minute browse always takes an hour? Or why a 'quick look round' takes up the rest of the morning? Of course, it's not really a slowing down of time, rather it is the delight of unexpectedly coming across books that you remember as old friends combined with the joy of discovering new ones. And because the people who run these bookshops know how seductive is the lure of prospecting for hidden treasures, they'll let you enjoy the search without interruption, save

only perhaps a polite 'Is there anything in particular...?'

The Book Den in Burgess Hill, which is run by the Burgess Hill District Lions, is one of my favourite stores because not only does it fulfil all the criteria required for me lose track of time, but it is well organised and managed. At the north end of Church Walk, almost next door to the Post Office, the shop is bright, open and busy. The books are catalogued well and displayed in a way that shows how much the volunteers care. They take great pride in their work, and it shows.

The Lions have been in the 'book business' for some time, graduating from the well-remembered barrow in the market place, through a succession of shop premises, to the opening of the Book Den in its present home three years ago. While I was chatting to Tony Parris – the Lions' spokesperson – about the shop's success, we were constantly interrupted by people arriving to donate books, so I asked the shop manager Lion Colin Owen if they were ever overwhelmed with stock. "Absolutely not," he laughed, "we sell 1,600 to 1,700 books a week here and that's probably about half of what we

"THE DELIGHT OF COMING ACROSS BOOKS THAT YOU REMEMBER AS OLD FRIENDS AND THE JOY OF DISCOVERING NEW ONES..."

have on display. We also have a back-up storage facility at Hickstead, so to answer your question: no we can't have too many books. We love people to donate them."

It takes around 20 volunteers to maintain and run the store six days a week, and the Lions are always looking for willing hands, because the money the Lions Club generates is put to such excellent use in our community, whether it is providing a football strip for some disadvantaged children, making donations to causes like Help for Heroes or simply presenting a greenhouse to the Royal George Day Centre.

As an organisation, the Lions Club is dedicated to 'improving local people's quality of life' and I like to think that the Book Den meets that aim on its own, as well as the contribution it makes in raising funds for other good works. ■

The Book Den

99 Church Walk, Burgess Hill, RH15 9AS
Tel. 01444 233278

Can you assist? The Burgess Hill District Lions are looking for additional volunteers who would be prepared to work half days for a very worthy cause. If you think this is the job for you, please contact John Gee on 01444 236558 or Colin Weavil on 01444 246877.

