



# LOAGHTAN BOOKS NEWS



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## LOOKING FORWARD - AND BACK

This year we're revising *A Brief History of the Isle of Man*, publishing more archive photographs and venturing into children's fiction. But our older books still have something relevant to say.



### Will we never learn?

A refugee crisis in Syria. Mass migration through Europe. People made homeless by war. Sadly it's all happened before. In *A Cog in the Wheel*, Adelaide Lubbock writes :

'... a set of instructions for use in the field on how to fill up a set of nineteen forms for the documentation of displaced persons and refugees. These forms could only have been thought out by one of those absurd theorising boobies who are called 'experts'. It is folly to expect any harassed DP officer, with thousands of milling refugees clamouring

### The things people say - yet again!

to be fed and sent home, to sit down and fill in a registration form with thirty seven questions on it in quintuplicate. And not only this form, but eighteen others. 'Experts' sitting planning in comfortable offices do not seem to visualise the difficulty of making endless complicated returns when you have to do it with the form balanced on your knee, no typewriter, by the light of a candle. I keep telling the major, it is a waste of time to write instructions on how these forms are to be filled up, as they will prove hopelessly impracticable and will never be used, but he won't listen. I am certain that DP and Military Government Officers (MGOs) will totally disregard them, at any rate in the rush and flurry of the first few weeks, which is just the moment when documentation is so important, and that the forms will become so much scrap paper. After all, the officer in the field is the one who actually does the work and knows his job better than those sitting behind desks. The whole thing looks like being a mess up, and it does seem crazy that now when we still have time, we should not be able to foresee and prevent this happening.'

It sounds odd but as book producers we rarely get to talk with readers. Our customers are usually book shops and gift shops - any retailer who thinks that what we offer fits with what they want to sell. They're a great crowd and very helpful in passing on what their customers say, but it's not quite the same as talking with people direct. So it was a rare treat for us to meet real readers at a couple of Christmas Fairs.

We took the stands with the idea of reaching people who might buy books as gifts but who would never consider going into a bookshop. And it worked! Feedback was interesting though:

'Why do you publish books? There are too many already.'

'May I borrow your husband?' (To reach something of course. What were you thinking?...)

'This is for my Nan. I don't like the way books smell.'

'I've written a book. I don't want anyone to read it though.'

'I've got all of these' (Excellent!) 'I don't like them.' (Oh dear!)

'I liked your book on cats. Why don't you do one on geology?'

'Would you sign this?' 'Er, I'm afraid I didn't write that one.'

'That doesn't matter, sign it anyway...'

'I'll read these and tell you what I think if you pay me.'

Best of all

'I didn't think I'd like your book, but I did!'

Best wishes Sara

### Quote of the day

'The pool was, however, for men only, some of whom, particularly in its early days, swam without the benefit of bathing costume. Women could not walk the cliff paths and look at the scene without possible damage to their reputation, although there were complaints about some shameless hussies who did. Visiting the camera obscura [which overlooked the bathing beach], however, was quite respectable...'