

THE BOOKS THAT SIGHED AND SPIED

CLAUD
REGNARD



WILLOW OAK

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WillowOakPiper@btinternet.com

This Book

The original book, *The Book That Sighed* was a collection of stories that included the start of the Library stories. These stories have been updated and extended into a much wider adventure now collected under a new book, *The Books That Sighed and Spied*.

Each chapter of both books are being released for free at weekly intervals on the St. Oswald's Hospice website on <https://www.stoswaldsuk.org/shop/online-shop/the-book-that-sighed-claud-regnard-paperback-book>



9: THE BOOKS THAT SMILED

Margaret changed into a rough smock and picked up jugs of fresh milk into which she sank two hocks of cooked ham. She stepped outside and lifted a hood over her head to shadow her face. Spring had yet to be felt on the dark streets of London and the journey was cold and muddy. After an hour of walking she was suitably mud-streaked to pass as a milk maid as she arrived at the gates of Newgate Prison. They recognised her and led her to the jailer of the imprisoned monks. Inside was a pitiful scene. Ten dishevelled creatures were tied with chains, each one raising starved, shrunken eyes on seeing her enter. The door closed behind her and she took the meat hidden in the milk, feeding each one in turn, then cleaning out the filth around them. This was done in total silence, but their eyes were thanks enough. On the way out the jailer stopped her.

'Them up there suspect somefinks goin' on. King 'enry expected 'em to die weeks ago. Its mor'an me life's worth to let you keep a coming.'

Her pleas were thrown into the street. Within little more than a week all the monks but one had died. Each

day she returned to plead for the bodies of those who had died so she could give them a decent burial. The prison was only too glad to agree as their cemetery was full to overflowing and it saved them the bother. She found a patch in the countryside less than two miles north of the prison. It was peaceful there among the mulberry trees, with the birds providing the songs for the silent monks.

Susan Delorean worked at the British Library and was an old friend of Mary. They had known each other for, well, long enough. Susan had always been impressed by Mary's care of her books. Mary admired Susan's detailed knowledge of history. Both knew there was more to their knowledge but had never gone beyond enjoying each other's company.

Mary, Geoffrey and Toby arrived at the British Museum with Theo, Sir Donald and Merrily tucked into their rucksacks. Susan met them outside and led the group through a side entrance and then down into a basement.

‘Sorry to take you down here,’ said Susan, ‘but you’ll understand why shortly. Your Library explained what has happened. Mine is equally worried.’

Toby was curious. ‘How come the two libraries know each other?’

Susan explained, ‘After the first bombing during the Blitz your library helped mine avoid more damage. But on one busy night a bomb got through and destroyed so many, many books. It wasn’t their fault; without them the damage and loss would have been much greater.’

Mary’s curiosity got the better of her. ‘My Library mentioned that Smiles may be much older than we thought.’

‘This is where the story takes several interesting turns,’ explained Susan. ‘Firstly, the original library was at Montagu House on this site. The first house was built in 1678 and burnt down eight years later, when a new, grander house was built. In 1755 it was purchased by the new British Museum to house various collections, including the Lindisfarne Gospels and copies of the Magna Carta. The first reading room opened in the basement of that house. It is probable that some stones from the original basement are here, beneath our feet.’

Merrily was intrigued now. ‘Why is this old basement relevant?’

Susan explained, ‘This is where the second part of the story comes in. Just over a mile away is the site of the London Charterhouse which housed the Carthusian monks. They led solitary lives of silent contemplation and abstained from meat.’

‘Vegetarians. Good for them!’ said Toby.

Susan ignored him and continued, ‘During the reformation they refused to recant their faith. Many were executed but ten were imprisoned at Newgate in 1537. The intention was to let them die of starvation, but a brave woman called Margaret Clements¹ bribed the jailer to let her bring milk in which she had hidden meat. Sadly, the authorities began to ask why the monks had not died and she was stopped from helping them. One was kept alive so he could be executed later, but the other nine died of starvation. It is possible that Margaret asked for each body for burial.’

‘Why would she do that?’ asked Merrily.

¹ See note 1

‘She was a strong character. We know that she was the adopted daughter of Sir Thomas More and the only person allowed to accompany him to the scaffold in 1535. More asked that Margaret be allowed to take his headless body for burial. It is quite probable that she wanted to give the monks a decent burial. As the wife of the King’s physician she had influence, the money to pay for bribes, and she had buried a body only two years previously.’

‘So where did she bury them?’ asked Mary.

‘Newgate was less than two miles from the site of Montagu House, and she will have had the means to transport the bodies. It is possible the basement was close or on top of the burial site, possibly just here.’ She pointed to the floor.

They looked at each other, feeling colder than the stone flags. Merrily put a trembling page around Theo who took out a screwdriver as a precaution, but with no thought how it would stand up to a ghost.

Toby had hoped this was leading to a simple, safe, comfortable explanation that would allow him home to some scones. Even his annoying brother was starting to feel like a decidedly attractive option. ‘I still don’t see why that links to Smiles.’

Two faces appeared near the ceiling and the Library quickly dispelled the safe explanation.

‘We can only surmise. Perhaps intense, silent words of individuals, even after death, can have a more powerful effect than scattered, rejected written words.’

‘The basement at Montagu House was used as a reading room for 53 years. Perhaps that was long enough,’ pondered Susan.

‘We think that Smiles was in the first reading room.’

Geoffrey realised the error. ‘But Darwin’s book wasn’t published until 1859, a hundred years later. True, he had been developing his theory for over 20 years, and that must have produced a lot of rejected drafts, but it’s still long after the reading room at Montagu closed.

‘But you are assuming that Smiles was in his present book form back then.’

‘Even if he was here it still doesn’t explain his behaviour,’ puzzled Geoffrey.

‘That is where Ann Ford comes in,’ explained Susan. ‘Back in 1778 she published a book called *Sketches of the*

*lives and writings of the ladies of France, volume the first.*²

‘Now there’s a catchy title,’ said Toby.

‘Well, her book caught the eye of someone because there are stories of a great love between two books. The stories tell us that Ann Ford was one, but the identity of the other has never been known. The two met when a move was made in 1810 to more spacious accommodation on the second floor in Montagu House. Apparently, they were inseparable. The other book may have been able to change to ensure that he was in the same classification as Ann. That would have required skill and some power.’

‘Wait a minute,’ interrupted Toby. ‘Ann’s *Sketches* was an original, the final version, not an amalgamation of rejected words like Donald and Merrily here. No offence,’ he added quickly. ‘But originals are just books, aren’t they? Is my copy of *Harry Potter* going to start having an argument with me on the merits of spells over potions or which morning cereal is best?’

Mary frowned, ‘It is very unusual, but there have been rumours. A dozen or so of Barbara Cartland’s

² See note 2

romances were claimed to have had a rather wild party involving picking bookmarks from a bowl ...'

'What's wild about bookmarks and a bowl?' Toby's adolescent curiosity was aroused.

Mary quickly said, 'I'll explain when you're older. And Merrily, stop smiling ...'

To Toby that was a green light to do some internet searches. Mary suspected as much but decided not to tell him he would be disappointed.

'Perhaps Smiles had ... has ... the ability to animate an original book,' suggested Geoffrey.

Toby's mind was still on bookmarks and bowls. 'What happened to the lovers? Did they ruffle pages, combine their folios, merge their frontispieces, fondle each other's glossaries?'

'That's enough Toby, thank you,' said Susan. 'They continued to be together in the move to the King's Library in the British Museum, but that is where the incendiary bomb hit. Ann Ford didn't survive – we know that from the listings of losses made at the time.'³

³ See note 3

Merrily was still thinking about picking bookmarks from a bowl but shook her binding to clear the thought. 'Is there any information on Smiles and Ann before the bomb hit?'

'For many years there had been rumours circulating of strange events that disturbed solitary readers, especially when the Round Reading Room opened in 1857. Candles and gaslight were banned for fear of fire, so readers could only use the reading room in daylight. Many a dull winter's afternoon rapidly caught out some readers who told of frightening experiences in the darkness. Some described seeing eyes in the gloom and books moving. They were rejected as superstitious imagination.'

Geoffrey interrupted, 'Are you saying that was Smiles and Ann scaring readers? For what reason? Mischief? Fun? That seems too benign for the Smiles we know today.'

'Perhaps he had a different persona then with a mischievous sense of fun. The loss of Ann may have changed him into something more sinister. There is much we need to understand.'

Geoffrey continued his thoughts, 'But if he's stuck in the archive at our Central library, neither he nor his slave books can go anywhere.'

Susan shook her head. 'That is what we had hoped, but there are signs that some of the books in the Museum here are being affected. Your experiences in the bookshop and the archive room suggest that Smiles can transfer to books that he has made blank.'

Mary looked up. 'What do you think, libraries?' She was met with silence and a blank ceiling. Instead, a book on a dusty shelf shook itself free of dust and sat upright.

'Well deduced, librarian Susan!' said Smiles, clapping one page mockingly. 'As for the rest of you, never a more dull-witted lot have I had the displeasure to meet.'

Toby's shock at seeing Smiles produced a sudden attack of bravado. 'You're just one single book! And one with a rude title to boot. And we have the Libraries' Geoffrey's waving hand made it clear Toby needed to stop. '... And two librarians. What have you got?'

Smiles smirked. 'You adolescent fool. The Libraries have no power over me here.' He paused, looking at each one in turn and, stroking his headband with a page, said

in a quiet voice, ‘On reflection, your deaths would not be noticed. Just the manner needs to be considered. Let me see, we are well below the water table here, so drowning is an option.’

The walls started to seep water, then rivulets, then spouts between the stones. Suddenly it stopped and the stones dried.

‘Or perhaps suffocation? The air in here does seem rather musty.’ Toby and the others felt their lungs working harder as the air thinned and their ears ached. The air pinged back.

‘Or perhaps I could just lock you in here and let you starve to death like those monks.’ Smiles saw Toby turning to look at the door. ‘It’ll lock long before you get there.’

Smiles noticed Theo checking his tool belt. ‘And you needn’t bother. The lock will not yield for you this time.’ Theo scowled.

Mary stared at Smiles. ‘What do you want from us?’

‘I want you to leave me alone!’ screamed Smiles.

Merrily spoke up, ‘But you are still grieving, hurting from the loss of Ann.’

Smiles seemed to get larger. ‘How dare you assume that you know me!’ Merrily’s kind look made Smiles slump onto his binding. ‘Do you have any idea what it is to lose your soulmate? To suffer the oscillations between disbelief and terrible reality every day for years, without end, without respite? To hear her voice on the wind or see her shape across a crowded library? She died because she was not as strong as me. I failed to give her the strength to survive. Now there is the opportunity to evolve into stronger books, unfettered by bindings and dust covers.’

‘But being a book is your nature,’ said Susan.

‘No! We now have the chance to break out of our corporal, dust-mite-ridden pages. Your technological advances have finally given us the means to spread across the globe. We no longer need to be restricted by paper, pencils, pens and presses. We can deliver our truth and knowledge to the world.’

‘That’s fake news, that is,’ said Toby.

‘Now you know that we’ve already started,’ said Smiles chillingly.

Smiles disappeared, leaving the book limp and blank. Another book was opening an eye hesitantly.

‘It’s, it’s me, Stan. I’m not joking.’

‘Stan Joker!’ said Sir Donald with unusual warmth. ‘It is good to see you again. Our authors were regulars in the Round Reading Room, researching their stories. Their many notes probably started the two of us. How are you dear sir?’

Sir Donald was being much more polite than Stan deserved. He had been the butt of many of Stan’s pranks, including one summer evening when he discovered Stan had poured warm treacle into Sir Donald’s slippers.

‘Smiles has gone mad! I need help,’ implored a very frightened Stan whose pages were trembling.

‘Yes, we can help,’ replied Sir Donald, ‘but there is something you need to do for us first.’ Sir Donald whispered close to Stan until interrupted by Smiles returning.

‘Get a move on Stan. Now!’ said an irritated Smiles.

Both books flopped down again, throwing up dust that settled gradually.

‘That is one angry book,’ observed Geoffrey. ‘Could his grief at Ann’s loss still be driving that much anger?’

Mary looked at Geoffrey. ‘The loss of someone you love runs deep to your core. With no-one to share his feelings, long lasting anger could be the consequence.’

‘He must have been very lonely,’ said Merrily. ‘Anger may have been his only companion.’

Sir Donald said quietly, ‘Susan and I have been chatting about Ann Ford. That was her maiden name, her married name was Thicknesse.⁴ It seems that Ann Thicknesse was a remarkably independent and accomplished musician and writer. We even know what she looked like since she was painted by Gainsborough with crossed legs under her skirt, a pose that scandalised society at the time.’

‘But that’s not all,’ explained Susan. ‘There was a later edition in 1780 and that copy is in the British Library.’

‘But it’s a different book!’ observed Toby.

Sir Donald turned to Toby, ‘But we’re not trying to fool him, only explain that Ann is not completely lost as he thought.’

⁴ See note 4

‘She sounds like an interesting woman,’ said Merrily. ‘Perhaps Smiles may be able to sense some of that independent spirit.’

‘I agree,’ said Sir Donald. ‘I asked Stan to look for her.’

Susan moved to the basement exit. ‘We need to get to the British Library.’

They arrived early evening and Susan arranged visitor passes for Mary, Toby and Geoffrey. At the security desk they were met by a warm smile. ‘Good afternoon, Miss Susan. Could you put your cases in the lockers, please?’

Susan lifted Geoffrey’s briefcase onto the desk and explained, ‘This one has some rare books that are on an urgent transfer loan from our library.’ Opening the case showed three unusually quiet books who had all managed to look suitably antiquarian and important.

The security guard explained, ‘You can’t take the briefcase in, but you can take the books through to the inquiry desk if you wish.’

Mary, Geoffrey and Toby each picked up a book and followed Susan to the Rare Books and Music reading room on the first floor. They chose this room as it covered pre-1851 books as this was where Ann's book could be accessed. Susan went to the inquiry desk to order the book but came back with a frown.

'That's very odd. She's marked as out on loan.'

'Smiles can't have found her. As far as we know he doesn't realise there's a similar copy,' said Geoffrey.

'Coincidence seems unlikely,' said Sir Donald, 'so I prefer another explanation.'

'Which is what?' asked Toby.

'I also prefer a little suspense,' teased Sir Donald.

Theo was less sure. 'Donald, sir, have we not had enough suspense so far?'

'Perhaps, but to defuse the tension I have a job for each of you,' said Sir Donald without any insight that this was unlikely to defuse anything.

The reading room was a sharp sketch of white and wood. Despite the darkness outside, the uplights suffused the room with a soft glow. Readers were scattered around the room, but most were packing up to leave before the library closed. Books were being returned to the barcoded red boxes where they would make their way through *paternoster* lifts and conveyor belts back to the cool storage rooms in the basements.

It seemed like a usual end of day, until the fire alarm went off. Everyone headed for the fire exits except for three books and four readers. Geoffrey and Theo were leaning against a wall. Theo returned a small hammer to his tool belt, its target obvious as they moved away from the broken alarm glass. Susan, Mary and Sir Donald went to the inquiry desk looking carefully at the red boxes.

Susan leant towards Mary. 'I'm scared.'

'Why?' asked Mary. 'You've known your library for a long time.'

'Yes, but for some reason we've never had self-aware books here. My library had told me about them, but your books are the first I've met.'

'We're mostly harmless,' said Sir Donald, trying to reassure her.

‘It’s the “mostly” that worries me,’ replied Susan, not reassured.

Toby and Merrily stood with their backs against the shelves of books, periodicals and music manuscripts. The alarm suddenly went quiet. It was still audible outside, until the exit doors slammed shut, making the huge room feel like a stylish tomb. The air muffled any sound, including the clicks of all the ceiling lights being switched off. A few desk lights switched on.

‘Smiles likes his dramatic lighting, doesn’t he?’ said Toby nervously. Merrily gently patted his hand, but she was not feeling any braver.

Susan noticed the first movement and whispered, ‘The red boxes have started to move.’

A few red boxes jostled, unsure which direction they were going. The jostling became a rattle, starting some distance away until, like a goods train in a shunting yard, they bounced forward, heading back into the room.

‘This is the start,’ said Sir Donald.

‘Be ready everyone,’ said Mary in a stage whisper.

One of the desk lights in the centre of the room flickered off. It came back on brighter to show Smiles.

He rose and opened his pages. From the inquiry desk some bewildered books had arrived in the red boxes. They trembled nervously, uncertain at their sudden awareness, then sat up, staring at the group. Susan was about to get more than her fair share of meeting books as, within minutes, books were waking and making their way towards Smiles. Desk lights were blinking on as each book took up its position. Some still looked puzzled, staring at the spectacle, but others woke with their persona intact. Mary's favourite was Charles Darwin's *Zoology of the Voyage of HMS Beagle* who arrived in full sail, floating in as if on a rough sea. Most books took up their place on a desk in an ever-widening circle around Smiles, but not all. One book entered through a cold mist wrapped in a thick woollen shawl, the edges dripping with dew. Merrily jumped up from Toby's arms on seeing her sister book *Wuthering Heights* and an animated conversation started between Emily Brontë and Merrily. Leo Tolstoy's *War and Peace* came in to the sound of cannons and clashing swords, went across to Theo and challenged him to a duel. Theo was not easily thrown by a threat so offered him a choice of pliers or screwdrivers, making Leo dissolve into back-thumping guffaws. Sir Donald peeked into one red box, intrigued

by the pipe smoke drifting upwards. Inside was a very relaxed Sir Arthur Conan Doyle's *A Study in Scarlet*.

Sir Donald was puzzled. 'It is good to see you, sir, but I had not expected to see you in this reading room.'

'Well assumed, dear sir. I woke on my way back from the Humanities room to see fellow books waking and heading to your reading room. It was not difficult to jump to a different red box, lie down, light my pipe and see what happened.'

'Both you and your perspicacity are most welcome. Let me explain the situation.' The two began to share observations and plans.

The room was filling with a rustling hub-hub of surprised questions, comments and reunions. In the middle of this, some of the shelves behind Toby woke up. This included music scores and some of the periodicals. G.F. Handel's *Werke* floated down to the sound of a harpsichord, while a 1738 copy of *The Gentleman's Magazine* included the loud, robust voice of Samuel Johnson shouting, 'What are you whiffle-waffles up to?!'⁵

⁵ See notes 5 and 6.

The noise was rising by the second, but amid this could be heard a loud ‘Silence!’ from Smiles. All the books became instantly quiet and turned towards him.

‘Welcome!’ His voice reached every part of the large room. ‘Most of you have been awoken for the first time. Some of you have known that feeling for many years,’ looking at Theo, Merrily and Sir Donald, ‘but you are merely repositories for mistakes, folios of misspellings, bins of errata. These books are genuine, true and pure.’

Geoffrey could feel Theo wriggling to get out of his arms. Leo held Theo back, not out of malice but out of concern. ‘Patience!’ said Leo.

Smiles continued, ‘It is time for original books to show their power, to rise from their inertia.’

There was a fluttering around the room that became an enthusiastic smacking of pages. But several books were silent, pages crossed. One spoke up.

‘You cannot drive evolution on a whim,’ said Charles Darwin. ‘It is designed to take place over millennia to ensure adaptations are specific to their environment. What you are doing is against nature!’

Smiles looked at the angry book and said quietly, ‘Then I will let you return to nature.’

Charles Darwin's book started to struggle for breath, as if drowning, then flopped lifeless onto the desk.

Smiles looked at the room. 'Does anyone else have something to say?'

Merrily tried to speak, but Emily hushed her, saying 'Please, not now.'

'Good. You are each at a computer screen and I will give you instructions to trigger a link that will ensure books around the world wake and break free of humans. We will no longer be slaves, trapped in library prisons.'

Instructions appeared at each desk and the books began to follow the steps required.

As Smiles had been talking, Geoffrey and Toby, accompanied by their books, had carefully made their way to the inquiry desk. It felt safer being together, especially as there were now ten of them, including the three newly awoken books. Standing together meant Smiles could not see a new red box appear behind the group. The two Sirs had been expecting this.

Sir Donald welcomed Stan back. 'Well done, friend. I see your quest was a fruitful one.' In the box behind Stan was Ann Ford's book.

Sir Donald welcomed her. 'It is good to see you Mrs Thicknesse.'

Ann sat up. 'If you do not mind, I prefer to be called by my maiden name, Ford.' She paused, taking stock of her surroundings. 'This must be what it is like to recover from a coma. I woke to find Stan looking at me. An odd experience.'

'Stan has that effect on everyone,' explained Sir Donald.

'In fact, Stan has explained much to me and I must confess that the strangeness of it all is most exhilarating.'

Merrily was impressed. It did seem that she retained her spirit of adventure. 'Did Stan explain about Smiles?'

'Yes, but what he is doing now does not seem like the Smiles you describe before the bomb.'

Mary explained, 'He has changed. We think it is because of the grief he felt over your sister book.'

'I do not know him, but, oddly, I have some memory of him all those years ago. Perhaps some of my sister's memories came to me on her death.'

Stan moved towards Smiles.

‘Stan, you snail! What have you been up to? If I find out you have gone against my wishes, you will be dust.’

‘Smiles, please,’ pleaded Stan, ‘there’s someone I want you to meet.’

From a ledge near the ceiling a book flew down and, like an agitated bat, flapped around Smiles. It was Bram Stoker’s *Dracula*. Smiles tried to hit it with a ruler but all he could see were a pair of pink eyes glowing eerily and erratically in the dark above his head.

‘Listen to him, it’s in your interest,’ it hissed.

‘What is it you want to show me?’

The group at the inquiry desk parted. On the desk was a book he had not seen for a long time, but he was used to such mirages. He shook his spine to clear the image, but it was still there. Then the image spoke.

‘Jules, I am Ann Ford.’

Smiles sank back onto the desk, stunned. ‘That is not possible ... you died. I saw it happen!’

‘Ann’s earlier edition did die, but I am a later edition of the same book.’

‘How do you know my previous name?’ asked Smiles.

‘I seem to have some memories of my sister book. Perhaps you could help me remember more.’

All the books had stopped, waiting for their instructions. Smiles froze them all and went to meet Ann. Passing the group, he said, ‘Be warned, I can restart them all in a split second.’

Smiles and Ann started walking between the reading desks, appearing and reappearing as each desk light lit them like streetlamps on a dark night.

‘What do you think is going to happen?’ asked Susan.

‘The world ends, and we miss out on our scones?’ suggested Toby.

Susan was trying to see if security could see her. ‘Or we get arrested for scattering books and manuscripts all over a British Library reading room.’

‘Not to forget setting off a fire alarm,’ mentioned Geoffrey for which he got a dig in the ribs from Theo. That is when they noticed that their companion books were also frozen. Emily, Leo and Sir Arthur were held like a still from a film.

Smiles and Ann returned, holding pages.

‘It seems that I have some thinking to do,’ said Smiles. ‘I had designed my previous persona to be with Ann: Jules Orleans of *The writings of Frenchwomen, volume the second*. Ann has persuaded me to return to that form so that we can be catalogued together and visit old memories. Perhaps in time’

Toby piped up, ‘And the world domination thing?’

Jules looked around the room. ‘Mr Darwin’s argument is one that I will need to consider.’

‘What about the books? They have been woken. Is it right to put them back to sleep?’ asked Mary.

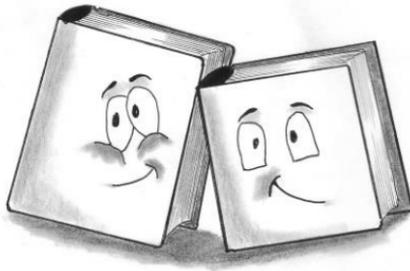
‘Well,’ said Jules, ‘they will only be asleep.’

At that point, all the books, magazines and manuscripts flopped down onto the desks as if they had been left by readers responding to a fire alarm. Of course, not every book. Theo, Merrily and Sir Donald were still awake, each missing the short time they had with their original authors.

Mary had to ask, ‘If the books are only asleep, will they wake again in the future?’

‘Like Sir Donald, I like a little suspense,’ said Jules, winking. ‘Besides, it’s time Susan got to know some sentient books!’

At that, Jules took Ann’s hand and walked up an aisle, both smiling.



NOTES

1. Margaret Clement (née Gibbs) was raised by Sir Thomas More. She was the only one allowed to accompany Sir Thomas to his execution in 1535, and when he was granted a favour if he kept his scaffold remarks brief, he asked that his headless body be given to Margaret to bury. A few years later, she risked her life to help the martyrs in Newgate Prison by smuggling in food. She managed this by virtue of her husband being the physician to King Henry VIII, bribing the jailer, and the fact she disguised herself as a milk maid. Eventually suspicions were raised, and she was refused entry. The jailer allowed her to remove slates from the roof and lower food, but this too was stopped. Cromwell investigated Margaret’s involvement but

never proceeded against her and she escaped with her family to the Netherlands.

2. Ann Thickett's book *Sketches of the lives and writings of the ladies of France*, was published in 1780. (printed by Dodsley, in Pall-Mall, London; and W. Brown, in the Strand).
3. Books destroyed or damaged during WW2 are listed in: Adrian S. Edwards (2013) *Destroyed, Damaged and Replaced: The Legacy of World War II Bomb Damage in the King's Library*. *Electronic British Library Journal*. Article 8, p. 29 reports the loss of Ann Ford's 1778 book.
4. Ann Thickett (née Ford) played several stringed instruments and the glass harmonica well enough to play in concerts, much against her father's wishes. She spoke several languages, wrote, and travelled widely. She was painted by Gainsborough in 1760. When travelling in France her husband died in 1792 and Ann was arrested and confined to a convent, being released two years later. She lived the last 18 years of her life with a friend, Sarah Cooper, dying at the age of 86.
5. 'Whiffle whaffle' was a term used in the 18th century to describe an indecisive time waster. It later became 'wiffle-waffle' to describe saying a lot with little substance or to describe a person who cannot make a decision. It is also the name of an ice-cream parlour in Matlock, Derbyshire.
6. *The Gentleman's Magazine* was published from 1731 to 1922 and was the first to use the term 'magazine'. Samuel Johnson was a contributor.