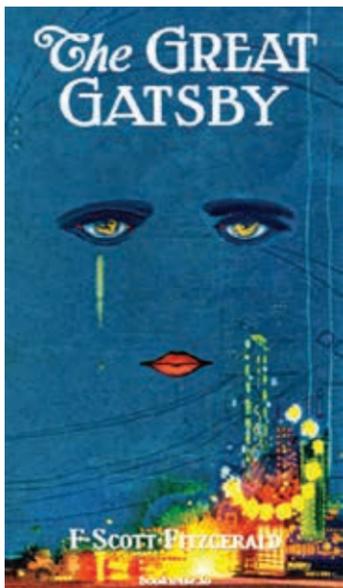




How one man's writer's block unlocked classics for everyone

By Lynn Winton

Would you like to immerse yourself in an unforgettable book for free, even if you're stuck at the airport or on a train? Or maybe an exquisite version of *The Tale of Peter Rabbit* complete with Beatrix Potter's original illustrations for your child's bedtime? Thanks to one East Finchley resident, now you can.



Richard Neville has been passionate about the joys of reading, writing and telling stories in one way or another all his life. He moved to East Finchley in 2007 with his wife and twin sons, having enjoyed successful careers in building up web design companies and commissions to make films around the world about the work of Unicef.

At the start of the pandemic, he came to a crossroads with a now-or-never moment: he would change direction and finally become the full time novelist he had dreamt of being. Despite his tenacity and commitment, however, and the purpose-built studio newly installed in his garden, he was plagued by writer's block.

And so he sought fulfilment in a new philanthropic venture to provide beautifully designed digital books for free. Hence bookwise.io was created.

Digital and desirable

A quick look at the website will tell you everything you need to know. Whilst most people are aware that once books are out

of copyright, usually after 70 years, they are entitled to read them online for free, it's usually a dismal experience.

By contrast, Richard has created versions of many classics that echo their original editions, with striking covers, the clearest fonts and, where available, illustrations, making them truly desirable digital editions.

Richard says there are already around 700 titles available through Bookwise. "They're really good ones though, beautifully formatted total classics every one. Not millions of books you've never heard of, instead, a selection of the greatest books ever written," he says. "It's early days as it's just me selecting them and setting them up. The potential is infinite but this is just the beginning."



Once upon a time there were four little Rabbits, and their names were—

Great novels outclass tweets

Richard is determined to keep all out-of-copyright books free to all, whilst hoping current writers with an aversion to the publishing behemoths would be interested in making their books available too.

He is particularly concerned with the trend towards reading super short opinions on social media rather than literature. "The reader will gain more insight from the in-depth experience of reading one great novel than from reading a thousand tweets, whether the novel's a physical book or a download," he says.



Close friends: Joanna Lumley unveils the Spike Milligan memorial bench at Avenue House in 2018. Photo Mike Coles

Calling all fans of Spike Milligan

By David Melsome

The Finchley Society has put out a call for fans of Spike Milligan to help with the publication of a new booklet about the late comedian, who died 20 years ago.

Spike lived in Finchley and his archives and memorabilia are kept at the Lodge in Avenue House in East End Road, N3. A life-size statue of him sits on a memorial bench in the gardens there, unveiled by his friend and actress Joanna Lumley in 2018. Lynn Bresler, of The Finchley Society, said: "We want to update and expand on a booklet called *Spike Milligan 1918-2002* that was published for the unveiling of the statue but we need help in pulling together all the different strands of publishing a book."

If you are interested, and have some project management experience, please email vicechair@finchleysociety.co.uk for more details.

I sang into a wardrobe for Gareth Malone

Local singer Margaret Hiscock tells us how she came to work with TV choirmaster Gareth Malone and 1,000 fellow singers on a charity single to raise money for Ukraine.

I have been singing in the choir at Holy Trinity Church in East Finchley since 2006 and also sing with the Choral Society at Henrietta Barnett School. During lockdown I missed singing, so I googled 'online choirs', found the Stay at Home Choir, and just loved what they do and how they do it.

We have done many projects, from classical music to a computer game theme tune, often with the composer, a professional vocal group, or a world famous conductor at rehearsals.

Most recently, I was involved in the *Notes for Our World* charity single, an amazing piece written collaboratively with the help of 1,000 singers all over the world and led by Gareth Malone.

The process

It was so moving and inspiring to work together on this project. First, Gareth played us the music he had written so far, we then brainstormed ideas around a theme together on Zoom, and later, we could submit other ideas and associations we had, based on the session. Gareth then adjusted the music around our input.

The creative process took just over a month from our first meeting online with Gareth. Due to the lack of sound synchronisation on Zoom, it is not possible to record all at once, so we all recorded our parts in our own homes. When I recorded, I placed my device in my wardrobe and sang into that to get a better quality of sound.

The outcome

Once all our parts were submitted they were very skilfully put together using whizz technology that I don't understand.

It is such a heartfelt piece that touches on the challenges



Together alone: Margaret Hiscock sings from home in her online choir

we face, and also speaks of hope and light. I loved singing and recording it. We all felt very involved in it, and it was almost unbelievable that we could be working creatively with him and with people from all round

the world.

Listen to the *Notes for Our World* single at stayathomchoir.com and buy a copy to support the humanitarian work of the Disasters Emergency Committee in Ukraine.

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East Finchley Baptist Church

We meet each Sunday for worship at 10.30 am. If you would like to join us please go to our website for further details. All welcome.

For more information please contact the Church Office
Email: office@eastfinchleybc.org.uk
www.eastfinchleybc.org.uk