

Celebrating Beaconsfield's Past
Alison Uttley, Spinner of Tales, creator of Little Grey Rabbit

Children's events, 24 May – 27 June 2017

Any celebration of Alison Uttley, Beaconsfield's famous children's author, must of course involve children. So the Society's Alison Uttley month featured a whole raft of fun activities designed with them in mind. We worked in partnership with the staff of Bekonscot Model Village, High March School and Beaconsfield Library, all of whom threw themselves enthusiastically into the project.

Our celebrations launched on the weekend of 24-25 May with a special treasure hunt organized by Bekonscot Model Village, who cunningly hid several Little Grey Rabbit characters throughout their extensive gardens. Their treasure hunt sheet, given out to visiting children, also included a colouring competition and a quiz. The lucky winners received book prizes generously donated by Templar Publishing.

At the same time, High March School organized art and craft competitions for the town's primary schools, with two age categories, 4–8 years and over 9's. The younger children were asked to colour in and decorate drawings, either of Hare and Squirrel rowing a boat to a party, or Little Grey Rabbit on her way to the party, too. The older children could choose to create a party hat for Hare or a party apron for Little Grey Rabbit, using fabric, paper or card. This proved to be very popular. The first prizes were a large Treasury of Little Grey Rabbit stories, also donated by Templar Publishing, plus a Little Grey Rabbit toy. Second prizes were of smaller books.

The library was a hive of activity throughout the celebrations. They mounted a large display on Alison Uttley's life and work, including a selection of her adult and children's books. Also on display was a beautiful ornate table which had once belonged to the author. This was kindly loaned by Belinda Avery of High March School, who had inherited the table from her grandmother, Del Anderson, a great friend of Alison Uttley.

The library also put on a treasure hunt over a two-week period, hiding six beautifully knitted Little Grey Rabbits for little readers to find. To decide the winners, children were also asked to give the famous little rabbit a name. The prize-winning suggestions were Petal, Milly and Hoppy.

Tuesday 27 June was designated 'Alison Uttley Day' at the library, with a special birthday party story time for the under 5's in the morning. The library volunteers told a fun story about an animal picnic and the 16 children who came happily waved cut out pictures of LGR and her friends whenever they were mentioned in the story.

In the afternoon, there was a craft session. More than 40 children joined in, colouring in and decorating a selection of masks featuring Alison's famous characters, and making pop-up puppets using beakers and sticks. It was a hectic fun-filled hour, made possible with extra support from both library and Beaconsfield Society volunteers.

The afternoon came to a happy end with a prize-giving ceremony, hosted by Belinda Avery with Kari Dorme of The Beaconsfield Society, followed by a quite delicious party picnic for all the children. This most kindly sponsored by Jungs our local Baker and Patisserie, who made special rabbit-shaped biscuits for the occasion.

My thanks go to all those involved in helping me put together such a worthwhile and fun children's celebration of Alison Uttley and her *Little Grey Rabbit* stories. It will have done so much to raise awareness of these appealing books. I would especially like to mention Maura Buckland, Marketing Manager of Bekonscot Model Village, Belinda Avery and Linda Bissett, art teacher, from High March School, Helen Goreham, library manager at Beaconsfield Library, and all those at Templar Publishing and Jungs who helped make the celebrations special.

And last but not least, I would like to thank Rosemary Saunders, who knitted the utterly delightful Little Grey Rabbit toys.

Kari Dorme
Celebration organiser

