



An Evening with the Author P. D. James

Merril Lilley

P. D. JAMES (Baroness James of Holland Park) addressed an appreciative audience of her readers at the Junior Library on 28th May. After pointing out the subtle distinction between crime writing and detective fiction and commenting on the characteristics of some of the most famous fictional detectives, P. D. James gave the audience a fascinating insight into her own work.

For her the starting point for a novel had often been a particular feeling experienced in a suitable setting; on seeing boats on a quiet beach in Norfolk (*Devices and Desires*) or looking up at a tower in Dorset (*The Black Tower*) The long process of researching the background and of building up and getting to know the characters took much longer than the actual writing of the novel. It was for her a process of revelation rather than creation.

She regaled the audience with various anecdotes of the writing process, stressing the necessity of accuracy in detail, quoting from readers' letters, which flooded in whenever an error was made.

Speculating on the popularity of detective fiction, she said that readers like the familiar structure of the detective novel as well as the excitement, suspense and anticipation. They like a good story and the solving of a puzzle by human perseverance, intelligence and reasoning.

Afterwards Baroness James answered questions and signed copies of her books. A very successful evening and an excellent choice of venue for the event Δ

Spring: ONE-OFF GALLERY EXHIBITION

Leo Wright

The 'One-Off' Gallery in Castle Street timed another of its interesting exhibitions to chime with the Arts Festival: this one featured some dozen East Kent artists.

There were water-colours and oils, large and small, and, full of character, the hand-tinted etchings by Michael Baker. These mostly showed interest in people and situations, some reminiscent of George Cruikshank's. There were many local subjects: Dover, Canterbury, St. Margaret's, Folkestone, several of which succeeded in that difficult artistic aim: *faire quelque chose de rien*.

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