

For immediate release

1 December 2008

## **Local residents join the world's biggest free book club**

Free books have been appearing in various locations around St Albans - from parks to pubs - as the global phenomenon of 'BookCrossing' comes to the city.

To celebrate the 2008 National Year of Reading, local website [www.allaboutstalbens.com](http://www.allaboutstalbens.com) is leaving books in public places for people to take away, read and 'release' for others to enjoy. More than 30 titles to suit different ages and interests have been left in local cafés, shops, parks and public buildings, and more releases are planned.

The books are easily identified by their 'free book' stickers and unique reference number, which allows readers to follow each book's journey. Anyone who finds (or 'catches') a book can enter its unique ID number at [www.bookcrossing.com](http://www.bookcrossing.com) to see how far the book has traveled before adding a personal note or review. For a complete list of current titles and release locations, visit [www.allaboutstalbens.com/bookcrossing](http://www.allaboutstalbens.com/bookcrossing).

Allaboutstalbens.com founder, Lis Coulthard said: "Our aim is to help people have more fun in and around St Albans. BookCrossing is a fun, free way for the local community to share their favourite reads. We hope that residents and visitors will enjoy these books, pass them on, and become BookCrossers themselves.

"We'd love to hear from anyone who is interested in setting up a BookCrossing Zone at their business or workplace. This is a great way to generate goodwill and bring in readers who use the 'go hunting' feature of BookCrossing to find new releases."

This appealing combination of adventure, serendipity and a community focus on sharing the pleasure of reading has made BookCrossing a global pastime, with more than 700,000 people in 130 countries sharing 5 million books since 2001.

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## For further information contact:

Lis Coulthard, founder of [allaboutstalbans.com](http://allaboutstalbans.com) (available for interview).

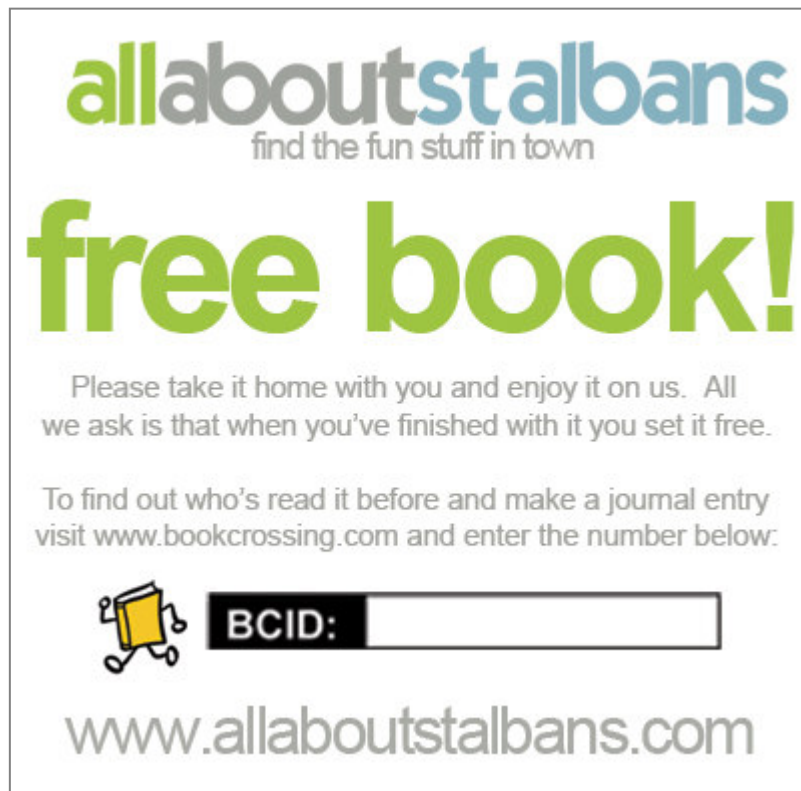
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## Notes for editors:

### [www.allaboutstalbans.com](http://www.allaboutstalbans.com)

Is a community-based website full of useful content on what's on and where to have fun in and around St Albans. The site has reviews of the best places to eat, sleep and drink, activities and days out for different ages and interests, and topical features on all aspects of local life.

## Identifying the books



Each book has 'free book' stickers on the front and back covers. The label shown here is attached inside the front cover.

All books are labeled with a unique, lifelong BookCrossing ID number (BCID). Every time someone finds the book, visits [bookcrossing.com](http://bookcrossing.com) and enters a BCID, they will be able to see the book's complete history and make a new journal entry of their own.

## BookCrossing in St Albans

The aim of BookCrossing in St Albans is to encourage a shared, community approach to promoting the pleasure of reading by making the whole city a library through this unique, fun way of recycling unwanted books.

Our releases so far include:

- *The English Patient* by Michael Ondaatje. Left in the Tourist Information Office.
- *The Commitments* by Roddy Doyle. Left in the waiting area of St Albans Magistrates' Court.
- *Extremely Loud and Incredibly Close* by Jonathan Safran Foer. Left in Inn on the Park.
- *Strange Places, Questionable People* by John Simpson. Left outside Ye Olde Fighting Cocks pub.
- *I Capture the Castle* by Dodie Smith. Left in the Photo Me booth outside the main Post Office.
- *Doctor Who - Wetworld* by Mark Michalowski. Left in Verulamium Park.
- *A Spot of Bother* by Mark Haddon. Left in Café on the Hill, Holywell Hill.

Please see [www.allaboutstalbans.com/bookcrossing](http://www.allaboutstalbans.com/bookcrossing) for a full list or follow the link to BookCrossing from our home page.

### Some facts about BookCrossing globally

- BookCrossing began in 2001 as a small community project
- It is defined by the OED as *'the practice of leaving a book in a public place to be picked up and read by others, who then do likewise'*
- Over 700,000 people in more than 130 countries do it
- The UK is the second largest BookCrossing country
- More than 5 million books have been registered and set free
- The BookCrossing running book mascot is named Ballycumber, after Douglas Adams' definition of a ballycumber (n) as: *'one of the six half-read books lying somewhere in your bed'*



### The 2008 National Year of Reading

The 2008 National Year of Reading is a year-long celebration of reading in all its forms. It will help to build a greater national passion for reading among children, families and adult learners. The Year encourages people to read in businesses, homes and communities around the country, helping people to access help and support through schools and libraries. This initiative is being managed by the National Literacy Trust.

[www.yearofreading.org.uk](http://www.yearofreading.org.uk)