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**Celebrating Bedford’s unsung publishing hero: Noel Carrington**

Bedford Borough Council is proud to announce the opening of a free exhibition that shines a long-overdue spotlight on one of Bedford’s most influential yet often overlooked cultural figures, Noel Carrington. The exhibition, titled “Noel Carrington - Nothing Need be Ugly,” opens on Saturday, 15 November 2025 and will run until 28 June 2026 at The Higgins Bedford, Castle Lane, Bedford.

Noel Carrington (1895-1989) was a visionary book publisher, best known for bringing the wartime children of Britain the much-loved Puffin Picture Books. Launched in 1940, these affordable, brightly coloured picture books were illustrated by artists personally selected by Carrington and aimed initially at evacuee children during World War II. Over time, they expanded to cover nature, sports, hobbies, and more, enchanting generations of young readers.

The exhibition has been thoughtfully curated by writer and publisher Joe Pearson, founder of Design for Today, and supported using public funding by the National Lottery through Arts Council England. Visitors can explore all 120 titles of Puffin Picture Books alongside original artwork and rare gems from Carrington’s extensive career, including his influential work with Country Life and notable British artists such as Edward Bawden, Eric Ravilious, and Kathleen Hale.

Also featured will be the work of Noel Carrington’s sister, Dora Carrington, whose artistic reputation was revived through Noel’s efforts in Bedford.

Councillor Sarah Gallagher, Portfolio Holder for Customer Experience, Leisure and Culture at Bedford Borough Council, said, “Noel Carrington’s contribution to children’s literature and design is a truly remarkable story of creativity, talent spotting, and dedication to making beautiful and meaningful books accessible to all. This exhibition not only celebrates his legacy but also enriches Bedford Borough’s vibrant cultural heritage, inviting everyone to discover a local hero whose work has touched countless lives.”

The exhibition will be held at the Wixamtree and Connections Gallery within The Higgins Bedford, located at MK40 3XD. Admission is free and open to all.

Join us this November to celebrate the life and legacy of Noel Carrington, a Bedfordian whose vision helped shape children’s publishing in 20th-century Britain.

For more information, visit The Higgins Bedford website at <https://www.thehigginsbedford.org.uk/Exhibitions/Noel_Carrington.aspx>

**Ends**

Editors notes:

The exhibition is curated by writer and publisher Joe Pearson founder of Design for Today <https://www.designfortoday.co.uk/>

**Image credits**

**Image 1: *Noel Carrington and Family -* From the collection of the granddaughter of Noel Carrington
Image 2: *Noel Carrington* c.1912 by Dora Carrington © Trustees of The Cecil Higgins Art Gallery (The Higgins Bedford)**

**Image 3:Puffin Picture Book 31 *Trees in Britain*, 1943 by Stanley Badmin Reproduced with kind permission of the estate of Mrs R Badmin**

**Image 4: Puffin Picture Book 55 *Extinct Animals*, 1947 by Hilary Stebbing © Hilary Stebbing Estate**

**Image 5: Puffin Picture Book 61 original artwork for *The Arabs* 1947 by Edward Bawden © The Estate of Edward Bawden**

**Image 6&7: *High Street* 1938 by Eric Ravilious**

**Image 8: *Orlando’s Evening Out* 1944 by Kathleen Hale**

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