



ALLEN LANE AND THE HIS FOUNDATION

In 1989 the trustees of the Allen Lane Foundation decided to set up an annual lecture in memory of my father. Our original idea was to celebrate his life and the work of his foundation. This year is the 40th anniversary of the founding of the Foundation. In fact the trust deed was signed on March 14th 1966 – just two weeks from today!

When I was asked to give this annual lecture in memory of my father I felt both pleased and honoured to be asked. But when I looked at the list of eminent past speakers I felt daunted. As I began to read the biographies and the early minutes of the Foundation, I found it more and more difficult to find a way to join the man, who was also my father, and the Foundation he founded, in a seamless way. He was not a natural philanthropist in the accepted sense of the word, he just turned out that way.

So I decided to tell it like a story, which I hope you will enjoy.

Allen Lane Williams Lane was born on September 21st 1902, in Bristol, the eldest son of a Welsh town planner. His mother was a Devonian woman of farming stock who was the lynch pin of the family – much loved by Allen who wrote to her frequently even in later life. It was a happy, close-knit family. He spent many holidays with his farming cousins in Devon and developed a great love of the countryside.

His school days impressed him less and he left school at 14 with no academic qualifications whatsoever.

However his mother was distantly related to John Lane. A well known publisher in his day, he founded the Bodley Head in the 1890's and published such luminaries as Aubrey Beardsley, Andre Maurois, Anatole France and Oscar Wilde . (In fact the butler in *The Importance of Being Earnest* is called Lane – supposedly an intended insult as John Lane was notoriously mean about paying his authors!) Anyway Mrs Williams as she was then called, arranged for her son and John Lane to meet. The publisher was so taken with Allen he offered him a place in his company on condition that he and the rest of the family, including Allen's father changed their name to Lane. So Allen Williams became Allen Lane. John Lane and his wife Annie had no children and very soon it became apparent that Allen and his brothers were to become their heirs.

Allen was persuaded to go back to school until he was 16. In 1919 Allen left Bristol Grammar School and moved up to London to work for his uncle at The Bodley Head. In his diary of that year he wrote, 'I left school April 11th. And then 'I started work April 27th'.

He lived in lodgings with various cousins and from his diaries seems to have led a very active social life. His uncle was keen for him to improve his education and in the early years he had dancing and riding lessons, took drawing lessons at the London Polytechnic, and in the evenings had conversational French lessons with a Mlle Vaghya. In his diary of 1920 he writes that on April 1st he had a pay rise of 14pence, having been paid a guinea a week, his pay went up to £1.15. His diary of 1921 is full of rather sad entries "Was lectured for hours by Auntie about my lack of seriousness." "Uncle says he will be writing to my father to tell him I am not working hard enough and he is thinking of sending me home."

One very revealing entry over a year after he had left home, "No letter from home for the first time since I came to London."

He started out as a sales rep, working his way up the company. His early diaries are full of details about packing, delivering, getting subscriptions for books. In September 1923 when he was 21 he became a director of The Bodley Head and sat on the Board for the first time.

In 1924 he went to Paris to interview his uncles French authors, Andre Maurois and Anatole France. It was the first time he had been abroad and he took to travel enthusiastically. Uncle John died in 1925 making Allen his heir. By that time the Bodley Head was in deep trouble. For the next ten years Allen struggled to keep the company afloat and the company nearly went bankrupt twice. He was not popular with the other members of the Board of Directors who found him impulsive and sometimes rash in his publishing decisions.

His brothers John and Richard joined him in London and they set up house together in Talbot Square. They had a reputation for holding parties that went on long into the early hours, and sometimes non-stop until the following evening, when it would all start again.

One of Allen's most celebrated publications whilst at the Bodley Head was Ulysses by James Joyce. This book had been the cause of legal action in America and had achieved notoriety throughout Europe. It had been published in serial form, but always the printer took the risk of a court action against him, and of having all copies of the

books destroyed. When Allen Lane decided to publish the book the Directors of The Bodley Head were dead set against it and insisted that the Lanes put up a guarantee of £20,000 against any legal actions being taken against them. When the book was finally published two years later in 1936 it was a great success but by that time Allen and his brothers had started to publish under another name. Penguin Books.

The legend is that in 1934 during a journey back from Devon after a weekend staying with his great friend, Agatha Christie, who later became godmother of my sister Christine, Allen was unable to find a decent book on Exeter Station. As he travelled back to London the idea of producing and marketing good, inexpensive literature came to him. To be honest I do not think he came to this idea from a purely philanthropic angle – he was just keen to produce good books which the public would want to buy and might make him a penny or two at the same time. The next morning he talked to his brothers during their ritual ablutions in the bathroom and persuaded them that his idea would work.

A week later he presented the Board with his idea. It was met with icy disapproval. He approached other publishers – again to be rejected.

He tried the booksellers themselves – no luck. Despite all this the brothers decided to continue and find ten titles for the first series.

They also needed a name for their new series. After some false starts – albatross, phoenix, dolphin, porpoise – Joan Coles, then a secretary in the Bodley Head office, came up with the name, Penguin Books. Quickly a simple, attractive design was produced by Edward Young, then a young editor at the Bodley Head, who went on to write the 1000th Penguin, published in 1954, ‘One of Our Submarines’.

The first Penguins were all reprints. Titles belonging already to The Bodley Head, Jonathan Cape, Benn and Chatto’s made up the first ten. The list included works by Mary Webb, Dorothy Sayers and Agatha Christie. Contracts were agreed and 20,000 copies of each title was published with the later familiar striped covers, green for crime, orange for novels and blue for biography.

The three brothers set out with their titles to persuade booksellers to buy copies of their exciting new series. Although John did really well, selling to the overseas contacts he had made during his early days working as a rep abroad, Richard and Allen’s efforts were not well received – between the three of them they had not sold even up to half the copies printed of each title.

Despite these setbacks Allen would not give up. He began to think of other outlets for books and decided to pay a visit to Woolworth's who already published and sold their own titles for 6d. Although the senior buyer was an old friend he could not be persuaded to be enthusiastic about the project – he thought the covers were too severe for his readers.

Then providence stepped in! The buyer's wife was due to come and take him to lunch. When she arrived Allen showed her a copy of the dummy Penguin and she loved it and said that at 6d a copy she'd take the risk of buying the whole series even though she'd never read one of the titles.

Despite his reservations her husband agreed to take a few dozen copies for each of the London stores. Less than a week later he phoned again to ask for a larger consignment and two weeks later an order came for over 63,000 copies! It had worked! Suddenly it seemed everyone wanted copies of the smart little books with the 'flippant yet dignified logo'.

Storage space became a problem and in 1936 Allen and his two brothers took over the crypt of a church in Marylebone Road. The stories of this time read like a Ealing studio comedy and the men who worked there were bound together by the experience, like soldiers in a long and dangerous campaign. While Allen still worked from the Bodley Head office in Vigo Street his two brothers packed books from dawn to dusk, one still working as a part-time insurance salesman too! The brothers were paid no salary for the first two years and their sister Nora came into the office occasionally to work as an unpaid typist.

However things could not go on like this for long, and after a visit from the equivalent of Health and Safety in 1937, it was decided to move out of London and build offices and warehouses all on one site. They bought a site near Harmondsworth, opposite what is now Heathrow Airport. Allen's father laid the foundation stone of the new buildings in August 1937.

War broke out in September 1939. Although Dick and John served in the navy, Allen was allowed to stay on civvy street to look after the company. By another fluke of luck a Penguin book fitted snugly into the breast pocket of an army uniform. It is often said that the worst part of being at war is not just the fear but the terrible boredom and maybe Penguins did its part in alleviating this. During the war paper was rationed which affected the print runs for most publishers. But Allen managed to arrange to have the same quantities of paper as before the war and so sell more books to the forces, who craved something to read.

It seems extraordinary now but my father travelled throughout the war, ostensibly on business, but with plenty of opportunities for pleasure and recreation. I have read letters written from ships crossing the Atlantic in 1941, with my father keeping watch for enemy shipping on his way to Canada on business. He writes of trains being cancelled to allow troop trains to go ahead, but he seems to make light of the fact there could be any danger. In 1941 He grumbles when he is stopped by the police in London for having the beam of his car headlights too high during the blackout.

These diaries read like the accounts of high-spirited young man about town, often about his companions, girl friends, the quality of the food and the amount of alcohol they consumed.

In 1940 the brothers bought a farm near Reading and farming became an abiding interest for my father. Coming from a farming family I suppose it was in his blood and my memories of him driving the little blue Fordson tractor around the farm – helping to make hay or silage – remain very strong.

When he died 30 years later he left the farm to his foundation.

Tragically his brother John, my uncle, was killed in a convoy in the Mediterranean in 1942 and it is said that my father never really got over it.

My father married in 1941 and my two sisters and I grew up with the business going on all around us. The family home was called Silverbeck and was about twenty minutes drive from the penguin offices at Harmondsworth. The house belonged to Penguins, a fact I did not know until I was much older, but as a result I think my father felt the house was an extension of his business.

We knew the editors, marketing directors, warehouse managers, and reps very well indeed and were quite used to having Sunday lunch with a prospective new author or an American publisher looking for new talent. (We loved them because they always brought us lovely things from America – the land of plenty to us in grey post war England!)

Although most of the visitors were in publishing, rather than writers, I do have the signature of George Bernard Shaw signed for me in 1942 in which he wrote ‘Who on earth is he, Papa?!’

During the war, with most of the staff away on service Penguins was run with a skeleton staff of never more than 40. Despite this, during those years over 500 new titles were published, many of them newly commissioned books. This was the golden age of Penguins and saw the birth of Pelican's, King Penguins, Penguin New Writing, Penguin Poets, Puffin Picture Books, Puffin Story Books, Penguin Special's, the list is endless and they must have been heady times.....

After the war my father attracted a band of brilliant, idealistic men and women. They had been through the war and wanted to make a better world for the next generation. Although AL, as he came to be known, could be distant, manipulative and ruthless, he was also extremely attractive, charismatic and inspirational. And people flocked to the Penguin flag.

They worked with the zeal of missionaries, bringing to their work all their hopes for the future. In those years just after the war Penguins stood for everything people felt they had been fighting for.

After the 1944 Education Act people wanted to make a new beginning, to open minds to the possibilities and the greater fulfilment of everyone.

Although in Australia and in the States, Penguins made strong relations with the educational authorities and sold titles which fitted their syllabuses, the same titles were being sold in England to the general public. Only in the 1960's did Penguins enter specifically 'educational' publishing. I think that my father felt instinctively that there was a population out there thirsting for knowledge and that Penguins could provide it without dumbing down or being patronising. Although many titles were bought by schools and universities they were not commissioned for any particular market.

In 1938 the Pelican series had begun with the blessing of George Bernard Shaw. Early contributors were Aldous Huxley and Leonard Woolley.

I suppose that the ideology behind the Pelican series might indicate that my father had an interest in improving and educating society – I am sure that is part of it – but only part. The wonderful editors who worked at Penguins then should also receive the credit.

Penguins expanded across the world with the offices in Baltimore and Melbourne. My father travelled frequently and indeed was much criticized for not being at Harmondsworth enough.

Among his great publishing achievements was the translation (by E V Rieu) of the Odyssey in 1953, which had sold over two and a half million copies by 1976 and has never gone out of print to this day.

At this time he was particularly close to two individuals. Eunice Frost had been employed at Penguins since the early days. She started out as AL's secretary in 1937, eventually becoming editor and briefly managing director of the office in New York. Then there was Bill Williams, a Welshman with a strong sense of social responsibility and a great mover in the corridors of power. Although never employed by Penguins, Bill lent his office in London at the Arts Council for editorial meetings. He was my father's confidant right up until his death. Bill Williams was probably largely responsible for the creation of the Pelican series, although there are many others who would lay claim to that.

With the death of his brother and Dick's departure to, and marriage in, Australia, my father was very lonely I think.

He still lived a sparkling social life at Silverbeck, enjoyed his farming activities but probably never enjoyed the excitement of those early days of Penguin again.

In 1952 He was made a Knight of the Realm.

I went with him to Buckingham Palace with my mother and grandmother but I had to stay in the car because I had chicken pox! He also took me out of school to go to King George VI's funeral – walking back across St James' Park he asked me what I had enjoyed most. The music and the drum horse I replied. “O yes – and the thought of everyone back at school doing their lessons!” I remember he always thought that was very funny!

At this time I felt the closest I ever was to my father – in 1952 we cycled round Normandy and then Brittany together – travelling to Cherbourg on the Queen Elizabeth with our bikes – we must have made a funny couple! Whilst he enjoyed the trappings of wealth my father really loved feeling in touch with people. My sisters will confirm that as children we spent a lot of time waiting in the car outside pubs, while he sat chatting with anyone he met inside! We consumed huge amounts of crisps!

By the time I left school in 1959 my father was living alone at Silverbeck, looked after by the gardener and his wife. Penguins seemed to weigh heavily upon him I remember, and he was involved in endless editorial and boardroom struggles.

Perhaps the publication of Lady Chatterley's Lover in 1960 gave him the chance to enjoy once again the excitements of those early days of Penguin when risk taking had been a daily occurrence. I was in the Court Room at The Old Bailey on the day of the final verdict, but I really was not aware of the significance of that event. Lady Chatterley's Lover went on to sell over 3,000,000 copies in the first months after publication.

I was also at the party the day Penguins was floated on the stock exchange in 1961, and made my father a millionaire. In my diary that evening I wrote 'Daddy seems more sad than happy by what has happened'. However, it was indirectly thanks to Lady Chatterley that The Allen Lane Foundation came into existence.

I am not sure what or who inspired my father to set up The Allen Lane Foundation. I have found two letters in the files of the Foundation dated 1964 and 1965, one from Eunice Frost and the other from Bill Williams both expressing enthusiasm for my father's idea of setting up a Foundation in his name. Frostie's letter first, written to AL after she had read the first draft of the trust deed, 'My dearest Allen..... It is a splendid document, looking so simple but containing so much power for good. It must give you the greatest pleasure'

And another letter from Bill 'I have been brooding on the exhilarating idea of your setting up a charitable trust and would like to make one or two suggestions..... Have you got as far as deciding upon a name yet?

The obvious choice would be the Allen Lane Foundation'

The family solicitor, Leslie Paisner, drafted and redrafted the Trust Deed at least three times and in 1965 the first trustees were appointed. They were my father's old friend Sir William Emrys Williams, Lord Boyle of Handsworth, a more recent addition to the Board of Directors at Penguin, and my sister Christine who was a student of Fine Art at Reading University. Invited on to represent the views of the younger generation, she suggests. She was 22. Tatyana Schmoller, wife of Hans Schmoller, Penguin's brilliant designer and typographer, or TK as we all knew her, my father's trusted assistant since 1946, was the first administrator.

The Foundation was set up initially with a gift of one hundred thousand shares in Penguins valued at nearly one hundred and fifty thousand pounds and in May 1966 the first grants were made. In the trust deed the preferred charities would be those working in the fields of education, archaeology, the arts, literacy and handicap, but the Trustees had an extraordinarily wide remit and discretion. My father had already been contacted

by various organisations and had suggested that some funding might be available if they applied.

The first 5 grants were for work with the deaf and those with learning difficulties, work with musicians in rural areas and an organisation called The Committee for Reading and Writing Aids. The largest grant was for £500 for work with deaf children.

The trustees were already beginning to feel their own strength and turned down two Oxford colleges and a private school!

Meetings were difficult to organise so TK sent out the applications to the trustees for their approval or otherwise. (her patience with the trustees was extraordinary!) From 1966 until 1970 the Foundation was administered by TK single-handed, and we owe much to TK for her careful management in those early days. Her strongly held principles have left an indelible mark on the style of the trust even today. In November 1969 TK and I were appointed as trustees.

At the same time my father made a further gift of three hundred and fifty thousand Penguin shares which at the time were valued at over half a millions pounds.

My father died in July 1970 and because he had died within seven years of setting up the trust it became liable for a swingeing amount of Estate Duty. In the end the Foundation had to pay out over £200,000 to the Inland Revenue.

By this time we were having regular trust meetings. However we still had no policy and just made decisions at each meeting on all the applications that came in. TK was still acting as Administrator to the Trust and as well as being a Trustee herself. We had an office in a tiny room, rent free, at the accountant's in Bloomsbury and we could just about all squeeze in for meetings.

It can be seen from the list of grants made that we still favoured the handicapped, the arts and sometimes, at the suggestion of Bill Williams, who was now in his 70's, the elderly. In 1970, at the ninth distribution of funds, the trustees made seven grants the largest being £500 for an arts project and we turned down 17 applications.

Already in 1970 Bill Williams was complaining about the size of the grants being made: 'I know we are a relatively small charity,' he wrote, 'but I feel that some of our grants are too small to be much use I'd like to see us helping fewer causes but on a bigger scale.' This debate has continued throughout the 40 years of the Foundation's existence!

By 1970 the trustees realised we needed some help. TK had done a wonderful job in setting up and organising the fledgling foundation but she knew that it needed to move onto firmer ground. The person to do this came in the form of Gillian Davies. Although she had had no experience of the charity world Gillian took to it like a duck to water. Well she was the daughter of an admiral! She had no problem about mixing with all kinds of people. At a time when most grant giving foundations were administered by men she was quite happy to be the 'token woman' when invited to gatherings of trust administrators. She was eminently clubbable and was one of the earliest members of the Charitable Trusts Administrators Group.

Gillian became secretary and administrator to the Foundation in May 1971. Under her guidance the profile of the Foundation rose and rose.

In the Minutes of January 1973, Bill Williams, who was very much an advocate of the old school of charitable giving, suggested that it was inadvisable for applicants to meet the trustees to plead their case as it gave them an unfair advantage. He also suggested that we should begin to allow the administrator to sift through the applications so that we were presented with fewer but more suitable subjects for consideration. As trustees we had to begin to form our own a policy.

By 1974 the decision had been made for the trustees to consider grants from a pre-selected list of applications, the selection made along the lines of the policy already agreed by the trustees. Today a complete list of applications is always available at the meeting for the trustees to see and comment on.

By now Christine was the last surviving member of the gang of three. It fell to her in those early days to keep a tally of the grants we made at each meeting – I remember she used an abacus. The sound of the beads sliding along the wires as she added up the total remains for me a very happy memory,

Gillian was very keen to encourage the trustees to support applications for core funding – something very difficult for struggling projects to find in the early 70's. It was at this time that the trustees began to look for undeservedly less popular causes. Under her direction the trustees began to be more proactive and to look for areas where longer term funding with larger grants might be a more constructive use of the Foundation's money.

And so we began to support the work of women's refuges, projects that supported the victims of rape, and the mental health needs of refugees. Towards the end of her term of office we began to fund the needs of women's groups in the Republic of Ireland,

working with another Irish foundation and so maximising the effect of our grants. The first grants were made in 1989 and these grants continued until 1997. Having raised the profile of women's issues in the Republic, and with government and European support becoming available for this, in 1998 the trustees decided to redirect their support to help some of the valuable work being done in prisons in Ireland today.

This does not mean that the Foundation does not support such important work in Great Britain. We have always looked to support inspiring and innovative work in prisons. Gillian encouraged the trustees to come with her to the meetings and conferences organised by Association of Charitable Foundations and to experience the buzz which these occasions engendered.

She encouraged us to come with her to visit new projects and we all learned from her expertise. In 1996 after 25 years, Gillian retired from the Foundation.

She tells me that she is now on the committee of the National Gardens Scheme in London so if anyone has a garden they would like to open for that wonderful organisation – she is the one to speak to!

And so we come to our present Administrator. We needed to find someone with experience in running charitable trusts, but someone we thought would be sympathetic to our idiosyncrasies – and in Heather Swailes we found just the right person.

She came to us from her position as Assistant Trust Secretary at the Joseph Rowntree Charitable Trust where she had been responsible for grant-making of over one million a year and at the National Lottery Charities Board where she had been responsible for grants totalling ten million pounds! She admits now that it was quite a change!

When asked to comment on her work with the Foundation Heather said that although we cannot expect to make a significant impact on public policy, she feels we are the embodiment of 'small is beautiful'.

With eight trustees (four of whom are family members) Heather says the Foundation is an easy ship to sail, having only two part time staff and three trustees' meetings a year, it needs the minimum of internal discussions.

Heather, really appreciates the opportunity to get to know the grantees and says of them: 'here are people with vision, commitment, enthusiasm and courage who are undaunted by their circumstances – they are truly wonderful and it is a privilege to meet them and to be able to help them carry on their work.'

Heather has made us very conscious of the importance of keeping to the policies we have decided on. I am sure that many of you will have looked at our website but I thought it would be interesting to note here what our priorities are today – if only to compare with the ones we started out with.

It states:

The Foundation wishes to fund work which:

Will make a lasting difference to people's lives rather than simply alleviating the symptoms or current problems.

Work which is aimed at reducing isolation, stigma and discrimination.

Work which encourages or enables unpopular groups to share in the life of the community.

We are all very much aware of the amount of work it takes to present the trustees with applications which we will feel happy to support. Heather's dedication in finding and researching the small projects which the trustees feel will make a difference, disproportionate to their size, is truly amazing and one of the hallmarks of the work of the Foundation.

In 1994 the portfolio was valued at approximately nine million pounds and on September 30th 2005 it was valued at eighteen million pounds.

In 1994 we took the advice of Roger Morton, financial adviser and trustee of the Joseph Rowntree Charitable Trust who put us in touch with RC Brown Investment Management. This has obviously proved to be a really fruitful partnership!

The trustees have discussed on numerous occasions the possibility of having a portfolio of ethical investments. After many discussions the Trustees have decided not to make any changes for the moment, unwilling as we are to take the drop in income this would involve. However the Trustees have instructed the investment managers to avoid investments in companies dealing with armaments and tobacco products.

As I mentioned earlier, my father left his beloved Priory Farm to the Foundation with the specific request that the farmer should stay on as tenant and pay rent to the Foundation who would be responsible for gates and hedges, ditches and driveways,

upkeep of woodlands etc. Very soon the trustees decided that they just could not become landlords as well and the farm was sold off. He also left some valuable archive papers that had followed him from the Bodley Head. After much discussion these too were sold and found a new home in Austin, Texas!

Very occasionally an individual has left funds to the Foundation for the trustees to allocate on their behalf, as they see fit. It must be said that this is a huge complement to the Foundation, and the trustees take the opportunity to find very special projects to support with these funds. Recently we supported Book Aid International and its work in Africa with such a bequest. I feel sure that my father would have been really delighted with our choice of beneficiary.

I was very interested to find out how much the size of our grants had changed over the years and was astonished to find that except for the exceptional blip they were remarkably steady. I think it is interesting to note that in March 1975, the year of our first published report, with a disposable income of £108,000. we gave 119 grants of which the largest was £5,000 and the smallest £100.00. At our last meeting in October 2005 with a disposable income of £710,000, we made 47 grants, two for £10,000 and the smallest for £500.

One of the more recently appointed trustees said this:

‘Studying the agenda can be depressing – so many needs so many problems and people struggling with their lives.

However, the other side of the coin reveals inspiring and optimistic work very often initiated by one person with an eye for what is needed in a particular field or area: the nationwide charity supporting prisoner’s families started by one woman; the man who initiated a composting project in the wilds of Wales, set back by foot and mouth but still going. It restores my faith in the belief that people do care about each other and in fact that individuals can make a difference.

We never have enough money for everyone’s need but the scale of our grants somehow is like the grit in the oyster – enough to get things going. Huge projects can be set up by government bodies and vast amounts wasted – we do make a difference with small amounts.

I enjoy chewing over the dilemmas and ethical considerations behind our work and in the world of philanthropy in general. It is a challenge to examine and re-examine constantly our role in society as fashions in funding come and go, as causes become more or less popular. We have to see how we as individuals and as a group relate to the

issues. It is a personal challenge to consider the role one plays in distributing the money entrusted to us and the need to check ones stance is constant.

It is a strange situation – a group around a table with differing preferences and interests and perhaps prejudices, deciding how to distribute the money that the founder put aside for this purpose. It is good to have family members to keep some sense of continuity and maybe some sense of what he might have wanted to happen – though at the same time the trustees do seem to be autonomous.’

A retired trustee, when asked for his memories of his time at the Foundation had this to say:

‘..... how pleasant it was to be part of a Foundation which not only gave help to undeservedly unpopular causes but also where the meetings were always so constructive. In all the years I served we never needed to have a vote – any differences were discussed and resolved in a civilised way.....This pleasant atmosphere was, I think, partly due to the fact that we were the only foundation with a majority of woman trustees! Even if the male trustees spoke to much!’

And from another more recently recruited trustee:

‘I think the fact that our grants are of a size that some big institutions may allocate by machine is a wondrous thing and an immense fillip to all applicants who get on the shortlist. I feel so much more positive about the state of things knowing that there are so many people doing so much on so little!’

I was recently invited to talk to an international group of would-be philanthropists who were thinking of setting up their own family charities. I was on a panel with two heavy-weights of the British philanthropic scene. I could see the eyes of the audience glazing over as they listened to these two stalwarts speaking on the very necessary and important subjects of policy making, appraisals, assessment of priorities etc.,. What they wanted was to feel connected to their gift – not from any sense of self-aggrandisement – but because they just wanted to make a difference.

Lea, Allen Lane’s eldest great-grand daughter came to the last meeting of the trustees, just as an onlooker – it was good to have her with us. She is now out in India working with orphans near Pondicherry. Whether or not she becomes a trustee of the Allen Lane Foundation is not a decision for me but I know that if she does it will enrich her life immeasurably.

Researching this lecture has been like a journey for me. I think my father would have been really pleased with all we have managed to do with his Foundation – I hope so -

even if we have followed some unusual routes to achieve this. I do believe WE HAVE MADE A DIFFERENCE to people's lives – which is after all what Allen Lane really wanted when he created the foundation in the first place, 40 years ago. And maybe this is why he so loved those early heady days at Penguins – he could see the difference the books were making to people's lives.

Allen Lane made a difference, and goes on making it!

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