

# 'A tragedy to let our bookshops die'

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**Can you imagine Bath without any bookshops? Could the city which was home to Jane Austen and Charles Dickens be without a shop to display their masterpieces?**

It could be a real possibility in the future, and local author Gordon Bloor is spearheading a campaign to get more people to support our local bookshops.

With the rise in popularity of internet buying and electronic devices such as Kindle, book lovers are worried about the future of bookshops.

Mr Bloor said: "The number of independent bookshops in the UK has fallen below one thousand for the first time, as a combination of Amazon, e-books and high street rent increases put them out of business."

Bath has six main bookshops including Mr B's Emporium of Reading Delights in John St, Good Buy Books in North Parade, Oldfield Park Bookshop in Moorland Road, Waterstones in Milsum Street and Topping and Company in The Paragon.



Local author Gordon Bloor with Jane Austen, left, and Charles Dickens, right

The author, whose novel *Go Swift And Far*, set in Bath during the Second World War, has sold almost 5,000 copies, started the Back Bath Bookshops (BBB) to try to get more people through

the door.

For research on his novel, written under the pseudonym Douglas Westcott, he spent eight years in the offices of *The Bath Chronicle*, detailing every

issue of the then daily newspaper for a flavour of what the city was like during the war.

"Bath has a fascinating history," said Mr Bloor.

Some of the highlights, reported on the pages of this newspaper, include the Beatles' concert at The Pavilion in the 60s, and a memorial service at Bath Abbey after the death of John F Kennedy.



His main aim is to get people, especially families, through the door of Bath's bookshops.

"There are some wonderful events happening in our bookshops, many of them are free, and people should support them," he said.

"If we do not do something drastic they will be a thing of the past, and our children and their children will never know what a real bookshop looks like."

A national campaign, backed by celebrities including actor David Jason and artist Tracy Emin, recently came to Waterstones in Bath.

Called *Books are my Bag*, the campaign's aim was to get more people into bookshops.

Tim Godfray, chief executive of The Booksellers Association, said: "Bookshops are important cultural and community hubs, and make a vital contribution to the health of our high streets and local economies in particular, so it is always disappointing to see them close."