



# The Friends of Highgate Library

## NEWSLETTER December 2017

### Highgate Library News

We are delighted that Sue Perkins, who now lives locally, has agreed to be our President. We know that she is very busy with all kinds of new TV projects, but we look forward to welcoming her in the future.

In November distinguished novelist and poet John Harvey gave us a masterclass in how he writes his very successful crime stories and engaged with an enthusiastic audience. He also accepted to become a patron of Highgate Library Friends and donated all the proceeds from the sale of his books at the event to our funds. Thank you, John.

Camden is bidding to become London's Borough of Culture and we were pleased to be visited by Jessica Gibbons, Director of Community Services. After visiting the library, she stayed to discuss the library's management and was impressed with our successful partnership. She was also pleased with the many ways in which we contribute to Camden's cultural offer with our varied events and children's activities. When Councillor Simpson ran his list of ways Camden enriches culture on Facebook, our library featured at number 19! Look at our rich programme planned for Spring 2018 inside.

Our local Secret Artist featured a new painting of our library, described as a favourite by the Artist, in October. It is to be loaned to us and will be on display in the new year. Many of the artist's shop and local building pictures are now postcards (available in the Owl Bookshop).

Highgate Library Civic and Cultural Centre's regular Tuesday choir, Mixed Up Chorus has settled in with our other regulars. We are now looking to welcome classes moving out from Highgate Newtown Community Centre before their rebuilding programme starts in 2018. We have added new folding chairs to accommodate our increasing audiences for the film club and local meetings. Please enquire if you wish to hire our lovely space for your events.

Sadly in 2017, there is great need for food banks. There is one at Highgate Newtown Community Centre and you might like to support it.

Finally, our library will close on Thursday 21st of December and open again on Tuesday 2nd of January.

Best wishes for the festive season and a happy 2018!

*Linda Lefevre, Chair*

## News from Highgate Library

The combined forces of the Camden Library Services and FoHL volunteers are not only keeping the library and its services running but are also increasing what is on offer.

The range and number of books for adults will expand significantly thanks to the very generous bequest by John Horder, the local poet, of his personal library. It is taking a while to sort this very large collection, but we aim to incorporate as many books as possible into the Highgate Library and other Camden Libraries' stock. John had many collections of poetry and we are exploring the possibility of creating a poetry corner in his memory.

There are lots of new books and toys for children including a lovely dolls' house thanks to a generous gift from the York Rise Street party. Despite the continuing austerity cuts the Tuesday and Thursday sessions for Under 5s are still running, one now informally coordinated by local parents and carers. There are twice-monthly Saturday craft sessions run by a volunteer (Emilia), which are proving to be very popular with children.

Volunteers have continued to mount exhibitions in the library: we have marked the centenary of the Russian Revolution, the 500 years since Martin Luther posted his 95 theses, this year's Summer Reading Challenge and the children's book reviews.

As always, we would welcome more volunteers, so do consider becoming one and above all continue to support your library.

Explore and borrow some of the expanding range of books! Dip into the fascinating material in the Local History Collection!

*Sarah Harrison Library Volunteer Coordinator*

## Things to Come

**Thursday December 14th Beth Shaw and Martin Bould return with** another of their wonderful plays where those in the audience who are willing become the cast. With lots of hats and other props and laughter we bring the play to life. This one is **Dante's Brexit**, recreating his journey through post-referendum gloom, amongst liars, flatterers and sowers of discord. Come and have fun (and a glass of mulled wine and mince pie)!

### **Thursday January 11th Public Librarians in Victorian and Edwardian London**

This illustrated talk tells the forgotten stories of the chief librarians in charge of the first public libraries in late-Victorian and Edwardian London. It describes their working-class backgrounds; their early career paths; their deluxe library flats; and their contribution to the early success of the so-called 'universities of the people'. It also outlines the tragic and unusual case of Highgate's very own librarian, Henry Bond. Our speaker is **Dr Michelle Johansen's** whose PhD was on late Victorian public librarians and social mobility in London.

**Keep in touch with events** <http://www.dartmouthpark.org/FOHL/events>

### **Thursday February 8th Eve Harris 'The Marriage of Chani Kaufman'**

Eve will tell us about her popular book and about her writing in general. Her novel was long listed for the Man Booker prize in 2013 and deals with the sensitive, and serious, subject of arranged marriages.

Nineteen year old Chani lives in an Ultra-Orthodox Jewish community in N W London and the novel describes what happens when she meets and falls in love with a young man who also loves her. It is when they decide to get married that their parents try to put an end to their union, judging it to be unsuitable. The book has a light, humorous touch despite being concerned with important issues such as class prejudice and snobbery.

Before she became a writer, Eve taught for twelve years both in London and in Tel Aviv. She admits that the book was inspired by her final year of teaching at an all girls' Ultra-Orthodox Jewish school in London.

**Thursday March 8th Toby Faber Faber and Faber: A distinguished Publishing House.** As the grandson of Faber and Faber's founder, Toby Faber grew up steeped in its books. He was managing director for four years and is still on the board. This illustrated talk will trace the firm's history, trying to explain why it is the last of the great literary publishing houses to remain independent, while telling some of the stories about the publication of books familiar to us all.

Part of the firm's success relates to the strong editorial team - TS Eliot was famously an early recruit - but a large part is also due to the firm's insistence on good design and illustration. It has employed some of our most celebrated artists as cover illustrators – from Rex Whistler and Barnett Freedman to Peter Blake and Damien Hirst.

**Thursday April 12th Our Annual General Meeting** with brief reports followed by a guest speaker. Details in our March Newsletter.

**Thursday May 10th Mrs Shaw Herself - A Glimpse into the life of Charlotte Payne-Townshend.** Helen Tierney and actress Alexis Leighton present a one woman show based on the life of Charlotte Payne-Townshend, wife to George Bernard Shaw. Charlotte was a remarkable woman and their marriage was unconventional. She was a champion of women's rights, especially women's suffrage and education and she funded the Shaw library at LSE.

## **Recent Events**

**September. Jane Austen at Home. Maureen Stiller, secretary of the Jane Austen Society,** presented an image of Jane Austen at once familiar and surprising. We all know of her close relationship with her sister Cassandra and with some of her nieces, but Maureen showed us how involved Jane was with her wider family circle, a generous and loving aunt. If she was far from being an 'IT' girl, she had her frivolous moments

and loved society and balls just like any eighteen-year old. Jane's love life remains mysterious. She lost an early love, but her relations with other men remain nebulous, perhaps because Cassandra burned many letters after Jane's death. The writer Maureen presented was lively, humorous, talented, society loving but above all, a fascinating and ever rediscovered individual who still defies definition. The large audience loved the evening.

In **October** we were privileged to have the company of **Dan Carrier and Paul Cox**, a double bill event. The library walls were adorned with the wonderful **illustrations Paul Cox made at the special 110th anniversary** of the opening of the library. It is always fascinating to see the process of a work of art being created. A year ago, at the 110th celebration, we had seen Paul with a white sheet of paper making sketches - and now here was the finished product!

**Dan Carrier**, a newspaper reporter working for the Camden New Journal, came to introduce his new book, '**Doctor Zipp's Amazing Octo-Com**', newly published. Dan gave us an insight into the life of a journalist who "doesn't spend much time in the office" - instead he meets amazing characters and listens to their stories. His investigative work, for example, reveals how to keep a business going on a barge on London's canals, who stole the vegetables from the allotments and how a car ended up in the men's pond on Hampstead Heath. This book gives voice to eccentric Londoners - a magic collection of real life stories.

**November John Harvey**, a new patron, was happy to reveal how he set about writing his new Frank Elder crime novel, illustrated with brief readings and with pictures of his working notes. He spoke at length with clarity and wit about the process of writing, from the first spark of an idea to the finished book - and everything in between. He was speaking about his latest book, 'Body and Soul', which features successful detective, Frank Elder. John is well known for his detective series featuring the jazz loving, Nottingham based detective, Charlie Resnick. John completed this series with the book 'Darkness, Darkness'. He also explained how he became a writer rather by chance having started as an English teacher.

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### **FRIENDS OF HIGHGATE LIBRARY**

c/o Highgate Library, Chester Road, N19 5DH

Chair: Linda Lefevre

Vice Chair & Membership: Sarah Carrier

Hon. Secretary: Margot Kafno

Hon. Treasurer: Patrick Lefevre

Committee: Michele Cohen, Alice Gutkind, Agnes Stewart,  
Sarah Harrison, Ann Cheyne & Virginia Kerridge

President: Sue Perkins

Patrons: Julian Barnes, Joanna Briscoe, Tracy Chevalier, Hunter Davies, Charlotte Mendelson, Andrew Motion, June Rose & John Harvey

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