



The Friends of Highgate Library

NEWSLETTER

September 2017

Highgate Library News

At long last there is life on the ground floor of the Chester Balmore development opposite the library. Not yet the promised shops but a delightful and friendly café. **The Oak Leaf** serves excellent coffee, a range of teas and other drinks, salads, sandwiches, and pastries. Well worth a visit when you next pop in to the library.

The summer has been busy in the library welcoming and supporting the children keenly joining in the Summer Reading Challenge. Children must read 6 books and are rewarded with stickers, arm bands and a bright book bag. We can report that over 100 children signed up and were busy reading throughout the school holiday!

The Library's front garden is full of bright flowers and looking great - a good place to sit and read or meet a friend. Our thanks to Margaret and Bridget who keep it looking lovely. The benches commemorate founding members of the Friends and this summer we added a plaque to remember Enid Evans - read more inside.

This year's York Rise Street Party is on September 10th, more news inside. Last year the Friends were given £750 from the proceeds to add new toys and books to the children's library for all to enjoy.

Our library thrives as a Camden Council library with the essential support of a team of volunteers and our community benefits from their work.

As our followers on Facebook and Twitter will know I was interviewed by Alison Flood for her Guardian article on August 8th "Save your local! Should volunteers help keep our public libraries open?". Our efforts were notable because Highgate has been kept open as a public library in a community partnership. The statistics are shocking. 121 libraries closed last year as local authorities coped with severe government cuts. Since 2010, 500 of the UK's 3850 public libraries have been taken over at least in part by volunteers.

When librarian Ian Anstice meets the people running the UK's community libraries, he finds a common link between them all. Volunteers, he says, "absolutely love their library and are desperate to keep it going, [but] they are torn themselves. The majority of them would say that in an ideal world there needs to be a council-run service paid for by the council. However, they are dealing with reality. They want their library open." We too are waiting for that ideal world, but meanwhile will work hard to keep our library open as a public library.

Linda Lefevre, Chair

News from Highgate Library

Volunteers' News

Central to Highgate Library's continuing success is that it remains one Camden's public libraries, offering the same services as the other public libraries. The arrangement where FoHL and Camden Library Services jointly manage and staff the Library goes from strength to strength. A joint management group meets regularly.

Whenever the Library is open a trained librarian from the Library Services is on duty together with by FoHL library volunteers. Fahd Toor, the principal Librarian, not only contributes his professional experience but also tirelessly supports any volunteers needing help with particular issues. The volunteers make use of their skills and experience outside library work to extend what the Library can offer its users; this includes for example, developing the Local History Collection, organising displays, maintaining the garden and running monthly craft sessions for children.

During the summer Library staff and volunteers have spent a lot of time talking with some of the children who participated in this year's Summer Reading Challenge about the books the youngsters had read. Over a hundred children enrolled in the Challenge, whose theme this year was "Animal Agents" and the majority reported that they had very much enjoyed it.

In the past year (April 2016-April 2017) 34 Library volunteers together clocked up 2729 hours' work in the library; the Library management team of volunteers contributed a further 900 hours. The volunteers continue to be overwhelmingly positive about their experience of working in the Library, and without a doubt their work enables Highgate Library to remain one of Camden's nine public libraries.

Sarah Harrison Library Volunteer Coordinator

Things to Come

This year's **York Rise Street Party** will be held **on Sunday 10th September**, from noon onwards. As usual the Friends will have a stall with information on the Library and we hope to recruit more members as well as volunteers. Help with running the stall for short periods is welcome.

There will be two stages for music, talks and discussion, a disco, with a Dads' and Mums' dance competition, a dog show, and an outdoor cinema showing old films and newsreels featuring Camden. There is also a photography competition for children and young people, find our more on Facebook and tree posters! There will be food, beer and cocktails. For the children, there are special shows and an outdoor play area. Please come, help support the Library and meet your friends and neighbours.

Thursday September 14th Jane Austen "At Home" We have all heard of Jane Austen, and perhaps have read her novels or seen the films, but what do we think she was really like? Maureen Stiller, secretary of the Jane Austen Society, will

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describe, in a fully illustrated talk, Jane Austen's life, as a woman in Georgian times and the influences and development of her career as an author. Of course, we are commemorating the 200th anniversary of the death of Jane Austen.

Thursday October 12th Join us to view the **illustrations which Paul Cox** created during our 110th anniversary celebrations last year and to view the many photographs taken during the evening over a glass of wine. We are pleased that Paul will be joining us.

Thursday November 9th. Crime writer, John Harvey, will be our guest speaker. He is winner of the CWA (Crime Writers' Association) Diamond Dagger lifetime achievement award for 'Sustained excellence in the genre'. John has published over 100 books and has worked on scripts for tv and radio. He has created a series of memorable protagonists, most notably the jazz loving, Nottingham based Pole, Charlie Resnick. He brought this series to an end with 'Darkness, Darkness' which he dramatized for the stage and was produced at Nottingham Playhouse in 2014. He will be talking about the process of crime writing with particular reference to his latest work 'Body and Soul', featuring another successful detective, Frank Elder.

Thursday December 14th Martin Bould and Beth Stone return with another of their wonderful plays where those in the audience who are willing become the performers. With lots of hats and other props and laughter we bring the play to life. This one is on the **theme of Brexit**. Should be fun!

Recent Events

Enid's Plaque Enid Evans, who died in 2013, was a loyal founding member of the Friends. She was our hard-working treasurer for many years. But Enid was always much, much more and helped us all behind the scenes in so many ways, holding us together with wisdom and integrity. So it was with great pleasure that the current committee, along with Enid's son and daughter and others who had worked with her, came together in July to unveil a brass plaque in her memory. This is on the wall of the garden Enid created in front of the Library as a memorial to another great Friend, Edith Morgan. We are all grateful for what Enid contributed to the library and owe her an enormous debt. We still miss her very much. *Fabian Watkinson*

Brookfield prize giving Each year the Friends of Highgate Library give a book to the child in each class who has progressed most in reading. One of our valued Friends has donated the money to buy the books. The children are taken to the Owl Bookshop where they choose a book and on 14 July at the special Assembly I presented the books and heard why the children had chosen them. After the Assembly, I was invited for tea and scones with teachers, the prize winners and their parents. We value this strong link with the school. *Linda Lefevre*

Much Ado About Nothing in an hour In June, many Friends enjoyed Valerie Doulton's latest production with her US Students, this year outdoors in the grounds of Lauderdale House. The lively show made up for the rather dismal weather!

Highgate Library Civic and Cultural Centre

We are pleased to have three new regular users alongside our Thursday Pilates sessions and karate classes.

On Tuesday evenings, we have the Together Arts Choir, open to all.

On Saturday mornings 10am to 12pm there will be children's tap dance classes.

Contact rahma.kingfisher@gmail.com for details.

On Friday mornings, offering music, singing and dancing and German for babies and toddlers we have **Fu & Fara German Baby Playgroup**

London. Contact info@fuandfara.co.uk for more details.

Book Review 'When Breath Becomes Air' by Paul Kalanithi

This is a deeply moving memoir about Paul's experience as a neurosurgeon who finds himself facing a terminal lung cancer diagnosis at the age of 37. This is not a depressing or morbid book and he writes in a matter of fact way about his life and the goals he had set for himself despite knowing that these will now never be achieved. Paul did not think at once about becoming a doctor and his initial studies were in English Literature (at Stanford) and the History of Medicine (at Cambridge). It was only later that he decided to become a surgeon and he chose neurosurgery because it seemed the most challenging.

While it can be disturbing to read an autobiographical book in which the author knows he is dying, Kalanithi writes in a matter of fact way without a trace of self-pity. Nor does he spare us any of the unpleasant details of the illness as it takes over his body. Before we get to this final section he writes, almost lovingly, of his work as a brain surgeon and describes in breath-taking detail specific cases where the brain is cut open exposing the layers and sections inside. He succeeds in giving us a flavour of what it must be like to have to make decisions that can literally mean life or death.

Often in the book he muses on life and what it is that makes life worth living. He is also thoughtful and questioning: 'How do you behave when your planned life is shattered?'. He died in 2015 while writing this book - the final pages are written by his wife. *Margot Kafno*

FRIENDS OF HIGHGATE LIBRARY

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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

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