



# The Friends of Highgate Library

## NEWSLETTER

### Summer 2020

#### Highgate Library News

We hope that you are all well and coping with the strange circumstances of our lives at present.

During this lockdown we are very aware of how important our neighbours and local community are and the Friends want to remain a central part of it. We are thankful that the Highgate Newtown Community Centre is bringing local volunteers together to provide vital services. For our part, we hope to keep you stimulated, entertained, involved and in touch.

While our library is closed and the activities and events in our Civic and Cultural Centre have ceased, life goes on and we have moved our events to virtual Zoom online sessions. Our first Zoom event was put together to see how it might work. It attracted a good audience and in particular knowledgeable participants who had lived and worked through the redevelopment of Highgate Newtown.

This encouraged us to offer our talk by Harriet Evans about her new book and her study of life in Beijing on Zoom. This attracted not only a local but an international audience of 80, including participants from China, Norway and Ireland.

A great advantage is that these Zoom events were recorded and are now online and you can now enjoy them or watch again. **We still have two exciting events before the Summer break and look forward to 'seeing' you *all* at these.** Full details on our website and with the enclosed Programme. We have begun to wonder if, when we have actual meetings again, we could keep online and recorded access as well. This would bring events to a wider audience and particularly to those who are housebound or have childcare responsibilities.

Our Annual General Meeting planned for April, has been postponed until (hopefully) September. Please use our website to keep in touch. We continue to send our monthly emails and advertise events on Facebook and Twitter sites. Emailing has become problematic and we really need your help to make sure it continues to work for us.

You can renew your membership online and by bank transfer, details elsewhere in this newsletter. We are still very good value at just £6 and of course we welcome your donations. We are really missing your donations at meetings.

Remember there is always more information and an extended and often updated newsletter on our website, <http://www.dartmouthpark.org/FOHL> Please contact us by email [FOHL@dartmouthpark.org](mailto:FOHL@dartmouthpark.org). We welcome your suggestions.

*Linda Lefevre, Chair*

## Things to Come

See the attached Spring/Summer Events Programme for full details including how to book your place

**Thursday June 11th 7pm for 7.30pm At Home with Frances Hodgson Burnett**  
*The Secret Garden - Little Lord Fauntleroy -The Little Princess*

In a specially adapted programme for Zoom, Helen Tierney and Alexis Leighton will give an overview of the work of Francis Hodgson Burnett. A brief talk will lead to extracts from her diaries and letters read by Alexis and narrated by Helen. This will bring us closer to an author whose most famous work connects us to gardens nature and the earth.

**Thursday July 9th 7pm for 7.30pm Lennie Goodings A Bite of the Apple - Behind the scenes at the Virago press.** Lennie will be in conversation with Harriet Evans, talking about her work at in this iconic publishing house. Her book is part memoir, part history and part thoughts on 40 years of feminist publishing. Lennie is chair of Virago and has edited works by Margaret Atwood, Sarah Waters and Maya Angelou.

## Recent Events

**Thursday March 12th One Two Three a film and discussion.**

For Sue Crockford in 1969, childcare was a central concern and with other parents, she set up the Children's Community Centre in Dartmouth Park Hill, a radical nursery fostering child-centred learning and gender and social equality. The fascinating film was followed by conversation with five women who were part of it. A new departure for the Friends and a successful one!

**Thursday April 23rd Highgate Newtown The battle to stop comprehensive redevelopment** This was our first online event through Zoom with a talk by Patrick Lefevre showing many photos of the changes over time with commentary and participation by several prominent members of the community who witnessed and were part of it. It worked well with much audience involvement. Video and much more at <http://www.dartmouthpark.org/FOHL/events/specialaprilonlinemeetingapril23rdfrom7pm>

**Thursday May 14th Beijing from Below Harriet Evans**  
*Stories of Marginal Lives in the Capital's Centre*

Harriet's book is based on long-term fieldwork in a deprived inner city neighbourhood in Beijing. She recorded the memories and experiences of everyday life of residents through the tumultuous decades of the 20th century and showed her photographs of the neighbourhood. This talk was a compelling insight into a community unknown to most of us and Harriet patiently answered many of our questions. Video at <https://vimeo.com/420282503>.

## News from the Library

Highgate Library is still locked down with the only sign of activity being the much-needed maintenance of the FOHL Memorial Garden by volunteers Margaret and Bridget.

However, behind the closed doors Camden Library Services (CLS) has remained active. A key focus has been to maintain the digital services offered free to all Camden Library members - supplying a wide range of e-books, e-audio books, newspapers, magazines and

reference books. CLS has extended its digital offer by offering members free access to "Ancestry", the popular site used for researching family histories which will be welcomed by to all those using this time to find out more about their own family histories.

Another key activity has been using the Home Library Service to supply books to as many of those unable to leave their homes as possible. Those Library staff members not needed for this work have been seconded to help other activities around the borough, such as those being organised by the Highgate Newtown Community Centre.

FOHL Management Group have maintained contact with the library volunteers by emailing a fortnightly very well received Blog containing Library news - local, national and, where appropriate, international - as well as book reviews, poetry and some of the beautiful or amusing images or videos that have emerged over the past few weeks.

Throughout the lockdown, Camden Library Services (CLS) has been considering how to re-open the Libraries when the time comes. CLS needs to review each Library to establish the how best to ensure social distancing and protection for Library staff and volunteers. In addition, an issue that will be very testing for library services will be how to provide the frequent and regular deep cleaning of the computers and all library stock that will be needed. Just think of all those books! Never will our libraries have been so clean.

Currently CLS anticipate that the easing of the lockdown restrictions will begin with the partial opening of some libraries for computer use only in order to provide access to key online services. FOHL remains in regular communication with CLS. The organisations will work together when the time comes planning the re-opening of Highgate Library.

**Sarah Harrison, Chair of Highgate Library Management Group**

### **The Piano Shop on the Left Bank, by T. E. Carhart. Vintage UK Random House 2001**

Pianos and Paris, what a perfect proposition. This book beautifully captures the atmosphere of Paris and the fascination that one might have for pianos. The author is an American writer working in Paris who comes across a strange piano shop with an idiosyncratic owner. The story unfolds as the author becomes accepted by the shop owner and eventually buys a piano. But on the way and indeed throughout the book there is a detailed history of the piano as well as captivating details of how this amazing instrument was developed and constructed. He describes the importance of the choice of materials, wood, (of many kinds, rosewood, mahogany, oak, spruce and so on) iron, steel, copper, felt, ivory, ebony, glue and varnish, and the different skills that are needed in the process, cabinet making, iron work, etc and then tuning which has a story of its own.

Camden Town has a different ambience from Paris's Left Bank but is similar in that there are specialist shops and interesting characters that inspire good writing. Camden Town was the heart of a 19th piano making district, where all the heavy materials for piano making would come up the Regent's Canal by barge from the London docks. The deputy head of one of the schools where I worked was an accomplished jazz pianist and he would hold the children spell-bound in assembly by dismantling the piano and showing them not only how it worked but how it was constructed. I performed this trick in my next school with great success, especially as it was in Camden Town. One does not have to be a pianist to find the instrument intriguing and to enjoy this book, and it may

inspire a new way of looking at instruments and performers, as well as a desire to revisit Paris when the lock down is over.

Sarah Carrier

## Keeping in touch effectively

We are missing our traditional tree posters terribly and with the Library closed there are few outlets for our leaflets/ Event Programmes.

There isn't a viable alternative but relying even more heavily on email as our main means of communication becomes more problematic by the day. Providers are constantly trying to upgrade their efforts to beat off spammers and worse. Which is good but not so good is they frequently trap innocent emails like ours. Making sure [FOHL@dartmouthpark.org](mailto:FOHL@dartmouthpark.org) is in your address book helps. We normally send at least one email a month while trying to respect our promise not to send more than 15/16 a year. If you don't see these, please check your spam folder. **Let us know if you simply can't find our emails.** One of the problems of limiting the number of emails is that we have to pack in more than one message per email so please open them and read beyond the headlines. Won't be true this time but usually the e-version of the Newsletter contains more than the printed one.

One of the advantages of our emails etc is that all the links are live.

One failsafe way of getting our emails if all else fails is to go to <http://www.dartmouthpark.org/FOHL/newsletter>. There you will find back numbers of all our Newsletters and, at the bottom of the page, a link to all our Reminder Emails and e-Newsletters.

We now have a strong presence on Facebook and Twitter. Sadly, many Friends aren't but If you are on either or both and if you haven't already please 'like' and/or follow us. If enough people are on another App, eg WhatsApp, we will set up a Friends' Group.

The absolute fail safes are our News and Events Pages on our Website:

[www.dartmouthpark.org/FOHL/events](http://www.dartmouthpark.org/FOHL/events) &

<http://www.dartmouthpark.org/FOHL/news>

*Don't forget you can pay subscriptions and donations by bank transfer to FOHL at RBS*  
**Sort Code: 16 00 23 Account number: 10008322.** You can complete (or amend if you have completed the form previously) our online form at <https://goo.gl/7e6VrW>

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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, Agnes Stewart, Paul Harris

Sarah Harrison, Ann Cheyne & Virginia Kerridge

President: Sue Perkins

Patrons: Julian Barnes, Joanna Briscoe, Tracy Chevalier, Hunter Davies, Caitlin Davies, John Harvey, & Charlotte Mendelson

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