



The Friends of Highgate Library

NEWSLETTER

December 2011

Friends' News

Members of the Friends' committee, along with other representatives of the local community, have now had a meeting in the Town Hall with Tulip Siddiq, Executive Member for Culture, to discuss in more detail the future of Highgate Library. This was also attended by our three ward councillors, by Mike Clarke (Head of Libraries) and a member of Camden's property services.

From April 2013 the budget for Highgate will be halved from £180,000 to £90,000. Despite this we were given a definite assurance from the ruling Labour party that they will continue to run and staff our library for the foreseeable future, but inevitably at a reduced level. But this still leaves a massive hole in the funding and there as yet no answers as to how this will be filled. Camden are currently engaged in what they call their 'Community Investment Programme' which is assessing all their buildings to make sure that they are getting the best use out of them and, no doubt, to make money by selling some of them off. Consultation about Highgate should begin in the New Year when there will be workshops in which the local community can 'design the engagement process themselves'.

In the meantime the Friends, along with other local groups, will put forward a proposal to the council for a form of governing body for the library which will help to ensure that the community has some more formal control over the future use of the building, particularly the space which will be freed up by the removal of the mobile library service.

Fabian Watkinson, Chairman

FUTURE EVENTS

March 29th 2012

“The Spirit Level : Why Equality is better for everyone” by Richard Wilkinson and Kate Pickett

At this meeting, our AGM, we hope you will come and join the discussion, lead by Martin Wilkinson, Richard's brother. One reviewer wrote " *Richard Wilkinson and Kate Pickett have written a remarkable, meticulously researched book which argues convincingly that inequality is the root cause of many of society's ills. A mass of evidence is marshalled to demonstrate that levels of violent crime, mental illness, drug addiction, illiteracy, obesity etc. are almost always higher in more unequal societies and that even the affluent are adversely affected by inequality.* "

RECENT EVENTS

Prashant Vaze - 22 September. How low can you go? Local author Prashant gave a thought-provoking talk on how we Dartmouth Park residents could reduce our carbon footprint, with many examples taken from his own experience recorded in his book *The Economical Environmentalist*. A series of diagrams clearly showed how a typical household generates carbon emissions and how these could be reduced. Prashant also told us about a recent local scheme where the use of a loaned electricity monitor had revealed unexpected waste of electricity in some appliances when left on standby. The audience went home with lots of ideas to put into practice.

Charlotte Mendelson read from her latest published book *When we were Bad* on Thursday, 3 November. A small group came on a rainy evening and appreciated the excerpts she read. She answered many questions about the craft of writing novels, how she started, and humour in her novels. She has also just finished a new novel which she did not talk about and which does not yet have a title. It was a good, companionable evening.

CAMDEN PUBLIC LIBRARIES USER GROUP

This group continues to link and support the Friends groups trying to run the libraries at Heath, Belsize and Chalk Farm. Our local papers are following their progress. The High Court decision in favour of library supporters in Somerset and Gloucestershire has given new heart to campaigners. This decision criticised those Councils for not considering enough the more needy members of the community. In Camden CPLUG are reporting Camden's actions to the Local Government Ombudsman. Friends of Highgate Library attend CPLUG meetings and keep in touch with developments.

LIBRARY GARDEN

We hope you have noticed and enjoyed the two new planters in front of the library. They came from the Chester Balmore site before the demolition began, and with the help of a generous donation from Glenda Jackson MP, we have planted them with low maintenance plants. A group of Friends also pruned and swept and spruced up the garden. We hope they add to your enjoyment of visits to our library.

READING GROUP

We now have ten keen members of our reading group. Although we usually meet in the library on Friday afternoon, we 'rang the changes' last month and met at Enid 's. Enid, as many of you are aware, has not been well so we decided to hold the meeting in her charming sitting room. We had a full house and a lively discussion about 'A Passage to India', E.M. Forster's astonishing novel about racial distinctions in India at the time of the Raj and reactions to British rule. The characters simply walked off the page and although for many of us this was a second reading of the book it nonetheless moved us once again with its subtlety of detail.

If you are interested in joining us at some future date please contact either Margot Kafno (020 7267 5565) or Ann Lewis (020 7272 1722) so we can put you on our reading list.

FORTHCOMING EVENTS

WINTER CELEBRATION Thursday, 8 December, 7.30

Come and join us in the library for pre Christmas cheer and to celebrate the fact that we are still here fighting for our library. There will be entertainment, for example, local writer, actor and storyteller Danny Scheinmann will be doing a number with his wife. We have actor Roger Lloyd Pack and poet Jehane Markham to amuse us with readings from fiction and poems. As for music, we are lucky to have popular musician Richard Strange as well as actress and singer Amy Finegan. And possibly even more.

To keep you sustained through the evening there will be mulled wine as well as seasonal offerings such as mince pies. Obviously an unmissable event!

NOTES FROM THE LIBRARY MANAGER

Are you interested in being able to get on line, use the internet, send e-mails, and use word processing? Age UK Camden offers computer classes that are small, friendly, and tailored to your needs. Free beginners classes for the over 50s take place at Highgate Library on Wednesday mornings 10.30-12.00. For more information or to book onto a course, please call the Computer Training Coordinator at Age UK Camden on: 020 7239 0416, or leave your details with the library staff.

We have a Christmas craft event for children on Wednesday 21st December 10.30 -12.00 .The library is open all the usual hours over Christmas with the exception of Tuesday 27th December when we will be closed.

Joanna Birch

FRIENDS OF HIGHGATE LIBRARY

President: Roger Lloyd Pack

Acting Chairman:	Fabian Watkinson
Hon. Secretary:	Margot Kafno
Hon. Treasurer:	Linda Lefevre
Committee:	Sarah Carrier, Natalie Doyle, Andy Edwards, Enid Evans, Alice Gutkind, Agnes Stewart, Sally Thompson
Patrons:	Hunter Davies and June Rose