



The Friends of Highgate Library

NEWSLETTER Spring 2020

Highgate Library News

Our Dartmouth Park Neighbourhood Forum has held many meetings and events in the library Civic and Cultural Centre since starting their work in 2012. Over recent years the Forum has reached out at community events and in other ways to find out what we think about our area, its good points and what needs improving. The culmination of that work was the Neighbourhood Plan which now adds extra planning protection to the things we value, our historic buildings, our green spaces and community assets like our library. The Plan says (para 5.4), “We received comments like this: “ ‘People value the HNCC and the Highgate Library facilities.’ ‘I love the library – meeting neighbours, getting information, borrowing books.’”

We are delighted that the library itself became a polling station for the referendum. The result was that more than 1000 people voted and almost 88% supported the plan. To find out more go to <https://www.dpnf.org.uk/>.

The Friends had a stall during the Lauderdale House Heritage Weekend to showcase our special local history and Highgate Cemetery collection. We talked to many people about local history and our important collection and strengthened links to other Highgate groups.

Sadly, one of our stalwart Friends, Barbara Alexander, died early in February. She often came to our Thursday events and was a keen library user. Our condolences to Bernard and her family. We will miss her.

Our April meeting is our Annual General Meeting. The evening will start with reports on our year’s work and our finances before we hear our guest speaker, Helen Lawrence.

This is the time to renew your membership and you will find a form inside. You can renew online by bank transfer, details on the form. We are still very good value at just £6 and of course we welcome your donations. Our printed newsletters, postage and printed posters all need to be paid for.

Remember there is always more information and an extended and often updated newsletter on our website , <http://www.dartmouthpark.org/FOHL>

We welcome you to join us as volunteers to work in the library, to manage the hall or to join our committee to plan and run events. Just come and talk to any committee member at an event or contact us by email or through our website. We also welcome your suggestions.

Linda Lefevre, Chair

Things to Come

Thursday March 12th at 7.30pm ***One Two Three* a film and discussion.**

For Sue Crockford as a young mother 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 the values of gender and social equality. This film records activities in the centre against the background of the development of Highgate Newtown. Join us to see it and meet some of those involved at the time.

Thursday April 9th at 7.30pm **FOHL AGM followed by**
***How Hampstead Heath Was Saved* Helen Lawrence**

Helen, who was involved with the Heath and Hampstead Society (H&HS) for many years, has written a new history of the Heath and the many battles to save it. After decades of opposition to the Lord of the Manor of Hampstead, Sir Thomas Maryon Wilson's plans to build on the Heath, it was finally preserved for the public by an Act of Parliament in 1871. Then, over the next century, land around the original Heath was slowly added - with campaigners such as H&HS often playing a central role.

Thursday May 14th at 7.30pm **Frances Hodgson Burnett - her life and work.** *The Secret Garden - Little Lord Fauntleroy - The Little Princess*

Musician Helen Tierney and actor Alexis Leighton make a welcome return to bring the author Frances Hodgson Burnett to life in this dramatization of her life through her novels and letters. This is a one woman show with live accordion and harp music. Burnett is famous for her children's books but wrote 55 books for adults and children and adapted some for the stage. Hers is a fascinating life – come and enjoy this show.

Thursday June 11th at 7.30pm ***Beijing from Below* Harriet Evans**
Stories of Marginal Lives in the Capital's Centre

Harriet Evans studied in China during the last years of the Cultural Revolution. She has written extensively on the politics of gender in China and on the visual culture of the Mao era. This book is based on long-term fieldwork in a deprived inner city neighbourhood in Beijing. She records the memories and experiences of everyday life of residents through the tumultuous decades of the 20th century. She will show her photographs of the neighbourhood.

Thursday July 9th Lennie Goodings ***A Bite of the Apple* - Behind the scenes at the Virago press.** Lennie will be in conversation, talking about her work at this iconic publishing house.

Recent Events

Tuesday December 17th PETERLOO! 200th anniversary pop-up play

Our audience joined in with enthusiasm to take parts in acting out the drama.

Despite commemorating such a grim event, Martin and Beth's script managed to

make contemporary references which amused us. Everyone enjoyed the mulled wine and seasonal food too.

Thursday January 9th Oliver Rowe *Food For All Seasons*

We had a fascinating evening in the company of Oliver Rowe, a successful chef. He told us how he took ten years to write his book “Food for All Seasons”. We found out about his time in Tuscany where locally sourced food is used in restaurants. When he started to run his own business, he tried to do the same and had close contacts with farms in the vicinity. Oliver’s father reminded us how once beetroot ruled his seasonal menu. We came away with the message - don’t eat strawberries in February but rather look for locally produced fruit and vegetables.

Thursday February 13th Tracy Chevalier *A Single Thread*

On Thursday February 13, Tracy Chevalier was our guest, introducing us to her new book *A Single Thread*. Tracy is a *habitué* of our Thursday evenings because of her astonishing literary output. Her presentation was unusual, intimate and riveting: she generously allowed us a glimpse into her creative process, leading us into the complex trains of thought and thorough research which she combines to construct a plot and characters, and then write. Don’t try this at home! Brilliant talent is the essential ingredient, as she proved when she read out some passages from her beautiful book.

News from the Library

New public computers (PCs) were installed at Highgate early last summer, but since then it feels like little has happened. This is very frustrating, so we thought it would help to tell about the bigger picture – i.e. the IT work across all Camden’s libraries. This is a big project, with PCs to be replaced, new operating system installed (Windows 10), network upgrade, wi-fi coverage expanded, new self-service machines, as well as innovative kit like the Hublets.

In March 2018, we had 229 PCs working across our nine libraries, but by December 2019, we were down to 168. At that stage only Highgate and West Hampstead had new machines. Meanwhile IT were still working on the new Windows 10 profile for the PCs, a more complicated task than installing a new system on a home computer, because of the interconnected systems we use.

That was completed in January and they started installing new PCs in the remaining libraries (200+ computers). So far, these have been installed at Kentish Town (as part of a redesign of the whole library), Queens Crescent and Swiss Cottage.

In March the four remaining will be done, including Kilburn which had gone from 40 working machines to just eight!

In the meantime, about 20 new self-service (RFID) machines have been installed at all libraries. Even with their new coloured lights, they’re not exciting bits of kit, but they are essential – they are used for 70% of all transactions (e.g. borrowing items). Every library now has Hublets, which allows users to borrow tablet computers in the library, Highgate being one of the first to get theirs.

In April, our small team in IT will move on to the upgrade of the network – which defines our data speeds – and to expand our wi-fi coverage. Parts of the network are 20 years old and when the wi-fi was installed 10 years ago, it was only put into certain areas, rather than covering the whole space. I am lobbying for this work to be done early at Highgate and we hope this work will be finished in April. The upgrade to Windows 10 at Highgate and West Hampstead and users being able to print to from their device (laptop etc) should happen in April or May.

Nick Durant, Team Leader

Julia Donaldson, Waterstones Children’s Laureate, wrote a poem to celebrate National Libraries Day.

Everyone is welcome to walk through the door.
It really doesn’t matter if you’re rich or poor.
There are books in boxes and books on shelves.
They’re free for you to borrow, so help yourselves.
Come and meet your heroes, old and new,
From William the Conqueror to Winnie the Pooh.
You can look into The Mirror or read The Times,
Or bring along a toddler to chant some rhymes.
The librarian’s a friend who loves to lend,
So see if there’s a book that she can recommend.
Read that book, and if you’re bitten
You can borrow all the other ones the author’s written.
Are you into battles or biography?
Are you keen on gerbils or geography?
Gardening or ghosts? Sharks or science fiction?
There’s something here for everyone, whatever your addiction.
There are students revising, deep in concentration,
And school kids doing projects, finding inspiration.
Over in the corner there’s a table with seating,
So come along and join in the Book Club meeting.
Yes, come to the library! Browse and borrow,
And help make sure it’ll still be here tomorrow.

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
