



# The Friends of Highgate Library

## NEWSLETTER Spring 2023

### Friends' News

Our December event saw a new development, a live audience and a speaker in Scotland joining us on Zoom! February brought a different challenge as part of the ceiling fell into the library's learning centre and the Civic and Cultural Centre was closed while damage was assessed. (More building news in Sarah's report) Derek Hayden at Brookfield School offered immediate help and our choir and Pilates groups moved into the school, followed by our February talk. Derek and his assistant set out chairs and welcomed us, while Dave Bodger showed us how to use the projector and link in our camera and microphone. We are very grateful for their help. The large audience enjoyed this talk in the new venue. We are back in our hall and it is good to see our in-person audiences growing while we keep our Zoom link for those unable to join us there.

We are moving our talks to Tuesday evenings from our April AGM, to allow more time to set up and train volunteers who offer to help with the technical aspects. Our President Toby Faber will chair this meeting and I and our treasurer, Patrick, will present our reports on the last year, followed by questions and comment. After this brief session, we will hear our speaker Tania Kaczynski, about the work of the New Art studio. (Details inside).

Sarah and I regularly network with people from many local societies at meetings set up by Katherine Ives, director of Lauderdale House. We share information and help each other if we can. We were pleased to have a stall at Lauderdale's recent Heritage Weekend, showcasing our Local Studies and Highgate Cemetery Collection. We hope it will be better used when more people know of it.

We continue to send monthly emails, including an extended newsletter, and advertise events on Facebook, Instagram, Twitter and Eventbrite. Remember there is more information on our website, [www.FOHL.org.uk](http://www.FOHL.org.uk). Please contact us by email [FOHL@dartmouthpark.org.uk](mailto:FOHL@dartmouthpark.org.uk). As always we need more volunteers to join us and would be particularly keen to have someone who could help with video editing.

*You can make donations and pay subscriptions now due (normally £6) by bank transfer to FOHL at RBS **Sort Code: 16 00 23 Account number: 10008322**. If you are a new member or your details have changed, please complete our online membership form at <https://goo.gl/7e6VrW>.*

*Linda Lefevre, Chair*

## **News from Highgate Library**

Just as Highgate Library was hitting its stride, getting ever busier with new people coming in and more activities on offer, everything ground to a halt. The Library had to be closed for a month as some ceiling plaster came down necessitating thorough checks to the whole structure. Once repaired the Library re-opened on Saturday 25 February. It was heart-warming to see the delight with which this was greeted by many of our “regulars” of all ages.

Despite this hiccup, things on the building front, internally and structurally, are looking very positive. In the short term, as part of Camden’s “Warm Hubs” initiative, measures are being put in place to make the library easier to heat while additional comfortable seating and larger study tables will extend the space available to users. Over 20 metres of additional shelving are being installed easing the book overcrowding and having more books on display.

In the medium term, the new desks for the PCs will finally be installed. Incorporating shields, they will provide users with both privacy and protection from viruses. Work is in hand to improve the wi-fi facilities so that it will work reliably in all parts of the building.

In the longer term we now have confirmation that funding to refurbish the Library has been secured. The beautiful building, financed by Andrew Carnegie the Scottish American industrialist and philanthropist, has been operating as Library ever since it opened in 1906. However, in recent decades maintenance has been severely affected by the reduction in local authority funding, as a result the building now suffers from many problems especially with its roofs and heating system. The refurbishment will deal with these issues incorporating insulation and improving the windows and doors. The details have yet to be finalised and builders appointed, but it is hoped that this work will begin as early as June. The Civic and Cultural Centre in the hall, originally built to be the Children’s Library, is included in the specification of this work.

It is a great achievement that in the current economic climate 2023 will see a warmer, more comfortable refurbished building with improved facilities for users. One of our ward councillors Anna Wright, the FOHL Management Group and officers have worked hard over several years to achieve this. Indeed Highgate Library owes its very existence to the many people in this community who over the past decades have successfully fought off several attempts to close it. Since 2015, when FOHL took on joint responsibility for management and staffing, the Library volunteers have contributed over 3000 hours every year to sustain the library and develop new initiatives.

It is a local library in the best sense – loved and supported by its community.

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

**Things to Come - please register in advance with Eventbrite (we know it can be a pain but it helps us build our event publicity arrangements)**

**Thursday March 9th 7.30pm *Honouring Highgate Women***

**Angela Burdett Coutts to Stella Gibbons *The Pink Plaques Project* Catharine Wells**

We celebrate International Women's Day (March 8<sup>th</sup>). The Pink Plaques project was started by three local women, including Catharine, and celebrates the lives of Highgate women who achieved much, past and present, including Christina Rossetti, Mary Kingsley, Victoria Wood and Claudia Jones. Catharine will tell us more about it and the women it honours.

**Tuesday April 18<sup>th</sup> 7.30pm Our AGM, chaired by Toby Faber, followed by**

***The story of a London art studio for asylum seekers and refugees* Tania Kaczynski**

Tania Kaczynski is an art psychotherapist working at The New Art Studio, set up as a lifeline for refugees and asylum seekers. Her book tells how creating art can provide hope for those who have lost everything. In it alongside the work of the studio's members are their true stories of bravery, loss and redemption. She will talk about her vital work.

**Tuesday May 16th 7.30pm *Untold London***

***Stories from time-trodden streets* Dan Carrier**

Dan calls it a love letter to London. Within the first 20 pages, we've learned about the crocodiles that once called St James' Park home. Some of the walks will take you to places you already know but might need reminding of, others will head into new parts of Westminster worthy of exploration. You won't get 10 yards without Dan pulling out some outrageous fact about a lost watering hole or something hidden behind a faded façade. With this book, everybody can take a stroll with him too.

**Tuesday June 20<sup>th</sup> 7.30pm *Spinning Stories* Esther Freud**

Esther Freud is a novelist much admired for her absorbing stories of family relationships, children and lovers, as well as for the wealth of sensuous details that she brings to the storytelling. Esther will be talking about her most recent novel, *I Couldn't Love You More* and how she uses the springboard of personal experience to create fiction.

## Recent Events

Our Zoom events are recorded and you can enjoy them when it suits you or or will be able to as soon as we catch up with our editing schedule. Full details are on our website.

### **Thursday December 8th Emma Jolly**

#### **Tracing your family history using the census**

Emma's knowledge as a professional genealogist gave us a clear account of how the Census provides a fascinating insight into the past. She took us step by step through how to use it and how the census itself has changed over time, recording new information. The evening was full of advice for anyone wanting to trace their family history. Emma was speaking to us in the hall from Edinburgh by the power of Zoom!

### **Thursday January 12th Simon Norfolk**

#### **Making Climate Change visible (and beautiful)**

Simon used his wonderful photographs to show us how images change our ideas and feelings and challenge us. He used a wide variety of images, some showing people changing over time affected by war in Afghanistan. He also showed some beautiful and startling film of glaciers shrinking rapidly as our climate changes. His images and haunting music were powerful and moving.

### **Thursday February 9th Fabian Watkinson**

#### **Erno Goldfinger and 2 Willow Road The house that no one wanted**

Fabian gave us an insider's view of 2 Willow Rd which became the home of Ernö Goldfinger and his family. As the title says The House That No one Wanted meant that there was much resistance to the demolition of the cottages on the site and to the design of the modern block. Erno Goldfinger was a Hungarian born architect (in)famous for his controversial high-rise blocks like Trellick Tower. Although during his lifetime he was under constant attack for his uncompromising modernist architecture, the tide has turned and some of his buildings are now listed and flats within are much sought after. In spite of the last minute change of venue the event was very well attended and a great success.

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### **FRIENDS OF HIGHGATE LIBRARY**

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

Chair: Linda Lefevre

Vice Chair & Membership: Sarah Carrier

Events Margot Kafno Hon. Treasurer: Patrick Lefevre

Committee: Michele Cohen, Agnes Stewart, Paul Harris

Sarah Harrison & Virginia Kerridge

President: Toby Faber

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

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