



# The Friends of Highgate Library

## NEWSLETTER Summer 2023

### Friends' News

Our annual general meeting in April was very well attended, as was our May meeting with Dan Carrier talking about *Untold London*. It is good to see the return of live audiences. We may soon have to check people's registrations so do remember to register in advance. Dan strongly recommended a book by Sidney Day, *London Born*, Sidney's story of growing up in the space that is now the Whittington Estate. This book is in our Local History library so do come in and read it (it is part of our reference collection).

You can borrow and take home Tanya's book *Who Am I?*, the subject of our April talk and we also have *The Domestic Theatre Handbook*, full of instant plays by Beth Shaw and Martin Bould who have entertained us several times, involving the audience as cast members, the most recent being the story of Coleridge which we managed on Zoom!

While we support authors by encouraging book sales at events, FOHL donates books for everyone to borrow, (authors get a small fee when library books are borrowed). We have books by Pamela Holmes, Emma Jolly, Jehane Markham and others too.

After many recent factual talks we return to fiction for June and July and I am really looking forward to hearing from Esther Freud and Guy Ware about how they approach their writing.

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). We sometimes add newspaper articles and reviews relating to our events. Please contact us by email [FOHL@dartmouthpark.org.uk](mailto:FOHL@dartmouthpark.org.uk).

Included with this newsletter is our Summer Programme. Traditionally we don't have an August event, it avoids the risk that people will miss something when on holiday.

*You can make donations and pay subscriptions (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**

Highgate Library has been thriving these past few months with more people coming in to take advantage of the space and the services available. The large new study table with charger points is usually occupied, as are the new smaller study tables at the back of the library; the use of the PCs is increasing; the Children's Library has become one of the go-to places of choice for many parents/carers in the after-school period, while attendance at all the services for children has increased. The Meeting Room is now in regular use with two of the Ward Councillor's surgeries held there, a variety of classes including IT, ESOL as well as some from the Working Men's College and a local Knitting group.

Several improvements, many funded by our Charity, are in place or shortly will be. The temporary measures to make the library warmer made a real difference while the weather remained cold. The new shelving is now erected and the books being re-arranged to make best advantage of the extra space. The long-awaited new computer tables will finally arrive this month. The provision of magazines for reading in the library has been re-started, and shortly we will be re-introducing the popular sale of books not needed or not appropriate for the Highgate Library.

However, amongst all these positives there is some sad news. Fahd Toor, our universally liked and respected Community Library Manager, has moved on. We wish him all the best for the future. Iqbal Hussain will now be managing Highgate Library together with West Hampstead Library supported by two Library officers who will provide the day-to-day staff input. George, who has been in post for several months, is being joined by Sikirat. This is a new structure and has been introduced on a trial basis.

The Library also faces the challenge of finding a way to continue to deliver services while the refurbishment is carried out. The details of that are not yet finalised, but it seems probable that work will begin in the autumn and last for at least seven months. The Ward Councillors are committed to ensuring that Highgate Library continues to provide a service throughout the refurbishment and the construction team have been asked to draw up work schedules that will ensure this is possible.

Despite these changes and the challenge ahead I have no doubt that the new Highgate staff team and the Library volunteers, who have recently been strengthened by three new members, will ensure that Highgate Library continues to deliver its much-valued service to the local community.

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

## Things to Come –

Please register in advance with Eventbrite via the link on our website  
[www.fohl.org.uk/events](http://www.fohl.org.uk/events)

### **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.

### **Tuesday July 18<sup>th</sup> 7.30pm *The Peckham Experiment* Guy Ware**

Guy Ware's latest novel tells the story of Charlie and JJ - identical twins and children of the 1930s utopian health initiative, *the Peckham Experiment* - who come of age committed to building the New Jerusalem. It is set in June 2017 - the night before the general election and a week before the Grenfell disaster. JJ has died and the 85-year-old Charlie, living in the now redeveloped home of the original Experiment, tries to make sense of their lives. It's about idealism and corruption - moral, political and financial - about local government, housing and gentrification, about sexuality, love and lust, about class and family loyalty. And, of course, Peckham.

The *Guardian* described the book as "Deeply impressive ... one of the most moving novels I have read in some time."

### **Sunday September 10<sup>th</sup> 12 noon till late York Rise Street Party**

The Friends will have a stall at this great community event with live music, food, films, activities and stalls. Come and see us (or stay and help!)

### **Tuesday September 19<sup>th</sup> 7.30pm *African and Caribbean People in Britain* Professor Hakim Adi**

"His latest book, *African and Caribbean People in Britain*, is his crowning achievement; a meticulously researched tour de force that charts black presence on the British Isles from Cheddar Man through the African Roman legions and Black Tudors and into the present day. In the age of Black Lives Matter, and following books such as David Olusoga's *Black and British*, the Windrush story has been under increasing strain. Adi's work should represent the final nail in the coffin for those who think that Britain was ever truly white and should be kept that way." *Kehinde Andrews Guardian 2022*

## Recent Events

### **Thursday March 9th Honouring Highgate Women The Pink Plaques Project**

Catharine Wells told us about this tongue in cheek project, a perfect accompaniment to the ubiquitous blue plaques that commemorate very few women. Politicians Nicky Gavron and Barbara Castle, writers Stella Gibbons and Diana Athill are among women who should be remembered, also curiosities like Dido Belle, born into slavery and illegitimate ending up in Kenwood House getting a good education, Harriet Mellon actress who became one of the wealthiest women of her times by marrying Thomas Coutts the banker. The list is long and hopefully the accreditation for the area's remarkable women will carry on.

### **Tuesday April 18th AGM and The story of a London art studio for asylum seekers and refugees**

The Annual General Meeting, chaired by FOHL President Toby Faber, received reports on the year's work and FOHL finances. Then Tania Kaczynski the art psychotherapist who founded The New Art Studio, set up as a lifeline for refugees and asylum seekers, told us how creating art can provide hope for those who have lost everything. We heard true stories of bravery, loss and redemption and how being a member of the studio offered a welcome, hope and support. People at the large meeting bought many copies of her book and raised £500 for the charity.

### **Tuesday May 16th Untold London Stories from time-trodden streets Dan Carrier**

Our May event brought in the crowds to hear Dan Carrier, with barely an empty seat in the Hall. Dan, a journalist on the Camden New Journal, born and bred in Dartmouth Park, talked about his new book. The receptive audience listened intently to Dan reading excerpts in which he uncovers and celebrates forgotten or unknown stories, landmarks and characters. This had been a lockdown project when he had been able, as a journalist, to explore deserted streets. He also sourced historical information from sites such as [british-history.ac.uk](http://british-history.ac.uk) and [oldbaileyonline.org](http://oldbaileyonline.org).

Many of our Zoom events are recorded. Full details are on our website.

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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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