

# Friends of West Barnes Library

## Committee meeting, 6pm, Tuesday 24 August 2021

### Present

	Toby Ewin Chair; Newsletter editor	
Rev <sup>d</sup> Rachel Taylor Vice Chair		Theresa Clarke Committee member
Sarah McAlister Committee member		Madeleine Maguire Committee member
Mary-Jane Jeanes Committee member		Alison Honor Committee member

**Apologies**—Anthony Hopkins (Head of Library Services), Danny MacDonald (West Barnes & Raynes Park Library Manager), Dan Griffiths (Friends' Secretary), Penny Price (Friends' Treasurer), Brenda Brevitt (Friends' Committee member), Cllr Hina Bokhari AM, Cllr Eloise Bailey, Cllr Carl Quilliam.

### Minutes of previous meetings

1. There were no comments.

### Library Manager's report

2. Complications in arranging cover during staff absence prevented Danny MacDonald from being present, but he kindly provided a summary of recent developments.
  - He and Roz were making contact with West Barnes' activity volunteers and were slowly rebuilding the activities we had pre pandemic, with yoga and the knitting group due to return from Sunday.
  - Danny would also be reaching out to Blossom House in September to arrange a private session in the Childrens' library for their attendees.

(The Storytime children's group had already re-started on Tuesdays and Fridays, and the Scrabble group had also moved back into the library—from now onwards, meeting at 4pm on Thursdays rather than 5pm on Mondays. And apart from Danny taking over as manager of Raynes Park and West Barnes Libraries, his team has also been reinforced by a new member of permanent staff, Magda.)

3. He wanted to thank Gilli Lewis-Lavender and the Rendezvous Club for working with him to resume club meetings in a Covid-secure way, thanked her for lobbying to Hannah Doody for purchasing a defibrillator for the library. The Committee wondered if the defibrillator would be housed inside or outside the Library. *ACTION: Danny.*
4. John Morgan—who had now taken over Hannah Doody's role as Interim Director for Community & Housing—would be visiting West Barnes Library at 2pm on Thursday 2 September, together with Anthony Hopkins (Merton's Head of Libraries, Heritage & Adult Education) and Cllr Brenda Fraser (Merton Council cabinet member for Culture, Leisure & Skills). *ACTION: interested committee members.*

5. The Committee was grateful for this information and hoped it would also be possible, at future meetings, to have figures for library usage. It was understood that the pre-Covid practice of comparing a given month's figures with those of the previous year(s) would not make sense over the next year, but hoped it might be possible to compare a given month with its immediate predecessor, and with figures for other Merton branches. (it was noted, for comparative purposes, that churches in south London presently had attendance at 40-50% of pre-Covid levels, and did not expect to regain their former numbers for perhaps 18 months.)

6. Given that, in pre-Covid times, some library users visited in order to read daily newspapers, the committee wondered how soon it might be possible to provide daily papers in the Library again? *ACTION: Danny.*

### **Chairman's report**

6. Most library—and Friends'—activities necessarily had to pause during lockdown. But we had continued to issue Friends' newsletters, and will now resume doing this on a regular monthly basis. Colleagues were invited to alert Toby about any forthcoming events they wanted to see mentioned.

*ACTION: Toby and committee members.*

7. Special credit was due to Penny Price for keeping the main Reading Group going online, and to Joy Kluyer and Sarah McAlister for organising some virtual author talks. Congratulations too to Joy for publishing two great books since Covid began, and for donating copies to the library. We understand that Joy hopes to resume the author talks in the autumn. Many thanks were due to Sarah, too, for acquiring the new display boards, which were now at the library.

8. As these display boards were heavy and delicate, the Committee did not envisage their use *outside* the library building. And as they had not come with instructions, and their assembly was not simple, Sarah McAlister had prepared instructions for their use, and would provide training for those colleagues who wished to familiarise themselves with this equipment. *ACTION: Sarah and interested committee members.*

9. The Motspur Park/West Barnes area had been well represented at the Discovery Day event at the Civic Centre on Saturday 23 August, with both St Saviours' display of *The men of Raynes Park 1914-18: their lives, deaths and stories* and our own *Airship over Motspur Park: the West Barnes/Motspur Park area between the Wars*. Merton's Local Heritage librarian, Sarah Gould, who organised the Discovery Day, reported that at least 849 people had visited the exhibition, and while this figure was lower than in pre-Covid years, it was still commendable given continuing Covid concerns, and the day's rainy weather.

### **Friends' website**

10. The Committee agreed that the website should focus on Friends'—and other West Barnes and nearby—events. For clarity's sake, it was desirable not to overload the site with too much information about more distant events and activities.

*ACTION: Madeleine.*

### **Friends' acquisitions—and Constitution**

11. Over several years, the Friends had bought several tables (mainly for use at events

such as Quizzes, bingo, and fairs in the Library), some of the chairs used for large events, hot water flasks, a sandwich board and—most recently—a set of display boards. It had also contributed to the cost of the flat screen by the Library entrance. While these items had all been procured for *use* in the Library, they remained the Friends' property, and their use *outside* the Library was subject to the Friends' agreement—as was the case most recently when two flasks were sent to Morden for use on Discovery Day.

12. Theresa Clarke would prepare an inventory of the Friends' items at the Library, in consultation with Penny Price (to consider whether such items needed to be reflected in future Friends' Accounts). Mary-Jane Jeanes would prepare stickers to identify the relevant items, and Sarah McAlister would print out a list of the items, with a view to its featuring on the Friends' noticeboards, so members and Library users had some sense of what the Friends' activity *other than events*, over the years.

*ACTION: Theresa, Penny, Sarah.*

13. Rachel Taylor reminded the committee that the Friends had initially had a Constitution. Among the uses of such a document was to record, formally, what should happen to the Friends' funds and property if either [a] the organisation was unable to continue (as had happened to our sister organisation at Raynes Park) or [b] if the London Borough of Merton ever felt obliged to close West Barnes Library. The longest-standing committee members undertook to check whether they could locate copies of the existing Constitution, to see if these eventualities were already provided for.

*ACTION: committee members.*

### **Events**

14. As many of the events the Friends normally organised were after-hours, it was hoped that the ability to use all the public space within the building would mean that events such as author talks and the AGM should be consistent with any continuing social distancing requirements.

15. The Events sub-committee hoped to meet within the next few weeks, to consider what type of events to suggest for the autumn. They did not anticipate seeking to organise anything before October.

*ACTION: Events sub-committee.*

### **Friends' Annual General Meeting**

16. The Committee hoped it would be possible to arrange the—understandably overdue—AGM for 4pm on Saturday 18 September. *ACTION: Toby, Dan, Penny, Theresa.*

17. The Committee sought guidance from Danny about what type of Risk Assessment was required for the AGM and indeed for any prospective Friends' events. And whether it was acceptable to provide tea and cakes at the AGM.

*ACTION: Danny*

### **AOB**

18. The committee thought it would be worth having a display in the Library where users could stick Post-it notes saying what books they had read during the lockdowns, perhaps with separate spaces for adults' and childrens' answers. Toby would seek Danny's views as to whether some noticeboard space, or the interior wall beside the library entrance, might be used for this.

*ACTION: Toby*

19. Committee members had not recently been in Motspur Park station's ticket office, and were uncertain whether the bookcase for ex-library books had yet been re-installed there—as had apparently happened at Raynes Park.