



Friends of Greenhill Library

Registered Charity Number 1158656

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ANNUAL REPORT TO THE 2023 AGM

This report covers activities from October 2022 to September 2023 and the finances for the year ending 31st March 2023.

Foreword

What a fantastic year this has been for Friends of Greenhill Library, one of change, growth and celebration across both of our locations in Greenhill and Lowedges. The library continues to recruit new volunteers and find new ways to meet the needs and wants of local residents. Our Greenhill buildings utilities have been modernised and the space in the children's section was extended just in time to celebrate our 60th Anniversary. Whilst we still face some challenges, the library's future feels secure and in good hands – our volunteer celebration event in July was testament to that. Next year marks our 10th anniversary as a community run library, a brilliant milestone to look forward to and what should be a proud achievement for all those who have and continue to be involved in Friends of Greenhill Library. Well done.

Main Achievements During the Year.

A) Library Service.

Following much hard work from our library assistants, session leaders and our operational lead Ann Hartley we have returned to our pre-pandemic opening hours of 26 hours per week. We continue to welcome around 3000 visitors each quarter and total book loans continue to grow. Interestingly yellow sticker book loans, those not on the wider library catalogue, now make up 61% of our book issues. Additionally, this year has seen our highest number of yellow sticker book issues compared to the previous five years, 14608 book issues this year up from 10586 last year.

Our sub-branch library, Lowedges, which shares a space with the Terminus Initiative in the Meeting Place continues to go from strength to strength. As was our aim, the recruitment of more volunteers means there is a reduced dependence on Catherine Samengo-Turner, our Events and Engagement Coordinator in order to offer a library service. In turn, this has meant Catherine has more time to engage the local community and find new ways to connect them to the library such as

regular class visits to the library from Lowedges Academy.

Lowedges library is open 12.5 hours per week. Engagement in the library continues to grow through increased footfall and library membership. Book issues continue to grow and book 'give aways' remain a proven means of engaging local people in the library.

Our Summer Reading Challenge for children run at Greenhill Library in 2023 was a success. Co-ordinated by Clive Opie and in addition managed by a range of volunteers a total of 166 children (102 girls, 64 boys) registered and, at time of going to press, 43% had completed the challenge. The total registering was up on 2022 figures although still down on the 2019 registration figures of 186 but obviously a continuing improvement pattern.. Encouragingly, the Lowedges library registered 15 children (9 girls, 6 boys) with a 20% completion rate, another continuing improvement pattern.

We continue to expand our selection of books both through donations and the purchase of new titles. We remain grateful for the £1,500 book grant from Sheffield City Council in this regard. Books we cannot add to our catalogue ensure our ever popular book shop remains well stocked. We continue to sell books, including those not fit for use, to a range of online buyers and platforms including Ziffit, Revival Books and We Buy Any Books. This ensures books get the best possible chance of being used or recycled. We really appreciate peoples donations as the above outlets collectively provide us with steady income.

This last year saw the return of our user survey with the results published in April 2023. The outcome was overwhelmingly positive with a significant number of comments on how fantastic our volunteers are and what a fantastic community asset the library is. Other comments on how we can improve have been taken forwards.

B) Community Outreach & New Activities.

Our **strategic objective** is to grow outreach into our community and new activities. These would be to fulfil our mission "to work with local residents, groups and organisations to promote other educational, cultural, recreational and social activities that respond to their needs and contribute to community cohesion and development".

Our activities are now back to business as usual with some new additions. Special thanks to Chris Brown who helps organise or oversee many activities at Greenhill Library. Our offer over the last year has included:

Greenhill

- Our **monthly film program** for both adults and children continues to be popular with many showings enjoying a full house
- We continue to enjoy a range of **one-off events** at the library including a performance by the Sheffield Ukelele Group and some interactive theatre for children by Cardboard Cosmos.

- Our regular **evening talks** continue to be popular and this year have included a Menopause talk by Karen Weir, Flower Arranging on a budget by Elizabeth Bishop, Demolished Sheffield by Mike Higginbottom, a history talk from Val Hewson, and a talk on Loxley by Peter Machan.
- The **Porter Valley Concert Band** held a brilliant concert in March at Greenhill Methodist church which raised £960 for the library. A big thankyou to both the band and attendees for such a great event
- The library celebrated two big occasions this year; it was our **60th anniversary** which saw some of the first ever Greenhill Library staff members and the Lord Mayor join us as VIPs. We also held a special **Coronation Celebration** Event which allowed attendees to watch the day unfold on our big screen whilst enjoying lots of delicious food!
- Sixteen local children were treated to a trip to the **Mayors Parlour** at the Town Hall where the Lord Mayor read some stories and treated everyone to some cake.
- Our weekly **coffee mornings** continue to grow in popularity and now include a monthly visit to a local pub, The White Swan, for a lunch club.
- The **book clubs** popularity has led to second group being developed which both meet once a month
- Janet Black and Laura White won the Montessori “Storyteller of the Year” award for their work on **Story Time**; despite both moving on, Story Time continues to be a popular offering
- A new addition to our offering has been **running courses** delivered by Tessa Bainbridge that are helping attendees build up their stamina to complete both 5 and 10-kilometre runs. These have proven incredibly popular and follows on from our user survey which asked for a physical health group.
- **Story walks** continue to go on display on the lawn in front of Greenhill and attract good levels of interest
- Our annual **open Gardens event** was once again successful; we are very grateful to all those who opened their gardens and made contributions
- The **Scarecrow Competition** in August 2023 had slightly more entries than the previous year and saw a fantastic outing of scarecrows. Well done to all those involved.
- A new **poetry group** has been launched, new poetry books purchased alongside some new poetry activities for children. Special thanks to Louise Dore for her efforts on this front.
- We have continued to provide support and space for **Greener Greenhill**, notably their Great Big Green Week in late September last year and a repeat of their popular bike maintenance offering in the library car park.
- The **Greenhill Events Group** who are part of Friends of Greenhill library organized another Christmas Extravaganza, which despite the rain, was a big

success!

- We have returned to regular **market** events trialing different focuses, these continue to be popular and a good source of income for the library.
- A new **Lego Club** for children aged 8+ started in early summer and was quickly booked to capacity. Our local lego master Richard Biddulph is quickly becoming a local celebrity.
- Our **Coder Dojo** (essentially an afternoon coding club for 8-13 year olds) enjoys regular attendance
- Our **website** continues to be the most definitive source of information particularly for our events program
- We continue to organize **readathons** across the year.
- Our **Knit and Natter** group continues to be both popular and productive.
- The children's library continues to enjoy **fantastic displays** throughout the year which catch visitors attention and no doubt help spark children's imaginations. Notable mentions go to the Narnia and Winnie the Pooh displays! A huge thanks to Lynne Brown for all her work on these
- Our attempts to launch activities designed to combat **digital exclusion** have not been successful due to lack of perceived need within our community. Lack of customers has also led us to discontinue our Friday morning one-on-one computer support sessions.

Lowedges

- Our **Lowedges school holiday activities** have continued and we are now part of the **Healthy Holiday Scheme** in partnership with Sheffield City Council.
- Our relationship with **Lowedges Academy** continues to blossom. We have regular class visits to introduce children to the library and take membership forms away. Catherine also delivers assemblies including launching the summer reading challenge and getting children to write book reviews to display in the library.
- The offer at our Lowedges site continues to develop, we continue to host a **Breakfast Club**, **Adult Craft & Coffee Mornings** and a **Board Game Club** plus have recently launched a new **Adult Creative Reading Group** which has been well received and helped engage people in reading for the first time.
- We joined the campaign '**Letters against Loneliness**' with local children writing letters to those living in care homes with Dementia. The uptake was really positive and residents thrilled with their correspondence. We will repeat this again in the autumn.
- Alongside The Terminus Initiative we helped organise and deliver a green themed **Fun Palace**, a **Coronation Afternoon Tea**, a **Christmas Grotto** and a local **Covid Memorial Event**

- **Story Time** continues but has moved to the local community centre as part of the local toddler group and is thoroughly enjoyed.
- We have and will continue to host **National Energy Action** for drop in sessions at the library to offer advice and support to those struggling with their energy costs
- Our partnership with **Read Easy** continues to progress, albeit slowly, and we now have four trained reading coaches and one reading pair who are making good progress.

Communications

Our 8-page printed **newsletter** continues to be distributed every 4 months alongside a digital newsletter sent out monthly to 500 recipients with a fantastic 70% 'open rate' making it our most definitive communications outlet. Well done to those involved in putting this together.

We continue to maintain a significant presence on Facebook; Greenhill now has 1,609 followers and Lowedges has 233 followers (up from 132 last year).

Work continues on a Lowedges specific website which we hope will go live by the autumn. At Christmas we also completed our first leaflet drop specifically for Lowedges which led to new people coming to the library and numerous children attending to claim their free book!

C) Organisation & People.

Our **strategic objective** is to maintain a workforce of volunteers with the skills, capacity and motivation to operate the library to the same standard as those operated professionally, and to provide a high-quality offering of community events.

At present we have 166 members, of whom 135 are registered as volunteers, 1 is an employee, Catherine Samengo-Turner, and 30 are Friends contributing at least £20 p.a. Since the pandemic a number of volunteers have not returned to the library for a variety of reasons but we can still contact them to volunteer in the library should the need arise. Around 75 volunteers, plus Catherine, regularly volunteer.

Trustees

Michael Corbishley	Chair
Chris Brown	Vice-Chair
Lyndon Henard	Secretary
Dawn Davis	Treasurer
Ann Hartley	Operations Manager
Lynne Raven	Volunteer Coordinator
Wendy Crookes, Janet Crowther, Kirsty Atkin, Laurence Coates	

Ex-Trustees: Richard Brown

Unfortunately, Michael Corbishley will be stepping down as Chair of the board due to a change in his employment that will limit his ability to fulfill this role effectively. This will take place following our 2023 AGM.

Trustees are elected, usually for a period of 3 years, by the membership of the Friends of Greenhill Library. They meet monthly and review FROGL's policies and procedures on a regular basis.

Volunteers can access the minutes, policies and procedures on the Three Rings website. Members and library users may also consult them in the library on request. Additionally, Lyndon Henard has recently organized the collation of handover documents for key roles in the library to shore up our succession planning, these are also available on Three Rings.

D) Finance for the year ending 31/3/2023.

Our strategic objective is to maintain financial sustainability with multiple diverse funding streams.

Receipts in 2022-23 were £76,625 (2021-22 £62,501) and Payments £143,484 (2021-22 £40,410) giving a deficit on the year of £66,860 (2021-22 surplus £22,091). We are grateful to Sheffield City Council for their annual grant as well as for the support of their libraries staff. Fundraising and earned income have increased to £22,231 from £10,283 the previous year, close to pre-pandemic levels. Last year's deficit is entirely due to the cost of the new building developments.

Reserves Policy. On 31/3/23 we carried forward funds of £158,968, of which most were unrestricted reserves. The trustees' policy is designate as Reserves an unrestricted sum equal to 5 years gap between expected unrestricted receipts and payments (i.e. circa £27,000) but also to designate funds for significant matters. The fund for major repairs is now £28,500. £16,925 is designated to fund community events over the years. During the year some reserves were invested in interest-bearing accounts with the Charity Bank and the Hampshire Trust Bank.

E) Building.

Our **strategic objective** is to have a fit for purpose and developing building.

As always, we continue to be indebted to Rob Goodrum, buildings manager, and his team of handypersons and to Linda Stevenson and team of cleaners for their constant attention to maintenance, painting, cleaning and health and safety in the library. There are many volunteers who operate 'behind the scenes' but are integral to the successful running of our library. Thank you for your ongoing commitment and hard work.

Following the board agreement in April 2022 to revise our building development plans, Burnell Briercliffe oversaw the tender process and our chosen contractor Sandersons commenced work in January 2023 and completed the works in April. The works included new toilets and kitchen facilities alongside an extension to the children's library area and a new storage room. These have been welcome additions with the new area in the children's library proving particularly popular (especially given the addition of new bean bag chairs). Thanks to the building works planning group (Kirsty Atkin, Wendy Crookes, Ann Hartley and Rob Goodrum) for their input on this work and for everyone's patience as the works were completed. The building

works were completed under budget which was an additional bonus!

The previous plans for lettable offices and a community room remain on hold but we still intend to modernise the main office space in the near future.

Greenhill and Lowedges Library both joined the wider Sheffield 'welcoming space' network providing a warm space during the colder months again demonstrating how we meet a myriad of needs in the local community.

Signed on behalf of the charity's trustees

Michael Corbishley (Chair of Trustees) Date: Sept. 2023