

**FRIENDS OF THE DURNING LIBRARY
ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING 2020**

Chairman's report 2019-20

Friends' Committee. The committee for 2019-20 consisted of Priscilla Baines (chairman), Kay Coombs (secretary), Jeremy Orme (treasurer), Val Parker (membership secretary), Elizabeth Barrott, Ruth Briant, Eleanor Halsall, Veronica Ledwith and David Tisdall. The committee met six times during the year.

Membership. At the end of the year the Friends had 138 members compared with 143 the year before. Both years' totals include our honorary life member. 123 renewed their membership for 2019-20 and 14 new members joined, although 17 did not renew. We issued four members' Newsletters during the year. We circulate the newsletter by e-mail wherever possible and continue to build up our members' e-mail address list. The committee has reviewed the privacy policy, as required, and reported no problems among our membership.

Activities. Our monthly talks have continued with mainly local speakers plus two parties and generally good attendances. Our January 2020 speaker unfortunately had to cancel at the last minute – a very rare occurrence - but we were able to arrange a replacement. Our thanks as always to our speakers, to Veronica Ledwith for arranging another successful programme of talks, to Tim O'Dell, Lambeth's Reader Development Officer, and Jon Newman of Lambeth Archives, for help with providing local speakers, and to Sylvia Goodman and the food teams for the excellent and much appreciated food. Thanks once more to our regular helpers: Gordon and Jill Johnston for running the bar, Margaret Clinch for so generously and unfailingly providing flowers for each event, Frank Bornemann and Viola Wang for operating the sound system and arranging presentations at our talks, and David Miles for help with moving the furniture before the talks. Our collective thanks from the membership to our committee members who all do their share of the tasks: it really is a team effort.

Website. Eleanor Halsall has continued to manage our website and our presence on social media. We still distribute flyers to local shops but our main means of publicising our events are now email and, increasingly, social media. Attendance at our events also benefits from being included in Tim O'Dell's Lambeth-wide publicity; the combination of that with our social media presence probably accounts for the number of new faces at some of our talks.

Durning developments. From the beginning of the 2019/20 financial year the Durning and Tate South Lambeth have been funded from the main libraries' budget and that has brought a very welcome period of stability. All Lambeth's libraries have benefited from the almost unknown luxury of being able to plan ahead and we are fortunate that Lambeth continue to recognise the importance of libraries to their local communities. It has been very helpful that Councillor Sonia Winifred is still cabinet member with responsibility for libraries and we remain very grateful for her continuing and valuable support.

This time last year, the capital repairs to the Durning building had just been completed and we were awaiting the internal redecoration that happened in June 2019. The roof has not proved entirely watertight but has been subject to unusual stresses and the promised routine maintenance programme should mean that the gutters etc are kept clear in future. The redecoration has brightened the interior; we are still hoping that money can be found to replace the moveable shelves as the present ones are worn out.

Planning permission for the new disabled access to the building was granted in November 2019. It is hoped that the work will be done in summer 2020, although that could have to be delayed because of the covid-19 epidemic. The proposed platform lift is not ideal but the layout of the front porch precluded any other solution. The work should also include improvements to the existing emergency exit. We do not yet know how user access to the library will be affected while the work is going on but hope that closure can be avoided.

Durning staffing. Liz Buchanan has served as library manager throughout the year and among other things has arranged a series of well-supported activities for library users (see below). We were very sad to say goodbye in August to Audrey Hudson who had worked at the Durning for many years and was well-known to all of us. She has moved to work part-time at Clapham and we wish her well. We welcome her successor, Edwin Macrae.

Durning activities and regular events. The Durning now offers a wide range of activities for people of all ages and skills. They include the Durning Diamonds for older users, the long-established Book Group, the Chess Club, ESOL for intermediates, Friendly Knitting, IT Help drop-in and Reading English, and Storytime

for Under Fives. There is something for everyone and we hope that members of the Friends will take part in them.

Friends of Lambeth Libraries (FoLL). Laura Swaffield has continued to chair FoLL; there have been fewer meetings with Lambeth officials to discuss library matters but there is now a rolling libraries strategy that provides a framework for the future.

On behalf of the committee, our thanks once more to our members for their support throughout the year. That has continued to confirm how highly the library is valued. I would also like to thank my fellow committee members for their hard work and contributions to the collective effort; without them none of our activities would happen. We continue to be very grateful for the support of the Durning staff, particularly those who baby-sit our events, and to those Lambeth officials with whom we work so closely.

Priscilla Baines
March 2020