

The Friends of The Women's Library

Charity No. 277165

1. Chair's Report 2021-22

Talks Programme

With tremendous help from Gillian Murphy, Curator of Equality, Rights and Citizenship at LSE Library to whom we are extremely grateful, our Zoom-based talks programme has gone from strength to strength. Audiences have been swelled by attendance from members of the Women's History Seminar of the Institute of Historical Research, the Women's History Network, and the Royal Historical Society, and from historians across the Channel and the Atlantic. Our talks continue to attract a small increase in our membership.

The past year's programme has featured talks by Gillian Murphy, Annette Lawson, Mary Evans, James Keating, Clare Wichbold, Alexandra Hughes-Johnson, Anne Summers, Jane Grant, Krisztina Robert, and our AGM speaker Caitriona Beaumont. All our sessions testified to the lively state of research in women's history and, as usual, provoked stimulating and well-informed discussions. We are extremely grateful to all our speakers, and have been particularly pleased that presentations continue to include the themes of localism within the suffrage movement, as well as the 20th century 'afterlife' of its activists.

There is no doubt that Zoom technology has enabled us to increase our audience well beyond the physical capacity of our former meeting space in LSE Library. An added and unexpected bonus is that it has led to an increase in our membership. On the other hand, we all miss the pleasure of personal contact. Our first experiment in holding a 'hybrid' real life/online event will take place at our AGM on 29 June, and we hope to repeat the practice for our 2022-2023 talks programme. However, we will bear in mind that it may not always be feasible for speakers to travel to London.

Acquisitions

Friend Caroline Derry continues to scrutinise online sales sites, and to bid on our behalf, for which many thanks. We have purchased:

- i) an album of suffragette sketches and autographs, dated c. 1910-15. The sale details suggest a Scottish provenance for some of the names and content; our own first thoughts are that there is a strong connection with the Women's Freedom League.

- ii) a collection of manuscript and printed material relating principally to the Men's League for Women's Suffrage which augments TWL's holdings in this area.
- iii) we have been able to augment TWL's 20th century holdings with the purchase of two scrapbooks kept by Elaine Burton MP relating to a parliamentary delegation to the USSR in 1954. Edith Pitt MP was also appointed to the delegation, and images in the collection indicate that they made a big effort to find out about conditions of life for Soviet women in this period.
- iv) in memory of our late colleague Jean Holder M.B.E., a south Londoner to her core, we were able to purchase from Elizabeth Crawford a scrapbook compiled by a member of the Croydon NUWSS society, containing a wealth of articles on the suffrage campaign, drawn from national and local newspapers.

Projects 2022-2023

Membership database: plans are in hand to restore close working ties between the Treasurer and Membership posts and to update the information at their disposal.

Social Media and Website: Holly Cameron, who is studying for an MA in Public History at St Mary's Twickenham, will shortly begin an internship with the Friends which will involve her working on social media interaction and website re-design. She has many ideas around using different types of social media to promote TWL and the Friends and to widen the age cohort of our support groups (putting it tactfully).

The essay prizes for 3rd-year dissertation and M.Sc. students whose research was largely based on the holdings of TWL: we can re-advertise our offer for the coming academic year now that access to the collections has been restored.

Movement for the Ordination of Women: plans are now in hand to reactivate our project of recording and transcribing interviews with veterans, to supplement the archival holdings of M.O.W. in The Women's Library collections.

It is gratifying to see how much activity has been possible since the last AGM, despite the lack of in-person contact necessitated by the pandemic, and also

despite the Executive Committee's suffering perhaps slightly more than its fair share of the ills that flesh is heir to. We have grieved the passing of our member Jean Holder M.B.E. and the continuing indisposition of Dr Katharine Milcoy. Other members have had more than brief encounters with the medical profession, and their continuing support and wise counsel throughout the year deserves the deepest gratitude. Our Treasurer Lorna Hawthorne, Membership Secretary Judith Bourne and Minutes Secretary Susan Pares have kept the scaffolding of the edifice in place. Thanks are equally due to Catherine Clay, David Doughan, Mary Evans, Jean Gooding, Mary Joannou, Anne Logan and Gill Sutherland for 'holding the fort'. Geoffrey Berger, who is volunteering for a second year to act as our external auditor, is a warmly welcomed addition to our ranks. Coronavirus may not quite be a thing of the past, but we are well placed to take our projects forward into the coming year, wish all the Friends well, and thank them heartily for their lively commitment to TWL.

Anne Summers, Chair, Friends of The Women's Library.

2. Treasurer's Summary Report 2021-22

Our income 2021-2022 was £6337.67, and our expenditure £8975.13, giving a movement in funds of -£-2637.46, that is to say a sum well above our yearly income from subscriptions alone. Given the level of assets we are carrying (some £60,000), it is a good thing, in view of our legal constitution as a charity, to have been spending more than our income. We hope that we will be able to continue along these lines in the coming year, bearing always in mind that we will not spend our funds frivolously or on inappropriate objects.

Lorna Hawthorne, Treasurer, Friends of The Women's Library.

3. Membership Secretary's Report 2021-22

Numbers currently stand at 215 members; this includes 6 new members. We have also gifted a year's membership to all our speakers over the past academic year. From July membership data will be administered by our Treasurer, Lorna Hawthorne, to streamline the process. During the summer an MA Public Histories student will review the website as part of her dissertation. She hopes to introduce social media initiatives to increase and grow membership. She will need your help with this, so please look out for emails requesting interviews, blogs and book club convenors.

Judith Bourne, Membership Secretary, Friends of The Women's Library.