

## **Library annual report for AGM of Friends of Brixham Library 2022to 2023**

I would like to start by welcoming you all to the library and to thank you for your support over the year. By being a member of the friends of Brixham Library your membership fee is of course of great value to us in helping us to “go the extra mile” for our customers, as we always like to do. But it is also the message that your membership gives to us as a team. Particularly in these times where for many, every penny counts, your membership is a message to us that you value Brixham Library, and care about it, and believe me that means the world to us. You really are FRIENDS of Brixham Library.

I would like to also thank the committee of the library, some of whom are stepping down this evening, and one of whom will be staying on, if elected! They are a small team, and of course the smaller the team, the more there is to do. We appreciate all you have done for us, you have kept The Friends of Brixham Library going, when it seemed this may not happen, and have helped us to rebuild after the dreaded Covid. Thank you not only from me personally, but from all the Brixham Team. Thank you also to those of you who have come forward to accept nomination for the vital roles needed on the committee.

So, as our friends, we want to share with you some of the things we have been doing since our last AGM, as it is important that you know what is available to you, and what an integral part the Friends play in our library, and by default, our community.

As many of you know, Brixham Library has been run for the last 5 years by Libraries Unlimited which is the charity that runs 54 libraries across Devon and Torbay. We have some financial support towards our running costs from Torbay Council and they still own the building. Libraries Unlimited needs to obtain further funding so this is done by several means including grant applications and fundraising such as the Libraries Unlimited Lottery, small and large events, sponsorship and donations. We as a team have targets to fundraise towards this, and this is money for Libraries Unlimited to keep the doors open, the shelves full, the lights, heat and computers on and the staff in place. So where does your membership and support for the friends go? This is raised for the Friends accounts, and this is used in the form of donations specific to Brixham Library, for the little (and not so little) extras that make things here that little bit extra special.

Libraries Unlimited have specific aims of what they want our libraries to be. They, and therefore we aim:

**To bring ideas, imagination, creativity and knowledge to enrich people's lives and build thriving communities. We do this by:**

- **Promoting a love of reading**
- **Providing free access to resources and information**
- **Inspiring everyone to learn, create and realise their potential**
- **Enabling everyone to explore and connect to the wider world**
- **Offering welcoming spaces**
- **Supporting the health and wellbeing of individuals and communities.**

**I have an amazing team here at Brixham and we all care so deeply about our customers and the library, but we know that the library is not our library, it is the people of Brixham's we are just so incredibly lucky to work here.**

So, let's have a quick look at what we have been up to in your library this year, and I'd like to link what we have done to which of the aims we have aspired to meet.

- **Promoting a love of reading**

Last summer we ran the summer reading challenge, as we do every year. We ran

8 events over the course of the summer in the library, and the national theme was Gadgeteers, focusing on science, maths and technology.

- Launch event, Marble Mayhem, (repeated on another day due to customer requests)
- Sense of Illusion science and story event,
- Out of this world Space Academy story and craft activities,
- Lego NXT event,
- Bionics event, making robot hands with a story,
- Bugs Galore event, story and making moving caterpillars, bug hotels, leaf rubbing, stone ladybirds.
- Finishers event, with hands on science activities.

As I mentioned before, we are still in rebuilding mode, and were encouraged by how much the children, particularly those who had not had the opportunity do the challenge other than on line over the covid time, really embraced and enjoyed both the reading and events aspect of the challenge. The Friends

generously funded some science and craft materials for these events, as well as a gift card for each Brixham Primary School for a draw to take place of all those who complete the challenge. I am very grateful that they have provided the same this year, as well as some sports and games equipment as our theme this year is Ready Set Read with a sports and games theme. We have some fabulous events planned over the summer, and have already had a good number of children sign up, considering they haven't even broken up from school

AS well as the summer reading challenge we also have the Secret Book Quest which is an ongoing challenge for children to read 50 books, then they can continue beyond this if they choose. We are thrilled with our uptake of this.

Not wishing to leave anyone out, we joined the Torbay wide Bay Book Bimble which is an adult challenge, encouraging readers to step out of their norm and try some new genres or authors. some of our customers were so disappointed to hear it wasn't continuing this year, so we have devised the Brixham Book Bingo, a similar scheme which is proving very popular.

We have had other events this year to encourage a love of reading:

We joined with the Agatha Christie Festival and hosted a murder mystery afternoon with author Kate Ellis giving an author talk, and writing the murder mystery. Torbay library staff and volunteers acted out the parts and good fun was had by all.

We also had an author event for children "Alfred and Friends – The Mystery on the Golden Hind" To celebrate this new book, set around Brixham we had author Louise M Dickens here to read from her book, with dog themed craft. Alfred the pug himself also attended with author

Other events have included holiday events, visits from school classes, particularly this term. We also provide books to Furzeham School each term for their chosen topics. We have visited each school to an assembly to encourage the children to join the summer reading challenge and enjoy all we have at the library. One huge highlight was in June when Children's Laureate visited on his Bamboo Bike to run a poetry session with a class from St Margaret Clitherow School. It was a great morning, with BBC spotlight here to film, and we featured on spotlight.

Last year I told you that we were about to launch our 2 new book groups, and I am happy to report that they are both thriving and actually have a waiting list for people to join. I'd like to thank Chester for all his work in helping to get things going, and to Helen, Jo and Libby who are members of the groups and have taken on the admin for each group. I know the members have bonded really well and have met socially outside of the groups.

We have been promoting Libby and Borrowbox with our customers, which is free with your library card, where you can access ebooks, spoken word books, newspapers and magazines. A regular customer came in to ask for guidance to use Libby having downloaded it. She said she wanted to make sure there hadn't been a mistake as she had seen the number of newspapers, magazines, and publications she could access and thought she had gone onto an enhanced version as she could not believe she could access them all for free.

WE have run story and activity events in each of the school holidays as well as a World Book day after school event, how to train your dragon. These have been run by staff, volunteers and outside agencies.

We hosted a session run by the Nest Neighbourhood Nursery for them to engage targeted families and introduce them to the library and give out the Book start Book Packs.

We have joined with the Orchard Forest School and have leant books and resources for their recent Very Hungry Caterpillar event, and some further planned for the summer.

A member of staff ran one of the monthly Paignton Zoo storytime and craft sessions run with the zoo and Torbay Libraries. Chester's session was attended by approximately 25 children. He will be going again later in the year.

We had story and activity sessions on the Saturday of the Brixham Pirate Festival as well as our display on the ledge which we entered into the window display. The staff also loved dressing up (we don't need too much encouragement for that, any excuse)

**Providing free access to resources and information**

We have continued to offer access to IT, as well as Greg our IT buddy offering free sessions where help is needed by our customers. Sadly Greg has ended his time with us after almost 6 years as he has moved away from Torbay, but we are actively seeking a replacement.

We have also welcomed the following to the library over the last year to offer information to our customers:

- weekly sessions with Torbay Council staff supporting people with Council Tax rebates.
- Stand in the library for SWISCO to offer information about new blue recycling bags and garden waste collection.
- Fun palaces, where community groups share for free, with others skills and hobbies. We had Cycle Torbay/ Brixham Bike Hubs offering hands-on help and advice for cycle repairs/maintenance. Also someone making paracord keyrings, and another teaching decorative ways to repair clothing, as well as gift wrapping with cloth. (Sachiko and Furo Kishi)
- Barclays hosted a drop-in fraud and scam awareness session.
- We welcomed Angie from Devon Wildlife Trust to the Friends monthly Coffee Morning to talk about the local wildlife projects they are undertaking.
- We have had information sharing visits from Ecoe giving advice on saving energy and managing fuel bills.
- We also had a visit from Devon and Somerset Fire and Rescue Service giving advice on home safety, and how to get a home safety visit. We also hold leaflets about this for customers to access.
- WE have our community notice board for local charities and nonprofit groups to advertise services and events and have introduces our community kindness board to give information on what is available for free, and to support our customers wherever we can, particularly with the cost of living crisis.
- 2 members of staff from the Nest Nursery came to one of our weekly stay and play sessions to promote the new craft and music pack loan service they have instigated.

### **Inspiring everyone to learn, create and realise their potential**

- Jen from the friends has organised 2 very successful talks in the library:

a talk by Guide Dogs about how puppies are trained, some guide dogs and puppies joined us for the talk, and the Friends of Brixham Library sold refreshments. We had approx 50 attendees of all ages.

- Jen has also organised a recent talk entitled “Malawi the Heart of Africa”, again very well attended and refreshments were provided by the Friends.
- Our Thursday art and Craft group continues to thrive and has welcomed more new members. Led by our volunteer Libby, the group have tried new things including watercolour, paper mache, tessellation, pottery with a visit from a local amateur potter. The focus of the group is that everyone can make art, and anyone who was told they couldn’t was misinformed! It is about trying new things and making new friends.
- We gave out packets of celebratory Coronation Seeds for customers to grow their own wild flowers.
- We are currently co-hosted a 10 week course with Spark Creative, a local CIC, called “Creative Magic” which encouraged people in all aspects of creative writing, vlogging, poetry etc.
- The Brixham Library monthly Poetry for Pleasure group continue to meet at the library and are always happy to welcome new members.
- The Woolpack knitting and crochet group returned to the library post-covid and have been meeting on Wednesday mornings, although they, like the board games group are taking a short summer break and will return in September.
- We hosted a drop in taster event for South Devon Embroiderers. We hope to welcome them back later.
- We provided Brixham Brownies exhibition space to display the wonderful artwork they created at a special art day, towards their art and craft badges.
  
- Saturday club events have happened weekly and for free for all children, including: Mother’s day cards, lego challenges, rainbow crafts for chinese new year, making musical instruments, stick man crafts, christmas wreaths and autumn wreaths, decorating plant pots and planting beans/sunflowers, easter crafts, fathers day cards, spies in disguise, Libraries Week bookmarks, comic strips and stories, Halloween

crafts, Silent Fireworks (science and painting), Making hedgehog houses, crafty animals, Christmas card making, lantern making and board games.

- 
- We held a Fun science session with Energy Edd, from Fun Science in Exeter, based around electricity. We are so pleased he is returning this summer to do a special session around hearts and lungs to show children the positive effects exercise has on us.
- We offer space in the library for volunteers and students to meet from the charity Read Easy which supports adults with literacy issues. We have had 2 students here over the year, and are delighted that one student graduated, and has now chosen to become a library volunteer. We have also supported this organisation with a banner in the library, and participating in their advertising campaign to encourage more people to take up this service and passing details of interested parties on to them in their recent recruitment drive.
- Brixham Watercolour group used to be part of U3A which has now disbanded, they have decided to hire one of our rooms at a discounted not-for-profit rate in order to continue their group as Brixham Watercolours Group.
- We created a display about Coronations in history as our contribution to the Brixham Coronation Weekend Celebrations free events in partnership with Brixham Future.
- 

### **Enabling everyone to explore and connect to the wider world**

- We were part of the Torbay Libraries link with Vue Cinema to present a competition around Matilda by Roald Dahl with tickets for the cinema as prizes. One winner from Brixham will be making their first ever visit to the cinema.
- After the success of our displaying the tapestry made in 1988 by local school children at the time of the Jubilee, it has created a renewed interest in it. As it is too large to display in Brixham museum, we were able to offer space in the library when we were closed, for local photographer Chris Slack to come with a member of the museum team to photograph each panel to make the tapestry accessible to museum visitors and school parties in a different format.
- I attended a meeting of the Brixham Good Companions to give a talk about the library and what services and events are available there. We

were delighted with the response from people both at the session, and over the next few days when they came in to look around and in at least 5 cases join the library. Some said they were members but hadn't been for years, others had never visited. One said she comes in most days but had no idea how much other than books was on offer. We also gained one volunteer for Read Easy as an outcome of the talk.

- We had another 2 visits from Music @ the edge, bringing their band to offer a workshop for customers to enjoy their music and join in, with us providing percussion instruments. This led to an article in the Torbay Weekly. One of our lovely young customers has subsequently joined the group and by all accounts made lots of new friends. We look forward to seeing her performing next time they visit. Yes at the edge have kindly invited us to have a table to promote our services at their free music festival at the rugby club in August. If you go, please come and say hello.
- We have continued to sell tickets for Brixham Theatre, Paignton Theatre and Babbacombe Theatre. This is helping considerably in keeping these charities going, and both Brixham and Paignton Theatres have acknowledged the tremendous sales we have achieved for them. We have sold £358 of tickets for the Palace theatre and £1601 of tickets for Brixham Theatre during this quarter. Customers are able to buy tickets whenever we are open and pay no booking fee when booking with us. We also advertise shows and events with fliers and posters in the A frames outside the library.
- We have had a "Try something new this new year" display, advertising local groups and organisations to our customers. Part of this was promoting a local group called "Sew Crafty Brixham" We have received feedback from them that their most recent meeting had quite a few new attendees who had heard about it via the library. We are hoping to engage with this group in future for joint ventures in the library.
- 

### **Offering welcoming spaces**

- We always aim to provide a welcoming space, both by keeping it tidy and attractive, and with our customer service. We have received several 5 star reviews on Google this year, and have been described on social media as "leading the way" "A great place to be" and offering a



“fabulous service” I have to say I am very proud of my team and know they do their absolute best for every customer who comes through the door, who phones or emails us.

- The Friends of Brixham Library continue to fund, plant and maintain our flower boxes and beds at the front of the library. We regularly have people coming in to comment on how lovely they look, and have entered, with encouragement from the local co-ordinator, the Brixham in Bloom competition. The library has also featured in the booklet given to the judges of the Britain in Bloom Competition for the entry for the whole town of Brixham.
- Thank you to the Friends for funding the plants and especially to Jen and Doug and Jane and David who plant and most importantly water them, as much as our intentions would be good, I really don't think they would thrive under our care alone!
- 
- We are regularly (most days in term time) used by an organisation called ROC College where tutors and students, several with additional needs, meet in the library to learn in a less formal setting, which is more comfortable and feels safer for these particular students than in a formal school/college setting
- We have introduced an ongoing community jig-saw for customers to dip in and out of or work on together. We did this particularly as a way of offering a comfortable warm space going into the Autumn, but it, like many of our warm space initiatives has proven to be so popular we are continuing them.
- Brixham Library was the venue for a tea party hosted by all 4 Torbay Libraries, for our many volunteers during Volunteers Week. We had approx 40 attendees, who enjoyed meeting fellow volunteers, a cream tea, a game of backwards bingo and a good natter! Each volunteer was presented with a certificate, card and goodie bag. We were delighted to also welcome Beth Reynolds, Libraries Unlimited's HR manager, to the event.
- As the tea party was for volunteers officially registered who do specific tasks in our libraries, Brixham Libray held a Separate event at Christmas for our own volunteers and Friends group with mulled apple juice and mince pies. We are so grateful for all that the friends and volunteers do for us.

- Since last year's AGM we have held 2 quiz nights We had the quiz, a raffle, and soft drinks for sale, with quizzers able to bring their own alcoholic drinks. The evening was a huge success with 44 attendees, making up 9 teams. We raised over £200. at the most recent, and £195 in the one we ran in the Autumn.
- Our Board game group volunteer started, and we have had weekly volunteer led board game afternoons, as well as the board games available at all other times for individual/group use within the library.
- Stay and play and bounce and rhyme sessions continue to thrive
- 
- The Friends Monthly Coffee Mornings continue to be successful with a special Coronation Coffee Morning attracting regular and new attendees. Thank you to the friends who have tirelessly worked to re-establish and continue them. There is a lovely atmosphere in the library when it is on.
- We welcomed some residents from a local care home to make some valentines day crafts and enjoy a cuppa and a chat. This was part of the home's outreach/entertainment officer's aim to engage residents in community spaces, that aren't overwhelming for those with dementia in particular.
- One of our biggest welcome events this year was the warm spaces initiative. We worked with the local church and The Edge community group to share information and resources for the Warm Spaces campaign in Brixham. They promoted and shared what we were offering, and left warm packs containing scarves, gloves, socks, hot water bottles etc for us to give out, as well as vouchers for a hot drink, soup and sandwiches. We also liaised with the local PCSO, so he was aware of our warm space status and what we had to offer.
- We are offered free hot drinks as part of our Warm Spaces. We also hosted Christmas drop ins for anyone who wanted company or a space to spend time in the week leading up to Christmas, and the week between Christmas and the new year. The drop ins included drinks and snacks, (supported financially by the friends) Christmas puzzles, games, warmth and most importantly company. We developed this to 2 sessions this year as we know some of our customers feel very lonely and isolated at Christmas and one customer mentioned once that he hadn't spoken to anyone over the Christmas period. Some parents also

found the school holidays overwhelming, particularly with having to keep their homes warm.

- We ran several events leading up to Christmas. We had our popular Stories around the Tree with stories, hot chocolate and Christmas Crafts. We had a Toddlers around the Tree event with Festive themed play activities, a story and Christmas songs. We kicked it all off with a Decorate for December after school event, where the Children decorated our Christmas Tree, made Christmas decorations and decorated biscuits to enjoy at the library or take home. All our Christmas events, including the drop ins were supported by the Friends of Brixham Library.
- This was some social media feedback we received:
- “Thank you for the lovely hot chocolate and snacks today. And thank you for all the fantastic clubs and help you all provided Matilda and Otis this year. We are very lucky to have such an amazing library in Brixham. Merry Christmas to you all” This is an example of the “little extras” we are able to provide thanks to the support of you all, and how much they are appreciated.
- 
- **Supporting the health and wellbeing of individuals and communities.**
- We held a taster Chair Yoga session as part of our Try Something New campaign, and January’s Health and Happiness Winter offer
- I am thrilled to be able to tell you that we are going to be able to start a new initiative where we will be offering a books on wheels service to housebound customers. Volunteers will be selecting books for the customers and our supporters in this joint venture, The Rotary club of Brixham will deliver the books monthly to the person’s home. This will allow customers who would otherwise not be able to enjoy the emotional well being brought through reading the opportunity to do so. We are so grateful to the rotary for agreeing to join with us on this venture.
- We continue to be a collection point for Brixham Food Bank
- WE are launching a new initiative this summer to ask families to donate outgrown school uniforms to us so we can redistribute them to other families. This should help with the pressure young families are facing, as well as doing our bit for the environment.

- We have a wide range of books offering information on physical and mental wellbeing, these are our reading well collection.
- WE worked in partnership with Jess Slade by hosting 2 x 5 week courses called Live Longer Better looking at how to enhance our life as we age and at opportunities to improve lives, including things accessed via the library.

I would like to again, thank the friends for all you do, and also to thank my team here at Brixham. We have had some changes in team over the past few months, but I am delighted to have Becca, Chester, Becky and Debs on board now we are complete again.

Look out for lots of new initiatives we have planned for the coming year, we are very excited about them.

I'd like to end with a quote I recently saw on a bookmark,

It's by Albert Einstein and he said "The only thing you really need to know in life is the way to the library"

Thank you all for finding your way to our little library.