



Friends of Church Stretton Library

Supporting the library in the heart of the community

Annual Report April 2019-March 2020

We have pleasure in presenting our first annual report.

After five years of local campaigning to protect the beautiful library in Church St, **Shropshire Council agreed to continue to manage the library** in Church Stretton, retaining existing staff.

But like many other local authorities, budgetary constraints have led Shropshire Council to seek significant **financial contributions** from the Town Council and local community to help fund it.

We launched a new charity - Friends of Church Stretton Library – in June 2019 to support the library and help raise funds for it.

Friends of Church Stretton Library is a membership-based charity with a board of trustees responsible for managing its affairs.

Our Trustees



Current Trustees (in clockwise order): Sheila Davies(chair), Janet Newman, Margaret Quartly, Ben Warren, Graham Lewis, Kate Williams, Madeline Haigh

Friends of Church Stretton Library, Church Stretton Library, Church Street, Church Stretton
SY6 6DQ - email churchstrettonlibrary@outlook.com Charity Number 1182554
www.strettonlibraryfriends.org.uk



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This year's achievements

We are working closely with library staff and the Town Council and have built up a body of support, with 157 people becoming members of the charity and volunteers offering ideas and activities.

As well as contributing to regular library activities for children, we have run various events of educational and cultural interest, including two concerts, a local history talk, a quiz evening, a poetry evening and three Winter Talks in the library.



One of the highlights of the year was a Murder Mystery Dinner, organized in



collaboration with the Stretton Players. Members of the community helped to make this a great success by preparing and serving a delicious meal with food contributed by local traders.

Another highlight was working with the local Amnesty group in bringing a play to Church Stretton to raise awareness about the experience of refugees and help raise funds for refugees to visit Church Stretton to enjoy a day out in the countryside.

We promote our activities through our website, E-newsletter, Community Messenger & Focus. Volunteers also deliver a printed newsletter to members without email.

We raised a total of £4,369 from our fund-raising activities and received £5,565 in donations from individuals, some of whom now make regular donations through standing orders.

The Rural Charity shop helped raise £520.65 by selling second hand books for us and hosting monthly table top sales on their premises.

These activities show how we have built a successful pattern of community involvement, and a good track record of working with local groups and organisations.



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Volunteers

We would like to extend our thanks to all the volunteers who helped in so many different ways including:

- raising funds through table top sales & charity stalls
- manning the Visitor Information Centre at busy times and assisting with on-line week
- helping with the library's children's activities
- organising a programme of speakers for our Winter Talks.
- supporting events (selling tickets, raffles, baking cakes, serving refreshments)
- preparing publicity material and delivering information to members without email
- helping to run the charity e.g. admin, finances, events planning
- all those who helped feed 76 people at our Murder Mystery dinner by cooking, laying tables, serving the meal and clearing up afterwards. Thank you!



Please consider joining our committee!

We are always on the lookout for new committee members – anyone and everyone is welcome because we know that everyone brings their own range of skills and experience. We would love to have you on board! The one thing we all have in common is a desire to support our lovely small rural library. We want to see it remain at the heart of the community, busy with visitors using the information centre or taking part in a range of community activities.

Please see the contacts below if you would like to find out more:

Email Churchstrettonlibrary@outlook.com or Tel 01694 723455



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How local traders and groups supported us

We would like to thank local traders for their support, including:

- **Berry's** - for donations including half the takings from Christmas Eve mulled wine sales and contribution of desserts for our Murder Mystery dinner
- **Burway Books** - for assistance with author talks and selling tickets for our events
- **Hough the Butchers** - for discount on meat supplied for the Murder Mystery dinner
- **J R Thomas** - for selling tickets for our events
- **Mr Bun the Baker** - for discount on bread supplied for the Murder Mystery dinner
- **Marshbrook Printers** - for discount on developing our logo/corporate colours
- **The Rural Charity shop** - for selling second hand books and hosting table top sales
- **Van Doesburgs** - for contribution of desserts for our Murder Mystery dinner
- **Veg stall at the market** - for discounts on fruit and veg supplied for the Murder Mystery Dinner
- **The Rotary Club** for their generous donation of an overhead projector



and all the traders who displayed their favourite poem for National Poetry Day.



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Annual Accounts

In the financial year April 2019 to end of March 2020 we made a total profit of £11,479.36.

Income - We raised:

- £5,469.08 from fund raising activities
- £6,322 from donations
- £699.25 from Gift Aid (a further £178.40 is owing in Gift Aid for Dec to Mar 2019)

NB £1,809.48 of this income was carried over from previous year when we were operating as Church Stretton Library Support Group.

Expenditure

We spent a total of £989.19 on stationery, publicity, insurance and miscellaneous expenses relating to setting up as a new organisation e.g. logo, banners, collection boxes.

Spending on the library

After consulting with library staff, we spent a total of £704.48 on purchasing equipment for the library including:

- 3 banners to advertise exhibitions taking place the library
- 5 small tables - to support events taking place in the library
- kitchen equipment
- subsidies for children's events at the library



We have committed a further £150 from this year's income for the library staff to purchase more kitchen equipment for use at library events.

A more detailed Finance Report can be downloaded from our website - and a full copy of our accounts is available on request www.strettonlibraryfriends.org.uk



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Library Funding



Discussions have been taking place between Shropshire Libraries Service and the Town Council about funding of the library over the next five years.

Shropshire Council are asking the Town Council to contribute increasing amounts each year until eventually they are contributing 50% of the running costs. Friends of Church Stretton Library are being asked to help the Town Council cover this.

These amounts will raise challenges for both ourselves and the Town Council in future years as these amounts increase.

Shropshire Council are asking the Town Council to contribute £12,625 towards the running costs of the library in 2021/2022.

Our response

We have agreed to meet with the Town Council in October each year to review what contribution we can make in the next financial year, before the Town Council sets its local council tax precept.

For the year 2021-22 we have agreed to contribute £5,000 from this year's income.

We had set a target to raise £10,000 in 2020/2021, so we can increase our contribution to the Town Council for 2022/2023.

However, like many other charities, we now expect a reduced income in 2020/2021 as we have had to cancel planned fund-raising activities because of coronavirus.



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Looking to the future

We will need to substantially increase the amount of money we raise each year to meet what is being asked of us.

We also want to retain some of the income generated each year to spend directly on the library e.g. equipment, subsidising children's events, and to provide us with a small reserve in case of unexpected expenses.



We will continue to raise funds through running events and activities, but there is a limit to how many fund-raising events it is effective to run. There are many other events and activities taking place in Church Stretton raising funds for other good causes.

We therefore hope to increase our income by encouraging more people to make a small monthly standing order. At present these generate an income of £250 a month and we can claim a further 25% of most of this through Gift Aid.

Regular payments like this will help us become confident in knowing how much we can raise on a regular basis, year by year.

Shropshire Library Strategy



The Town Council have indicated they will continue to lobby Shropshire Council about the unfairness of having a tiered approach for libraries.

This means people living in small market towns with Tier 2 libraries, (including Church Stretton) have to pay additional amounts in their town council precept to help fund their library service.

Meanwhile people living in major towns and people living in neighboring parishes using the library in Church Stretton do not have to make any additional contribution.

We fully support the Town Council in challenging this unfair approach.



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Our goals for 2020/2021

Once coronavirus restrictions are lifted, we will schedule events in order to raise funds and to promote the use of the library among a wider section of the community

Increase our income through regular standing orders to help us gradually grow our income over the next four years

Continue to promote the library's educational and cultural role and support library activities

Support other charities and groups by hosting events and sharing income

Encourage other groups and organisations in the community to help us raise funds

Increase the number of people on our committee to ensure our long-term sustainability.