



Oxford CBG Chair's annual report for the 2022 AGM

Like many other charities and organisations, it has taken some time to shake off the challenges caused by the pandemic. We decided not to charge annual fees but it is taking time to re-invigorate our membership and bring back or recruit new members and schools. The Committee is still too small and is in desperate need of a Secretary, and /or a Publicity person.

Last year, the picture seemed rather bleak but, thanks to Moira, we applied successfully to receive support for an exciting environmental initiative and project: **“Stories to Save the world...”**

Thanks to a very generous grant from energy co-operative, WESTMILL SOLAR, the Oxford Children's Book Group has been running a special project in 2022, working with authors who write about conservation and environmental issues. We have been able to introduce children to a wide selection of gifted authors whose stories raise awareness of climate change and the environment.

So far, we have organized over 10 inspiring and successful author visits to our member schools.

Long-time OCBG member, **Linda Newbery** visited three Primary schools to share her story, **Lob**, which focuses on a love of nature. Linda is also visiting secondary schools, like Europa School, Culham, with her book **This book is cruelty free**.

School Librarian Beatrice Mallet wrote: *“What a wonderful morning the S3 had yesterday with Linda! They really enjoyed learning in a very different, interactive way. It created interesting debates and interaction with Linda and hopefully, they will be more aware of their attitudes and actions and the impact it has on the world that surrounds them.”*

Acclaimed science educator, **Jules Pottle** shared her picture book **Doffa's Reindeer** which relates specifically to wind farms and the need to get away from fossil fuels.

Another celebrated local author, **Mini Grey** visited four schools to talk about her books. She focused on **The last wolf** and also her newest book **The Greatest Show on Earth** which is Mini's debut non-fiction picture book about how our natural world has changed over 46 million years and how we can learn from this collective story of Earth.

Author and storyteller **Chitra Soundar** shared her book **Sona Sharma – looking after Planet Earth**. In the story, Sona is learning about climate change in school and Sona's teacher encourages the children to get involved.

Ben Lerwill is a renowned travel writer who also writes for children about global and conservation themes. His talks, about **One Moment in Time** (KS1) and **Climate Rebels** (KS2) were enjoyed by two Primary schools.

Finally, **Nicola Davies**, zoologist, writer and former presenter on the Really Wild Show, has agreed to speak to the secondary age range, via Zoom, from her home in Wales about her book **The Song that sings us** which asks 'Who will sing the song to save the world?' We hope to organize a session on December 10th this year...or early next term.

Overall, by the end of this year, we will have reached around 1,000 pupils, enabling them to meet and engage with authors who want to inspire the next generation to learn about, love and treasure our fragile planet.

In addition to these visits, we have run our first Book Swap since the lockdowns, at Cumnor Primary School, where over 200 children each took home at least 3 books to read! The committee were joined by honorary members Bill, Peter and Alex so there were seven of us in total. The children wrote thank you letters to us all, including comments such as "Thank you for all the lovely books" and another just saying, "Thank you for being there"

On November 26th, Amy and Jackie will represent the OCBG at Oxford's Independent Book Fair in the city centre (Wes Mem, in St Michael's St). This is what our blurb says:

The Oxford Children's Book Group (OCBG) Part of the [Federation of Children's Book Groups](#), which aims to promote children's books and nurture a love of reading. We are a story-loving group of writers, parents, teachers, librarians, students, illustrators, publishers and bookworms of all ages. We run events in schools and for families, writing workshops, conferences, author talks and Book Swaps.

On December 22nd, I have been invited to give an author talk at the relatively new Botley Library, so OCBG will feature and we may be able to recruit more members.

The committee have been meeting on a monthly basis, usually on Zoom, so this AGM meeting is our first face to face meeting this year.

I would like to thank everyone on the committee for all that they have done.

Looking ahead, into 2023, we have identified October 7th (or October 21st) as a possible date for our biennial conference. We need to find a venue (Story Museum or school). It would be good to offer more Book Swaps because they really generate enthusiasm for reading but who knows what else the next year will bring...

May it be a healthy and happy one for all of us, and may we all encounter some more wonderful books on the journey.

Jackie Holderness