

Wroughton Library Report to Full Council - September 2025

Summer Reading Challenge (SRC)

The Summer Reading Challenge (SRC) went really well. Approximately 100 children signed up and a high proportion of parents brought them back for second and third visits (we will receive the official statistics in September). We ran out of the age 3-4 book packs and needed 40 extra of the basic booklets due to demand.

I am hoping the good engagement with the SRC is due to our improved comms both on social media and the 3 primary schools in the parish, as well as word getting out that not only is there plenty of free parking outside the community centre, but the library itself is cosy and inviting. We have also had children in from Broad Hinton, Chiseldon, Westonbirt and a village near Reading.

We always make sure that there is something for children to do when they arrive, in addition to choosing and reading books. Some children are too young or just don't have the concentration span to sit with a book, so over the summer we had a miniature sandpit full of dinosaurs, a daily craft, a small indoor tent for quiet reading, colouring sheets, play food, a treasure hunt and board games on a Friday morning. The fish bubble tube provides a soothing background sound as does our new starlight projector, which we set to "waves" or "rainforest".

We have noticed that parents who arrive intending to stay for "5 minutes" are often still in the library 40 minutes later, so this all seems to be working well.

Craft club continues to be well attended and we publish the schedule ahead of time to attract custom.

Whatever we offer, we stress the importance of enjoyment and the library being a space to think.

Explore Learning (EL) put on 4 different, FREE workshops that tied in with the SRC for children aged 4 to 11 on August 19th and 27th. There were 3 to 4 children at each session. EL tell us that the sessions held at Old Town Library are fully booked, so we are not sure why it is not so busy here. They didn't give us a date for the second session until the summer holiday began, so we were unable to publicise the workshops through the Infant School newsletter. They also don't tell us when their facebook adverts are live – I happened to find it on Badbury Park Library's facebook page and shared it. We hope to have better engagement for any future sessions as they are a valuable free resource for those families who need them.

Stitch-Social Banner Making Workshop – a well-attended success!

Swindon-based duo Jo and Josie have formed a banner making initiative called Stitch Social, which has previously exhibited in Central Library, and currently they are exhibiting their amazing banners in our library until late September. Please come and have a look - we hope you agree they look absolutely great. I promoted the event on social media one Saturday and by the following Tuesday, all 12 tickets had sold! The workshop was provided free of charge thanks to funding from Swindon Artsite. This enabled us to keep ticket prices low, and the money raised will be shared between the library and Stitch Social. The workshop was held in the library on the 6th September. It was very successful, very enjoyable, and we had really positive feedback from those who attended, as well as a thankyou card from Stitch Social.

NB: One woman phoned us about this workshop from Stroud and another from Sri Lanka – so our comms are starting to reach far & wide! I will ask them how they heard about us!

A new pilot – Adult Creative Writing Course

Huge thanks to local resident Heather Hawkins, who very kindly offered to run 5 weekly Creative Writing sessions free of charge, which started Tuesday 9th September. 7 people signed up and attended the first session, which I was pleased with. The Parish Council has kindly agreed we can offer these for free in the Alex room as a pilot. I'll update you next month.

****Future Event: Pick, Cook and Eat: Thursday October 9th. 6.45pm for 7pm start.**

In July, Cathy and I attended the Gardening Society's Summer Outing at Overtown Manor B&B. Overtown Manor is owned by Nancy Lawson, a cordon bleu chef who worked with James Martin, and recently starred in "Four in a Bed". Nancy explained that she had set up a charity called "Pick, Cook and Eat" which she runs from her garden. Volunteers work to support young adults with learning disabilities by showing them how to cook vegetables they have planted and helped to grow. Nancy has offered to run an event on October 9th explaining what they do, and also to give a cookery demonstration. She is a total star, please support this event, which I have shared on facebook and whatsapp, tickets are £7, and the money raised will be shared between her charity and the library.

****Future Event: Wiltshire & Swindon Canal Trust October 16th and October 23rd. 7.15pm for 7.30pm start**

The Canal Trust will be exhibiting copies of historic maps and plans for several weeks in October, as well as giving two talks in Wroughton Library focussed on the Wilts and Berks canal. The first will be a short history of the canal and about its restoration. They are hoping that the artist Ken White will also attend and talk about his paintings of the canal. The second will be by Chloe Ford, which will explain the continuing work at Wichelstowe and the major project of taking the canal through the Eastern Villages to join the original canal route. Please support these events by coming along and promoting them online (I will be posting the canal event soon).

Thanks to.....

Zoe has been a brilliant help, covering for holidays; my thanks to her and to the office for sparing her as our pool of cover staff has reduced during the past couple of years. In the meantime we have interviewed and taken on 4 really good candidates who are happy to work ad hoc hours to cover holidays and other absences in the future. This will be particularly valuable to help cover weekends and when Zoe isn't available. We hope to start their training next month.

Many thanks also to the Grounds Team for putting our monthly poster in the Parish Council's notice board near to Waitrose, this makes our presence in Wichelstowe more visible (that's Wroughton Library and the Parish Council).

Would you like me to investigate a Book Box for Wichelstowe?

I am wondering whether there is anywhere in Wichelstowe to site a box to put withdrawn library books in, to help residents in Wichelstowe access free books without having to drive or catch the bus to the library? This would also increase the Library's (and therefore the Parish Council's) profile. It would need a local volunteer to replenish the books, and spot any issues. Many are crime fiction. (This isn't because no-one reads them, it's quite the opposite.) Crime fiction is one of the most popular genres. Books are withdrawn to keep the book offer up-to-date so our library users don't have to go elsewhere to borrow books from or re-read books they've already borrowed. Please could councillors let me know if a Wichelstowe book box is something they would like me to investigate?

And Finally..... on Tuesday a mum with a toddler told me how difficult she had found the summer holidays as she had had relatives staying for two months. Her home life sounded fraught, and she told me that **she comes to the library because it's a place of kindness and safety.**

Hannah Dosanjh,

Library Supervisor

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