

# The Book Society

Founded 1921 by Sir Hugh Walpole

Dear Member

## **The Chair's Report 2017/18**

I am pleased to present the Chair's report for the Society during my year in office to June 2018.

I will cover financials first. We are indeed lucky as a Society to have the quietly efficient and excellent service of Greg Craig Waller who looks after our accounts with great diligence. You will have seen the Treasurer's Report to the year ending 31 December 2017; and I am not going to steal all of Greg's best lines - but maybe I will pinch a couple.

We finished 2017 with both an improved surplus and cash reserve on the previous year; your Committee has also just reviewed the financial position to the end of April 2018. We are in good shape and forecasting to end 2018 with an improved cash position again.

One pleasing result of this is that we have been able to support additional charities that are related to our trade, notably Give a Book. We have received a report from Give a Book that outlines how our donation of £2,000 has been used which I will circulate to the wider membership. It's really inspiring to read. This was in addition to our usual donation of £1,500 to BTBS and £2,000 to World Book Day which you will see in the 2017 accounts.

Our membership remains in good nick with 254 paying members out of a maximum of 300. We have just given the nod to five new members and we are always keen to receive new nominations so please bring any forward that you have.

In the light of increasing costs from the Savile Club, we made a decision to increase prices by a small amount. This was a prudent and sensible move that will preserve the solid financial position of the Society. We consider that the Savile still represents excellent value as a home for our Society; and personally, I consider that the long standing relationship that we have enjoyed with the Savile has an additional value all of its own.

Average attendance at both the dinners and the two drinks parties for 2017 was 91, a shade ahead of 2016; and average attendance at the two dinners to date in 2018 has been a healthy 82. The Jamie Byng dinner this evening sold out very quickly and we have 100 in attendance with a waiting list. I am sure we are in for a quiet evening...

I would like to record our thanks as a Society to all the speakers who have, maybe with an odd bit of arm twisting here and there, addressed our dinners during my term in office. We have enjoyed a wide range of perspectives from publishing luminaries such as YS Chi of Elsevier and Amanda Ridout of Head of Zeus; Justin Adams who until recently was CEO of Bertrams; Bridget Shine, CEO of the Independent Publishers Guild, one of the most vibrant and rapidly growing trade bodies in the UK; and last but not least, the brilliant Chris Riddell who treated us to an exhibition of his magical artistic abilities and some crackingly funny anecdotes.

Our final event of this season will be the President's Party on Thursday 7<sup>th</sup> June which will again be held at the October Gallery in Old Gloucester Street. We had some great feedback about this venue after we tried it out in 2017 so I hope you will all attend and bring guests.

Turning to your Committee, this year two members will be standing down in line with our constitution. Rebecca Smart of Penguin Random House, who had a brilliant term as Chair immediately before me and was a very hard act to follow, and Emma House, Deputy CEO of the Publishers Association, will be standing down. I would like to thank both for their sage contributions during their time on the Committee. I am pleased to report that we have two new members coming forward for election to replace Rebecca and Emma: Tim Dare of Mosaic Selection and Justine Solomons of Byte the Book.

I would like to say a huge thanks to my wonderful Deputy Chair, Sheila Crowley, who has been a great support; I know that Sheila will be an equally wonderful Chair and I wish her all the very best. I would also like to thank Emma Lowe who has done a brilliant job as Secretary and had some very large shoes to fill which belonged to Claire Harrington. Nice job, Emma and thank you.

My thanks as well to our Honorary President, Richard Charkin, for all his support and counsel during the year, and the other members of the Committee: Jacqui Graham, Michael Bhaskar, Jamie Hodder-Williams and Perminder Mann. Michael is coming forward this evening for election as Deputy Chair and I wish him all the very best. I think he will make an excellent Deputy and future Chair so you can probably guess how I am going to vote.

Last but by absolutely no means least, I would like to say a massive thank you on behalf of the Book Society to Jo Dawson, our superb Administrator, who runs the day-to day business of the Society with quiet and seamless aplomb and a good dose of humour. She is an absolute joy to work with. Thank you, Jo.

Finally, in 2021 our Society will have been in existence for one hundred years. Your Committee has already begun to discuss what we might do to mark this event and we are open to suggestions from members as we make our plans. Our Society is in good health and continues to play the role which its founder, Sir Hugh Walpole, set out for it: *"to promote, share and extend knowledge to all those concerned in the creation, production and distribution of books..."*

It's been a great honour and a lot of fun as well to serve as Chair of The Book Society over the last year and I thank you for giving me the opportunity to do so.

All the best

David Taylor, Chair of The Book Society, 2017-2018

