



The Federation of Children's Book Groups

Newsletter

Autumn/Winter 2014

RHCBA Shortlist for 2015

The Red House Children's Book Award shortlist has just been announced!

red house
children's
book award!
2015



Every child can vote at
www.redhousechildrensbookaward.co.uk

Look out for this year's advert announcing the **RHCBA Shortlist for 2015**. For the first time The Reading Agency will be helping us encourage even more children to read and vote for the award, by displaying our advert on their website.

The Federation would like to thank Axel Scheffler for his beautiful illustrations.

All groups voting on the shortlist should return their votes to Jane at etheridgejs@talktalk.net by **23rd January 2015**. Please don't be late otherwise the votes won't count!

The 2015 Ceremony will be held at the Southbank Centre on **21st February**, be on the lookout for more information soon.

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fcbg.org.uk

BIRTHDAY CELEBRATIONS



Lewes Children's Book Group celebrated their **40th anniversary** earlier this year with a big event with several special guests, music, fun and, of course, books. Jean Burke got in touch to share the highlights of their day.



Gillian Cross



Ali Sparkes

After all the preparations and hard work the day had finally arrived - and what an amazing day it was! **Gillian Cross**, one of the founder members of the group, opened the event, welcoming visitors and speaking about the group from its early days. Several old members and founder members came to visit and wish us well for the future, including six past chairs, and **Jane Etheridge**, representing the current executive committee of the Federation was a welcome visitor as was **Chris Routh** from the Reading Children's Book Group.

We had a great line-up of authors - **Emily Gravett** entranced the audience talking about her very popular books. She then encouraged the children to create a story of their own, for which she drew the pictures, enabling every child there to see themselves as an author. **Chris Lloyd** gave a most interesting talk on the history of the world, including the Battle of Lewes, in quite a short space of time - how does he remember all those details? - which the audience lapped up and would have sat for more if we had had the time. My eight year old granddaughter was so enthusiastic she encouraged her mum (equally enthusiastic) to buy his whole series of books, as well as one for me!

Ali Sparkes gave a very entertaining talk about her way into authorship and had the audience joining in a game based on one of her books, and **Steve Cole** was his usual entertaining and energetic self as he cavorted about the floor and played the ukulele.

There were craft activities for the children to enjoy, refreshments to partake of, Diana's collection of scrapbooks of days gone by to reminisce over, not to mention the most beautiful birthday cake which was cut at lunchtime when the Mayor was in attendance. Bags of Books came up trumps with an amazing bookshop which was constantly busy and from which books could be bought to be signed by the authors.

All in all, a thoroughly enjoyable day for which thanks must go to the committee and all the volunteers who so kindly helped out on the day (and made all the lovely cakes and biscuits). Thanks also to **Michael Munday** for the inspiration behind our new logo and the wonderful publicity materials, **Meg Sullivan** for the host of amazing photos she took of the event and the local cake shop for our beautiful birthday cake.



Steve Cole



Emily Gravett



Christopher Lloyd

Name:

Starting Out

Number:

Claire Mooney, secretary of our newest group, Saddleworth Children's Book Group talks us through how the group got started and their very exciting first six months.

'Would your child enjoy being part of a fun, lively book group?' That's how our first message to everyone on our respective email lists started back in March.

Four mums had got together, inspired by our creative chair **Kate Breitholtz**, to set up Saddleworth Children's Book Group for children at primary schools in this collection of villages between Oldham and the Pennines.

We wanted something memorable for our first event during May's National Share A Story Month so had a *Charlie and the Chocolate Factory* themed party, complete with our own Willy Wonka, a DIY glass elevator and some rather manic Oompa Loompa-lympics.

At 10 to two we were nervously asking if only our own children and those of the friends we'd roped in would attend. By 2pm they were piling through the doors at a rate that had us quailing. That first party brought us 58 members aged two to eleven and truly, we couldn't have coped with more.

Our second event saw us handing over some of the responsibility to professional storyteller **Susanna Meese**, whose spooky tales kept members enthralled while we volunteers brewed up, handed out home-made cakes and sold new and second hand children's books. We sourced the new from an online cut price book seller, adding a small mark-up to help us fundraise, while the second hand ones came from a clear-out among members.

It's not just books we've recycled though - our books carousel and our **Great British Book-Off** were essentially the same event, just marketed differently. The idea was to share recommendations for great reads - not just from the grown-ups but with the children also talking about their favourites, mixing a bit of reading aloud (mainly the grown-ups) with a lot of chatting about much-loved books (mainly the children) in smallish groups.

And although we haven't managed to top that initial attendance, membership has continued to grow to more than 70 children and we have high hopes of another big turnout for Non-Fiction November's event based on the lives of children during the First World War.

So what have we learned so far?

The things you think will be easy (like opening a bank account) are hard and the things you think will be hard (like persuading people to take out membership) are easy.

If anyone offers to help, give them a job to do immediately. There is no such thing as too many helpers. Even if it's just doing a check round to make sure no one's desperate for a toilet break/to find their child, it all makes life easier.

There is such a thing as too much cake and we've baked it. If you all say you'll bake X, then panic and all make Y and Z too, you'll end up with more than you can sell. When this happens, you need someone to work at the right sort of place to take the remnants in and mug their colleagues for donations (thanks Micci).

Your own children will be slightly neglected during events because you're so busy. If you guiltily compensate by giving them cash to buy cake and/or books, expect them to spend it on cake that you baked and second hand books that you donated. That's life.

Cinder toffee (also known as honeycomb) is easy to make in bulk and a good fundraiser. It is absolute HELL to bag up though.

We had minutes after our first meeting. We've never bothered again. Everyone takes away their own 'to do' list and we trust each other enough to get on with it. We just prefer rabbiting about books to getting serious about committee meetings.



Viv, The Treasurer





National Non-Fiction November

As announced earlier this year November is now the month for focussing on Non-Fiction, and as well as plenty of events organised by the groups around the country the month long celebration is also taking place online. Throughout November bloggers around the around the UK will be posting World War I and non-fiction themed blog posts. Check our website for details.



First World War events & exhibitions this Autumn

Beyond the our local book group events and the annual Remembrance events taking place during November there is much more going on as we come towards the end of the 100th year since 1914, the year the Great War began.

WARHORSE TO HORSEPOWER

Bovington Tank Museum, Dorset

www.tankmuseum.org

An exhibition exploring the rise of the tank and the changing role of the cavalry in the First World War.

IMPERIAL WAR MUSEUM

www.iwm.org.uk/

www.1914.org

Events and exhibitions around the country, including *Truth and Memory: British Art Of The First World War*, at IWM London, and *From Street to Trench: A World War that Shaped a Region* at IWM North in Manchester. *From Street to Trench* looks at the contribution that the North West made to WWI, and gathers together lots of first hand sources, including objects, recordings, photographs, art and letters.

CAROLS IN THE TRENCHES

Saturday 13 December 2014. 19.30 - 20.30 hrs

The Staffordshire Regiment Museum, Whittington

www.staffordshireregimentmuseum.com

An evening of Carols set in the Museum's WWI trench system, which will be concluded by a re-enactment of the Christmas Truce where British soldiers emerged from the trench to shake hands with their German counterparts who were dug in just yards away.

INSPIRE: CONFERENCE 2015

10th - 12th April, The Olde Barn Hotel, Marston, near Grantham, Lincolnshire

The 2015 Conference is being organised by the Lincolnshire Children's Book Group around the theme *Inspire*. The venue is not far from Isaac Newton's birthplace, Woolsthorpe Manor, and that famous story of Newton and the apple was one of the starting points both for the conference's theme, and for the illustrator behind the conference logo, Louise Comfort, who is a member of the Lincolnshire group.

We can expect a fun packed weekend, with speakers including Frank Cottrell Boyce (Novelist and screen writer, best known for *Millions* and the sequels to *Chitty Chitty Bang Bang*, as well as for being writer for the 2012 Olympic Opening Ceremony), Philip Ardagh (author of many books, both fiction and non-fiction and a previous winner of the Roald Dahl Funny Prize), Kjartan Poskitt (*Murderous Maths*) and many, many more.

Booking is already open, with an earlybird discount available if you book before December 15th.

For more information visit the new Lincolnshire Children's Book Group web page <http://www.lincschildrensbookgroup.org.uk/> or contact conference@lincschildrensbookgroup.org.uk

You can also keep up with Conference 2015 news on our own website.

OTHER EVENTS COMING UP

HARRY POTTER BOOK NIGHT

February 5th 2015

Bloomsbury Children's Books is inviting schools, bookshops, libraries and community groups to

host events in celebration of Harry Potter Book Night. Bloomsbury is putting together a complete Harry Potter Book Night Kit – which will be available for free download - offering hosts everything they need to plan an unforgettable evening.

The kit will include invitation templates, a poster, games, activities and quizzes as well as ideas for dressing up and decorating the venue. You will be able to find it from new website www.harrypotterbooknight.com.

If you're interested in hosting your own Harry Potter Night you can register now at the site to receive the kit and plenty of updates in the run up to the big night.

On the night there will also be public events in London and around the country, a major competition for UK and Irish schools and many other treats and surprises – all celebrating J.K. Rowling's seven iconic Harry Potter books.

A Quick Q&A with **Steve Cole**

As he takes on the writing of Britain's most famous spy.
Shoot to Kill is published in November.

What was your own first experience of James Bond?

I owned the Corgi Aston Martin from Goldfinger with the built-in ejector seat as a small boy, and was allowed to watch the films on TV for a special treat. My mum had a big passion for Roger Moore, and for Christmas 1979 I got her the novelization of *'James Bond and Moonraker'*, which showed Roger in a spacesuit. I knew Bond was a spy so I was slightly puzzled to find him in space.

How does it feel to be taking on such a well-known, iconic character?

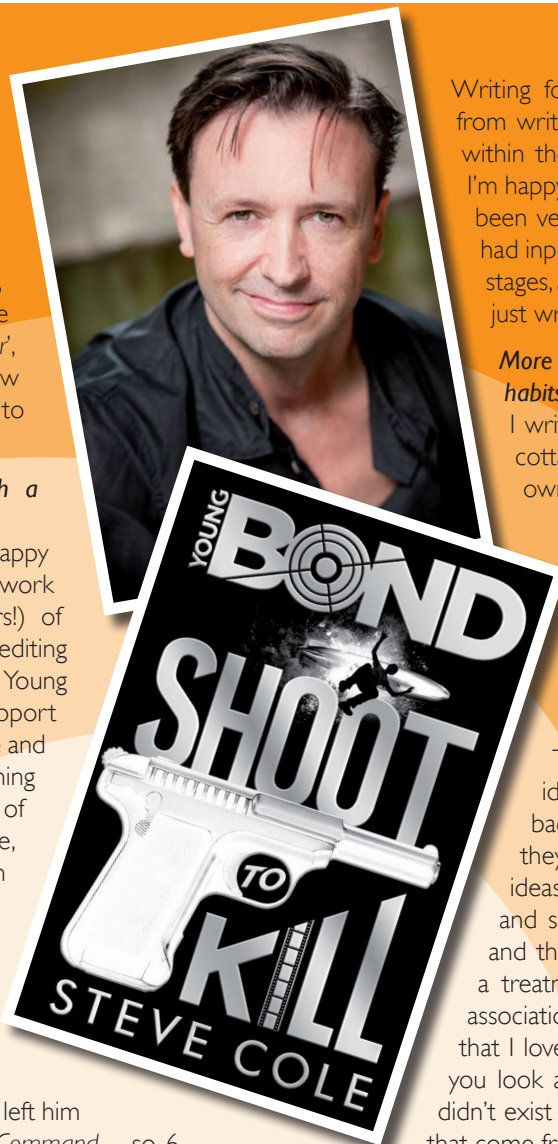
It's been a slightly surreal but very happy privilege. I've been lucky enough to work with the literary estates (and daughters!) of Enid Blyton and Agatha Christie in my editing career. To now find myself writing the Young Bond novels with the permission and support of the Ian Fleming board – who vetted me and my proposals personally before sanctioning my involvement – grants me a hat-trick of associations with literary icons! Of course, I know Bond has a huge following with diverse opinions, so I'm braced for a range of reactions to my first Young Bond.

There's been a few years since the last Young James Bond book was published - how much distance is there in terms of where we pick up his story again?

Shoot To Kill follows on fairly soon after we left him at the end of Charlie Higson's *By Royal Command* – so 6 years have passed since the last Young Bond but only a few weeks for James himself!

This could be viewed as a bit of a departure from your previous books, how different was the writing experience?

It's funny, because although I'm best known for my junior fiction, I started off writing YA/crossover titles for *Doctor Who* before it came back on TV, and my first original fiction trilogy, *The Wereling*, was for YA, and *that* in turn led to the *Thieves Like Us* books which are still in print (all under the name Stephen Cole). And of course I did two *Tripwire* books for teens with real life bomb-disposal expert Major Chris Hunter... So for me, writing *Shoot To Kill* has felt a little like coming home, except now I have a lot more experience than I had starting out.



Writing for licensed characters is always different from writing your own because you have to work within the parameters agreed by the licensor. But I'm happy to say the Fleming editorial approach has been very stimulating and non-restrictive. They've had input at both storyline, first draft and rewrites stages, and that's great – because without it you're just writing fan fiction.

More generally can you tell us about your writing habits? (ie. When, where do you write?)

I write an awful lot of the time. I rent a work cottage in a nearby village so I have my own space; it is off a footpath so there's no traffic and it's very quiet, so I can focus fully. In the evenings I normally work into the small hours in my home office, as those deadlines don't like to leave me alone for long!

When you have a new idea how do you go about starting to turn it into a story?

There seems to be a part of my head where ideas settle. I like to leave them there in the background while I work on other things as they sometimes start to associate with other ideas – for characters, settings, plot elements, and so on. That in turn generates other ideas, and the act of sitting down and trying to write a treatment or synopsis formalizes their sneaky associations. It's the pinning down of plot and ideas that I love most about the writing process – when you look at a storyline that works, a storyline that didn't exist until now, and you think, 'Wow, where did that come from?'

Are there any particular favourite children's books from when you were younger (or now!) that you would like to recommend to us?

I love *Marianne Dreams* by Catherine Storr, about an invalid girl who draws a house with a boy in it and travels there in her dreams. It's brisk and sparse and compellingly told. The hard-to-get sequel, *Marianne and Mark*, is strangely fantasy-free but I'm still very fond of it.

If you could be any fictional character for the day, who would it be?

I'd like to be James Bond for 24 hours – enjoy the glamour, have a car chase or two, win all the fights, save the world, come back for a drink in Mayfair – and then be glad to get back to writing the following day!



Events

SEVEN STORIES

Twists and Tails - the Story of Angelina Ballerina
Until March 2015

An exhibition celebrating author Katharine Holabird and illustrator Helen Craig's best-selling series, which began with *Angelina Ballerina* in 1983. Twists and Tails showcases manuscripts and illustrations from the *Angelina Ballerina* Collection which Katharine and Helen have donated to Seven Stories over the last couple of years.

The exhibition allows its visitors to learn more about the relationship between author, illustrator and publisher as they create a picture book series together and to discover the intricate processes involved in bringing the inhabitants of Mouseland to the page, from Angelina and her family, to her dance teacher, Miss Lilly, and all her friends.

With the opportunity to dress up as *Angelina*, practice your positions and join in with all kinds of activities this exhibition is sure to keep all budding ballerinas entertained.

CONTINUING EXHIBITIONS

Moving Stories – Children's Books from Page to Screen
Until April 2015

In partnership with the National Media Museum. An interactive exhibition that invites you to step in to the world of some of our best known stories, as they appear both in books and films.

26 Characters
Story Museum, Oxford

The story museum's exhibition of portraits of authors and illustrators dressed as their favourite characters from literature has been extended until February next year.

The Illustration Cupboard, London

Opens its 19th annual Winter exhibition towards the end of November. Celebrating all that is "exciting and innovative" in the world of illustration you can expect a wide range of different styles from illustrators both well known and new. Runs until January 31st, visit www.illustration-cupboard.com for more information.

And on a similar theme, the **Hastings Illustration Festival** takes place the first Saturday in December, with workshops, talks, live drawing and much, much more going on all day. More information, including the list of exhibitors, can be found www.hifest.co.uk.

STORIES FOR THE DARKER MONTHS

This time of year, as the nights close in around us and the air starts to smell sharp and cold many of us like nothing better than to curl up with a cup of tea, a blanket and a good book. There is a long tradition, in the winter as the dark grows outside, of gathering people together for the sharing of stories, passing on myths, legends, ghost stories, and a great many stories have grown up around this time of the year, many of them now bound up with Christmas. These are some of the stories I like to come back to at this time of year.

The Holly King and the Oak King

Although this fifth of November and the Oak King including colouring in-Fiction themed day for ers food inspired crafts and gamesolk legend tells of the turning of the year and the changing of seasons it is always this time of year, as the power of the Oak King (who holds sway at the height of summer) wanes and the strength of the Holly King (which peaks at the midwinter solstice) grows, that brings it most to mind.

The Yule Lads

One of my favourite stories of Christmas visitors comes from Iceland, where they have a tradition of the Yuletide Lads, not just one but thirteen pranksters, thought to be the sons of dangerous mountain trolls, with names that translate to things like 'Spoon-licker', 'Sausage-swiper' and 'Candle-stealer' which tell of their original purpose for entering houses. They arrive one by one, between the 12th and 25th December, and these days instead of stealing are supposed to leave gifts for children in shoes left out for the purpose.

Ghost Stories

The tradition of Christmas Eve as a time for sharing ghost stories is perhaps not widely known, but there are many ghost stories that are set on this night of the year (including Dicken's *A Christmas Carol*). There is not one particular story that I like to remind myself of, but sitting down with the *Oxford Book of Christmas Stories* (which includes a few ghost stories) has become a family tradition.

Books

There are a few (very well known!) books that evoke this time of year, the fear of the dark and of a winter that could never end, beautifully.

Susan Cooper – *The Dark is Rising*
John Masefield – *The Box of Delights*
Terry Pratchett – *Wintersmith*
CS Lewis – *The Lion, the Witch and the Wardrobe*



NEWS from the groups



A quick round up of what our other groups have been up to since our last issue.

Oxford CBG

At Oxford we have been busy with a variety of events and have exciting visits planned.

On Thursday 18th September we held a thoroughly enjoyable evening at The Story Museum at Pembroke Street in Oxford where we explored their wonderful 26 Characters exhibition.

"Many of Britain's best loved writers and storytellers have transformed themselves into the characters they most loved as children in our exciting new, interactive photographic exhibition."

<http://www.storymuseum.org.uk/whatson/26characters/>

It was great fun wandering around the amazing building trying to identify the authors and book characters.

We are delighted that we have been able to arrange for **Michael Morpurgo** to take part in the **Thame Art and Literary Festival in October** and he will be present on behalf of OCBG.

We are also organizing school visits for **Michael Malaghan, Susie Day** and **Sally Nicholls** over the next few months so busy and enjoyable times ahead!

Get Reading Reading

In August Get Reading Reading held a fun-packed crafty event featuring storyteller and writer **Margaret Bateson-Hill**, all around that most favourite and alarming of mythical beasts – dragons.

Celebrated Roald Dahl's birthday on 13th September. This year, GRR held an event at Woodley Library where they repeated the Charlie and the Chocolate Factory activity drop in session that the put together for this year's National Share a Story Month, reminding us all that to run a successful event you don't have to start completely from scratch! And yes there was birthday cake.



Aldbourne CBG

Held their annual Bonfire Party in early November with plenty of warming food and drinks.

Ipswich CBG

Have been very busy planning their day conference, with a Non-Fiction theme, for early November. Titled Adventures in the Real World – Exploring Information Books for Children speakers include **Clive Gifford, Christopher Lloyd, Sarah Ridley, Chris Brown** and **Lucy Letherland**, who will be covering topics as diverse as the first world war, the SLA Information Book Award, and finding out *What on Earth?*

South Bucks CBG

Scrumptious Stories:

Our exciting event held during the summer holidays "Scrumptious Stories" was in celebration of good things to eat! We welcomed approx 25 children and 20 adults to our free annual summer event in Wycombe Museum Gardens. This delicious family afternoon of appetising stories was really good fun. Everyone enjoyed listening to stories including *How Do Dinosaurs Eat Their Food?*, *The Very Hungry Caterpillar*, *Oliver's Vegetables* and *Eat Your Peas*; singing songs such as "The Queen of Hearts", "Could I please have a little bit of Butter for my Bread?", "5 Currant Buns" and "Cauliflowers Fluffy"; and getting up to various food-themed crafts including colouring in paper craft "lollies" which were then assembled by the children themselves, creating a lovely reminder to take home, of favourite food stories.

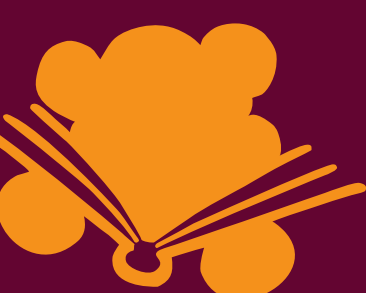
The Scrumptious Stories were well received and the singing of familiar food action songs enthusiastic. Many families stayed at the wonderful venue to relish their mouth watering picnic, shared with their yummy friends. We were particularly grateful to receive help with the story reading and the raffle from non-committee members – and to find that the museum staff would welcome us into the building in the event of rain.

We were delighted to welcome children's author **Angela McAllister** to our "Special Author" evening in September. Angela kindly joined us for an informal "Coffee & Chocolate Cake" soiree to discuss her

varied life and how she began writing her wonderful children's books. Angela is the much loved author of well over 50 books, including past Red House nomination "Yuck! That's Not a Monster!" as well as "Little Mist", "Be Good Gordon" and for older children, "The Runaway". Angela grew up in a large, extended family, telling stories to entertain her younger siblings then finding a quiet corner to draw. After studying philosophy, Angela worked as a nanny in Holland and Portugal as well as the South East of England. Angela's work with, and love of children, first inspired her to begin writing her delightful children's books. Everyone fortunate enough to attend the event expressed their delight at being able to meet this charming, unassuming but inspiring author; to hear about her writing career and share in her creative processes. We all found her open, funny, extremely generous in sharing her ideas and captivatingly enthusiastic about the whole business of story writing and book making. Her positive attitude and warm acknowledgement of the contributions of illustrators and editors to the process was inspiring. A particular highlight of the evening was our Chair's surprise discovery that one of her family's all-time favourite picture books was an Angela McAllister "The Battle of Sir Cob and Sir Filbert" – one of Angela's first publications as both author & illustrator, sadly now out of print.

We were fascinated as Angela explained her thoughts behind her many story ideas and her book reading experiences, to children in schools and book groups – all as captivated as we had been by her positive passion for writing and sharing stories. We were very pleased to share the evening with our guests, some of them unfamiliar with the work of the Federation but all involved in giving children a love of literature and access to books.





The Executive Committee is looking for new members

The National Executive Committee is currently looking for new faces to join us. We are particularly seeking someone who would be interested in taking on the role of treasurer. Given the responsibilities involved we would be keen to find volunteers who have previous experience in a similar role. If you would like further information please contact our National secretary Karen Hellewell, at info@fcbg.org.uk or 0300 102 1559.

Which leads me to my other news

It is with regret that I announce that I will be stepping down from the Executive Committee next year and giving up my position as newsletter editor. Following the Spring Issue I will be leaving the newsletter in the incredibly capable hands of **Chris Routh**, of Reading CBG, who I am sure will bring an exciting new perspective to these pages.

We have also made the decision that from 2015 we will only be producing two issues of the newsletter each year, dropping the summer issue. We have made this decision as we feel that, with the variety of means we now have of communicating with our members there is a lot that is now repeated across our platforms.

Deadline for the next issue is March 7th 2015

Though please note that I will be out of the country for the 2 weeks prior to that deadline, so might not be able to respond to emails.

Please send all group news, ideas and photos to Rebecca Knight-Morgan: news@fcbg.org.uk
6 Lizman's Court, Silkdale Close, Oxford, OX4 2HE

Follow us on Twitter @FCBGNews, and on Facebook and don't forget our website: www.fcbg.org.uk where you can subscribe to our blog!

Editorial Team: Rebecca Knight-Morgan, Louise Stothard and Jessica Knight.

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Executive Committee 2014-2015

If you'd like to know more about the members of the Committee then visit the Committee page on our website – where you can read about where we come from, and some of our favourite books.

Chair

Sarah Stuffsins
32 Washington Road, Caversham
Reading
Berks, RG4 5AA
0118 947 8486
sarahstuffsins@hotmail.com
Reading CBG

Vice Chair, CPO

Jane Etheridge
123 Frederick Road, Cheam, Sutton
Greater London, SM1 2HT
020 8641 8173
etheridgejs@talktalk.net
Oxted CBG

National Secretary

Karen Hellewell
10 St Laurence Road
Bradford on Avon
Wiltshire, BA5 1JG
info@fcbg.org.uk
0300 102 1559
Aldbourn CBG

Treasurer

Julia Miller;
Baie Lazare, Low Road
Barrowby
Lincolnshire, NG32 1DJ
01476 562915
Julia.miller@cognitivefitness.co.uk
Barrowby and Grantham CBG

Minutes Secretary

Christine Leggett
23 Dorset Close
Ipswich
Suffolk, IP4 3BJ
01473 251417
cleggett@claydonhigh.suffolk.sch.uk
Ipswich CBG

RHCBA Co-ordinator

Wendy Gilham-Skinner
Lyncroft, 38 Bicker Road
Donnington
Spalding, PE11 4XP
Wendy.gilhamskinner@lincolnshire.gov.uk
Barrowby and Grantham CBG

Group Liaison Officer

Rosanne Bartlett
65 Worcester Street
Norton, Stourbridge
West Midlands, DY8 1AX
01384 376292
cbartlett@earls.dudley.gov.uk
Dudley CBG

Booklists/Website

Melanie McGilloway
47 Derham Park
Yatton
Somerset,
BS49 4EA
yeovalleycbg@gmail.com
Yeo Valley CBG

NNFN/Blog

Zoe Toft
44 Jerome Road
Sutton Coldfield
Birmingham, B72 1SR
0121 354 2976
Zoe.toft@kuvik.net
Dudley CBG

NSSM

Louise Stothard
Manor Barn
68, Church Street, Helmdon
Northants, NN13 5QJ
louisestothard@aol.com
Oxford CBG

Social Media

Chris Routh
3 Morlais, Emmer Green
Reading
RG4 8PQ
Chrisrouth@leightonpark.com
Reading CBG

Newsletter

Rebecca Knight-Morgan
61 Bailey Road
Oxford
OX4 3HX
rebecca.janeknight@gmail.com
Oxford CBG

The next Executive meeting will be **17th January 2015**.

All meetings are held in London. Please contact Sarah for further information at least two weeks in advance if you wish to attend as an observer.

