

The Federation of Children's Book Groups Newsletter



50th Anniversary Celebration London 6th June 2018, Foyles of London



Federation supporters (old and new) gathered for a wonderful celebratory event with Anne Wood, our founder, as she exhorted all present to keep children's imaginations alive through the power of story.

Over 50 years the Federation has done just this – through national initiatives such as National Share-A-Story Month, National Non-Fiction November, Story-Aid and the Armchair Traveller, through the only award voted for entirely by children, the Children's Book Award and through working with children across the country in the Jean Russell Storytelling Project.

'Three cheers for the tireless volunteers who run the Federation groups!' someone said that evening. Almost every town in the country has had its own children's book group at some point in its history and this focus on developing links with local schools, local communities and local libraries and bookshops remains the unique feature of the Federation.

Each group has been different, responding to the needs of its own members, driven by the passion and commitment of volunteers, many of whom are readers themselves, who want to share their own enthusiasm and their own imaginations with all children.

As our golden party celebrated our work and the support of publishers, booksellers, authors and illustrators, everyone enjoyed a wonderful event, full of friends, raising a glass to the Federation and to the woman who said 'Never tell a woman to get on and do something or she might just do it!' A brief film of the event can be found on **Youtube: <https://youtu.be/AITTNDQHU-A>**

And as Anne celebrated the past – 'who knew it would last 50 years!' – we also look to the future. The Federation was created in 1968 to bring books to children, families and schools who did not have access to libraries or dedicated bookshops and to encourage discussion about how to find that right book for each child. It is still not easy to find that book, the one that will spark creativity and imagination in a child, the one that will create a lifelong reader... As libraries close, as schools face financial pressures, as local bookshops disappear, the Federation with our grass-root focus and local groups still plays a vital role in promoting children's reading and story sharing across the UK and will continue to do so for many years to come.

Be inspired to join a group or set up one of your own. Contact us on **info@fcbg.org.uk** and we will help you through the process.

Photos courtesy of David Bartlett.





GNSSM 2018

Celebrating A World of Stories

We certainly explored stories from all round the world as well as Children's Literature in Translation with our GNSSM theme this year. Amongst many events held by book groups, school and libraries, the pupils from Northampton High School collaborated with schools in France, Spain, Slovakia, Slovenia and Greece to create a shared European story on the theme of 'Don't judge a person by a face'. Abbotswood Care Home, in Hampshire linked with Yellow Dot nursery to create an anthology of stories, illustrated by the children and Upton Meadows Primary school in Northampton created a world map of stories the children had read.

It was great to see how the theme inspired so many different ways of sharing stories. We are grateful to the publishers who supported NSSM. A full report and photos are on the website.

Louise Stothard

National Share-a-Story Month

May 2019:

Travelling Tales

NSSM next year will be looking at stories and tales about travelling. This is travelling in its widest sense - from stories involving journeys via air, sea, train, bus, car and walking to refugee journey stories, to journeys out of this world, and through time.

Get your tickets - ready to get on board and travel with us! Join us in May 2019.

The driving force (see what we did there? - Ed) behind NSSM next year will be Tricia Adams
tricia.adams6@gmail.com



Golden National Non-Fiction November Competition

By the time you are reading this, National Non-Fiction November will be in full swing. Thank you to **Samuel Thomas**, member of Aldbourne Children's book Group, who designed the NNFN banner which you will see on the relevant website pages where you will find a host of ideas and resources including a list of recommended books.

Following the success of last year's competition, we have organised another one to tie in with this year's Food and Festivals Around the World theme, taking inspiration from Nadiya Hussain's fabulous cookery books for children: *Nadiya's Bake Me A Story* (Hodder, 2016), *Nadiya's Bake Me a Festive Story* (Hodder, 2017) and *Nadiya's Bake Me a Celebration Story* (Hodder, 2018).

Full details of the competition can be found on the relevant page of the FCBG website and the closing date is **Friday 7th December 2018**. We would like to thank **Hachette Children's Books** for sponsoring the competition.

We hope that you will have been following the related programme of guest blog posts organised for NNFN which have included a report on the winners of the SLA Information Book Award, announced on the 7th November, as well as contributions from publishers, authors and illustrators. This year we have also invited a number of guest children's book bloggers to post reviews on their own websites which we have been flagging up on Twitter.

We are now looking forward to hearing about how you have been celebrating National Non-Fiction November during our Golden Anniversary year. Please send your news and high resolution photos to hilarie.medler@btconnect.com



Federation Gift 2018

By Terrie Bournier
Chair Herts CBG

As is tradition at the Federation of Children's Book Group's Annual Conference, there is a donation of books made to a local charity. **Hertfordshire group** hosted the conference this year and agreed to donate books to **Keech Hospice**.

The Hospice is run to support children and adults with 'life limiting' illness and 'end of life' care for patients and their family. As the chair of the Herts group I gave a short explanation about the charity at the Gala Dinner. Part of the talk included how the books would be used by Keech. These books would be:

"read to little children to make precious moments/memories for parents, for young readers to read and giggle with during treatment, for older readers to escape to a different dimension or world when things became too difficult and for siblings who might need to take a moment out of their situation".

When I visited Keech Hospice to drop off the donated books the staff were very keen to show me around. I was in the children's wing, as the books were for children. I was struck by how very cheerful the place is with Mr Men and Little Misses characters painted all over the walls, alongside the Gruffalo, a story very familiar to lots of children. The inside space and the outside garden were being used by very small children and their families. They were clearly enjoying looking for mini beasts.

The Meadow Suite is the sadder side of what happens at the hospice. The staff were keen to explain that they do everything they can to limit the trauma of a child dying for parents and family and they do this by providing the Meadow Suite. This is a quiet space of a couple of rooms, a kitchen/sitting room and a 'bedroom'. The bedroom has what looks like a bed, but is actually a refrigerated bed. This is so the family can take their time to say goodbye. As much as I was impressed by the care they clearly take of family, parents and siblings, I couldn't bring myself to go in and see it.

The books that were donated have been used as gifts for some of the children from the Hospice for their birthdays. Some have gone missing because they became that 'must have' for a small child. Most of the books are still in use in the children's wing, helping these children and young people cope with the challenges of their life.

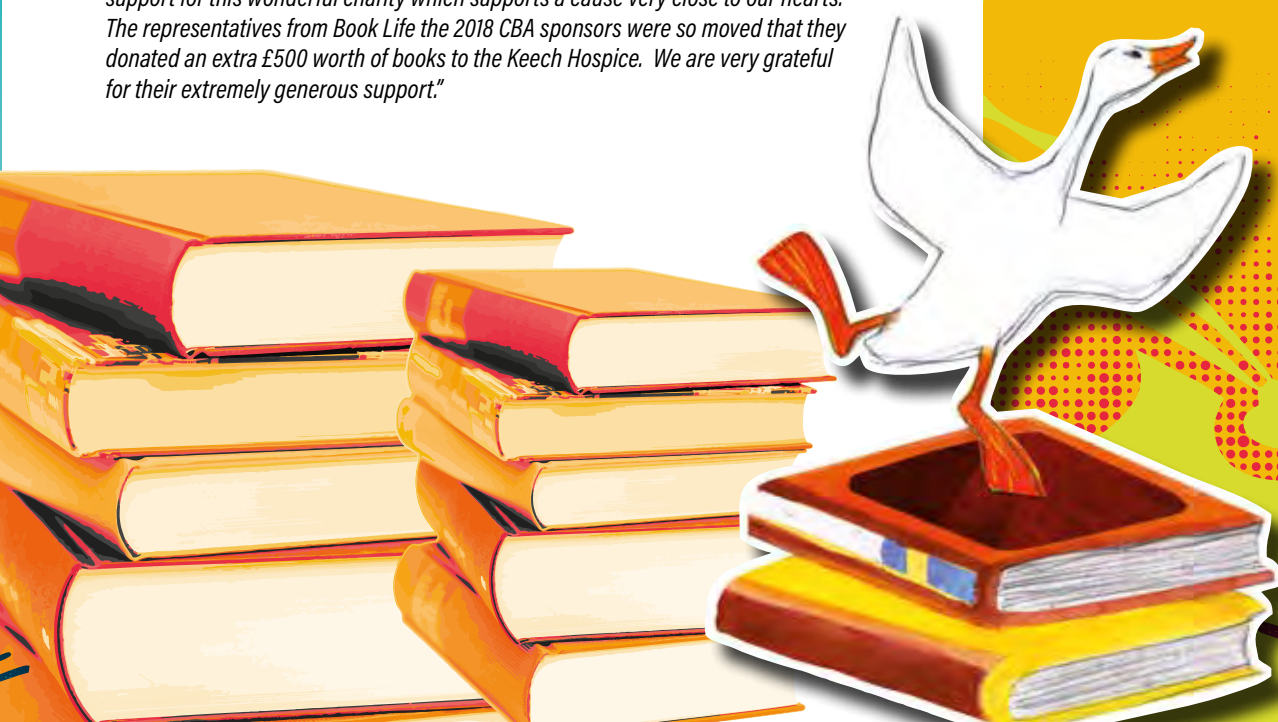
"Terrie made a very emotional speech at the Conference Gala dinner when she accepted the Federation Gift on behalf of Keech Hospice. We were all very affected by her passionate support for this wonderful charity which supports a cause very close to our hearts. The representatives from Book Life the 2018 CBA sponsors were so moved that they donated an extra £500 worth of books to the Keech Hospice. We are very grateful for their extremely generous support."



THE FEDERATION RAP

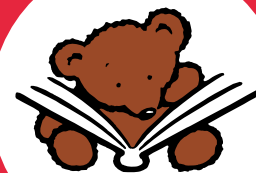
Come on everybody take a look
There's a child over there with her head in a book
She reads in the car. She reads on the bus.
If you try to stop her reading she causes a fuss.
She's surrounded by books and by people who say
Read as much as you like. Read all day.
For her parents belong to the Federation
That promotes reading across the nation
She's a pile of books beside her bed
And when every one has been read
She'll vote for the one she thinks is best
The one that stands out from the rest
That she thinks deserves the reward
Of the Federation's Children's Book Award.
She reads all day and she reads all night
When you think she's asleep, she will switch back on the light.
Her favourite place is the library
Where she can borrow books for free.
She's one of the younger generation
Who has been inspired by the Federation.
Come on everybody take a look
There's a child over there with her head in a book.

JOHN FOSTER



YOUNG PEOPLE AND THEIR INVOLVEMENT IN THE FEDERATION

BY DENISE LAWRENCE HERTS CBG & FCBG NATIONAL SECRETARY



Herts CBG hosted the FCBG 50th Anniversary Conference at the wonderful Queenswood School. The Federation is all about bringing children and books together, so we wanted to involve our younger members in the conference in a very special way. We invited four young people to introduce some of our speakers and it proved a brilliant success! We had lots of positive comments from delegates and we thought you might like to hear from the young presenters themselves.

JAKE IS NOW 13 AND INTRODUCED DAME JACQUELINE WILSON

"Being invited to the Federation of Children's Book Groups conference was an opportunity that I will never forget. I can remember so vividly how I felt at the time I was told I was going to be attending the conference not only as an attendee but as an introducer. I was over the moon when I found that I would be presenting the one and only Dame Jacqueline Wilson."

When the day arrived, nerves were flowing but excitement was jumping. On arrival I was whisked to the green room to be ready to greet Dame Jacqueline Wilson, where there was a short waiting time before she appeared with her PA. Words cannot express how I felt in meeting not only my book hero but the author my family has grown up with. We all love reading Jacqueline Wilson's stories; my Mum could barely contain her excitement!

Following the book conference, I have grown in my enthusiasm for my school library and encouraging young people to get reading. My English department and my school librarian (Mrs Lawrence) have really supported me with my love of English and books. I have since visited the Globe theatre and have had the opportunity to meet lots of authors on book launches. I am so grateful and am enjoying my book journey!" - Jake

Jake is a Team Supervisor in our school library. Since the conference he has been appointed as an English Department Ambassador. In this role Jake was chosen to meet and chat to the Lord Lieutenant of Hertfordshire when he visited our school.

PAIGE

Paige is 10 years old and is a Harry Potter Superfan, having read all the books in the series.

She is a budding actress with Elite Kids Agency, and a keen baker, twice winning the Hertford Mayor's Cake Decorating Competition as judged by Cynthia Stroud of Pretty Gorgeous Cakes fame.

Paige loves all things Blue Planet and hopes to be a marine biologist when she grows up.

Paige very confidently introduced Zeb Soanes and James Mayhew, but said *"It was nerve-wracking having to introduce two people. It was the first time*

I had used a microphone so I had no idea if it was on or not. I also hadn't practiced the conclusion (thanking the authors after their talk) so I made that up on the spot.

My highlight was getting a golden paw and their autographs at the end. I would be happy to do this again because the experience has helped me at school: I went on to sing a solo line in my school choir's rendition of songs from the musical Matilda."

Well done Paige!

MANGO BUBBLES BOY AND BANANA GIRL (BOTH AGED 12) INTRODUCED ROBIN STEVENS AND KATHERINE WOODFINE

From Ruben (aka Mango Bubbles Boy):

"It was a very fun day and I enjoyed meeting Katherine Woodfine for the first time, and seeing Robin Stevens again, who I've met a few times before. I really enjoyed their talk, and it was an interesting idea, having them interview each other. The whole day was great and it was good meeting so many people who are so into kids' books."

Afterwards Bev Humphrey interviewed Banana Girl and me for the School Librarian magazine. (School Librarian 66 (3) p151.) I hope it brings more people to the Mango Bubbles Books website.

A reminder for anyone who didn't watch our film, explaining all about our kids book review site and how to get involved: <https://mangobubblesbooks.com/videos/>"

From Banana Girl: *"I really enjoyed it and loved the opportunity to meet and introduce two authors whose books I really like (Robin Stevens and Katherine Woodfine). It was interesting to hear all the authors talk about what or who inspired them to write, how they find their ideas, which books they read when they were young. It was a fun atmosphere. The food was good too! I would also like to say thank you to Janet Syme for showing me (and Mango Bubbles Boy) around on the day."*



'The Doll Who Ate Stories': The 2018 Jean Russell Storyteller Project

"FEED ME A STORY" is a clear winner with our groups

The final performance of 'The Doll Who Ate Stories' takes place at our Three Laureates event in Birmingham on 3rd November. If you are reading this in time, there may still be tickets for the Laureate events available from <http://www.bcu.ac.uk/conservatoire/events-calendar/the-three-laureates>; free tickets for the Jean Russell story-telling finale are available from the same site.

'Hungry, hungry, HUNGRY...!! Children across the country have been raising the roof with their enthusiastic call and response to Anna Conomos-Wedlock's rip-roaring storytelling performance of Baba Yaga.

Re-creating the dark Russian forests in rural West Wales, inner-city Plymouth, an Academy in High Wycombe and a small forest school nearby, with her re-telling of the Russian folk tale, Anna's magical Matryoshka doll was fed with stories written and performed by children aged from 4 – 12, all of which contained food of one kind or another, in order to save the beautiful Vasilisa the Fair.

Using material and props created especially for the Federation of Children's Book Groups project, Anna enthralled the children (and adults) with her performance of the traditional Russian folk tale of the witch who lives in a house on chicken legs and creates chaos in the forest in her wooden bowl. Teaching everyone Russian and singing a beautiful Russian lullaby – you could hear a pin drop in the silence – Anna wove her own magic spells, encouraging all the audience to participate in the performance.

Storytelling is vital for the development of children's imaginations and can be used across the curriculum to embed learning. Creating stories in teams and then performing them after just two hours work with Anna stretched the children, developing their oracy skills, confidence, team-work and creativity. Storytelling, particularly of the old tales, has such power and yet is diminishing in a world where arts in schools is coming under constant pressure to demonstrate value.

Everyone will have the opportunity to benefit from this project. It will culminate in a story film telling the story of Baba Yaga with an accompanying DVD and Teacher Resource Pack and a big show using some of the stories at the Birmingham Conservatoire performed by pupils from Dudley and Solihull Children's Book Groups.

And the ingredients from the food stories that will have been fed to the Magical Doll are to be used to create recipes that children and teachers can share together when telling the stories and can then be shared by the children with their friends and families. And they will be tested to ensure they are not only edible but delicious too!

Storytelling shares messages and love across the generations – part of the legacy we pass on to our children and our children's children. This is the real value of the Jean Russell Gift, which is organised in partnership with and supported by the Ragdoll Foundation. To learn more about Jean Russell visit www.ragdollfoundation.org.uk or read the 50 Year History book of the Federation of Children's Book Groups, available to order via the web site www.fcbg.org.uk



Save the
date!

FEDERATION OF CHILDREN'S BOOK GROUPS ANNUAL CONFERENCE 12-14 APRIL 2019 OPENING DOORS

WOLDINGHAM SCHOOL, CATERHAM

Speakers and panellists will include: Sita Brahmachari, Nikki Gamble, Sam Hutchinson, Candy Gourlay, Knights Of, Miranda McKearney, Ross Montgomery, Guy Parker Rees, Serena Patel, Nick Sharratt, Francesca Simon, Cynthia So, Jeremy Strong, Marcia Williams, Yuval Zommer.

Join us for an evening of Poetry and Music on Friday in the company of Ed Boxall, Liz Brownlee, Brian Moses, Laura Mucha, Roger Stevens, Neal Zetter and more ...

**CELEBRATE ELMER'S 30TH
BIRTHDAY AND 20 YEARS OF
GIRAFFES CAN'T DANCE**

Discussion panels: The Empathy Factor;
Is This A Golden Age of Non-Fiction?;
Middle Grade Fiction; Representation Matters

Workshops Publishers' Exhibition Book Shop

Hosted by Lewes and Oxted Children's Book Groups

Further information and booking forms are available on the FCBG website <http://www.fcbg.org.uk/conference/> or contact Jane Etheridge at fcbgconference@gmail.com

Discounted rates are available for FCBG members. Join now and receive 14 months membership for the price of 12. Contact Denise Lawrence on info@fcbg.org.uk for more information about membership.

Logo © Corina Fletcher



Federation of Children's Book Groups
Annual Conference
12 - 14 April 2019





NEWS FROM THE GROUPS

PLYMOUTH CBG

Brilliant Biscuit Bonanza

What an amazing occasion in May at the Royal William Yard in Plymouth when, for the local FCBG, Claire Helen Welsh brought her *Aerodynamics of Biscuits* story to town. It was lovely to see so many different families and age groups together in one space enjoying the activities which Claire had thought of to celebrate her book. The audience became engaged as she encouraged children to dress up as characters and act out the story. It then moved on to the biscuits themselves and five biscuits from around the world were tasted and everyone had to vote for their favourite.

Now came the moment to test the aerodynamics of biscuits! Three children were each handed a squash racquet on which a different biscuit was placed and they had to see how far they could hit it through the air. The biscuit which survived the journey without breaking up on re-entry was the winner.

At last, the part everyone was looking forward to: the making of biscuit rockets with ice cream cones and butter cream icing. Mini versions of tea time treats were stuck onto upside down flat bottomed cones using the icing as glue to form wings and other rocket parts. Also children could put together collages of rockets using a variety of materials.

Once the model rockets were complete and hopefully sticking together, Claire's mum had brought along an app on her iPad where she took a photo of the rocket and could then make it look as if it was flying in space on the screen. How exciting!

All adults and children had a lovely time exploring Claire's inspirational story and went home full of biscuits and icing. What a great event to be part of our National Share a Story Month during this Golden Anniversary Year.



SOLIHULL CBG

Phyl Gaunt

On 17th and 18th July Solihull Children's Book Group welcomed Jenny McLachlan to Arden, Langley and Yardley Secondary Schools. She awarded prizes for Accelerated Reading at Arden, organised by Librarian Emma O'Brien. Jenny also held creative writing workshops which were greatly enjoyed by students, many of whom discovered that they were budding authors. Jenny gave entertaining talks about her books at Langley and Yardleys.

She is pictured with students from Yardleys who were keen to read her latest book, *Truly, Wildly, Deeply*. Thanks to Jenny for ending the school year on such a positive note.



IPSWICH CBG

Shirley Imlach

Ipswich CBG mounted a display in the local library this summer to celebrate the FCBG's Golden Anniversary.



FOR FUTURE EDITIONS, PLEASE SEND YOUR GROUP NEWS AND ATTACH SEPARATE HIGH RESOLUTION PHOTOS TO HILARIE MEDLER, THE GROUP LIAISON OFFICER hilarie.medler@btconnect.com

THE GRAND TOUR!

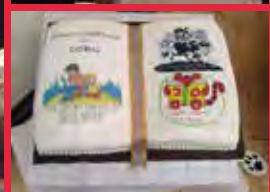
VISITING LOCAL GROUPS: THE FIRST 5 MONTHS



IPSWICH



OXFORD



LEWES



SOUTH BUCKINGHAMSHIRE



ALDBOURNE

One of my aims as Chair is to visit as many local groups as possible during the next two years.

I started in March with a visit to **Ipswich** to hear Kevin Crossley-Holland talking about the new edition of *Norse Myths*. The event took place in a fabulous old church, attended by a large audience of adults and children. The group provided a delicious buffet supper and the local Waterstones supplied books to buy and have signed. I really enjoyed meeting the group's members and supporters.

The annual conference was held in April at Queenswood School hosted by **Hertfordshire CBG**. This was a very special event – attended by many of our past chairs. A fantastic celebratory atmosphere was created thanks to the hard work of and warm welcome given by Herts CBG. Hosting the conference provides a great opportunity for local groups to make a significant contribution to FCBG's work at national level. Many thanks to everyone involved; and best wishes to **Lewes** and **Oxted** who are hosting next year's conference!

I was delighted to be able to join **Oxford CBG** in May for a special double celebration which took place in the Story Museum. Quite fittingly, a real party atmosphere was created to mark the group's own 25th birthday as well as FCBG's 50th anniversary! The programme of author talks and performances paid testimony to the warm regard that many writers feel for the Federation – some of whom get involved with setting up and running groups, like John Foster who was one of the founding members of Oxford CBG. See page 3 for his 'Federation Rap'.

My own local group, **Reading**, has also enjoyed the benefits of working with local museums and libraries. I recently enjoyed participating in a variety of events based at the Museum of English Rural Life, particularly the Spring Chickens family day, which also took place in May, where the group organised a chicken-themed trail and read chicken-themed stories. Between the story sessions parents and children read and voted for some of the picture books eligible for the Children's Book Award.

I also visited **Lewes CBG** in May to help out at one of their well-established, half-termly Book Swaps. Members of the group came out in force to run a very successful morning involving local families. Held at Lewes Depot, a new venue for Lewes, which is sympathetic to the notion of 'recycling' – this well-attended event demonstrated the real impact that a Children's Book Group can make on bringing children and books together in their local community.

In June, I attended one of the Jean Russell Storytelling Project events in a small rural primary school in **South Buckinghamshire** and was bowled over by the impact that Anna Conomos's storytelling and workshops had on the whole school. And in July I attended another very different al fresco storytelling event organised by **Aldbourne CBG**, this time set in a lovely local garden with a sale of books and bags (including tote bags printed with Aldbourne's brand new logo), wonderful homemade refreshments and a guest storyteller, Tanya Batt, who held the audience spellbound.

Thank you to everyone who has made me feel so welcome over the last few months and allowed me to observe the great work that is being done at grass-roots level. I am really looking forward to travelling further afield during the next few months.

CHRIS ROUTH



DATES FOR YOUR DIARY

JANUARY

Early January

Mid January

27th

29th

FEBRUARY

7th

14th

MARCH

7th

7th

8th -13th

14th-24th

30th March -
7th April

APRIL

12th- 14th

23rd

28 April- 5th May

Costa Book Award winners announced
Lollies (Laugh Out Loud) Awards announced
Deadline for first round of voting for Children's Book Award tbc
Costa Book of the Year announced

Harry Potter Book Night
International Book Giving Day

YA Book Prize shortlist announced
World Book Day
Blue Peter Book Award
Belfast Children's Festival
Bournville Bookfest
Jhalak Prize for Book of the Year
Scottish Children's Book Award winner announced
Shortlist Carnegie Kate Greenaway announced

Imagine Children's Festival,
South Bank, London
Oxford Literary Festival

FCBG conference, 'Opening Doors'
at Woldingham School, Caterham .
World Book Night
Stratford upon Avon Literary Festival

Deadline for the next issue is
Monday 25th February 2019

Next Issue:

A round-up of the 50th Anniversary Celebrations
Three Laureates FCBG Festival at the Birmingham Conservatoire
Our newest groups!
and more...

Please send all your group news, high resolution photos and top tips to hilarie.medler@btconnect.com
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!

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Spreading the Word about FCBG

As usual, members of the executive committee have attended a number of book launches and publishing events on behalf of the Federation. There has also been a huge amount of work undertaken behind the scenes to support the organisation of our annual conference and the CBA celebration day, to organise the Jean Russell Project, to liaise with our sponsor and, most pressing, to make sure that the Federation Children's Festival in Birmingham on 3rd November (the Three Laureates) is a memorable occasion.

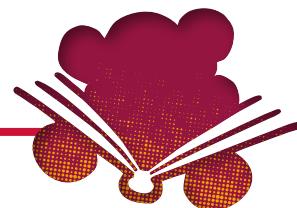
Executive Committee

The next Executive meeting will be on Saturday 12th January 2019. All meetings are held in London. Please contact Chris Routh for further information at least two weeks in advance if you would like to attend as an observer. The AGM takes place on 12th April at our annual conference.

CAN YOU PLAY A ROLE IN THE FEDERATION?

We are very keen to talk to anyone who is interested in the possibility of joining the Executive Committee this year. We are currently looking to fill the roles of **Publications Officer** and **National Non-Fiction November Coordinator**.

Please contact Chris, chrisrouth2@gmail.com if you are interested in supporting us in this way.



CONTACT LIST

CHAIR, NNFN CO-ORDINATOR, SOCIAL MEDIA

Chris Routh
chrisrouth2@gmail.com
Reading CBG

VICE CHAIR, NEWSLETTER

Diane Gaunt
diane.gaunt@abbotsholme.co.uk
Dudley CBG

TREASURER

Jane Etheridge
etherjane@gmail.com
Oxted CBG

NATIONAL SECRETARY/ UPDATED EDITOR

Denise Lawrence
info@fcbg.org.uk
0300 102 1559
Herts CBG

MINUTES SECRETARY

Karen Hellewell
karenhellewell@outlook.com
Aldbourn CBG

CHILDREN'S BOOK AWARD CO-ORDINATOR

Sarah Stuffs
sarahstuffs@hotmail.com
Reading CBG

JEAN RUSSELL PROJECT CO-ORDINATOR, SPONSORSHIP MANAGER

Julia Miller
juliaamiller1957@gmail.com
Lincs CBG

GROUP LIAISON OFFICER

Hilarie Medler
hilarie.medler@btconnect.com
Plymouth CBG

CONFERENCE PROGRAMME ORGANISER

Rosanne Bartlett
rbartlett1652@gmail.com
Dudley CBG

NSSM

Tricia Adams
tricia.adams6@gmail.com
Northamptonshire CBG

Louise Stothard
louise.stothard@aol.com
Oxford CBG

BLOG / WEBSITE

Clare Zinkin
clarezinkin@hotmail.com