



Friends of Pontesbury Library
The Pavilion
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The King's Award
for Voluntary Service

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Charity number 1176789

REPORT for the ANNUAL PONTESBURY PARISH MEETING Monday 9 March 2026, 6pm, Pontesbury Public Hall

Friends of Pontesbury Library (FOPL) is a fundraising and community group entirely run by volunteers and a registered charity. Its aims are to:

- Keep our Library open
- Encourage young children and students to love books and be library users
- Develop our Library as a community resource that provides more than simply books to borrow

We have some 400 Friends of Pontesbury Library members. There are currently 114 people in the 100 Club Lottery, with 183 tickets sold at present (some people hold multiple tickets), bringing in a regular revenue. Our events across the year are a mixture of fundraisers, community events and free activities aimed at a wide demographic of young families, schoolchildren and the elderly. Fundraising enables us to make our agreed contribution to the Parish Council to help keep our library open, presently £4000 per annum, and it also pays for our free events.

FOPL has a 17 people strong Committee, which Yvonne Davies Chaired until 1 September 2025 when Caroline Wright became Chair. Six Committee members are also Trustees and the Trustees are Chaired by Yvonne Davies. We are very pleased that our Library Manager, Beverley Dunn, has always been an active member of our Committee, enabling excellent liaison between FOPL, Pontesbury Community Library and Shropshire Library Services. We are also fortunate that Councillor Nick Hignett is a FOPL Committee member and Trustee and PC Chair Duncan Fletcher and Councillor Roger Evans are Committee members. We also have a core group of loyal volunteers, some of whom help at annual events like the Plant Sale, or during School Visits, while others give of their time month in month out at our coffee mornings.

At the October 2025 Parish Council meeting, Councillors approved the new Library Licence to Occupy (space within the Pavilion) from 1 April 2025- 31 March 2028 with Shropshire Council. This secures the future of our library at least in the medium term.

SUMMARY OF EVENTS & ACTIVITIES: 1 April 2025- 31 March 2026

12 Coffee mornings and a special birthday!

Held on the first Saturday of each month, our coffee mornings are always well-attended, particularly by older members of our community. In April we focussed on The Lily Chitty Touring Exhibition and short film, made by the Young Collective from Shrewsbury Museums, and this gave

us an opportunity to re-stage our library's very successful 2023 Lily Chitty display. In February 2026 we celebrated the 10th birthday of the FOPL coffee morning, in other words coffee morning number 120! Our March 2026 coffee morning sees the Friends being presented with the King's Award for Voluntary Service, see below.

Children's Crafting Activities

FOPL organised seven successful free-of-charge crafting activities for children during the various school holidays. The three in the summer holidays were linked to the theme of the Reading Challenge, 'Storygarden' and culminated in some messy play with clay! Bats, spiders and witches were the order of the day for Hallowe'en, the Christmas workshops followed this year's theme, *The Lion, the Witch and the Wardrobe*, see below, and February half-term was all about spring flowers.

Spring Plant Sale: 3 May 2025

Our annual Spring plant sale is a major fundraiser for FOPL and was a huge success, with people queuing to come in to select from the grand array of plants and seedlings. They enjoyed the added attractions of a tombola, cake stall and book stall, alongside our monthly coffee morning, which was so well patronised that the cakes nearly ran out!

AGM: 22 May 2025

Caroline Wright was elected as Chair, with effect from 1 September 2025 to allow for handover, with Bob Tune and Sue Smith reappointed as Treasurer and Secretary respectively. Our guest speaker after the AGM business was Nicky Green from Severn Hospice. She spoke about the history of Severn Hospice and its important role in our community, as well as plans for the new 'Hospice at Home' facility and future buildings improvements at Bicton and Telford.

Writing Competition: Pontesbury Festival

Our contribution to the Pontesbury Festival was a writing competition on the theme 'It happened in Pontesbury....' and we invited up to 500-word entries from all ages and in all writing styles, due by 31 May. The winners were announced at the READ IT! WRITE IT! SHARE IT! event in the library on 28 June, as part of Pontesbury Festival, and those short-listed also received a prize. The Children's winner was Spencer Winchester-Horscraft for his story 'The Mystery of Mr L H'. The Adult winner was Jonathan Lowrie for his poem, 'Pontesbury through the Seasons'.

Summer Reading Challenge (SRC) 2025

This began on 19 July, coinciding with the 100th anniversary of the formation of Shropshire libraries. We celebrated the Anniversary and launched the Challenge at the first of our Children's Art and Craft Summer Workshops on 19 July. The SRC invites children to read six books across the summer holidays, with accompanying games and competitions. **We had 46 starters and 36 completers, 78%** which is excellent. Certificates and medals were presented after school on 11 September, by Special Guest Sal Tonge, popular Shropshire Storyteller and Songster. She delighted all of us, adults and children alike, with songs and a very participatory story, 'The Enormous Turnip', vividly told, with actions!

Minsterley Primary School Visit: 22 September 2025

We welcomed 26 Reception children from Minsterley Primary for their usual 2-hour visit. They rotated in smaller groups around four fun activities designed to introduce them to their library: a scavenger hunt; an introduction to the children's corner and chance to choose a book to be read;

singing and miming Nursery Rhymes as part of World Nursery Rhyme Week; decorating a bookmark with their name on.

King's Award for Voluntary Service: 14 November 2025

FOPL were delighted and honoured to be awarded the King's Award for Voluntary Service (KAVS), announced on the birthday of His Majesty King Charles. The Kings Award for Voluntary Service is the highest, lifetime honour bestowed upon local volunteer groups in the UK, equivalent to an MBE. Created in 2002 for Queen Elizabeth II's Golden Jubilee, it recognizes exceptional, community-focused, volunteer-led groups that have operated for at least three years.

Polar Journeys: A Talk by Celebrated Wildlife Photographer Ben Osborne, 22 November 2025

Our second major fund-raiser of the year was a sell-out talk by local wildlife photographer and FOPL member Ben Osborne, held in Pontesbury Public Hall. Ben shared a brilliant, amusing and personal take on journeying to both polar regions, with stunning visuals. It was a real treat and a great community event.

The Lion, the Witch and Wardrobe: Christmas 2025

Marking 75 years since it was first published, this famous book by C.S. Lewis was the theme for our Christmas decorations in the library and for special Christmas story-times. Decorations made in crafting workshops and sent in following outreach to local schools saw the library festooned in snowflakes and robins. Together with decorations put together by volunteers, including a large mural of central characters and a wardrobe door, these transformed the children's corner into a magical space for three after-school readings of this enchanting story in the run-up to Christmas.

Chip It for Charity: 10 January 2026

Unfortunately, this annual event had to be cancelled at short notice, due to the treacherous snow and ice following Storm Goretta.

KAVS Presentation Coffee Morning: 7 March 2026

Yet to come as this report is compiled, a very special coffee morning culminating in a visit by the Lord Lieutenant of Shropshire, Mrs Anna Turner JP, and her party, to present FOPL with the King's Award for Voluntary Service. We invited all our coffee morning regulars, together with guests who have played a part in FOPL over the last 10 years and contributed to this great honour.

Talk by Liam Shaw: 14 March 2026

One final FOPL event to anticipate as this financial year draws to a close, is a talk by local author and researcher Liam Shaw about his new book *Dangerous Miracle*. This explores how antibiotics have transformed medicine and why their future is at risk.

Thankyou to all those who Support Pontesbury's Community Library

FOPL would like to record our thanks to all the volunteers who make possible our extensive activities throughout the year, giving of their time and skills so generously and helping us to contribute to community life as 'more than just a library'. We would also like to thank all those who contribute to our fund-raising, as Lottery number holders, attending our ticketed events, buying plants, eating delicious cakes at our coffee mornings and making donations.

Finally, we would like to encourage everyone to keep using our precious community library, and to start using it on a regular basis if they don't already do so. A library card may be small, but it is a very powerful little piece of plastic and opens doors to us on so many levels.