



## Valuing our Volunteers

Kate Castleden, November 2022

TeaBooks is an Oxfordshire-wide project, organising social book group for the over 60s. These groups enable members to share their love of books and reading while making new friends in their local community. We have 15 groups around the county, who collectively hosted 155 meetings in the last year. Each of these groups is run by a Volunteer Group Leader, and it is these Volunteers who are the glue that holds the project together.

We know that the TeaBooks group members value their Volunteers, but we want to make sure that our Volunteers feel valued by us too. So this month we hosted a Volunteer thank you and celebration. We wanted to provide a fun opportunity for the Volunteers to get together and share their experiences.

We are very grateful to The Story Museum in Oxford (<https://www.storymuseum.org.uk/>) for hosting us. As local story experts with an inspiring space, they welcomed us in with free admission to explore their evocative galleries. It was the perfect chance for us all to think about why we love stories, as well as when and how that love began. We explored the oral tales in the Whispering Wood, comic book exhibition, and the immersive spaces of the Enchanted Library which brings childhood favourites (like the Hundred Acre Wood and Narnia) to life. It was great to be reminded of the magic of stories, and how they help us escape from everyday reality and encourage us to imagine different characters and other worlds.



The visit was a relaxed way to spend time as a team and it was a pleasure to welcome our newest Volunteer, whose group was founded in September. It gave us the chance to share both successes and challenges. One Volunteer's group recently went through a refresh and is now going from strength-to-strength. Other Volunteers shared their struggles with sourcing sufficient copies of large print copies of their selected books. We work hard to make sure our groups are meeting the needs of local older people, and this is something we shall be exploring going forward (a blog post for another day!).

I'd like to take this opportunity to say a huge thank you to the TeaBooks Volunteers, as well as The Story Museum, and M & S who kindly donated our refreshments for the morning.

Kate is the Age Friendly Creative Facilitator at Age of Creativity, where she manages the TeaBooks project and leads on communication.

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