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The Leeds Library



# Speaks Volumes 21

The Bi-Monthly Newsletter of The Leeds Library

May 2020



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# The Leeds Library

## **Dear Member**

We hope you, your family and loved ones are safe and well and adjusting to the demands of the lockdown in this very complicated time. We have tried as best we can to keep Members engaged in the life of the Library and to provide support during this difficult time, as shown in this edition of Speaks Volumes.

We are now beginning discussions about how the Library moves forward and operates once we are allowed to open again, hopefully in the not too distant future. Over the coming days we will be developing an operational plan for the Library that will look at a broad range of issues including our opening hours, implementing social distancing measures in the Library, how we issue books and above all how we ensure Members, staff team members and volunteers are not put at any risk whilst at the same time enjoying the Library building and its ambience, our collections and our service. As these plans are firmed up, we will ensure that you are fully briefed about how we will operate and how that will affect you. We will also be asking for your views as to what areas of work you would be keen for us to prioritise moving forward.

Beyond the reopening of the Library, we are looking at how the Library will go about its work over the next few years so as to ensure we recover as quickly as we can from the financial impact of Covid-19. We are working on the basis that for a time, and we don't know how long, we will receive less rental income from the units beneath the Library, we will be unable to generate income from our events programme and room hire, and our ability to secure grant income will be impacted by increased competition from other charities and heritage organisations. At the same time it is unclear how the current pandemic will affect membership numbers. Whilst we do have reserves that we can draw upon, we need to do what we can to generate income and as part of that we are looking at fundraising initiatives that we can implement quickly. In particular, we are in discussions with the Heritage Lottery Fund for assistance during what is likely to be a continued period of uncertainty for all arts, heritage and cultural charities.

On the positive side, we have shown that the Library is able to adapt quickly to changing circumstances by implementing new arrangements for Members to access books. Equally the solidarity shown by Members, Trustees and the staff team of the Library puts us in a strong position to respond to the short, medium and long term challenges that Covid-19 presents in positive, creative and dynamic ways.

With best wishes, Carl Hutton, CEO.



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## From Your Editor

Hello everyone! I'm really pleased to be able to bring you this edition of Speaks Volumes straight from my home office. It's been such a strange time and there's been so much to readjust to that it feels good to have the constant that is this newsletter and to be able to connect with all of you. I really hope that you are well, staying safe and taking care of yourselves.

Speaks 21 is a much more pared back version than usual but I hope you find it interesting and helpful nonetheless. There's a whole section on reading focusing on our new eBook platform, the Library Book Club and your book reviews, please keep them coming! We look at writing too. Our guest contributor, Dr Rachel Connor from Leeds Beckett University provides some top tips on what you can do to start writing, you can also take part in a Leeds letter writing campaign initiative and my personal crusade is to get more people sending postcards, gaining inspiration from Tom Jackson's fantastic book, *Postcards From The Past*. Even if we can't go on holiday at the moment, we can still send someone we know a postcard.

With the Library remaining closed, our events programme has had to stop too but we are looking at how we can bring you some virtual online events. We've already Zoomed our first Book Club discussion and plan to do the same in May, for the third year in succession we will be celebrating International Dylan Thomas Day on 14 May with a lunchtime reading event organised by Dr Patrick Lodge and in June we are extremely excited about Nightjar Nights which will run from 1-13 June. Thank you to Katie Marland for her beautiful Nightjar drawing which graces our front page.

Details of everything I've mentioned here are in the following pages. Finally, please consider joining the Members' Forum. There's so much going on there, it's a great way to stay in touch with us and each other.

The next issue of Speaks Volumes will be published in July and I'd be delighted to receive your articles for inclusion by Monday 22 June by email at [gellf@theleedslibrary.org.uk](mailto:gellf@theleedslibrary.org.uk).

Best wishes

Fiona Gell, Marketing & Communications Officer





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## The Library in the Time of Coronavirus



As I write this the Library, like much of the city, is empty and silent. There is none of the usual lively conversation between Members, no meetings, and the events we were planning for Members and the wider public have been cancelled. It is a strange and ghostly place.

However although the Library is closed we haven't completely stopped work. Most obviously, as you know, we have set up a postal service to support Members who cannot easily come to the Library and an e-Book lending service for those who like to read on screen.

These were both ideas we had been considering but which the current crisis brought to the top of our agenda. And they are both services that we will continue with after the Library reopens. Over 100 members have joined our new Forum providing a space for online discussion covering everything from book recommendations and reviews to free resources to use at home, from a virtual book club to Library memories, not forgetting the Word of the Day. Staff are visiting the Library regularly to check on the state of the building and deal with post and other urgent business. While Library committee meetings have been suspended, with urgent business being dealt with by e-mail, Trustees will be using e-meetings to discuss critical issues such as arrangements for re-opening the Library and restoring normal functioning, and how to pair the Library's financial position, which will clearly be under pressure this year.

We would, of course, not have been able to get these new arrangements up and running without the hard work and enthusiasm of our staff. While some continue to work from home we have had to make the difficult decision to furlough other staff whose work doesn't lend itself to being done remotely, though I hope this will be for as short a time as possible. I appreciate that this is a difficult time for staff as much as for the rest of us and I want to express my very real thanks to them for their continuing commitment to the Library and their determination to do all they can to help Members during the current crisis.

Finally I've enjoyed talking to Members I've met while out shopping or taking exercise but it is not the same as seeing you in the Library so I look forward to welcoming you back when we reopen. I will let you know as soon as I can when that will be.

In the meantime keep healthy and stay safe.

Martin Staniforth, Chair of Trustees.



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## Member Survey



We are currently thinking through how the Library will operate on a day to day basis once the Government allows Members to return to the Library to engage with our collections. In particular we are considering how the Library can once again be used as a social space by Members at a time of social distancing, how we open on days and at times when Members feel comfortable coming into Leeds, and how we continue to support Members

who should not, or do not wish to, visit the Library in person in the near future.

To help us firm up our plans, we intend to ask our membership for feedback on these and other related challenges so that we can have a strategy in place for how we will operate over the coming months which has taken your views on board. For example, it may be that we consider opening for fewer hours each day to avoid anyone having to travel to or from the Library in rush hour, but extend the opening of the Library to include Sundays when it may be easier and quieter for everyone to get in to town. For those Members who may be unable to, or are uncertain about, coming into Leeds we may further extend our recently launched eBook and postal book services. To help in our planning it would be good to know from you what concerns you may have about returning to the Library so that we can think through sensible solutions that address these issues.

Linked to this we recognise that we may also have to consider making arrangements within the Library so that there are a set number of designated seats in the Library and have an agreed maximum capacity for the number of Members who can be within the Library at any one time in order to meet social distancing requirements. This could involve some form of system that allows Members who want to do more than return or collect books to register for visiting the Library at a given time and for a specified period of time so they can be certain that they won't be turned away at the door. To assist us in working up such a plan, it would be helpful to know how it would be best for you to engage with us if having to book a time to come to the Library, either via phone, email, or registering online.

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## **Member Survey, cont'd**

Until things become clearer on how the Government intends to relax the current restrictions and how they will want organisations like the Library to respect the need for social distancing at least for some time to come, it is obviously uncertain whether we will have to introduce measures such as those outlined above. However, we are keen that the Library is proactive in ensuring it is ready to open in a responsible manner whatever requirements are placed upon us, so your input on how we can do this would be greatly appreciated.

We hope that we will be able to send out a survey for you to complete within the next couple of weeks. We will then keep you updated as to an agreed way forward so that as many of you can return to the Library as soon as possible.



## **Annual General Meeting**

The Library's Annual General Meeting was scheduled for Saturday 27 June. Given the Covid-19 pandemic, Trustees have decided to postpone it until September. We will decide the precise date nearer the time. Should the current crisis continue for longer than we expect, and put a September meeting at risk, we will seek advice from the Charity Commission.



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## Members' Forum

Back in the day, a forum was the marketplace or public place of an ancient Roman city forming the centre of judicial and public business, our Forum isn't quite like that! It's more of a place where we can stay in touch with each other and exchange news and ideas. We have dozens of threads created by staff and Members. Examples are current reading, book reviews, free resources to do from home, Library memories and our popular Word of the Day. We now have over 100 Members actively participating and we would love you to join us there too.

It takes just seconds to register here: <https://theleedslibrary.freeforums.net>

## Vote for Leeds Lit Fest in the Saboteur Awards

We are very proud partners of Leeds Lit Fest and delighted that the Festival has been shortlisted for the second year running for Best Literary Festival in the Saboteur Awards.

The Saboteur Awards, started by Sabotage Reviews, spotlight a diverse range of literary publications, events and writers on the UK indie literature scene and have been running since 2011. The awards are voted for by the public for events and creative output that have happened in the previous 12 months, and are much prized and sought after by the writing community.

Voting is now open and we'd love for the Festival to win! You can help us by voting here: <https://form.jotform.com/201082211430334> or via the News section on our website. Voting closes on 13 May and results are announced on 16 May.





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# The Leeds Library

## Our New eBooks Library



On Monday 21 April, we launched our first ever digital library! Whilst we all love the feel and smell of a paper book, we recognised that setting up this service was a way for you to access more reading material during a time when you are unable to get into the Library.

Currently we have almost 300 titles available (including some audiobooks) and we are adding more books all the time. Most of our selections so far have been informed by your requests and reading habits, so do please let us have your suggestions and we will see what we can do.

As we realise that one of the aspects of lockdown may be an increase in the amount of time you have for reading, we have also added many classic fiction titles. So this is your chance to read that old favourite you've always meant to.

We have set a limit of 3 books per Member to ensure that as many of you as possible can borrow and we would ask that once you have read a book, you return it to the collection so that other Members can access it.

To access the books, you need to download the Libby app [play.google.com/store/apps/details?id=com.overdrive.mobile.android.libby&hl=en\\_GB](https://play.google.com/store/apps/details?id=com.overdrive.mobile.android.libby&hl=en_GB) as that's the e-reader (unfortunately, you can't use Kindle) and once on there you can search for us, or use the links below.

To go straight to our online Library: <https://theleedslibrary.overdrive.com/> and sign in as above or through Libby: <https://libbyapp.com/library/theleedslibrary>.

In Libby, follow the prompts to find The Leeds Library and sign in using your email address (as your card number) and your 4 digit membership number as your PIN (\*see below for more help on this), then browse the eBook Library collection and borrow a title. Borrowed titles appear under Shelf > Loans and download to the app automatically when you are using wi-fi so you can read them when you are offline.

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## Our New eBooks Library, cont'd

If you have any problems using the eBooks Library, please either go to our Forum at <https://theleedslibrary.freeforums.net> and post a question on our eBook Library thread or send an email to [counter@theleedslibrary.org.uk](mailto:counter@theleedslibrary.org.uk). We hope that if the service proves popular it will become a permanent part of our collection once the lockdown has come to an end and the Library is fully open.

\*If you can't remember your membership number, it may be on a sticky label on your door card. Let us know if you need to be reminded of the number or the email address we have for you.

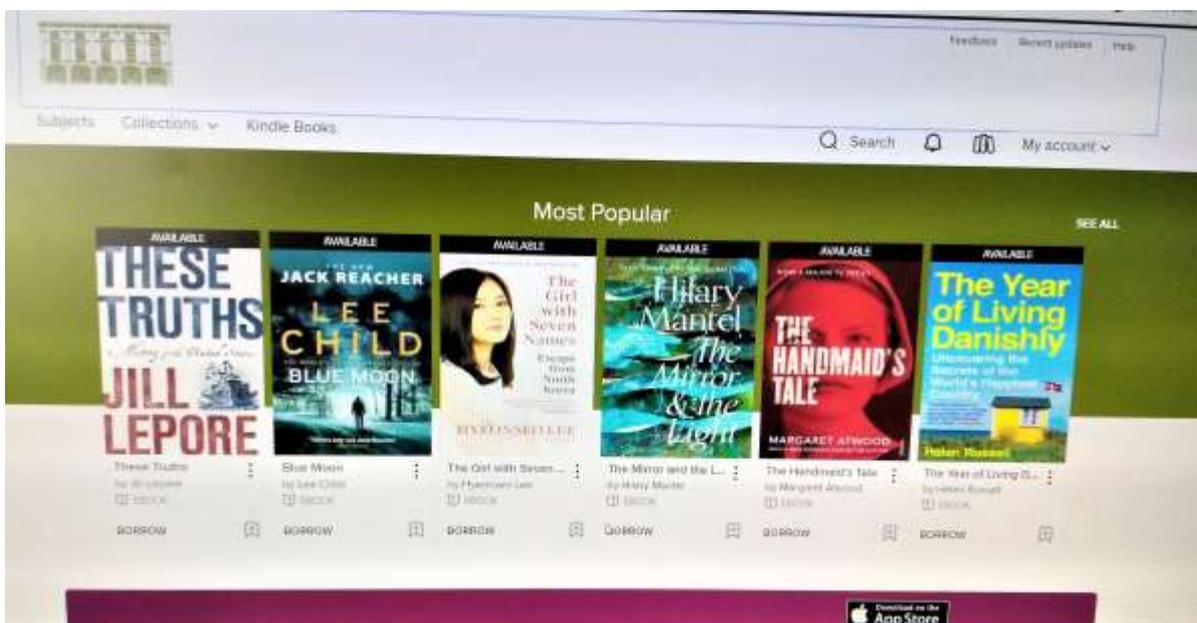
Membership numbers with less than 4 digits need to have a zero or zeros in front of them to make them up to 4 digits. For example: 12 needs to be 0012, 123 needs to be 0123 but 1234 is fine.

If you have a couple or family membership, you need to include the letter in the membership number also. For example: 12A needs to change to 0012A and 123A needs to be 0123A.

We are all new to this, so please feel free to ask questions on how to use the system, or post up tips for other users on the Forum.

Happy reading!

The Leeds Library Team





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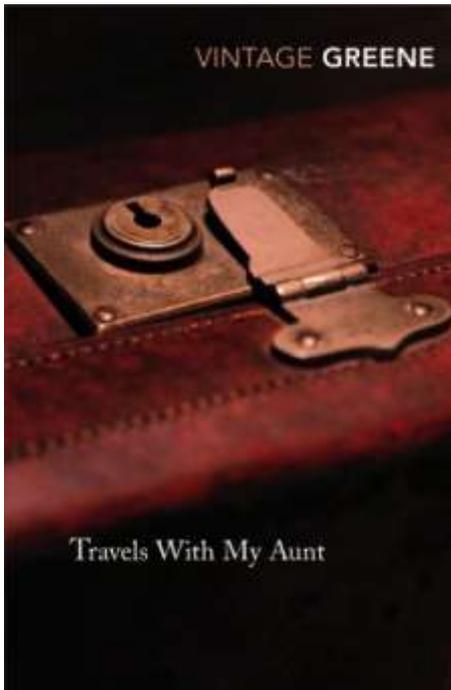
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## Join the Leeds Library Book Club!

When we started our early evening Members' Book Club back in October, little did we know then that necessity would force us to take it online and that we would be happily Zooming along like the rest of the world. Zoom is an online application that allows you to meet up virtually and can be downloaded onto most devices. Check out [www.zoom.us](http://www.zoom.us).

Since October we have delved into Kate Atkinson's *Case Histories*, become immersed in the French Revolution through Hilary Mantel's *A Place of Greater Safety* and fallen in love with George Eliot's *Silas Marner*, amongst others.

For April's Book Club, and our first Zoom meet up, we read Penelope Fitzgerald's *The Beginning of Spring* which we all in the main enjoyed and would recommend. She writes beautifully and really invokes a sense of place very well, in this case Moscow in 1913. It's a short, quirky and in places funny book not without its flaws but well worth a read, and Zoom worked well too!



Our next book is Graham Greene's *Travels With My Aunt* which should afford us the escapism that we all need right now.

There are multiple copies to download for free from our eBook

Library: [www.theleedslibrary.org.uk/members-area/ebook-library/](http://www.theleedslibrary.org.uk/members-area/ebook-library/) and it's currently topping our eBook borrowing charts! You can also download it on your Kindle in the normal way but the eBook platform does not support a Kindle option, or order a printed copy online.

We'll Zoom our discussion on Monday 18th May at 5.30pm and if you would like to join us then please email [gellf@theleedslibrary.org.uk](mailto:gellf@theleedslibrary.org.uk) and you will be sent a Zoom link nearer the time.

All welcome!

*"A journey from suburban London to Brighton to Istanbul to South America, it also explores recent history – with a compassionate overview of the sorrows of war, a hilarious send-up of 1960s counter culture, and surprising revelations about Henry himself. Graham Greene described his most enjoyably straightforward comedy as 'the only book I have written for the fun of it', and it's easy to reciprocate his pleasure."*

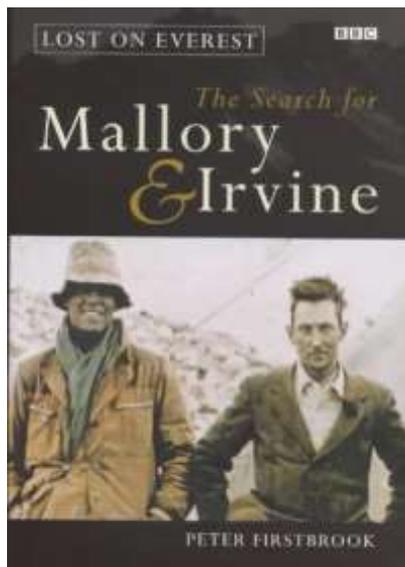


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## Book Reviews

***Lost on Everest - The Search For Mallory & Irvine* by Peter Firstbrook, BBC Books, 1999, pp. 220. Reviewed by Roger Garderhouse.**



As a small boy I well remember the really iconic photograph of Sherpa Tensing on the summit of Mount Everest, taken on the 29th May 1953, by his fellow climber Edmund Hillary, just in time for the start of the Second Elizabethan Age, with the Coronation of our present Queen.

The photograph was the result of a huge effort to climb what the British climbing fraternity thought of as “our” mountain, named after a retired Surveyor General of India. After a reconnaissance expedition in 1922, followed by an expedition aiming to get to the top of the mountain in 1924, Mallory and Irvine became the first climbers to die in a summit attempt, ensuring their place in the history of Mount

Everest, despite a number of porters and Sherpas having been lost in earlier attempts and indeed in the 1924 expedition.

Other climbers had discovered other bodies on the mountain, and one thought he had found Mallory or Irvine. So, in 1999 Peter Firstbrook lead an expedition to Everest to try to find the bodies of both men for a BBC documentary and this book.

Mallory was a forgetful, badly organized individual, married with children, a low-income public-school master who never really had enough money to support himself and his family but to whom climbing was nirvana and Everest in particular. Mallory was known as an exciting, often reckless climber, the sort who might forget to rope up and who forgot certain equipment on the final climb. Irvine was a lot younger, a brave and resourceful climber who felt honoured to be asked, at the last minute, to join the 1924 expedition.

The plan to reach the summit of Everest was one we are used to, with a large base camp and a series of smaller camps, proceeding higher and lighter each time, leading to a final camp from which the attempt on the summit would be made. At this camp Mallory lost their stove, which rolled down the mountain, lost forever.

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## Lost on Everest , cont'd

The plan to reach the summit of Everest was one we are used to, with a large base camp and a series of smaller camps, proceeding higher and lighter each time, leading to a final camp from which the attempt on the summit would be made. At this camp Mallory lost their stove, which rolled down the mountain, lost forever. This meant they had no means of melting snow for water, prepare hot food or to warm their frozen hobnail boots in the morning before putting them on. They were then probably hungry, dehydrated and tired, but Mallory was driven by the thought of the summit being so close.

Remember these men climbed Everest in woollen underwear, three sweaters each, tweed jackets and trousers, woollen scarves with a relatively thin type of windproof and waterproof boiler suit on top. Temperatures could go to below minus 40 overnight, which was spent at Camp V in a thin tent that offered little protection from the biting wind, likewise the clothes they climbed in.



After examining the evidence gathered by other expeditions, the 1999 expedition climbed up to the old Camp V, then the climbers spread out and other bodies were found, but not Mallory or Irvine, probably Russian and Chinese climbers. Then Conrad Anker, a searching climber, found a body, identified as that of Mallory. The body was propped, face down and the arms suggested he has been trying to stop a fall

with his hands. No trace of Irvine was found.

Peter Firstbrook clearly and in a readable manner reviews the evidence. Most accidents occur on the descent of a mountain. From the position of the body and other evidence of when Mallory and Irvine were last seen, the author takes the view that Mallory and Irvine had reached the summit, Irvine had the camera with its evidence, of which neither camera nor Irvine has ever been found. The pair were descending, they were tired, it was late and getting dark and colder, one of them, probably Mallory slipped, whether Irvine fell or held firm, only to lose his footing or die of exhaustion later, we will never know how these two brave men met their end, but they are inextricably part of the history of British climbing and Mount Everest.

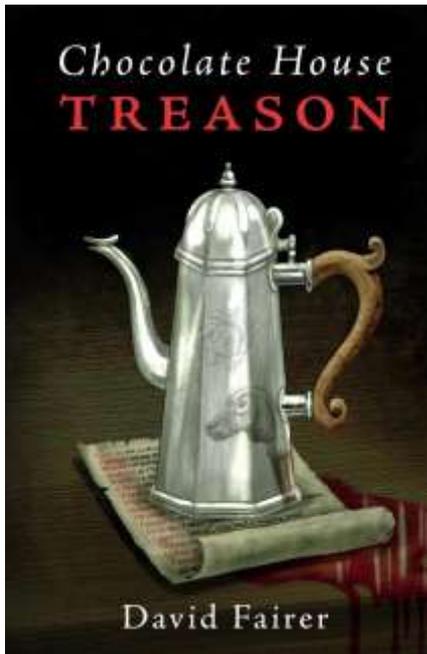
An excellent book for the general reader as well as the travellers or climbers amongst us!



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***Chocolate House Treason* by David Fairer, Matador, 2019, pp. 712.  
Reviewed by Pat Urry.**



The Library Book Club recently discussed this first novel by Library Member David Fairer.

Our conclusion? A very rewarding and worthwhile read for fans of impeccably researched historical fiction which transports you to the heart of Queen Anne's London for a two-week long period in February 1708.

Political turmoil rages in the wake of the Act of Union, and the flames are fanned by anonymous and defamatory poems and tracts circulating around the coffee houses and streets leading to intrigue, violence and ultimately murder ably and bravely investigated by an engaging and well drawn trio of characters led by Chocolate House proprietor Mary Trotter and her friends.

The book teams with people – a mixture of both real and fictional – and paints a vivid picture of London life at this febrile time ranging from the courts of Queen Anne and St James's to the coffee houses of Covent Garden, the horrors of Newgate prison and points in between.

It is full of fascinating period detail across the social spectrum from royalty and the court to the ladies of the night in Vinegar Yard covering for example clothes and wigs, food and drink, the complexities of social life, the different roles of women and perhaps, most importantly, the ability of the written word in the form of poems and mislaid confidential letters to influence events and foment intrigue whilst bringing out the best and the worst in the immensely varied spread of characters. But the underpinning ethos is unpredictable and the story ultimately is full of decency and kindness.

This is a long and very well written book rich in detail and historical information which deserves your full attention. The theme of political corruption is very much to the fore and arguably resonates still – except that the scurrilous papers have now been replaced with our social media. It is witty, intelligent and at times laugh-out-loud funny.

David plans for this to be the first novel in a trilogy involving many of the same characters. We look forward to the next one with keen anticipation.



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***Miss Pettigrew Lives for a Day* By Winifred Watson, Persephone Books, 2008 (originally 1938), pp. 256; *The Vanished Bride* by Bella Ellis, Hodder, 2019, pp. 352. Reviewed by Christine Eddison.**

Fun, fun, fun and the perfect pandemic escape novel! When Miss Guinevere Pettigrew, dowdy, diffident, out-of-work governess, attends an interview for a new position, she is propelled into the world of Miss La Fosse, glamorous and morally-dubious cabaret artiste. Ignoring the voice in her head of her late curate father, Miss Pettigrew decides she wants to 'really live' for a day and becomes immersed in this dissolute circle of Bright Young Things. By the end of this adventure-packed day, Miss Pettigrew's life has been completely transformed.

What worked for me? The format. Broken down into hours and minutes, each chapter progresses the reader through Miss Pettigrew's day in a way that allows you to become absorbed into events as they unfold. Enhanced by line drawn illustrations throughout. The writing style. Sharp and witty, akin to PG Wodehouse. Watson's descriptions are astute and vivid. The dialogue is lively and bursting with punctuation, an affectation that works perfectly here. What didn't engage me? Nothing! I rattled through this book with a smile on my face. It was a joy.

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For a crime fiction lover and Brontë fan, what's not to like about this debut novel by Bella Ellis the Brontë-inspired pseudonym of author Rowan Coleman? In this Gothic tale, our 3 lady 'detectors', escorted at times by their dissolute brother, risk life and limb to investigate the fate of Elizabeth Chester. The young wife has disappeared from the marital home, leaving behind her 2 children and a large pool of blood in her bedroom. The obvious culprit is her husband Chester, whose first wife died in suspicious circumstances.

The concept of the Brontës as detectors is inspired and the setting of Haworth perfect for a Gothic crime mystery. Ellis rotates the focus of each chapter between the sisters, allowing the reader to learn more about their individual characters, as well as weaving in references to some of the real life experiences that shaped their own novels. This adds depth to the characterisation and a sense of realism. The plot is clever and becomes increasingly complex. It certainly kept me guessing until very near the end. Minor niggles aside, *The Vanished Bride* is an enjoyable mystery of twists and turns, the Brontë sisters make credible detectors and there is a satisfying conclusion. The Brontë Mysteries is planned as a series, so roll on the next one!



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## Writing for Mindfulness. How writing can help you cope with the lockdown by Dr Rachel Connor



'In a dark time', the poet Theodore Roethke wrote, 'the eye begins to see.' In this global crisis, one possible way of seeing the world – the landscapes of our inner life, as well as the events unfolding around us – is by writing about it. There is something about the cognitive process of translating thoughts, experience and ideas onto the page that allows us to make sense of them. Through writing, things shift: memories might surface, thoughts take on form; insights become clearer.

Writing offers a way of coming to terms with the challenges, struggles and fears — and, perhaps for some, the unexpected gifts — of the current lockdown. But where to start, especially if you don't consider yourself to be a 'writer'?

### Let go of the pressure to produce

For some, the loss of our usual social activities means we might have gained time. While we might feel pressure not to waste it, not everything we do in the lockdown needs to be an accomplishment. We can take the time to do something simply for itself. Writing doesn't necessarily mean starting work on that novel we've always wanted to write (though if you want to do this, good on you!). We can use the time to write out of curiosity, for the pleasure of expression, to alleviate boredom, or from a desire to understand. It's the process that is key.

In her ground-breaking book, *The Artist's Way*, writer and creative mentor Julia Cameron advocates writing with pen or pencil and paper, connecting with the act of the hand moving across the page. This kind of stream-of-consciousness writing is very freeing. 'Nothing is too petty, too silly, too stupid, or too weird to be included', Cameron writes. If you're worried about where to start, focusing on your senses is an excellent way in. Just write what you immediately notice — the quality of light coming in through the window, for example, or the sounds of the household or the street outside.

When you do this, you're writing for yourself, not for an audience. It's a deep dive into self-discovery. There shouldn't be any criticism or judgement. Spelling and punctuation don't matter. There is no way you can get it 'wrong.'

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## Writing for Mindfulness, cont'd

### Build a habit

Hopefully, this kind of writing will be enjoyable rather than exerting another pressure. Without getting too rigid about it, there can be something powerful about building a regular practice: like yoga or meditation or regular exercise, it can provide an anchor point.

Cameron recommends doing something she calls 'morning pages' — three pages of stream-of-consciousness writing — each day. Find yourself a notebook or a folder for loose-leaf paper. Find a good time to write (despite being called 'morning pages' you can do this writing any time in the day, though there is an advantage to doing it in the morning, when there is less distraction from the 'thinking brain'). You might squeeze it in in the morning, before the kids wake up. You might do it between the end of a morning at your desk, before going out for a walk or a run. It doesn't matter how much you produce. Loosen up. Have fun with it.

### Freewriting

Another tool for expression is freewriting. It's linked to the stream-of-consciousness method (same 'rules' apply – keep the hand moving, no criticism, don't think, no need to 'get it right') but starts with a specific prompt or focus. I use this method a lot when I teach creative writing. It's a brilliant warm up, and a creative meditation in its own right. I give students a starting prompt and a set amount of time in which to write (this is a brilliant trick for silencing the critical mind).



The starting prompt might be a single word (open a dictionary or other book at random and start from there), the start of a sentence, a fragment of a poem, a piece of music or an image (Pinterest or Google Images can provide good material). Set a timer. I'd suggest five minutes in the first instance, building to ten or fifteen as you get more comfortable. If you're interested in exploring this method further, it's worth

checking out Natalie Goldberg's books *Writing Down the Bones* and *Wild Mind*, both of which provide inspiration and practical exercises.

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## Writing for Mindfulness, cont'd

There's an inherent mindfulness in the process of writing. It allows us an awareness of our own presence that can shore up resilience to adapt to our circumstances in times of difficulty. Writing is a form of deep listening. Ultimately, it's a way of putting us more in touch with the experience — however joyful, confusing or painful — of being human.

*Rachel Connor is a novelist, short story writer and a dramatist for stage and radio. She is the Course Director, Creative Writing programmes at the School of Cultural Studies and Humanities at Leeds Beckett University. Photos by Izzy Brittle.*

## Letter-writers Against Loneliness Leeds

Here's a fantastic project to get involved with. It's a campaign matching people up with pen pals to help reduce isolation. You can write a letter, receive a letter or refer people who might appreciate getting a letter.

Contact [annem@touchstonesupport.org.uk](mailto:annem@touchstonesupport.org.uk) or call her on 07920 461253.

YOUR SPACE  
PRESENTS

COVID-19 WELLBEING  
RESPONSE

## LETTER-WRITERS AGAINST LONELINESS LEEDS



Loneliness and boredom are two common effects of the lockdown.

Let's not let them get the better of us - sign up today and become a local penpal.

[annemetouchstonesupport.org.uk](http://annemetouchstonesupport.org.uk)

07920 461 253

Simply let us know the following information, and we'll match you with an appropriate contact:

1. Would you like to a) receive letters b) write letters and/or c) help refer others who might want to receive letters.
2. What are your interests?
3. What is your address?
4. What is your contact phone number?



#LettersNotLoneliness

Email: [annemetouchstonesupport.org.uk](mailto:annemetouchstonesupport.org.uk)  
Phone: 07920 461 253

Your Space collects and uses information in accordance with the General Data Protection Regulation. Your personal information will be collected for the purpose of service delivery and will be accurate and, where necessary, kept up to date. Your data will be processed in a transparent way and stored securely for no longer than necessary. The full Privacy Policy can be viewed at <https://www.touchstonesupport.org.uk/home/contact-us/privacy-policy>

For more wellbeing activities, information and advice search "Your Space Leeds" online:



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# The Leeds Library

## Postcards from the Edge by Fiona Gell

I've always loved receiving and sending postcards and used to do it a lot as a child especially to my family and friends, as I'm sure most of you will have done too and perhaps continue to do so. Like letter writing, it has fallen out of fashion, emails, social media and instant messaging having taken over. Of course, it also takes time to write a postcard and there is some cost involved in buying your postcards and stamping them. However, especially in the times we now find ourselves, wouldn't it be wonderful to have a resurgence in postcard writing and sending? The first postcard was published in 1869 and became such a phenomenon that by 1875, 231.5 million of these open letters were sent in the member countries of the Universal Postal Union. That's a lot of postcards!

Before I came to work at the Leeds Library, I used to work in Special Collections at the Brotherton Library at the University of Leeds. I used to love working on and sometimes just browsing through the archives of famous writers, artists and thinkers which were full of letters and postcards that they had sent and received, often only one half of the correspondence, but it was fascinating nonetheless. A moment in their lives, captured.

When I left Special Collections, one of my leaving gifts was unsurprisingly the book *Postcard From The Past* by Tom Jackson (4th Estate, 2017, £9.99). In it he has gathered a collection of the funniest, weirdest and most moving real messages from the backs of old postcards and reproduced them along with the front of the card. It's a real gem and endlessly entertaining. He also has a Twitter feed [@PastPostcard](https://twitter.com/PastPostcard) which is well worth a follow.



This week is National Postcard Week. Started in 1984 in the US, it has continued ever since but has never really taken off over here. Leeds Civic Trust posted 30 Leeds postcards each day last month which you can find on their Twitter feed [@LeedsCivicTrust](https://twitter.com/LeedsCivicTrust), an excellent glimpse into our social past.

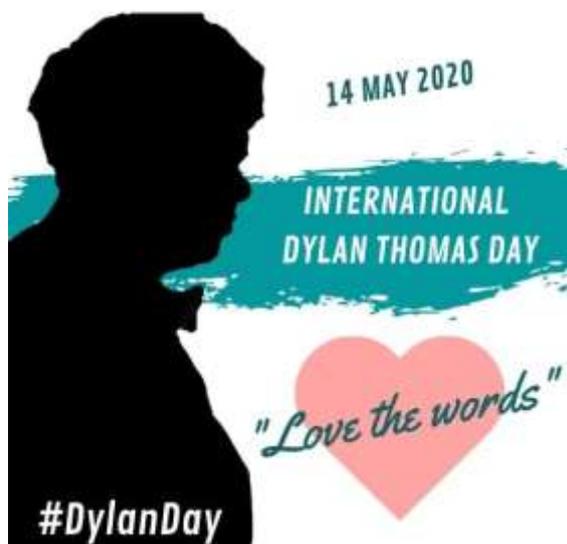
So, in honour of this week long celebration of the humble postcard, why not dust off your pen, dig out a postcard and send it? You could also sign up to be a postcrosser at <https://www.postcrossing.com> and connect with someone thousands of miles away. I know what I'll be doing this week!



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# The Leeds Library

## International Dylan Thomas Day



We'll be marking International Dylan Thomas Day again this year in slightly different circumstances but with the same celebratory spirit. This will be the third year in succession that the Library hosts a Dylan Thomas Day event, as ever very kindly organised by Dr Patrick Lodge. This year, because we can't meet in the Library, we'll be taking to Zoom and hope that you will join us as we share Thomas' writings in this special event.

Patrick says, "I'm really looking forward to this event. Previous celebrations at the Leeds Library have been great fun and thanks to Zoom we can once again celebrate the poetry of Dylan Thomas - the Rimbaud of Cwmdonkin Drive and one of the greatest poets of the last century. The poet Louis MacNeice, on experiencing Thomas's poetry for the first time said, "it was astonishingly new and yet went back to the oldest of our roots – roots which had long been ignored, written off or simply forgotten." With a reputation as a bit of a Boyo, Thomas's contribution to poetry can sometimes be overshadowed by his roistering reputation and his tragic end in a New York hospital. This celebration aims to put the words back to the forefront. We have a line-up of local poets desperate to read their favourite Dylan Thomas poem (and one of their own) as well as some surprises. these are dark and uncertain times and nothing could be better that zooming with us to let the light of Thomas's verbal magic shine out high and bright into the darkness. We won't go gentle into that good night but will rage, rage with the passion of Dylan Thomas. I hope you can join us and be part of an international celebration of the great Welsh poet. if you are interested in finding out more this link is to the official Dylan Thomas website: [www.discoverdylanthomas.com](http://www.discoverdylanthomas.com)."

If you would like to join us on Thursday 14 May at 12.30pm please register on the link here and you will be sent your Zoom links nearer the event. There will be two sessions each of 40 minutes with a short interval in between. Register here: [www.eventbrite.co.uk/e/international-dylan-thomas-day-tickets-104051408564](http://www.eventbrite.co.uk/e/international-dylan-thomas-day-tickets-104051408564) and also via our Events page on the website This is a free event with an option to donate, proceeds going to the Library.



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## **Nightjar Nights by Suzie Cross, Creative Producer, Land Lines**

The Leeds Library has teamed up with the University of Leeds and partners Natural England to present a series of works inspired by the Nightjar, a mysterious nocturnal bird scarcely seen unless silhouetted in the sky, but often heard as a strange churring sound at dusk.

Nightjar Nights forms part of a wider creative programme by the Land Lines research team at the University of Leeds titled Nature Revealed: Tracks, Traces and Trails. The project uses artistic interventions in nature reserves to explore environmental themes of climate, migration, nocturnal and subterranean life, working with children and older adult participant groups and commissioning new writing and artworks.

The Nightjar Nights series will feature new works from writers Sara J Hudston,



Anita Roy, and Land Lines' own David Higgins, with supporting materials from Natural England. There will be a special guest piece from naturalist, author and critically acclaimed birder, Stephen Moss. The new writing will be accompanied by artworks from Douglas Black and Katie Marland. Katie has

created this beautiful drawing of a Nightjar for the project.

Watch out on Monday 1 June for a special creative download and the start of a social media campaign leading up to the event, along with a full schedule. The main event week starts on Monday 8 June and concludes on Saturday 13 June. New works will be released each evening as the Nightjar awakes to feast.

For more information and a full schedule of content (to be released on 1 June), please visit the Land Lines project website at: <https://landlinesproject.wordpress.com/>

We are thankful to our funders, the Arts, Humanities and Research Council for enabling the commissioning of new work and the wider artistic project.