



FOUNDED 1768

# The Leeds Library



## Speaks Volumes 22

The Bi-Monthly Newsletter of The Leeds Library

July 2020



FOUNDED 1768

# The Leeds Library

## From Your CEO

### Dear Member

We hope that you, your family and friends are all safe and well.

As you may now be aware, the Library will be reopening to Members from Monday 6th July for 4 hours per day, 6 days per week. This follows a period of closure for the Library that is unprecedented in its 252-year history and something that we hope does not need to happen again.

Whilst the Library has been closed, the Library staff team has worked hard to ensure that through a range of services Member communications' engagement has been maintained. Many of the new initiatives set up, including the postal loans service and eBooks library, will be developed further over the coming months and will remain part of our membership service. We have also, with our colleagues in the Independent Libraries Association (ILA), made a commitment for members of all ILA Libraries to join the PressReader service which will enable you to have access to thousands of magazines and newspapers online. Details on how to sign up and use PressReader are detailed within this newsletter..



There is also a **Q&A section** that we hope covers the major concerns and queries that you may have about the reopening of the Library at this point in time. We appreciate that many of the measures we are taking in order for the Library to reopen safely may run the risk of impacting the unique atmosphere and ambience

of the Library, however, we will do all that we can to make sure that the special qualities of the Library that you value are safeguarded during this period of transition.

**Cont/**



FOUNDED 1768

# The Leeds Library

Now that we are on the cusp of reopening, I would like to take this opportunity to thank the Trustees for their support of the staff team over the last few months, a time that has thrown up many challenges and questions that no set of Library Trustees have previously had to wrestle with.

I would especially like to thank the staff team, some of whom have had to be furloughed for an extended period of time and others who have barely had a day off over the last 3 months in order to keep the Library, as a Member focused charity, ticking over. Their understanding and reaction to the need for the Library to make many adjustments to their working lives during the lockdown period has been totally positive and supportive.

Finally, on behalf of both the staff and Trustees I would like to thank you, our Members, for your continued kind words, support and understanding at what has been a universally difficult time. The responses in the recent survey have informed and underpinned many of the measures we have taken in reopening the Library. We intend to consult with you again over the coming months on how the Library operates and works for you going forward.

We hope that over the coming days, weeks and months that we are able to see you return to the Library building. We are looking forward to increasing steadily the range of services, opening hours and activities for you all to engage with, but for now, we are just really glad that we are able to open the doors again to you all. We look forward to welcoming you back in the safest way possible and when you feel the time is right for you.

With best wishes,

Carl Hutton





FOUNDED 1768

# The Leeds Library

## From Your Editor

Hello everyone! I can't quite believe that another edition of Speaks is here and that 2 months has passed already. The really fantastic news for all of us is that the Library will be reopening on Monday 6th July, albeit in a limited way but still, we will be open! We are really looking forward to seeing you and being back in the Library.

Speaks 22 will update you about how the Library will be operating in the first few weeks of reopening and provides current information on the new services we have implemented since lockdown, namely the eBook library, postal loans service and community forum along with now a trial subscription to the excellent PressReader, for journals and newspapers. There's information from our Book Club and Reading Group as well as your book reviews. Lucy Evans has reviewed *Aspire to the Beautiful: The Life of Cedric Chivers* by our very own consultant bookbinder Brian Cole. Our cover photo previews her article. Historian Rob Andrews has contributed a fascinating piece about his research into St. George's Parish Church in Doncaster and Melanie Chan, in a very timely fashion, writes about her forthcoming book *Digital Reality*.

Prior to lockdown we were principal partner in Leeds Lit Fest of which events many of you attended. We are delighted to tell you that it scooped Best Lit Fest in the Saboteur Awards in only its second year! A fantastic achievement.

Our events programme has become virtual via Zoom and we are gradually expanding it. Our Book Club continues in this way, we've had 2 quiz nights, celebrated International Dylan Thomas Day which Dr Patrick Lodge has written about, and also the nightjar in a partnership with the Land Lines team at Leeds University! We continue with our lunchtime poetry event Nowt But Verse hosted by Hannah Stone. Hannah has been joined recently by Moira Garland and Nick Allen. Her next guest on Friday 17th July will be Becky Cherriman for more poetry chat and readings. We are delighted also to bring you a special event with poet Clare Wigzell on Wednesday 22nd July, *I am the Landscape*, about Barbara Hepworth, her sculptures and the landscape. Full details of all events can be found on our [website](#).

The next issue of Speaks Volumes will be published in September and I'd be delighted to receive your articles for inclusion by Monday 24th August by email at [gellf@theleedslibrary.org.uk](mailto:gellf@theleedslibrary.org.uk).

Best wishes

Fiona Gell, Marketing & Communications Officer





FOUNDED 1768

# The Leeds Library

## Library News

### Annual General Meeting by Martin Staniforth, Chair of Trustees



As you know, earlier this year Trustees decided to postpone the Library's Annual General Meeting, which was to be held in June, until September.

We have now decided to hold the meeting at **2.00pm on Saturday 19th September in the New Room.**

There will be some differences from previous AGMs.

First, in order to ensure compliance with social distancing guidance we will only be able to accommodate 40 Members at the meeting. Those wishing to attend will need to register in advance and if more people want to attend than we can permit they will be selected on a first come first served basis. Details of how to register will be sent out with the AGM papers.

Second, the AGM will be strictly a business meeting to consider and approve the Annual Report and Accounts, receive the results of the election of Trustees, and transact any other necessary business. There will be no refreshments and no speaker.

I know that in current circumstances some Members will not wish to travel to the Library for the AGM. I am keen to ensure that your voices are heard so if you have questions arising from the Annual Report, or on any other matter affecting the Library, please submit them in advance.

Kevin Grady, our President, will ensure that they are responded to at the meeting, and the report on the AGM in *Speaks Volumes* will include those responses. I would also encourage you to arrange a proxy vote so that you can vote on the matters to be considered at the meeting. Details of how to submit questions and proxy voting forms will be sent out with the AGM papers.



I look forward to seeing at least some of you at the meeting.



FOUNDED 1768

# The Leeds Library

## **Become A Library Trustee by Martin Staniforth**

The Board of Trustees is responsible for setting the strategic direction for the Library, for overseeing the development and delivery of annual plans and budgets, and for ensuring that the Library uses its money appropriately. It is an important role, and one in which you can make a real difference to the way in which the Library operates.

There will be vacancies on the Board starting this year and we are keen to ensure that we maintain the strength of the Trustee body and enhance its diversity. We are looking for people who are willing to contribute their time and their ideas to shaping the Library's future, ensuring that it continues to develop and thrive and that it remains financially stable, rather than for particular skills and expertise. We have important plans for the Library and we need Trustees to work with Carl and our staff in turning them into reality

In terms of time commitment, the Board meets about six times a year at the Library. Trustees are also encouraged to join one or more of the sub-committees which focus on different areas of the Library's business and which meet three or four times a year.

Please do consider standing for election to the Board and helping take the Library forward. If you would like further information or to discuss what is involved in being a Trustee please get in touch with me and I'll be happy to help.

You can contact me via the Library e-mail: [enquiries@theleedslibrary.org.uk](mailto:enquiries@theleedslibrary.org.uk) or by calling the Library: 0113 245 3071 and the message will be passed to me or you will be given my details to contact me directly if that is preferable.

## **Library Research by Stuart Rawnsley, Library Research Committee**

Academic researchers often visit the Library to make use of our important collections which date back to 1768. We, however, wish to encourage all Members who are interested in the collections to explore them. Your work may be just for personal interest or it could result in a talk to other Members or perhaps an essay which could become part of a series of monographs we wish to see published. Whatever the outcomes, we should know more about Members' interests and areas of expertise and these would contribute to a database for any Member to use, as would a database of research projects and outcomes. We will be producing study guides to particular aspects of our collections and it may be that some of you contribute to the work on these too. If anyone wishes to discuss these opportunities further, then please get in touch with me via the Library.



FOUNDED 1768

# The Leeds Library

## **Q&As on the Reopening of the Leeds Library for Members**

The information set out here is to help you understand how the Library will operate for Members when we reopen on Monday 6<sup>th</sup> July so that you are aware of any restrictions that might be in place when you are planning and undertaking your visit to the Library. We thought the best way to do this was to answer the most likely questions that you may have at this time.

### **What will the Opening Hours of the Library be?**

The Library will be open:

Monday	11am to 3pm
Tuesday	11am to 3pm
Wednesday	11am to 3pm
Thursday	2pm to 6pm
Friday	11am to 3pm
Saturday	11am to 3pm
Sunday	Closed

### **Why will the Library be open for only 4 hours each day?**

The opening hours have been reduced to limit the need for staff or Members to travel into or out of Leeds during rush hours.

### **I don't want to come into the Library just yet, but I have items that are due for return. What should I do?**

We have extended the loan period of all items currently on loan to Members until the end of August so please do not feel obliged to bring your items in if you would rather not travel yet. However, if you would like to return them, you, or someone on your behalf, can drop them off in the Library foyer in a returns box. The foyer will be staffed during opening hours and all items will be quarantined for 3 full days before being processed and put back on the shelves for other Members to access.

### **I am feeling unwell. Should I come to the Library?**

No. If you are feeling unwell for any reason and especially if you are exhibiting symptoms of Covid-19, you should not come to the Library but follow government guidelines and seek medical advice if appropriate. This is to protect other Members and the staff team. We are sorry to say, we will have to turn you away if you are obviously unwell.

**Cont/**



FOUNDED 1768

# The Leeds Library

## **Q&As on the Reopening of the Leeds Library for Members, cont'd**

### **Will there be restrictions on the number of people who can use the Library each day? If so, do I have to register or pre-book my visit if I want to come into the Library?**

Following current social distancing guidance from the Government, we are working on the basis that excluding staff Members, we will be able to have up to 40 Members in the Library at any one time, with seating for this number placed in appropriate locations throughout the Library building. With 60-80 Members visiting the Library on average on any normal day it may be that from time to time the Library reaches full capacity. However, the times when 40 Members are in the Library at any one time is rare.

To give Members who wish to visit the Library some peace of mind, we will have up to 20 pre-bookable slots each day, so that upon arrival at the Library there is no danger of being turned away due to lack of space. This will mean that sometimes Members who arrive at the Library and who haven't pre-booked may have to wait until a Member leaves the Library in order for them to be able to enter. Members can pre-book a space through the events page on our website using Eventbrite or by phoning the Library counter during opening hours.

All Members will need to register on arrival in the foyer so that we have a record of who has been in the Library each day in case a Member or a staff member contracts Covid-19 and it is necessary to trace their contacts. This information will be held for 21 days then destroyed. Staff in the foyer will assist you with this.

### **Will there be any restrictions on how long Members can stay in the Library?**

We are not putting any formal time limits in place but would ask that Members judge the daily situation for themselves in a sensible and fair way. If the Library is busy and there are Members waiting to gain access, then a shorter visit would be appreciated so that everyone who wants to can benefit from coming to the Library. If problems arise from this more relaxed approach, we will review the situation and may introduce a formal time limit. We would like very much to avoid doing this, however.

**Cont/**





FOUNDED 1768

# The Leeds Library

## **Q&As on the Reopening of the Leeds Library for Members, cont'd**

### **Will there be any parts of the Library, or services normally available to Members, that will not be available at this time?**

For the Library to work in a manner that is consistent with Government guidelines regarding Covid-19 and social distancing, the following aspects of the Library service to Members will NOT be available:

- Drinks making facilities will not be available in Coffee Corner. However, Members will be allowed to bring their own drinks into the Library using their own receptacles.
- Food consumption on the premises by Members will not be permitted in this initial reopening period.
- The Basement and the Librarians Office will not be available.
- The Library locker and cloakroom areas will be closed.
- The Member computers will not be available to use and the use of the photocopier will only be available when undertaken on behalf of a Member by one of the Library staff team.
- Magazines and Journals will be available to borrow but not to browse and newspapers will not be available Please note that to compensate for this we have arranged for all Members to be able to use the online PressReader service that gives access to over 6000 magazine and newspaper titles for an initial 3 month period as part of their Membership at no additional cost. See the PressReader article in this newsletter for details.
- Member Clubs including the Film Club, Craft Club, Book Club and Reading Group will not take place in person for the time being but will be reviewed as social distancing measures are relaxed.
- There will be no facilities for leaving bicycles or mobility scooters in the foyer.

**Cont/**



FOUNDED 1768

# The Leeds Library

## **Q&As on the Reopening of the Leeds Library for Members, cont'd**

### **What social distancing measures will be in place within the Library?**

The Library will have a one-way system for all Library users to abide by. The direction of travel will be anti-clockwise requiring everyone to walk from the Main Room towards the New Room and then the Thoresby Room. In any area of the Library where there may be a need for Members to queue there will be markings on the floor clearly laying out the position that each person in a queue needs to take. It is anticipated that queueing may be necessary to get into the Library, at the Library counter and to use the Library welfare facilities.

We have also adjusted the layout of the Library to remove potential pinch points. This will mean that there will be no merchandise on display for either the Library or Thoresby Society and the used books sale trolleys will be removed. We will also be looking to reposition the New Room map cabinets and remove any chairs that do not comply with social distancing guidance.

### **Will toilet facilities be fully open for Members to use when the building is open?**

Both the gents and ladies' toilets will be open for Members. There will be a restriction of only one Member at a time being able to use the ladies' toilets, with one of those cubicles being dedicated solely for the use of Library Staff. It will be a requirement for anyone using the toilet facilities to use disposable toilet seat covers.

### **What additional hygiene facilities and measures will be put in place for users of the Library?**

Any person entering the Library will be required to use hand sanitiser in the foyer before going upstairs. There can be no exceptions to this. There will be also be hand sanitiser located at the entrance to each room when moving around the Library anti-clockwise. It is recommended that if you have handled any items or touched any surfaces as you enter each space that you reapply hand sanitiser.

Should a Member handle any book in the Library then there will be a need for the item to be placed in one of the plastic crates located in each of the rooms so that the item can be placed in quarantine for a 3 day period.

**Cont/**



FOUNDED 1768

# The Leeds Library

## **Q&As on the Reopening of the Leeds Library for Members, cont'd**

On a similar basis there will also be a need for Members who sit on a chair in the Library to use a card provided adjacent to the chair to identify that the chair has been used. This will enable the staff team to be able to easily identify which chairs and furniture needs to be sanitised during the day. As well as the regular cleaning that takes place in the Library outside of opening hours, additional cleaning will take place while the Library is open. Surfaces, door handles and other vulnerable areas will be sanitised regularly during the day.

Doors and windows where possible will be open to aid ventilation.

### **Will Members be required to wear face masks or face coverings when visiting the Library?**

Whilst the staff team working in the Library will be wearing face visors and gloves when serving Members, this will not be obligatory for Members, but you are, of course, free to wear them if you wish. Screens will be in place at the counter and in the foyer to minimise the potential for Covid-19 to be spread.

### **If I am unable at this time to come to the Library, what services will be available for me to use so that I can continue to benefit from my Membership?**

The Library is committed to continuing and extending its postal loan service, eBook library, online community forum and online events programme. In addition, we are now able to give all Members the opportunity to access PressReader which will allow you to view over 6000 magazine and newspaper titles at no extra cost.

### **When will these measures be reviewed?**

The staff team and Trustees will monitor all aspects of the operation of the Library on a regular basis and will adjust the current arrangements in the light of experience. We will look to extend the range of services available for Members to use and our operating hours at the earliest opportunity that any changes in social distancing legislation and Government advice allows. We will send out more information shortly about Membership extension for the period of lockdown and our closure. We will keep you informed regularly through Member communications and update the Q&As in response to Members' queries.



FOUNDED 1768

# The Leeds Library

## Services You Can Access From Home

### eBooks Library

Our new eBooks library went live on Monday 21 April and many of you have already signed up and used it. Currently we have over 350 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, as well as some classics, but please let us have your suggestions and we will see what we can do. Recent popular reads have been *Dinner at the Homesick Restaurant* by Anne Tyler; *The Secret Commonwealth: the Book of Dust Series, Book 2* by Philip Pullman; *Travels with My Aunt* by Graham Greene; *The Mirror and the Light* by Hilary Mantel; *A Modern Cinderella: the Little Old Shoe and Other Stories* by Louisa May Alcott.



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 eBooks library:

Download the Libby app which is the e-reader (unfortunately, you can't use Kindle): [google.com/store/apps/details?id=com.overdrive.mobile.android.libby&hl=en\\_GB](https://www.google.com/store/apps/details?id=com.overdrive.mobile.android.libby&hl=en_GB)

To go straight to our online library click on this link: <https://theleedslibrary.overdrive.com/>

Or go through Libby <https://libbyapp.com/library/theleedslibrary> and follow the prompts to find **The Leeds Library**.

**Cont/**



FOUNDED 1768

# The Leeds Library

## eBooks Library, cont'd

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 eBooks library collection and borrow a title.

N.B. If you have a couple or family membership and have only ever provided us with one email address and you want your own eBooks account, you will need to give us a second email address.

\*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 intend to continue with the eBooks library as a service to Members going forward. If you have any problems using it, please contact us and we'll do our best to help you.

## Members' Forum

Join our online community Forum and 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 120 Members and we would love you to join us there too.

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



FOUNDED 1768

# The Leeds Library

## Postal Loans

As many of you know, we set up a postal loans service for Members when we went into lockdown and it's proved so popular that we intend to continue it as a Member service. To date, we have posted out 235 items!

The service allows you to have up to 10 items (books, DVDs, magazines, talking books) delivered to your door by the Royal Mail. There is a small charge to cover the costs of packaging and postage only.

### These are the charges:

£3.00 for up to 3 items to be posted to you;

£6.00 for between 4 and 10 items to be posted to you.

### This is how to request a postal loan:

1. Reserve items from our catalogue via the website in the usual way, ensuring you add a note specifying that your request is for a postal loan: <https://www.theleedslibrary.org.uk/search/>



Or

Email [counter@theleedslibrary.org.uk](mailto:counter@theleedslibrary.org.uk) with your list of requests.

Instructions on how to log on and make a request can be found on the [Search the catalogue](#) page on the website.

N.B. Some items may be on loan, reserved for another Member or offsite, but we will inform you if this is the case to allow you to select another item.

- 2. Once you have selected the items you would like, please make your payment by clicking on the red DONATE button at the top right hand corner of the website home page and using a bank or charge card, adding a note identifying your membership number and name.
- 3. Your parcel will be sent to you as soon as possible by 2<sup>nd</sup> class post.

**Cont/**



FOUNDED 1768

# The Leeds Library

## Postal Loans, cont'd

If it is safe for you to do so, you may return any loaned items from 6th July onwards (not before please). We will have drop boxes in the foyer and at the counter and we will quarantine your returns for 72 hours before either shelving or passing on to the next reservation.

Some of you will have items that other Members have been waiting for, so we may need to contact you to arrange to get them back from you safely. Anyone can return loaned items on your behalf – they do not have to be a Member. Please let us know if you will have a problem returning items to us.

## PressReader Trial Subscription

We are delighted to have been able to secure an initial 3-month period free access to [PressReader](#) for all Members. This means that you will be able to view over 6,000 titles (newspapers and magazines) including the majority of UK newspapers free of charge. It is essential though that you follow these joining instructions as registration is strictly limited.

You will need to click on the link in **the covering email** to activate your access which will take you through to this page. Please do not forward this link to anyone else. Register using your email address and password of your choice.



You will now be shown the second screen to complete.



Now download the PressReader App and login. This is a onetime process, so once you've logged in on the email link you do not have to do it again. Henceforward, you will access by your chosen username and password.



You should be able to sign in with 2 other devices as well. We hope you enjoy your free trial to this excellent service.

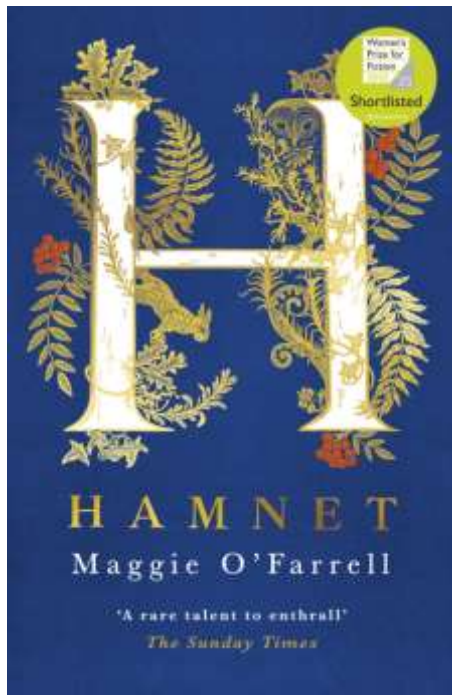


FOUNDED 1768

# The Leeds Library

## Zooming with the Leeds Library Book Club

Time really does fly when you are reading a good book! Our Book Club read Graham Greene's *Travels With My Aunt* in May which we gave a resounding thumbs up and which afforded us some joyful escapism when we haven't been able physically to do that ourselves. Last month was Anne Tyler's *Dinner at the Homesick Restaurant*. We did all agree that her writing is superb and to read more Anne Tyler is a must but this book split our readers. Some enjoyed it, some were in the middle and one disliked it intensely. Without giving anything away, we concluded it was the unsettled narrative of the different characters that made it difficult for the reader to wholeheartedly enjoy.



For July we are reading *Hamnet* by Maggie O'Farrell which has had fantastic reviews and is highly anticipated by our readers.

*The story of Hamnet Shakespeare has been waiting in the shadows for over four hundred years. Maggie O'Farrell brings it dazzlingly, devastatingly, into the light.* Kamila Shamsie.

We'll Zoom our discussion on Monday 13 July 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!

Our August Book Club choice is *The Outrun* by Amy Liptrot (2016) for a discussion on Monday 10 August.

You can find out more about what we thought about all the books we have read on the [Members' Forum](#) in the Book Club thread. Please feel free to post your own comments there too if you have read any of the books we have covered.

There are multiple copies of our chosen titles to download for free from our [eBooks Library](#) with the exception of *Hamnet* as this is not yet available.





FOUNDED 1768

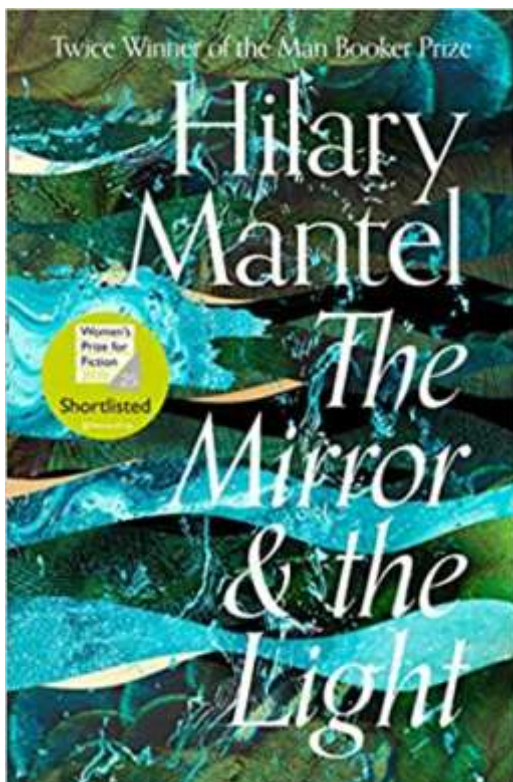
# The Leeds Library

## Zooming with the Leeds Library Reading Group by Bryn Moore

Having read with interest the article in May's Speaks Volumes about the activities of the Book Club that meets on Monday evenings, a number of us who belong to the Tuesday morning Reading Group thought we should broadcast our activities to the membership.

We meet (or met until the lockdown) on the first Tuesday morning of each month and we celebrated our 20th anniversary last year! Books read recently include *Diary of a Nobody* by George and Weedon Grossmith, *A Lost Lady* by Willa Cather and *Milkman* by Anna Burns.

Lockdown has, of course, put paid to physical meetings in the Library but some of us have met weekly for a forty-minute session on Zoom, courtesy of Pamela Ann Suter, our co-ordinator and host, to talk, amongst other things, about the books we have been reading independently. Others have preferred not to meet on Zoom but have kept in touch by email. Reading has, unsurprisingly, figured prominently in the lives of our members in recent weeks and an impressive range of titles and subjects have occupied them. What follows is only a selection.



Non-fiction, especially biography, has been widely read. American lives, such as those of Alexander Hamilton and antislavery activists like Frederick Douglass, William Lloyd Garrison and Ida B. Wells, have been of interest but so have British luminaries such as Hogarth, Wordsworth and Shakespeare.

McCulloch's biography of Thomas Cromwell was read as well as Hilary Mantel's fictional version, *The Mirror and the Light*, which met with enthusiastic endorsement on the part of some and a determination to avoid from others.

Diaries - those of Anne Lister and Chris Mullin - have been enjoyed. Neo-colonialism and Ireland were also subject areas of interest while one member is learning Japanese.

**Cont/**



FOUNDED 1768

# The Leeds Library

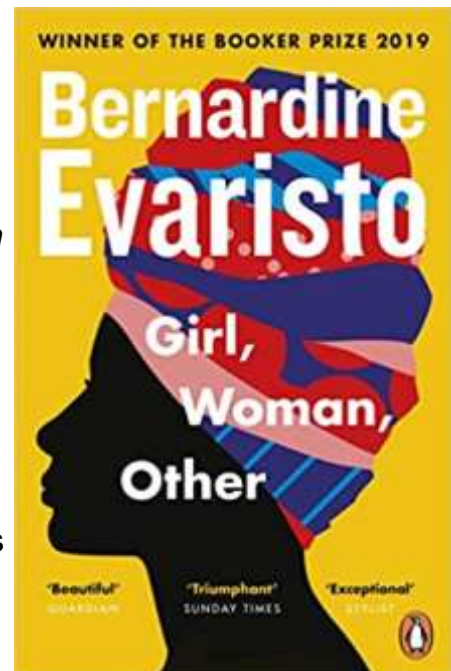
## Zooming with the Leeds Library Reading Group by Bryn Moore, cont'd

Members also felt the need to escape into the world of lighter fiction with a comic writer such as Jonathan Coe or detective fiction, George Bellairs was mentioned, as was Japanese detective fiction (by the same member who is learning Japanese). Several people had used and expressed appreciation of the new [eBooks service](#) offered by the Library. The classics were popular: Zola, Proust, James Joyce, Bocaccio, Golding and di Lampedusa were names put forward.

Contemporary fiction figured prominently: *Girl, Woman, Other* by Bernadine Evaristo received a vote of confidence and books by Ali Smith, William Trevor, C. K. Stead, Thomas Kenneally and Isabella Forde had been read.

A few of us read poetry -Tennyson's *In Memoriam* and Geoffrey Hill. Yours truly is tackling Joyce's *Ulysses* and then escaping at bedtime to *Tales from Toytown* by S.G. Hulme Beaman, which those who listened to Children's Hour on the 'wireless' in the 1950s may recall.

As I write this, the future is uncertain. However, we look forward to resuming our lively discussions in our Reading Group as soon as that seems sensible and are determined to support the Leeds Library as an important cultural hub, not only for Leeds but for Yorkshire and the North of England more generally, whatever the future may hold.



*Many thanks for those lovely words, Bryn and the Reading Group, and also for all the kind messages and good wishes we have received. It's fantastic to know just how much reading has been going on and its range and depth. We look forward to welcoming you all back as soon as we can and in the safest way possible. We've missed you all. The Leeds Library Team.*



FOUNDED 1768

# The Leeds Library

## Book Reviews

**Aspire to the Beautiful: The Life of Cedric Chivers by Brian Cole, Second Beck Press, 2020, 138 pp. Reviewed by Lucy Evans.**

Brian will be well known to many members, both for his work as The Leeds Library consultant bookbinder and for his absorbing talks on books, bindings and curiosities. It will be of no surprise that his biography of the bookbinder Cedric Chivers is about as perfect as you can get.



Cedric Chivers (1853-1929), son of a bookbinder in Bath, made his fame and vast fortune through his revolutionary methods for enabling books to survive multiple loans, a major problem for the public libraries. He established binderies in both Bath and Brooklyn, sold other of his inventions through the Library Bureau and his influence in library circles was world-wide. At the same time, he was lauded as one of the greatest fine binders. He co-opted artists, especially the Glasgow Girls from the Glasgow School of Art, for the design of his innovative vellucent bindings.

An astute businessman, an enthusiastic traveller (he crossed the Atlantic one hundred and twenty times in managing his enterprises) and an outstanding employer, he also gave his energies to Bath, as

Liberal councillor, alderman and mayor (five times).

You may recall Brian's beautifully illustrated article on his experiences with New York Libraries in *Speaks Volumes* ([Volume 13 May 2018](#)). Brian was on the Cedric Chivers's trail, a quest which has taken him across the Atlantic, to Scotland, to the gracious streets of Bath and back to The Leeds Library. There Brian discovered a unique cache of Chivers's bindings and a box of letters. These letters proved critical in understanding the puzzle of Chivers's professional life, his rare combination of being both craftsman and entrepreneur.

**Cont/**



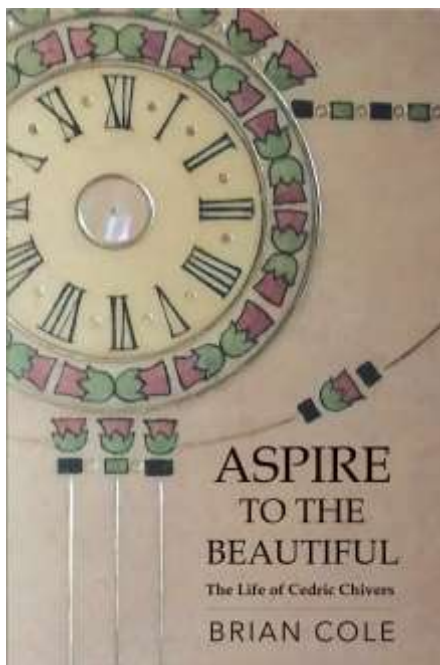
FOUNDED 1768

# The Leeds Library

## **Aspire to the Beautiful: The Life of Cedric Chivers. Reviewed by Lucy Evans, cont'd**

Unlike most researchers Brian has also wielded the scalpel on his subject, forensically 'dissecting a number of Duro-flexible bindings from the library's collections'. There is no need for panic for these items were selected from the historic fiction collection in the basement, most of which need rebinding. Brian emphasises in *Aspire to the Beautiful* the huge value of this collection, 'Not only has the collection proved to be probably the largest and most important collection of novels from this period in the country, it is possibly the biggest collection of Chiver's Duro-flexible bindings'. His estimate is that 48.5% of the 7200 books were bound by Chivers. Over time most libraries have discarded them.

The Leeds Library should take pride that Brian's biography is in a sense the first fruit of the historic fiction collection. Also detailed in the book are the relations between Chivers and two of The Leeds Library librarians, J Y W MacAlister and Frank Yates. Several letters are fully reproduced in the book and it is from one of these, MacAlister's advice to Chivers in the midst of negotiations over hogskin, that Brian drew the inspiration for his title.



As well as having specific relevance to The Leeds Library, *Aspire to the Beautiful* is one of those rare books that makes you look at the familiar afresh. We all love books and being made aware of the paper, construction, binding, the impact of use and history behind it all can only enhance the pleasure. I have learnt so much from this short but packed biography, with the added satisfaction that what I have read is largely original research, not recorded elsewhere.

It is exciting to follow Brian in his narrative of discovery, from the terrifying archive of the New York Public Library through to the comfortable gentleman's clubs of Brooklyn and to the hospitable Museum of Bath at Work. It's an absorbing and informative story.

**Cont/**



FOUNDED 1768

# The Leeds Library

## **Aspire to the Beautiful: The Life of Cedric Chivers. Reviewed by Lucy Evans, cont'd**

The biography seamlessly brings together the complex circles of Chivers's life: bookbinding and bookbinders, libraries and library indicators, travel to the USA and the development of Brooklyn, the Glasgow School of Art, women designers and artists, and finally Sarah Grand the novelist and Chivers's impact as 'The Greatest Bathonian'.

The book is elegantly constructed, gorgeously illustrated and is a delight to read. Each chapter has an entertaining title with a specific focus and the story is made easy to follow by the engaging narrative. The fact that Chivers was such an affable and decent man gives warmth to it all. (And he liked clutter of 'bijouterie' in his house, fairy lights in his garden.) No wonder the girls at the Bath bindery regarded him as an uncle.

As Brian points out, there are still questions to be answered. Little is known, for example, of the women artists and binders, and hopefully these are on his list for further projects.

Copies cost £12.99 + £2 p&p and can be bought directly from Brian. Email him at: [coleb@theleedslibrary.org.uk](mailto:coleb@theleedslibrary.org.uk)

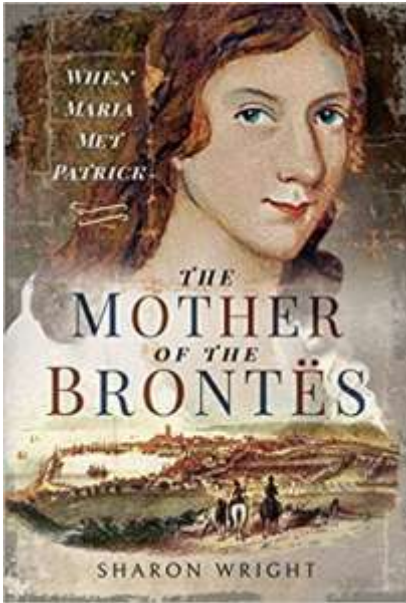




FOUNDED 1768

# The Leeds Library

***The Mother of The Brontës: When Maria met Patrick* by Sharon Wright, Pen-and-Sword Books, 2019. 182pp. Reviewed by Bob Duckett.**



*Maria, let us walk, and breathe, the morning air,  
And hear the Cuckoo sing,  
And every tuneful bird, that woos the gentle spring.*  
(‘Lines, Addressed to a Lady on her Birth-day’ by  
Patrick Brontë)

After the flush of books published recently on her children and husband celebrating their various anniversaries, it’s nice to see a full-length work on Maria Brontë (née Branwell). So often Maria remains in the shadows but now, in this excellent book by Bradford-born journalist and playwright, Sharon Wright, she features in her own right.

The book opens with a wide-ranging, absorbing, and impressively detailed account of Penzance in the late 18th century. This is followed by an account of Maria herself, her upbringing, her large and complex family, and their social, religious, military and political worlds. A picture emerges of a bright, independent and mature young lady, cultured, religious, and at home in a middle-class social scene.

Well charted is the chaos at Woodhouse Grove School in Apperley Bridge from where Maria’s aunt, Jane Fennell, pleaded for the help of her practical and level-headed niece. Here Maria was courted by the school’s examiner in classics, Patrick Brontë. There is a full account of the couple’s unusual wedding ceremony, including a description of the wedding clothes researched by dress historian Eleanor Houghton, and a lyrical account (imagined) of the wedding parties’ three-mile walk to Guiseley Parish Church.

An edge is taken off the romance by the reminder of the troubled background of England in 1813. The French Wars were sucking the country dry, the industrial revolution was laying waste to traditional employment, and a series of poor harvests combined with high prices was causing widespread hunger among the poor. Maria must have welcomed the family’s move to Thornton which had a cultured society somewhat akin to that enjoyed in Penzance.

**Cont/**



FOUNDED 1768

# The Leeds Library

## ***The Mother of The Brontës: When Maria met Patrick.* Reviewed by Bob Duckett, cont'd**

The old Thornton was a sizeable village with the parsonage fronting a busy road. We learn from church records that the parsonage had a stand for a cow and a horse, not that Patrick could afford a horse, but some of his visitors could. An analysis of socialite Elizabeth Firth's diary helps to chronicle visits made and books read by people in the area. Both Patrick and Maria found time to write and Maria's sole surviving essay on the *Advantages of Poverty* and her surviving letters are reprinted in full, though with the annual arrival of babies plus young children to look after, Maria would have had little time for writing and socializing, even with the appointment of Nancy and Sarah Garrs as servants.

With the move to Haworth we are on more familiar ground. The disputes with the Haworth Church Land Trustees and Patrick's early duties in front of a resentful congregation are well chronicled. 'The inhabitants of the hilltop town were hard working, hard drinking and hard to impress' writes our author, but Maria's elegance, fashionable dress, and her ease with social elites did her husband proud. Though all too soon the sad, long, and painful death of Maria followed. The burden placed on Patrick with six young children and a large parish led to the summoning of Maria's sister, Elizabeth, from Penzance, to help out.

Author Wright's wide experience as a journalist on regional newspapers has paid handsome dividends as shown by her wide ranging research and easy writing style. She quotes from the *Lady's Magazine*, featuring 'gothic bluebooks' and 'shilling shockers' which were high on the publishing scene in the early 1800s. She paints a delightful picture of both Maria, and later, her daughter Charlotte, curled up in a chair reading this mutually-owned magazine, and probably enjoying the same stories. It was all a long way from Sunday School!

This is a fine book. It is no surprise it has been reprinted. The book does not merely chronicle the life and times of the mother of the Brontë children; it puts her centre stage as an influential life-enhancing individual who played a major part in the family's life and their subsequent development and success.



FOUNDED 1768

# The Leeds Library

## Members' Articles

### St. George's Parish Church, Doncaster by Rob Andrews

By the time two fire engines arrived from York to assist in extinguishing a fire spreading furiously throughout St. George's parish church, the crowning jewel of Doncaster was already a 'heated wreck upon the floor'. 'A Scanty heap of stone and ashes'. So uncontrollable had the overnight inferno (started by faulty heating apparatus) of 28th February 1853 proven to be, that it laid to waste the entire medieval parish church in a matter of hours. The nation came together in mourning and the tragedy was widely reported across the country. Since I visited the church (a 'Minster' since 2004) for the first time some years ago, I often remember the story of the fire and have thought about its impact on the town. In February this year, I decided to learn a little more about these events.

'To say of an old Doncastrian that he remembers the parish church fire is to stamp him at once as a repository of the most poignant bit of history attaching to modern Doncaster' – Ernest Phillips, editor of *the Doncaster Chronicle*, from his book *The Story of Doncaster*, 1921.







FOUNDED 1768

# The Leeds Library

## **St. George's Parish Church, Doncaster by Rob Andrews, cont'd**

A copy of John Edward Jackson's 1885 book, *The History and Description of St. George's Church at Doncaster, Destroyed by Fire February 28, 1853* is shelved at the Leeds Library, and is perhaps one of the most comprehensive books written on the history and lost features of the old church. Numerous modern studies on the evolution of religious provision in pre-reformation Doncaster continue to shape our understanding of the town's religious order and structure, yet the authority of Jackson's mid-19th century survey continues to command respect amongst academics to this day. Through Jackson's book I was led to a number of other sources relating to the rebuilding of the new parish church, completed in 1858 to a design by eminent architect George Gilbert Scott. One of these was an investigation into the ruins of the old church by G. G. Scott himself, ultimately to determine the age and architectural styles of the lost building. This study informed a series of lectures delivered throughout the 1850s by Edmund Beckett Denison (a fascinating figure in his own right) who sat on the building committee for the replacement church.

During the lockdown I have published a [3 part series of blog posts](#) on this great milestone in the history of Doncaster's parish church although my research of this moment in history is on-going. Many of us will have first-hand experience of the thrill of embarking upon a fruitful research trail. I am thoroughly looking forward to, when it is deemed safe, to cohabit public spaces again, and the Library reopens its doors to Members. I am new to the Library, having been a Member for only a few months, and I look forward to discussing the literature and study of history with many of you in the future.



'St George's Church, Doncaster, South Yorkshire' by James Farrington, 1896. Doncaster Museum & Art Gallery.



FOUNDED 1768

# The Leeds Library

## Digital Reality by Melanie Chan

For the past two years I have been writing a book called *Digital Reality* which highlights how daily life is now intertwined with technology. The Leeds Library proved to be a valuable resource for research. In fact, many of the insights uncovered during the writing process came from books from the Library's non-fiction collection. Whilst researching I started to compile sketches about different levels of digital and screen-based activities in daily life. These sketches were not based on some strategic or rigorous sampling method; instead they were based on observations and insights from everyday life. At one end of the spectrum, there were people who had minimal engagement with digital and screen-based activities, such as accessing the world wide web at public libraries and using mobile phones for text and voice calls only. At the other end of the spectrum were those whose daily lives involved an array of screen-based activities, such as apps for dating, keeping fit, meditation, delivering food, booking transport. For these people devices such as self-tracking fitness bands, smart-phones, tablets and laptops were common-place.

In this time of lockdown, however, screen-based activities increased exponentially. Social activities such as in person meetings were replaced by video calls such as Zoom. Visits to the gym were replaced by online fitness workouts such as Joe Wicks PE. Meanwhile, The Leeds Library continued to support Members through its online community forum, virtual events, a new eBook library platform and a postal service for deliveries at home.

During the early days of the lockdown, we were allowed to leave our homes once per day for exercise, which provided a small window of opportunity to engage in non-screen activities such as walking, running or cycling. Meanwhile those who could not shop online, found that shopping trips became expeditions involving standing on lines painted outside of shops to social distance, wearing face-masks and using hand sanitiser.

Undeniably online communication has been tremendously beneficial during this time,



yet for me, non-screen based activities have taken on a new poignancy. Indeed, during this period, I have missed the physicality of the Leeds Library, the smell of wooden furniture, the weight and solidity of the portfolio sized books, the murmur of conversation and the friendly faces greeting me when I walk through the entrance.

Whilst *Digital Reality* emphasises the significance of digital technologies in our daily lives, the past few months show that non-screen activities cannot be replaced entirely. In fact, now that lockdown restrictions are easing, there is a sense of relief that we can once again meet in person even if we are still standing two metres apart. *Digital Reality* will be published by Bloomsbury in September 2020.



FOUNDED 1768

# The Leeds Library

## Events

### A Virtual Celebration of International Dylan Thomas Day by Dr Patrick Lodge

At 8.10pm on May 14th, 1953, Dylan Thomas had not quite completed his masterpiece *Under Milk Wood* – unfortunately its first stage performance was scheduled to take place a half an hour later at the Poetry Centre, New York. Fortunately, he wrote the end there and then, got copies printed for the actors and arrived at the venue at 8.30pm and the rest is history (or literature). Every year on that date the world commemorates the life and work of this great poet on what has become known as International Dylan Thomas Day.

For several years the Leeds Library has hosted a live celebration but this year, with lockdown, it was decided to experiment with a digital Dydd Dylan - as it is colloquially known. Organised by poets Patrick Lodge and Hannah Stone and ably assisted by the Library's own Fiona Gell, the lunchtime event attracted

around 60 people willing to brave Zoom in order to "love the words" as Dylan told the actors before that premiere.



The event started with a [video from Geoff Haden](#), the owner and restorer of 5 Cwmdonkin Drive, Thomas's birthplace, now a museum and venue. Geoff showed us the house including Dylan's bedroom where a huge proportion of his poetry was written.

Following a reading of the short story *The Followers* by Professor Richard Rastell, the celebration moved to the core - readings by over a dozen local poets of their favourite Dylan Thomas poem supplemented by one of their own. All the favourites were there – *Fern Hill*, *Do Not Go Gentle Into That Dark Night*, *The Force That Through The Green Fuse Drives The Flower* -as well as some of the more obscure of the Rimbaud of Cwmdonkin Drive's output.

Patrick, Richard and Hannah also contributed a brief exploration of Thomas's relationship with the demon drink. His reputation as a roistering, alcohol-fuelled "Nogood Boyo" is well known – "I've just had eighteen straight whiskies, I think it's a record" reputedly his last words – but this is exaggerated and certainly does not detract from the sheer hard work and craft that went in to his poetry.

**Cont/**



FOUNDED 1768

# The Leeds Library

## A Virtual Celebration of International Dylan Thomas Day by Dr Patrick Lodge, cont'd

One advantage of digital technology was the internationalisation of the event itself with poets and audience hailing from Ireland, Wales and the USA as well as Yorkshire. A welcome surprise was the participation of Hannah Ellis – Dylan Thomas's granddaughter – who joined the event from her lockdown home and who graciously answered questions about her grandfather and his poetry. That would have been a great place to end the celebration but everyone was charmed by Hannah's father, Trefor Ellis, singing us out with a marvellous rendition of the prayer of the Reverend Eli Jenkins from *Under Milk Wood*. So, until next year when we hope to be back live, let's echo the Rev. Jenkins:

O let us see another day!  
Bless us all this night, I pray,  
And to the sun we all will bow  
And say, good-bye – but just for now!

## Securing the future of the Birthplace and Family Home of Dylan Thomas. Can You Help?



The Haden family who own and run the Birthplace as a heritage house has launched a crowdfunder campaign to help with the house's running costs during this lockdown time.

You can find out more [here](#).



FOUNDED 1768

# The Leeds Library

## **Reflecting on Nightjar Nights by John Whale, Director of the University of Leeds Poetry Centre. An excerpt from his full article.**

'Nightjar Nights' was a series of works inspired by the nightjar presented in June from the University of Leeds and partners Natural England.

**JW:** 'Nightjar Nights' has helped reacquaint me with this strange, elusive species. I say strange, but the words spectral and uncanny might also be apt. The nightjar is a bird which has always haunted our imaginations because of the ways in which it inhabits the borders of what we think of as 'knowable'. So, a creature which is active in the twilights of dusk and dawn is always likely to hover between superstition and actuality.

Sara Hudston's contributions capture with precision the liminal nature of bird as does Cosmo Sheldrake's soundscape – an eerie re-thinking of the dawn chorus. Tim Kohler's report from Humberhead Reserve reminds us of its existence on another border – its precarious presence in our eco-system due in part to the vulnerability of the habitat on which it depends. Anita Roy's beautiful creation myth taps into the nightjar's metaphysical presence as she connects it by a thread to the moon so that it becomes a fascinatingly displaced and resonant exiled identity. The children of Hatfield Woodhouse School, while eagerly reaching to understand the nightjar's habits and geography, are clearly engaged imaginatively with its migration and, most movingly, with its average life-span of just four years. Their lanterns magically recreate the atmospheric location of the bird, its silhouette projected through the crepuscular light. Even the practical activity of catching and ringing specimens lends itself to the poetic when Jane Adams informs us '[t]hey caught nightjars in soft mist nets'.

David Higgins's helpful brief literary history of the nightjar begins with the eighteenth-century naturalist Gilbert White attempting to release the bird from mystery and legend through the power of disciplined observation so that we can see it as a dynamic living creature rather than as a dead specimen. One of the things with which White has to negotiate is the problem of names. As Stephen Moss points out, the very fact that the bird has so many names despite its elusive nature – and many of them reaching out to the borders of our imagination – is part of what makes it so special to us. 'Goatsucker', 'Gabble-ratchet', 'Dew-fall Owl', 'Fern-owl', 'Lych-fowl', 'Razor-grinder', 'Screech-hawk', 'Moth-gobbler'. Not just the number of names, but the peculiarity of the names – and their associations with death and the dead – makes the bird something different, gives it its peculiar resonance in our minds. *You can read John's full article and access all the created works [here](#).*



FOUNDED 1768

# The Leeds Library

## Leeds Lit Fest Wins Best Literary Festival in the Saboteur Awards 2020!

We had some very welcome news in May that Leeds Lit Fest won its category as Best Literary Festival in the Saboteur Awards.



Carl Hutton, Chair of Leeds Lit Fest and CEO of the Leeds Library said, “When we first discussed the opportunity for Leeds to have a literature festival two years ago, all of the partners agreed we wanted to create something that was unique to the city and a new model for literary festivals. We think we achieved this through a broad mixture of literary inspired events spanning a number of art forms, and so to win this award in just our second year, shows that others have recognized that as well. Whilst we are very pleased to have received the reward and for the city of Leeds to have this recognition too, we are mindful that the lockdown has affected everyone and that cultural organisations in the city, and literature festivals across the UK have been particularly hard hit by Covid-19. So, more than anything, we look forward to a time when the local and national live literary and cultural scenes are thriving once again.”



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.