



# Speaks Volumes 29

The bi-monthly newsletter  
of  
The Leeds Library  
April 2022



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# The Leeds Library

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### Opening Hours

Monday—Wednesday: 10am-6pm

Thursday: 10am-7pm

Friday: 10am-5pm

Saturday: 10am-4pm

Sunday: Closed

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# The Leeds Library

## Update from the CEO

Dear Member

We hope you are well and have had a good Easter break.

Since the last edition of Speaks Volumes the Library has been very busy on a number of fronts. First of all, as many of you will know, on the 25th February the Library completed the purchase of 15 Commercial Street. Since acquiring the premises the Library team, with the assistance of many volunteers, have been working to start the task of bringing back the collections from storage and preparing the Basement of 15 Commercial Street to store these books.



We are also currently in the process of appointing an Architect to quickly take forward the work of developing the layout for the building so that a planning application can be submitted in the coming months. We will notify members as soon as the appointment of an Architect is made, as we anticipate that there will be opportunity for members to have input into the design and layout of the building.

Underpinning this work is an ongoing focus on applying for grant funding and talking to partners in the city about our plans for the future. In recent weeks we have been in discussion with Leeds City Council, Leeds 2023, Arts Council England, the National Lottery Heritage Fund and Leeds Lit Fest partners regarding the project.

With regards to Leeds Lit Fest, in early March the 4th Leeds Lit Fest took place, with the Library as lead partner of the festival hosting and programming half of the events programme for the festival. For the 4th year running the Festival has been shortlisted in the national Saboteur Awards Best Lit Fest category, with the winners announced at a ceremony in Birmingham on the 14th May. Our ongoing involvement with the Lit Fest has raised the profile of the Library and provided a clear example as to how the Library can make a significant and relevant contribution to the cultural life of Leeds.

Within this edition of Speaks Volumes you will see that the Library has appointed a number of staff in recent months. This influx of new team members is a key part of the Library preparing to take forward the project to expand into 15 Commercial Street and develop a broad programme of work for members of the Library and non-members in the coming months and years.

Finally, in the next few weeks the Library will be consulting all members with regards the strategic vision of the Library for the next 5 years. The Trustees of the Library have been working on the vision alongside our plans to develop 15 Commercial Street and the process has reached a stage that we would like feedback from members about the strategic vision and direction of the Library. So please look out for a forthcoming letter or email asking for you to give input into the future work of the Library.

We will endeavour to keep members updated on all matters regarding 15 Commercial Street in the coming weeks or months. Please do not hesitate to contact the Library team if you have any queries on the project.

*best wishes*

Carl Hutton



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Friday 25 February 2022: staff (and a member) celebrate the news that the sale has been completed, and that the Library is the owner of 15, Commercial Street.



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# The Leeds Library

## Staff Update

We are delighted to welcome four new members of staff to the Library team.

### Mary Ealden

#### Projects & Development Manager & Deputy CEO



Hello, I'm Mary. I'm very pleased to be joining The Leeds Library as Development and Projects Manager at such an exciting time in its history. I'll be starting this new role in July after leaving the Royal Academy of Arts in London where I am currently the Project Manager for Young People and Teachers—I oversee a number of projects including exhibitions, schools programmes and teacher development workshops. Previous to this I worked at the British Museum and the National Portrait Gallery, managing a variety of programmes and events for various audiences including, sleepovers; conferences; schools workshops; specially curated evening events; and community activities. I am looking forward to bringing my knowledge and experience to the library, and getting stuck in!

### Niimi Day-Gough

#### Archives Assistant



Hello! I'm Niimi, and I have just joined the Library to assist with the archives and collections as a part of the Kickstart scheme. I graduated from Oxford University in 2020 with a degree in English Literature. In the midst of lockdowns I worked as a freelance copyeditor, English Language mentor, and dissertation project assistant at Birmingham City University. Though I enjoyed all three roles, my natural habitat has always been a lovely historic library, scouring through Victorian books for interesting marginalia. I'm very happy to be back where I belong! If you have any questions or queries about Leeds or Library history, please don't hesitate to email me at [day-goughn@theleedslibrary.org.uk](mailto:day-goughn@theleedslibrary.org.uk).

### Michael Lister

#### Projects Assistant



My name is Michael Lister and I graduated last summer from Nottingham Trent University with a first-class degree in History & Philosophy BA (Hons). I have joined the Leeds Library as an administrator and my role mainly focuses on our exciting project at 15 Commercial Street; however I also have opportunities to help with various other ongoing works such as archiving. I love the environment of the Library and I want to help make it accessible to more people to share this great space. My favourite non-fiction book is Steven Pinker's *The Better Angels of Our Nature* and my favourite fiction book is Charles Dickens' *A Tale of Two Cities*.



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## ...Staff Update continued...

### Ashley Cresswell Finance Officer

Hello, I am Ashley. I am very excited to be joining The Leeds Library as their new



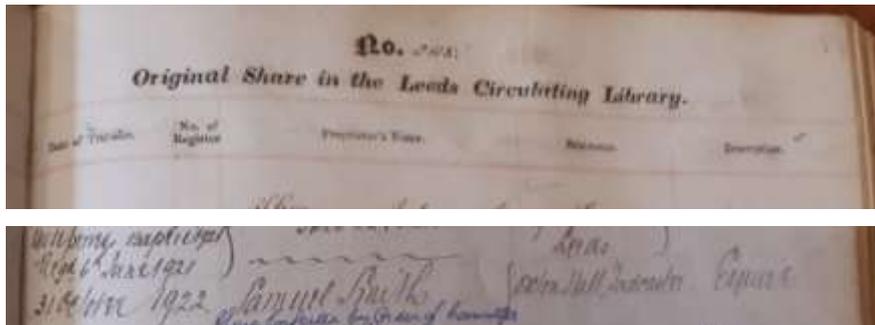
Finance Officer at this period of the charity's transformation. I recently started this role in April after completing my BA (Hons) at Leeds Beckett where I studied Politics with Political Economy in preparation to start my PhD in Politics later this year. Previous to this I worked as an operation/finance manager at an international music agency where I managed a variety of roles such as event management, contract management, client relations, company finances and international travel. I am looking forward to bringing my experience and skills from my previous roles to the library; and looking forward to working with The Leeds Library staff and its members.



### A long association continues

As the Library's programme of events for members and the public re-starts, we have refreshed our alcohol offering. Bottles of Samuel Smith's of Tadcaster will now be available at selected events—Pale Ale, Organic Lager, and Organic Cider. Their beautiful labels are works of art in themselves; we are pleased to support an independent Yorkshire business; and most importantly of all it tastes good!

A delve into the archives reveals that Samuel Smith of Tadcaster was a member from 1922, holding share 258.





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# The Leeds Library

## An update from Jane and the Library Services team

So far this year the team have added 126 new fiction titles, 101 non-fiction titles, and 17 DVDs to the collection. We also continue to purchase newspapers 6 days a week and 40+ magazines and journals.

Please continue to make requests for new titles. We can't guarantee to buy everything, but we do try our best to fulfil most requests.



Our focus is to continue our retrospective cataloguing. All books in the Librarian's Office and the Smoke Room have been fully catalogued. At the present Jane and Helen are making good progress on cataloguing books on the New Room gallery; Finn is cataloguing our Victorian Fiction and has so far reached the Ls; Aidan is working on the Literature collection in the Main Room; Aimee-Jo has been processing lots of fiction donations. Hopefully, when you search our online catalogue you will see the work we have been doing.

In March all the team, together with a sterling group of volunteers, moved our Theology collection which had been in store at Mill Hill Chapel for a number of years to our new premises at 15 Commercial Street.

Our challenge for the coming months is to bring back the remaining books that we have in store. We estimate this to be about 1800 boxes! Please bear in mind if you request a book that currently has a location as Offsite or 15 Commercial Street, it may take us a while to retrieve it. However, it will be great when we eventually have all our collection under one roof.

On a lighter note, Helen has been expanding the range of biscuits in the Coffee Corner. The clear favourites seem to be Tunnock's chocolate teacakes and caramel wafers.





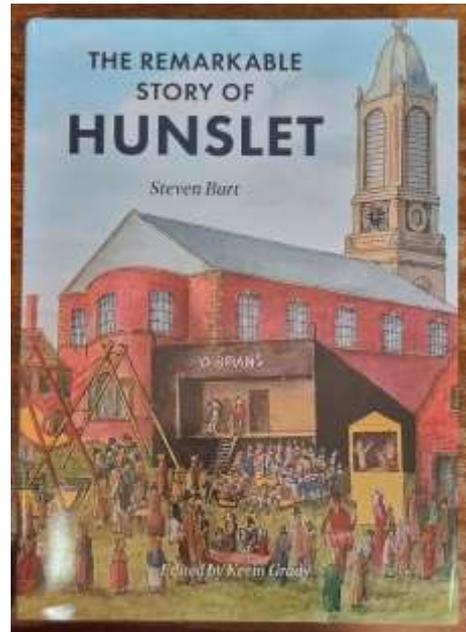
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# The Leeds Library

## ...An update from Library Services continued...

Anna has been working on a number of projects—firstly to add more detail to the periodicals research guide, which once completed will give both members and staff a much greater understanding of our collection. She has also scanned in a number of images for Steve Burt which appear in his latest publication on the history of Hunslet (copies of which can now be found on the shelves) and has been working closely with Library member Freda Matthews.

Freda is a local historian who has over the years done a great deal of important research on the history of Little Woodhouse. We have been working together to help preserve much of the exhibition material and various guided walks into digital format. Some of our more well-known Library members at one time or another had links with the Little Woodhouse area, including Ellen Heaton, Joshua Tetley, James Kitson, Edward Baines and John Deakin Heaton.



## eBook update

When lockdown came, our staff thought about how we could continue to provide books to members at a time when it had never been harder to do so but never more important. eBook provision proved very popular, and our eBook library is a year old this April. After its first 12 months, the catalogue has been refreshed with new titles and audio books.

As with our physical books, the eBook selection was informed by your borrowing, and we are keen to hear suggestions as to which books you would like to be available in electronic format, so please let us know if there are any books you'd like to download.

Full details can be found on the website:

<https://www.theleedslibrary.org.uk/members-area/ebook-library>



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# The Leeds Library

## Niimi's Archive Highlights

### Spotlight On: Street Musicians and Enid Blyton Fans

Since joining the Library in February this year, our archive has struck me as something like a paper rainforest. Enterprising investigators have mapped it out before me, each uncovering a new species of jewel-like poisonous frog, but I still have copious acres to (enthusiastically) explore. This work mostly consists of contentedly whacking through exotic foliage (or sifting through archive boxes comfortably at my desk). I do, however, often unearth my own fascinating specimens—and I'm delighted to push through the leaves and report my discoveries to you here at the Speaks Volumes base camp! This month, I'm highlighting two correspondences.

### Street Musician's Complaint, July 1883

It seems that the Library has always found neighbours in Commercial St. buskers! In this letter from July 2nd, 1883, the Leeds Police's Chief Clerk responds to two complaints from the Library about loud 'street musicians'.

Chief Constables Office,  
 Town Hall,  
 LEEDS July 2<sup>nd</sup> 1883

Sir,

I am directed by the Chief Constable to acknowledge the receipt of your Letter of the 2<sup>nd</sup> inst, and herewith enclose you Copy of the Leeds Improvement Act 1842. relating to Street Musicians.

I am  
 Sir  
 Your Obedient Servant  
 Frank Ward  
 Chief Clerk.

J. G. W. Macalister Esq<sup>r</sup>  
 Leeds Library  
 Commercial St.

Victoria 5<sup>th</sup> & 6<sup>th</sup> Cap 104. July 1842

Section 201 — And he is enacted, that it shall be lawful for any Householder residing within the Borough, personally, or by his servant, or by any Constable, to require any street Musician or singer, to depart from the neighbourhood of the House of such Householder on account of the illness of any inmate of such House, or for other reasonable Cause. And every person who shall sound, or play upon any musical Instrument or sing in any Street near any House, after being so required to depart, shall be liable to a penalty of not more than forty shillings.



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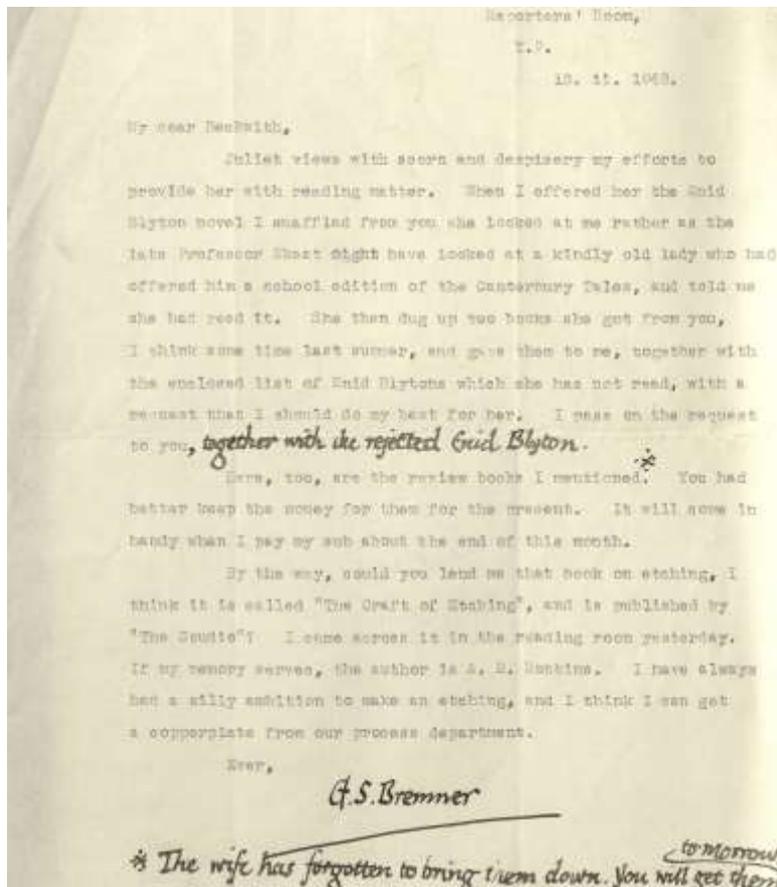
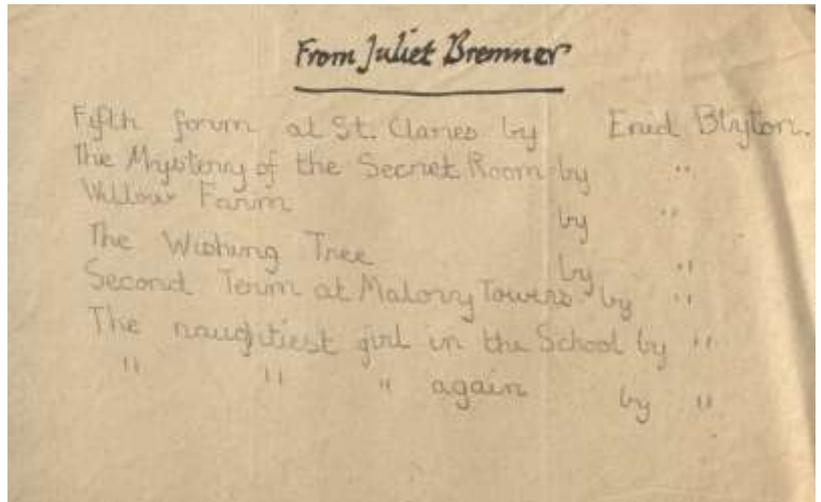
# The Leeds Library

## ...Archive Highlights continued...

He directs the librarian's attention to the 1842 Leeds Improvement Act, which mandates buskers 'depart when desired to do so'.

## Father-Daughter Book Requests, 1948

In a friendly letter to librarian Frank Beckwith in November 1948, G. S. Bremner laments his failures to 'snaffle' the correct books for his daughter Juliet. She views his efforts 'with scorn and despisery' much like 'late Professor Skeat' rejecting 'a school edition of the Canterbury Tales'. Clearly, the Library has always attracted exacting academic types of all ages!





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## Would you like anything from the trolley?

Looking for the next great read? Perhaps you'd like to try something new and unexpected. More recommendations are to be found next to the entrance to the New Room.

Aimee-Jo recommends a look at the work of Anne Brontë in **The Tenant of Wildfell Hall**—the story of a young woman who escapes her violent husband with her child to start a new life.

Helen has three recommendations for this issue. Set in the fictional town of Holt, Colorado, **Eventide** is the second volume of a trilogy by Kent Haruf's. Lives become entwined in this story of loss, separation, and hardship. **The Foundling** by Stacey Halls is a gripping story set in 1754, taking place around London's Foundling Hospital. And in Lisa Jewell's **Then She was Gone**, Laurel Mack meets Floyd Dunn ten years after the disappearance of her daughter Ellie. But why does Floyd's daughter look so much like her own?

Anna resisted reading James Bond novels for years, but she caved recently and has been surprised at how much she's enjoyed them. Starting with **Casino Royale** (a rebound first edition of which is part of the Library's collection) she's reading her way through them all! She also takes us to a regimented totalitarian society in the 26th Century AD with Zamyatin's **We**, and recommends a classic of Hungarian literature **Journey by Moonlight** by Antal Szerb.

Jane loved a debut novel by Alex Hyde. A BBC Radio 4 Book at Bedtime, **Violets** is a tale of two women with the same name who have very different experiences of motherhood. And her desert island film is **The Odd Couple** with Walter Matthau and Jack Lemmon. New York has never looked so good!



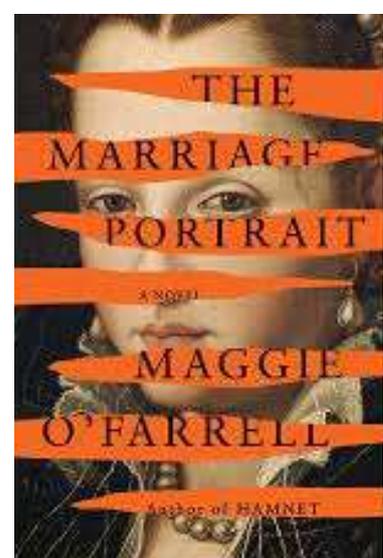
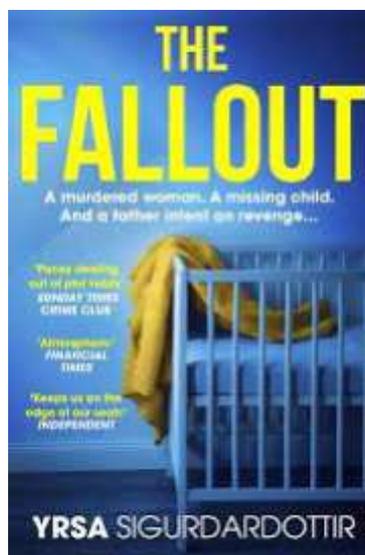
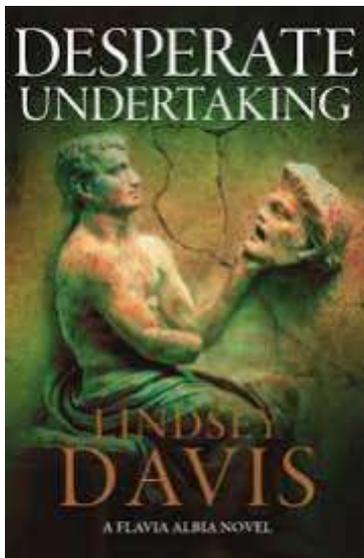


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## Popular fiction titles—new and forthcoming

Crime fiction continues to be our most popular genre, and the new historic crime titles by Lindsay Davis (**Desperate Undertaking**), Edward Marston (**Murder on the Lusitania**) and Paul Doherty (**The Hanging Tree**) are as popular as ever.



Current Thrillers by Linda La Plante (**Vanished**) and Stella Rimington (**The Devil's Bargain**) have been widely borrowed and the up and coming books from Mick Heron (**Bad Actors**), Rev Richard Coles (**Murder Before Evensong**), Yrsa Sigurdardottir (**The Fallout**), Robert Galbraith (**The Ink Black Heart**), Ann Cleeves (**The Rising Tide**), Maggie O'Farrell (**The Marriage Portrait**) and Lee and Andrew Child (**No Plan B**) already have many reservers!

If you want to reserve any titles, please let us know or add your membership number to the Fiction Request list at the Counter.



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# The Leeds Library

## Members Update

### New members evenings

We were delighted to welcome so many of our new members to the New Members Evenings at the Library in February, March and April. Our next new members evening will be held in August for any members who joined us from February this year. Details to follow.

### Thank you!

This month, membership of the Library not only regained pre-Covid levels but also reached its highest number yet. A big thank you to both new and longstanding members for your continued support of the Library.

### New ways to pay

Did you know that you can pay your subscription fees by Direct Debit? We accept annual, quarterly and monthly payments. If you are interested in

spreading the cost of your membership, please contact Membership Administrator Claire O'Brien ([obrienc@theleedslibrary.org.uk](mailto:obrienc@theleedslibrary.org.uk)) to set up a Direct Debit.

### Don't miss out!

Are you on the list? We send out regular updates via email about our events, library notices, updates on 15 Commercial St, volunteering opportunities and more. If you're not receiving emails and would like to be added to the mailing list please contact [enquiries@theleedslibrary.org.uk](mailto:enquiries@theleedslibrary.org.uk)





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# The Leeds Library

## Trustees' News

### ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING

The Library AGM will be held at **2.00pm on Saturday 25 June in the Library** and will be followed by a talk, details to be confirmed. Drinks and light refreshments will be available. Further details and papers for the meeting will be sent out nearer the time but you may want to put the date in your diary now. I look forward to seeing you there.

We will need to appoint three trustees and a treasurer at the AGM. Trustees are 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 runs.

We are primarily looking for people who are enthusiastic about the Library and are willing to contribute their time and their ideas to shaping its future rather than for particular skills and expertise, though of course we do want our treasurer to have good financial skills and experience. We are also looking to increase the diversity of our Trustees so that we benefit from a wide range of voices and views around the table. This will be particularly important as we develop our plans for expanding the Library into 15 Commercial Street, for attracting new audiences to our events programme, and for increasing and diversifying our membership.

The Board meets six times a year at the Library but 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. The current sub-committees are Books and Collections, Buildings, Membership, Outreach and Partnerships, Research, and Resources, so they cater for a wide range of interests.

Please consider standing for election and playing a big part in the Library's future. If you would like further information or to discuss what is involved in being a Trustee do 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.

Martin Staniforth  
Chair of Trustees



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# The Leeds Library

**...Trustees' News continued...**

## **Fundraising ideas for The Leeds Library**

Now that the Library has purchased 15 Commercial Street, members of the Library can play a key role in helping our plans to transform the building become reality.

The Library has been the proud owner of 15 Commercial Street since the end of February and we have started to think about the building will be transformed. It will take some time but we are confident that within 12 months this transformation will be complete.

The purchase of 15 Commercial Street has been made possible through the financial support of the Ecology Building Society and the Architectural Heritage Fund together with a contribution from the Library's resources. However, the need for financial support does not end with the purchase of the building and your support is vital as we move into the development and fit out stage.

We will shortly be launching a major fundraising programme and we hope that you will be able to support this. Whilst the fundraising programme will aim to secure donations from individuals and organisations we are also keen to develop a programme of activities whereby members can help make a contribution – however small – to raising money for the project.

Many of you will have experience of how the members of other organisations which you are a member of raise money for their projects—especially those involving the provision of new buildings and facilities. We are keen to have your ideas and suggestions for activities large or small, quirky or conventional, directly relevant to the Library or simply fun, that we could try.

For example some organisations have auctions of promises, coffee mornings, bazaars, wine tastings and sponsored events. What do you think you and the members of the Library might like to do? If you have any suggestions, particularly ones that you may have taken part in with another organisation, just let any member of the Library team know.

When we launch these activities we very much hope there will be something that you would like to get involved with so that you can support and feel part of the development of 15 Commercial Street.

Philip Walker  
Chair  
Membership Committee



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# The Leeds Library

**...Trustees' News continued...**

## **Complaints Policy**

Trustees recently approved a new policy for handling concerns and complaints raised by members or other Library users. The new policy can be found [here](#) on the Library's website (Members' area; Policies & Documents). I should stress that this policy is not a response to any particular problems. Rather it is a recognition that it is important to have a clear and publicly available policy and procedure for handling any concerns or complaints that may arise in the future especially given the Library's plans for expanding its membership and developing its programme of activities and events.

Martin Staniforth  
Chair of Trustees

## **Leeds Library Tour Guides Wanted!**

In the next twelve months we want to show as many people as possible around the Library and 15 Commercial Street to encourage support for our exciting new 15 Commercial Street project, and to encourage new members to join the Library. For this purpose we will need about a dozen well-informed and enthusiastic guides.

Our President, Kevin Grady, is going to lead a short series of training sessions for Library tour guides. They will be fun, and provide a great opportunity for those involved to deepen their knowledge and understanding of the Library and enable them to help make the acquisition of 15 Commercial Street a success. Kevin will lead the course talking about the Library's history and context, while our Librarian, Jane Riley, and other expert staff members will be contributing their knowledge about specialist aspects of the Library's collections.

If you took part, you would soon be well equipped to show visitors around the wonders of the Library and also take them into 15 Commercial Street to explain our plans for how we are going to use the building in future. The training will consist of six, two-hour sessions, plus some reading to be done at home.

Please email Kevin Grady if you are interested in becoming a guide and would like further details. Email address: [kevingrady50@gmail.com](mailto:kevingrady50@gmail.com). Your help will be greatly valued. The day of the week and time of the training will be decided once we know the preferences and availability of those keen to take part.

Kevin Grady  
President



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# The Leeds Library

## **...Trustees' News continued...**

### **Library Articles of Association**

Trustees have recently reviewed the Library's Articles of Association, its governing document. It is the first time we have done this since 2016 and we have identified a number of areas where the Articles would benefit from revision and updating. Revised Articles will be taken to the AGM in June for approval by members. Amended Rules reflecting the new Articles will also be presented at the AGM. We are proposing changes to the Articles in four main respects. First we want to add a new object, or purpose, for the Library. Our current objects are, in brief, to advance education and the diffusion of knowledge by running and maintaining the Library and to preserve our listed building. Over recent years we have developed a wider programme of cultural events and activities and we will continue to do so in future. It therefore makes sense to amend our charitable objects to encompass this work by including a new object for 'the advancement of the arts, culture, and/or heritage generally'.

Second we have identified some areas where our current Articles are deficient or do not work effectively. For instance although we have held our last two AGMs either wholly or partially using Zoom we have no specific power to do so. So we are making provision for holding AGMs remotely in future. Similarly our Articles have not satisfactorily set out arrangements for refusing or terminating membership, though these are covered in the Library Rules. We are now making the position clear in the Articles. Finally we propose to simplify the arrangements for making and amending Library Rules.

Third we intend to amend the arrangements for trustee terms of office in the light of experience. Currently trustees other than the treasurer may serve two consecutive terms and must then stand down but may be reappointed for a further term after a year's absence. The treasurer may serve three consecutive terms. In practice trustees who have stood down after two terms have not then sought a further term and as a result we are experiencing a rapid turnover of trustees with the risk of loss of knowledge and experience and difficulty in succession planning for example for committee chairs. We are therefore proposing that in future all trustees will be allowed to serve a maximum of three terms of three years, ie nine years in total, and must then stand down permanently. Finally we are updating a number of Articles in line with Charity Commission guidance and current best practice.

You can find the draft revised Articles [here](#) and I would of course welcome any comments or questions on what is proposed. Please send any comments to me via the Library e-mail, [enquiries@theleedslibrary.org.uk](mailto:enquiries@theleedslibrary.org.uk), or by post to The Leeds Library, 18 Commercial Street, LEEDS, LS1 6AL by 13 May.

Martin Staniforth  
Chair of Trustees



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## Tales from the Leeds Library has landed!

I've discovered for myself that working in libraries or with books and literature doesn't just mean one thing—the diversity of roles and specialisms even within the world of libraries is vast, and it's been fascinating to talk to so many different people with such a range of experiences and expertise this season on Tales from The Leeds Library.

A recurring theme this season has been the idea that collections of books can tell us a lot about the people who have collected them. Whether that is the ways in which the Cornish collection at the Morrab library in Penzance reflects the history of the area, or the ways that a growing diversity and inclusivity in children's book publishing helps more children to fall in love with reading. I loved discussing what dystopian fiction can tell us about the anxieties of our current culture with Professor Susan Watkins, and hearing about the different ways the idea of a book has been interpreted by artists from Aoife Larkin from Leeds Arts University.



“I think what makes them [the Morrab Cornish collections] really special is that they tell the individual stories of local people. We have an eighteenth century log book of a farmer's meteorological readings on their farm and scrapbooks of literally glued-in seaweed collections...and I think it helps us develop our understanding of individuals who lived and worked in Penwith, which is what we call west Cornwall. They're tangible people and not just statistical information.”

—Lisa di Tommaso, Librarian at Morrab Library, Cornwall.



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It has made me think about what The Library's collection can tell us about the history of Leeds—even what my own bookshelf says about me! Have you never heard of a shelfie?

A big thank you to everyone who has listened so far. In the coming weeks we're going to be talking to more authors, travelling to more libraries, and dipping our toes into the world of independent publishing. We're also working on providing text transcriptions of all episodes for those who are hard of hearing – or who simply prefer to read instead of listen!

Look out for new episodes every Wednesday on our website, as well as all major streaming platforms including Spotify, Amazon Music and Google Podcasts.

“One thing I have learned is that [artist books] are really difficult to define ... We often come across an item that we could justifiably decide to catalogue with the artists books or in the main collection or in the archive and you kind of just have to make a call sometimes. Artist's books have this changing and evolving function and meaning, so you have to be quite willing to be flexible and adapt when working with them and managing a collection of them.”

—Aoife Larkin, Special Collections Librarian at Leeds Arts University.



Newly available on the shelves of the Library and to buy (price £20) is a lavishly-illustrated history of Hunslet by Steven Burt, edited by Library President Kevin Grady.

Ranging from Hunslet's beginnings as a populous and extensive village south of the river, **The Remarkable Story of Hunslet** charts the changes in society, economy, technology and engineering and of course the human stories of this ancient settlement.

Beginning in 1086, Grady takes us up to 2020, but also looks to the future; and the book is a treasure-trove of painstakingly-compiled references and resources to enrich the research of local historians.





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# The Leeds Library

## Forthcoming events at the Library

Leeds Lit Fest saw the return of live audiences to the Library for the first time since the pandemic. Since the Lit Fest concluded, more readings, discussions, and workshops are being scheduled, along with member-only events such as the film, book and craft clubs. Here are the events coming up in May—but do keep an eye on our website and Eventbrite pages for updates.

Our **Tales from the Leeds Library** podcast also returned for its second series in mid-March. Episode 7 saw Molly Magrath talking to Lisa di Tommaso from fellow independent library The Morrab about keeping going during lockdown, their 3,000-strong collection of 16th-18th Century books, and their extensive projects and events programme. You can find all the podcast episodes on the Library's website [here](#), or via your favourite podcast platform.

### **Chelpling | Thursday April 28 | 19:30**

**Matt Abbott's** monthly spoken word night returns, featuring Casey Bailey and Otomewo.

### **Speaking to the Shelves: Matt Abbott | Sunday May 1 | 10:00am**

**Becky Cherriman's** series of creative writing workshops invites an author to choose a classic book from the Library's shelves and use it as a starting point for new work. Both online and in-person sessions are available.

### **Tours of the Library.**

Tours are scheduled for May 10 and May 21—but book early, as they always sell out fast!

### **Dylan Thomas Day | Saturday May 14 | 12:30pm**

Poets from the Leeds region will be reading a poem of their own and a poem by Dylan Thomas to celebrate Dylan Thomas Day on the anniversary of the first performance of *Under Milk Wood*. Contact organiser Hannah Stone to request to read.

### **Members-only Film Club | Wednesday May 18 | 18:00**

The film club is going from strength to strength—join fellow members to watch a classic film, currently the 'Isn't it romantic?' season. Light refreshments available.

### **Speaking to the Shelves: Yvonne Battle-Felton | Saturday May 28 | 10:00am**

**Becky Cherriman's** series of creative writing workshops invites an author to choose a classic book from the Library's shelves and use it as a starting point for new work. Both online and in-person sessions are available.



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# The Leeds Library

## Leeds Lit Fest 2022



The fourth Leeds Lit Fest took place between 26th February and 6th March—the longest in the festival’s history, and the first in-person programme since 2020. The Library hosted 22 events, with tickets for most events selling well and several at capacity. The New Room was buzzing with live audiences for the first time since the pandemic: people attended an LLF event over 700 times across the festival. But of course, Covid has changed everything: not everyone feels comfortable attending in-person events; and we learned during lockdown that (although it’s easy to get exhausted by screens) online platforms such as Zoom have increased the accessibility of events of all kinds.

So almost all of the events held at the Library were ‘hybrid’ events, with people attending both in person and via Zoom. Some events were recorded, and have been uploaded to Leeds Lit Fest’s YouTube account (which you can find [here](#), or by searching ‘Leeds Lit Fest’ on YouTube).

Following the close of the Festival, Leeds Lit Fest was once again shortlisted for Best Literature Festival at the annual Saboteur Awards. Click [here](#) to see the nominations and vote for your favourites.

Highlights included journalist Tim Marshall talking about his book **The Power of Geography**. Tim spoke on how geography has influenced global politics, and he adapted his talk to focus on Russia.

**AC Grayling** addressed big questions in discussing his new book **For the Good of the World**. Is it possible to reach an agreement on the global challenges facing mankind?

**Rebecca Lowe** gave her account of her 11,000 kilometre solo bike ride from Croydon to Iran. Accompanied by her partner and her new-born baby daughter, the youngest member of the audience was captivated by David Hockney’s **The Big Book** in the New Room while the audience listened to her mother’s extraordinary journey.

Long-time friend of the Library **James Nash** showed his skill as a literary host throughout the week, chatting to guests ranging from debut novelist **Jacqueline Sutherland**, to arts historian **Catherine McCormack**, to former cabinet minister **Peter Hain**.

And Projects Assistant **Molly Magrath** curated the podcast series **Tales from Leeds Lit Fest**. She talked to independent booksellers from Yorkshire about the joys and challenges of their trade; to novelist **Stephen May** about his new book **Sell us the Rope**; and to Gerald Dickens about performing his great-great grandfather Charles’s work to live audiences.



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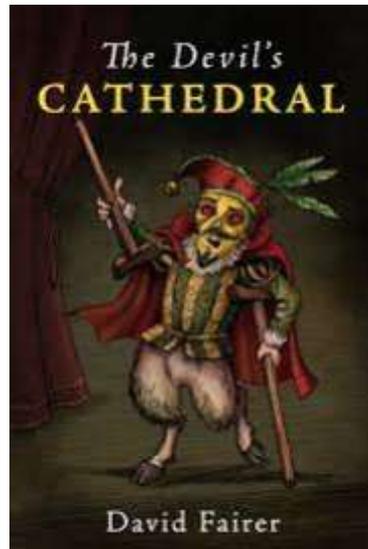
# The Leeds Library

## Book clubs at The Leeds Library

The Library hosts two book clubs—The Book Club meets once a month on a Monday.

At its meeting on 25 April, the group read **The Devil's Cathedral** by Library member David Fairer. **The Devil's Cathedral** is volume 2 of an historical crime fiction trilogy set in 18th Century London, and the group has also read volume 1. David's website can be found at [davidfairer.com](http://davidfairer.com).

The next meeting of the group will be on Monday 16 May, discussing **The Abess of Crewe** by Muriel Spark. Please email [enquiries@theleedslibrary.org.uk](mailto:enquiries@theleedslibrary.org.uk) if you're interested in joining the group.



The Tuesday Morning Book Club meets on the first Tuesday of every month at 10:30am. Books are chosen by members' own suggestions.

Please email Ann Suter if you are interested in joining: [suter.pamelaann@gmail.com](mailto:suter.pamelaann@gmail.com).

And speaking of the Tuesday Morning Book Club, on the next page you'll find reviews from Tuesday Morning Book Group members of one of the titles discussed by the group last year.



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# The Leeds Library

## Reviews from the Tuesday Morning Book Club

For our book for August we chose **Candide** by Voltaire. For some of us this was a revisiting of an old classic which we had read originally in our youth.

Francois-Marie d'Arouet (1649 to 1778) known as Voltaire was a writer, philosopher, poet, dramatist, historian and polemicist of the French Enlightenment. The diversity of his work was only rivalled by its abundance. He was a highly critical and satirical writer and a contemporary of Rousseau, Leibnitz, Locke and Hume. Voltaire is remembered for his correspondence with the leading heads of Europe namely the philosopher king Frederick the Great of Prussia and Catherine the Great of Russia. Voltaire even had rooms at the Potsdam court at San Souci until he fell out with Frederick.

Candide, written in 1758, was published in Geneva, Paris and Amsterdam simultaneously in 1759 and translated in to English the same year. It is probably the best known of Voltaire's work today. The book is a tale of a naive young man, Candide, and his philosopher mentor Dr Pangloss who take a journey around the world only to discover that 'everything is not the best in the best of all possible worlds'. On the surface a witty bantering tale it is a savage satirical thrust at most institutions and the idea of free will and especially at the philosophical optimism practised by Leibnitz.

But it was no fable inhabiting a make believe location but was a real life report on the current state of the world set among the headlines of the day. Examples are the Lisbon earthquake of 1755 (where 30,000 died) and the auto da fe the following year organised by the Inquisition to expiate the people's sins. Also El Dorado (where the streets were fabled to be paved with gold and precious stones) was believed to be an actual place –something that cost Sir Walter Raleigh his head. Voltaire concludes at the end of Part One that 'we must cultivate/dig our garden.'

What did we think? We all liked the book .It was felt to be witty and clever and Voltaire was described as 'a delightful narrator'. One of the group remarked that if he had been alive today Voltaire would be media commentator, directing films, or on the TV or in journalism making blistering attacks on the wrongs of the world.

We all felt how contemporary the book was and that all the issues of Voltaire's day are as pertinent now (natural disasters, religious intolerance, racism, and slavery) as they were then and how (depressingly) little has changed in the passage of a few hundred years. Most of us start out naive and innocent in life only be swiftly disillusioned. There is an excellent review by Julian Barnes relating to this.

[https://www.google.co.uk/url?](https://www.google.co.uk/url?sa=t&rct=j&q=&esrc=s&source=web&cd=&ved=2ahUKEwi2m4D6sZzyAhWhQUEAHVC9A5IQFnoECAYQAw&url=https%3A%2F%2Fwww.theguardian.com%2Fbooks%2F2011%2Fjul%2F01%2Fcandide-voltaire-rereading-julian-barnes&usg=AOvVaw3RsZF5U8CgdKuwlpjQvR2d)

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The question of what Voltaire meant by 'dig your garden' was raised. The meaning of this phrase has been a subject of controversy ever since the book was written. The meaning of jardin in the past was more loose and could be taken to be fields or land and so can taken to mean 'to do your own thing' or lead a simpler life or take responsibility for your own actions. *Candide*, although written 250 or so years ago, definitely merits a read today and I would thoroughly recommend it.

Ann Suter



Barbara Pym wrote "Excellent Women" in 1952, her second novel. During the 1950s she wrote five more novels and achieved a solid popularity. However, in 1962 she was dropped by Jonathan Cape, who felt that her novels no longer fitted the zeitgeist. During the 1960s and early seventies she therefore published no new novels, until Philip Larkin and Lord David Cecil chose her as one of the most underrated novelists of the twentieth century, and she speedily emerged after sixteen years of obscurity to almost instant fame and recognition. Three more of her novels were published before her death in 1980.

"Excellent Women" is set in 1946, still in the bleak shadow of wartime, where restricted lives, lower expectations and stricter conventions of social conduct were the norm. Familiar milieux and themes are explored such as the Anglican parish, its clergy and its yearly round of activities – the church jumble sale, the harvest festival, the Christmas bazaar. Women's thoughts, concerns and actions are central to the novels, this time in the person of Mildred Lathbury, our "excellent woman" who says of herself "I suppose an unmarried woman just over thirty, who lives alone and has no apparent ties, must expect to find herself involved or interested in other people's business, and if she is also a clergyman's daughter, then one might really say that there is no hope for her." It is through Mildred's eyes that the action unfolds, and she misses nothing.

There are hopes and dreams of romance and marriage of the never-have-been or never-will-be sort, with some generally unsatisfactory or unsuitable men in Mildred's life, such as the charming but married Rockingham Napier, or the ineffective clergyman Julian Malory, though at the end, by working for the rather enigmatic Everard Bone, Mildred glimpses the possibility of a fuller life for herself.

There was a sharp divide of opinion about this novel. Some disliked it, finding Mildred dull, over-privileged or lacking any inner life or self-awareness, and complaining that there was little or no plot within a tiny, stifling world. Others argued that there was an absolutely realism about Mildred Lathbury's situation both in place and time, and that much action was subtly understated. They enjoyed Pym's wry humour, and her ability to deflate pretensions and nonsense with a sense of the ridiculous.

These differences of judgement actually led to a lively exchange of views and a stimulating debate about Barbara Pym's fictional world. We all enjoyed it.

Christine Stead



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## The pleasures of being a number

by Library Member \*\*\*

(All \*\*\* have been changed to preserve the anonymity of members)

I've been a member of the Library for fifteen years, maybe more, but it was only recently that I began musing on those numbers that appear next to the 'return by' dates in the front of the books we borrow. I was slightly surprised to be given a number when I joined and told to use it when borrowing and returning books. Back then I was slightly uneasy about being a number and not a name but, of course, the Library is a friendly place and I stopped thinking about being a number – until recently.



It all began when I decided to try a new author, a not very well-known crime writer whose books had been discussed in the pages of *Slightly Foxed*. The catalogue told me we have a goodly number of this author's books so I skipped merrily down to the basement, only to find not a single copy on the

shelving. I then checked back in the Main Room, though not expecting to find them as that would mean a librarian had put them back in the wrong place, a scarcely imaginable possibility. But no, no sign. So where were they? The answer, of course, is obvious—they were on loan or reserved and waiting behind the counter—but not for me.

Over the next month or so, those books trickled back into availability. As they did so, I noticed the same number on the loan sheet in the front of the book and I realised that I was following in the reading footsteps of member number \*\*\*, not a million \* from my own number.

That's when I began to examine more closely the numbers in the other books I borrowed. There number \*\*\* was again, albeit in a book by a different author but predictably so, given our joint reading history. To my surprise, however, \*\*\* hadn't read another book I'd borrowed. Perhaps \*\*\* hasn't discovered this author yet? Risking obsession, I found myself looking out for \*\*\* in the pages of the 'books to be ordered' document that sits on the counter and enables us to make advance reservations. Ah, \*\*\* is going to read X, maybe I should too? Perhaps I could put \*\*\* down for this book, he or she might like this.

Not that I was obsessed, you understand. I didn't confine myself to looking just for \*\*\*. I widened my search for common numbers in the other types of books I borrow and there they were, not \*\*\* this time, but \*\*\*\* and a different \*\*\* and another \*\*\*\*. I suddenly felt that I was a member of several different groups of people, each group having a common interest but entirely anonymously, like being a toddler with a bunch of invisible friends. I rather liked the feeling.



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And I found myself wondering - maybe it would be even nicer to know these intelligent and cultured people who share my reading tastes? Maybe if we wore our numbers and names in the Library on discreet little badges? We might learn each other's names and share ideas for new authors to explore.

But then I realised the consequences of knowing names. We'd know who reader \*\*\*\* is. You know, the person who always takes ages to return the latest Donna Leon or Burt and Grady. Imagine the consequences. Frustrated readers sitting uncomfortably close to \*\*\*\* in the Library, drumming their fingers in a meaningful manner and whispering 'Have you always read so excruciatingly slowly? Speed up ... or else!' Anonymous phone calls to \*\*\*\* at home, urging 'It's only 2am. Get that bedside light on and read another chapter.' Mysterious Asiatic poisons being added to mugs in the Coffee Corner, leading to \*\*\*\*'s executors returning books far sooner than \*\*\*\* would have done.

No, numbers work. They provide a soothing anonymity while provoking a little light curiosity about the personality that lies behind \*\*\* or \*\*\*\*, those recent or long-ago borrowers of the book I've just taken out. And besides which, being a number is far, far better than being a bar-code.



## New exhibition marks 100 years since the founding of the Irish Free State



There's a new exhibition in the foyer, and it marks the centenary of the founding of the Irish Free State. As well as contemporary volumes discussing events as they happened, other books focus on the long-established Irish community in Leeds, highlighting the huge array of Irish authors and poets, some of whom have links to Leeds.

In addition to the exhibition cases, a number of books have been displayed on top of the map cases in the New Room; so why not borrow one or two to celebrate the wide range of Irish writing talent?

