

A photograph of a decorated Christmas tree in a library. The tree is the central focus, adorned with warm white lights, red and gold ornaments, and a white star on top. It stands next to a large window with a wooden frame. To the right, a dark wood bookshelf is filled with books. The text 'SPEAKS VOLUMES' is overlaid in white, sans-serif font across the middle of the tree. Below it, the number '32' is also overlaid. At the bottom, the text 'the magazine of THE LEEDS LIBRARY' is overlaid in white, sans-serif font. The overall atmosphere is cozy and festive.

SPEAKS VOLUMES

32

the magazine of  
THE LEEDS LIBRARY

## In this issue of Speaks Volumes:

<i>PAGE NUMBER</i>	<i>CONTENTS</i>
3	<a href="#"><u>Update from our CEO</u></a>
4	<a href="#"><u>An update from Library Services &amp; quiz</u></a>
5	<a href="#"><u>Members' Christmas events</u></a>
6	<a href="#"><u>A new look for our windows</u></a>
7	<a href="#"><u>Forthcoming events, January - April 2023</u></a>
8	<a href="#"><u>News from the Trustees</u></a>
9	<a href="#"><u>Biding Our Time: lady assistants at the Leeds Library</u></a>
11	<a href="#"><u>Forty years of membership</u></a>
12	<a href="#"><u>Raffle—gift membership—new merchandise!</u></a>
13	<a href="#"><u>Reviews by the Tuesday Morning Book Club</u></a>
16	<a href="#"><u>Quiz answers</u></a>

General Enquiries: [enquiries@theleedslibrary.org.uk](mailto:enquiries@theleedslibrary.org.uk)

Counter: [counter@theleedslibrary.org.uk](mailto:counter@theleedslibrary.org.uk)

### OPENING HOURS

Monday—Wednesday: 10AM-6PM

Thursday: 10AM-7pm

Friday: 10AM-5PM

Saturday: 10AM-4PM

Sunday: CLOSED



## Update from our CEO

Dear Member

We hope you are well and are looking forward to the festive period. After what has been a turbulent year for all of us, on behalf of the staff and trustees I would like to say thank you for your continued support of the Library.

During a year in which the cost of living for everyone has increased substantially, the Library recruited more new members than in any previous year, and saw a reduced number of membership resignations. This has meant that by the end of the year we have more members than at any time in its history.

Across the course of the year the Library has taken forward the plans for 15 Commercial Street, which culminated with securing planning permission last month. The focus for 2023 will be to bring these plans to life.

The Library hosted and programmed many events and activities across the year, including Leeds Lit Fest in March which went on to receive a Saboteur Award for national Best Lit Fest. The Library welcomed over 4,000 visitors over a two-night period in October for Leeds Light Night; programmed a number of theatre, spoken word, comedy and literature events; and hosted a number of events on behalf of several partner organisations including Milim, the Thoresby Society, West Yorkshire Society of Architects, Sofar Sounds, Ecology Building Society and the Heritage Fund.

In terms of the collections of the Library, a significant amount of work has been undertaken across the course of the year to ensure that an increasing number of the collections are catalogued. This work has also been extended to include ensuring that the archives of the Library are properly catalogued.

Finally, the Library has seen a number of volunteers help us undertake many aspects of our work, and several staff members both join and leave the team as we gear up for the expansion of the Library in the coming months. I

In the coming weeks, we will say goodbye to our Library Assistant, Aimee-Jo Holdsworth, who is leaving to take up a full time job at Leeds Arts University in the library; and Mary Ealden our Development and Projects Manager, who is taking on a new role at the Arts Council.

To Aimee-Jo, Mary, all of the members of the staff team, and Trustees who have supported and contributed to the work of the Library over the last 12 months I would like to say a thank you for all of your hard work and best wishes for a successful and happy 2023.



From Jane and the Library Services team

## BOOK SALE

Our Book Sale on Saturday 26 November made the magnificent sum of £1017! Many thanks to everyone who donated books and bought them too.

## EXHIBITIONS

We hope you have enjoyed our Egypt exhibition. The idea behind the exhibition was to mark the centenary of the discovery by Howard Carter of Tutankhamun's nearly-intact tomb.

**Anna and Claire are working on our next display which will be Myths and Legends (including ... spoiler alert ... Father Christmas!) and next year we will be having exhibitions on Yorkshire art and artists amongst other treats.**

## BOOK CARE

**Now that the cold and wet weather is here, please can we ask members to ensure that the library's books are protected from the elements by carrying them in a plastic or waterproof bag.**

## BOOK RECOMMENDATIONS

**Don't forget to pick up some Christmas reading! The team have recommended some Christmas books, so do have a look at the recommendation trolley.**

## QUIZ

Earlier this year, the Leeds Library hosted a Spring Celebration—below is part of the quiz we wrote for members—answers can be found (upside down!) on the back page.

1. Where do the royal family traditionally spend Christmas?
2. The Norfolk Black is a British breed of what domestic animal?
3. How many grandchildren did Queen Elizabeth II have?
4. Which is the only village in England with a name ending with an exclamation mark?
5. How many British Prime Ministers served Queen Elizabeth II?
6. What was 32 inches in 1512, 35 inches by the 1520s, and then 54 inches in 1545?
7. How old was Elizabeth II when she was crowned in 1953?
8. **Which author's picture was featured on £10 notes first issued in 2017?**
9. What other language, besides English, did Queen Elizabeth II speak fluently?
10. Which of the following cities is the furthest north: Leeds, Liverpool or Manchester?

## EXCLUSIVE MEMBER EVENTS FOR CHRISTMAS!

### MEMBERS' CHRISTMAS PARTY

Wednesday 14 December, 2pm—6pm

Come down to the Library any time between 2pm and 6pm to get into the Christmas spirit with fellow **library members**. We have lots of festive activities planned, including Tombola, Jane's 'Card Game', bingo, a raffle, tombola, name-the-teddy, the bottles game, and every member attending receives a complimentary tipple. Nibbles will be provided and there will also be a paid bar. Merry Christmas!

### FAMILY CHRISTMAS

Saturday 17 December, 11am—1pm

An extra-special festive event for members & their families! Including games, competitions, music, Christmas treats & our very own magician Dr Marvello!

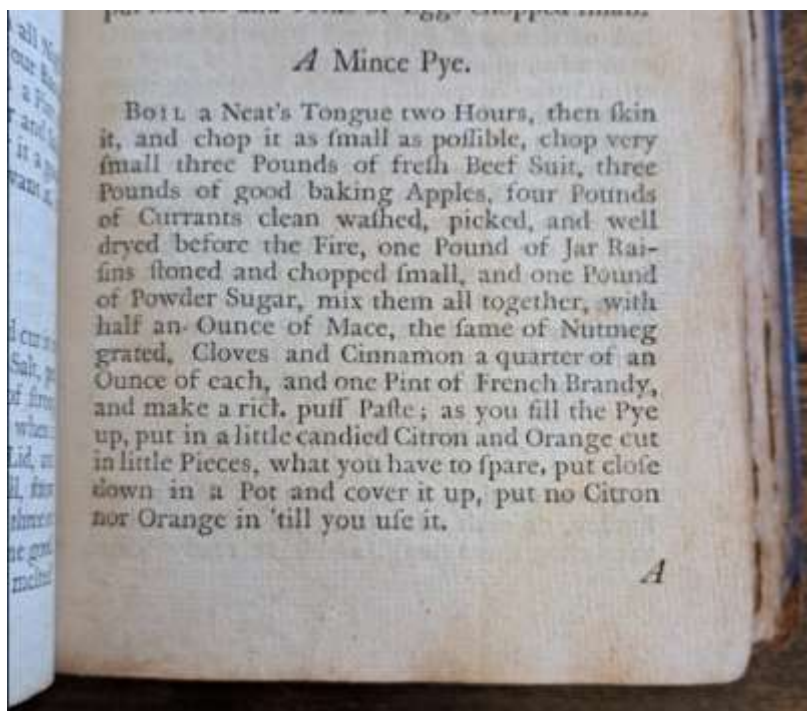
Please book for both events on our Eventbrite page: <https://www.eventbrite.co.uk/o/the-leeds-library-12296752918>

### MINCE PIES—THE OLD WAY...

If you're feeling adventurous this Christmas, you may need a butcher to source the ingredients for this Georgian mince pie, written the year after the Leeds Library was founded.

It is a recipe—or a 'receipt', as the author calls it—for *A Mince Pye*. It's taken from Elizabeth Raffald's *The Experienced English House-keeper: For the Use and Ease of Ladies, House-keepers, Cooks &c. Wrote purely from PRACTICE*. **A neat's tongue is a cow's tongue.**

The Library holds a 1769 edition in its collection, the conservation of which was generously made possible by Ian Simpson in memory of Dorothea Simpson in 2010.



## NEW WINDOWS

The library is delighted to unveil its newly-painted windows at both 15 and 18 Commercial Street, which were created by Illustrator Kristyna Baczynski. Presented with a brief to 'bring the ambiance of the library down to street level', we think Kristyna has done a fantastic job.

For those of you who are able to visit the library and see the windows for yourself, you will spot some fantastic details, including Hockney reading the Hockney; Vincent Sternberg, our resident ghost, peeping out of the bookshelves; Mary Shelley selecting her own novel; our Black Ball Machine; the chess set and clock; and various architectural features including the spiral staircases and the patterns on the balcony railings in the New Room. For those of you who aren't able to visit, we hope that these images will do the windows justice.



If you would like to see more of Kristyna's work, you can do so on her website here: [www.kristyna.co.uk](http://www.kristyna.co.uk) We are hopeful that Kristyna will also have an exhibition of her print works in the library over the coming months, where selected works will be for sale, and we also have a copy of Kristyna's new book 'The Wild Year' in the library's collection now if you want to find out more.





# Programme of Events—January to April 2022

As the year comes to an end, we are looking forward to starting 2023 with some exciting partnerships and programming initiatives, including a new, monthly lunchtime lecture series on the last Friday of the month; free guided tours led by our newly trained Member Volunteers; the first in a series of events with the students from the University of Leeds Schools of Medicine, Dentistry and Healthcare; a collaboration **with the Leeds Beckett Centre for Culture and Arts to celebrate International Women's Day, and a new exhibition celebrating Art and Architecture with PAGES in April, amongst other things.**

A special thanks goes to Dr Kevin Grady, President of The Leeds Library, for his commitment to the library through his training of the member volunteer tour guides, which has been an extensive romp through the history of the library from before its foundation through to the present day and beyond, with guest speakers including Chris Webster and Dr Ruth Robbins. It is so wonderful to be able to say that our free programme of public tours will now be led exclusively by our Members – a fantastic resource and brilliant representatives of the passion and commitment that Members have for the library.

As well as this, Kevin has kindly agreed to headline our new Lunchtime Lecture programme, which will take place on the last Friday of the month at 1pm, and which has been designed to celebrate the notable people of Leeds - those who have played or are continuing to play a significant part in making Leeds the great city it is today. Kevin will begin the series by talking about his experiences of tracing his family tree through the riverside slums of Victorian Newcastle and Gateshead on Friday 27<sup>th</sup> January.

**And finally, our regular Member's clubs will continue throughout 2023 including our monthly Monday evening Book Club, which takes place on the second Monday of the month from 6pm – 7pm; our monthly Tuesday morning Book Club, which takes place on the first Tuesday of the month from 10.30am - 12pm; our regular Member's Film Club, which takes place twice a month on a Wednesday evening and a Saturday afternoon, and our Craft Club, which takes place on the first Monday of the month from 5pm – 7pm and the third Friday of the month from 12pm – 2pm.**

Our public programme of events for January – April 2023 will be uploaded onto our website before Christmas. To find out more, check our events pages here: <https://www.theleedslibrary.org.uk/events/?eventPage=1>

**To find out more about our regular Member's Clubs, visit our website here: <https://www.theleedslibrary.org.uk/members-area/members-clubs-the-leeds-library/>**

If you would like to take part in training to become a volunteer tour guide, or you have any questions at all about our public programme, please email us at [enquiries@theleedslibrary.org.uk](mailto:enquiries@theleedslibrary.org.uk)

# News from the Trustees

## CHAIR OF TRUSTEES

I will be standing down as a Library trustee at the next AGM in June 2023 after ten years as a trustee, eight of them as chair. We are now looking for someone to join the Board of Trustees with a view to taking over as Chair after the AGM. This is a particularly exciting time to take on the Chair role as we expand the Library and in doing so deliver greater benefits for our members, engage more fully with the many and diverse communities in the city, and secure the future of the oldest cultural institution in Leeds. The Chair is expected to provide strong leadership for the Board; ensure that the Board functions effectively and that proper governance arrangements are in place and adhered to; work closely with the **Library's Chief Executive to deliver the Library's strategic and operational aims; and act as an ambassador** for the Library. It is an important and demanding role but one which is also extremely rewarding, especially at the present time.

In terms of time commitment, the Board of Trustees normally meets for two hours six to eight times a year. Meetings are usually held at the Library, though often with a Zoom option. In addition, there is a need for regular meetings with Library staff, particularly the Chief Executive, who is accountable to the Chair on behalf of the Board. The Chair may also chair or be a member of Board committees which meet several times a year at the Library.

If you are interested and would like more information, or want to discuss the role in more detail, please get in touch with me via the Library e-mail: [enquiries@theleedslibrary.org.uk](mailto:enquiries@theleedslibrary.org.uk) or by calling the Library: 0113 245 3071.

## NEW TRUSTEES

**I'm delighted to welcome two new trustees to the Board. David Butcher is a retired solicitor who is** already active in the Library and has recently trained to be a volunteer guide. Moade Shubita is a qualified accountant who teaches accountancy and financial management at Leeds Beckett University. He will take on the role of Library treasurer. I look forward to working with them in the coming months.

Martin Staniforth  
Chair of Trustees



BIDING OUR TIME:  
VICTORIAN LADY ASSISTANTS  
AT  
THE LEEDS LIBRARY

By Niimi Day Gough, Assistant Archivist

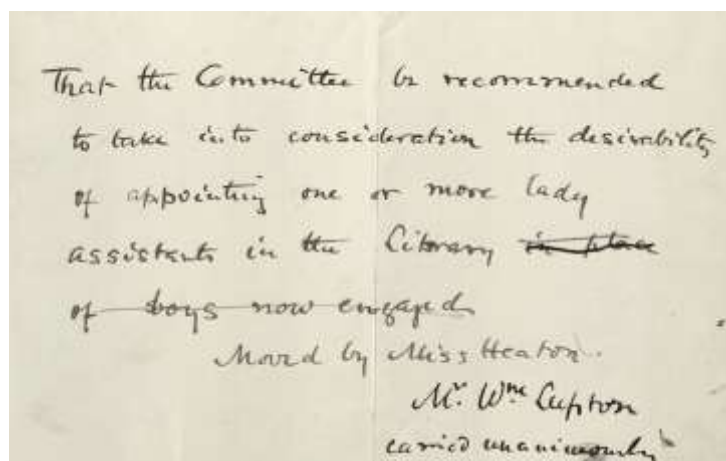
In 1871, Manchester Public Free Libraries advertised for “a respectable, intelligent young woman” to work “as assistant”. This request kickstarted a furore of articles debating the value of the “recent” female library assistant “experiment” that lasted into the next decade and beyond. Census records do reflect an increase in women with occupations listed as ‘Librarian’ or ‘Assistant Librarian’ during the period, from 113 in 1841 to a still-increasing 222 by 1881. Whether they belonged there, however, was another matter – and a contentious one.

In The Leeds Library, a recent archive discovery has unveiled a microcosm of the same debate. The Leeds Library was founded in 1768 and today remains the UK’s oldest surviving subscription library. Its archive spans its entire 254-year history, but it was in reviewing its collection of 1880s correspondence that I found two documents concerning the hiring of a “lady assistant”. The Library was no stranger to women in its workforce. In fact, its second and third librarians were both women and both named ‘Mary Robinson’; they were mother and daughter, and clearly not into unique baby names. Mary Robinson II retired shortly before her death in 1825, however, and by 1886 the ensuing all-male committees hadn’t hired another woman since.

In contrast, the Library has always had female members: from 5 of the original 105 in 1768 to 55 in 1886. Women also used the memberships of male relatives to borrow books. It comes as no surprise, then, that some of these female members began to push for the Library to hire a woman.

The first document is a motion to be read at the 1886 Annual General Meeting, in which Library members met to discuss Library business with the Committee. One side of the paper [Fig 1.] contains the motion:

“That the Committee be recommended to take into consideration the desirability of [...] one or more lady assistants”.



That the Committee be recommended  
to take into consideration the desirability  
of appointing one or more lady  
assistants in the Library ~~in place~~  
of boys now engaged.  
Moved by Miss Heaton.  
M<sup>rs</sup> W<sup>m</sup> Cupton  
carried unanimously

...Victorian lady assistants continued...

The other side carries a formal letter requesting the document be put into the General Meeting. Over both sides, it is signed by four female members and one male – Ellen Besquith, Lydia Walley, Jane Buckton, William Lupton, and Ellen Heaton. The latter was an active campaigner for women’s education, and all were middle- to upper-class, white, and employed at least one servant. They had the privilege needed to push for change. Even so, however, their original intent for the lady assistants to replace “boys now engaged” was quashed – clearly a step too far for the other members at the meeting. With that amendment, the motion is marked as having been “carried unanimously”; a remarkable signal of support for women retaking their place in library staff.

Further support is found in the second 1886 document I found [Fig. 2]: a February 4th letter from Committee member Eustace Couder excusing him from the February 8th 1886 meeting. He argues that “as so many of our subscribers are ladies [hiring a woman] would seem suitable”. He is quick to note, though, that this is only “provid[ing]” the “young lady” is “quick & intelligent” and “pleasant & lady-like in her manner” – not like the “curt & supercilious” ladies working in the post offices.

Couder’s conditional support serves as perfect illustration of the expectations behind every advancement permitted to women in the workplace during the period. If a woman is to be hired, she must be ‘respectable’; white, middle-class, heterosexual, and unchallenging of the elite patriarchal definition of ‘woman’.

Indeed, the reservations of the elite white Committee men are clear in the events that followed the General Meeting. Though the members “unanimously” agreed that the Committee must “consider” hiring a lady assistant, that is all the Committee proceeded to do. There is no mention of a lady assistant in the February 8th Committee meeting minutes. Though they hired multiple male assistants throughout the ensuing years, it wasn’t until 1899 that the Library finally employed a woman. Miss Duckett was hired in December 1899 to “have charge” of the ground floor counter.

Her arrival heralded the first time in 74 years that The Leeds Library had a woman on-staff – a torch carried by three more women over the next 50 years. In the same year as Miss Duckett’s hiring, Lucy Toulmin Smith (Librarian for Manchester College, Oxford) published a paper on female Librarianship. She hoped:

“If men therefore have so recently entered into their inheritance [as Librarians], women may bide their time in patience, confident of success before long.”



It wasn't until 1969 that the Library would hire its third female Librarian; but as one of eight women working at The Leeds Library in 2022, I hope we haven't kept Lucy waiting too long.

References:

Baker, T., 'The Employment of Young Women as Assistants in Public Free Libraries', in Tedder, H.R., and Thomas, E.C., (eds) Transactions and Proceedings of the Second Annual Meeting of the Library Association of the United Kingdom, London: Library Association (1880), p79

Baker, Ref. 1.

Douglas, Janet, 'Women, Reading, and the Leeds Library', in Robbins, Ruth, and Webster, Christopher, (eds) Through the Pages: 250 years of The Leeds Library, Leeds: The Leeds Library (2018), pp. 105-121.

Toulmin Smith, L., 'On Openings for Women in Library Work', Library Association Record, Vol. 1 (1899), pp.719-24

## 40 YEARS OF MEMBERSHIP

Earlier this year, we sent cards to members celebrating round-number anniversaries, and Michael Lobley write in about his memories of forty years of membership. Thank you, Michael! If you have any special memories of your membership—**however long you've been a member**—we would love to hear them. Please do write to us!

*How lovely of you to send me a card to remind me I have been a Library member for 40 years. Thank you.*

*When I joined in 1982 it was necessary to become a shareholder (one of 500 I think) and to walk into the Library and ask to join would be met with news of a waiting list stretching into the future awaiting the death of existing shareholders.*

*However I had a business acquaintance Bill Speight who was still a working accountant and he was a member. He obviously had some pull as a shareholding was made available to me immediately.*

*I must tell you about Bill. He had been a fighter pilot in the First World War. He flew Be2Cs which were out of date when he arrived at the front. His squadron in the RFC (Royal Flying Corps) were tasked with the most dangerous job of shooting down German observation balloons. These were ringed with anti aircraft guns and the squadron had a very high attrition rate. After 3 months Bill was the senior pilot in the squadron.*

*Bill must have been almost 90 when he retired.*

*I was so proud to be a shareholder in the Library and fought very hard not to change the constitution. However Michael Meadowcroft out-gunned me.*

*I love the Library and very much appreciate it as a haven in the middle of our bustling city of Leeds.*

*I am delighted it appears to be thriving. Long may it continue.*

*The Library is the staff. Thank you all.*

## MEMBERS' CHRISTMAS RAFFLE

Roll up! Roll up! Tickets for the Members' Christmas Raffle are on sale in the Library from Thursday 1st December. 1st prize is a year's free individual membership with lots more prizes to be won! Draw will be held at the Members' Christmas Party on Wed 14th December. Tickets are £2 or 3 for £5. Don't miss out!

## GIFT MEMBERSHIP

Still looking for that perfect gift? Give the gift of Leeds Library Membership! Gift packs come in a special hand-made presentation box and contain a Leeds Library greetings card, welcome letter and gift certificate. Buy your gift membership in person at the Library and receive a FREE copy of our 250th anniversary book, *Through the Pages!* Ask at the counter for details on your next visit.



## NEW MERCHANDISE!

The library has some new merchandise—and more on the way! We have some beautiful greetings card, suitable for many occasions, featuring images from the collection; and our brand new tote bag is proving very popular.

All are available to buy at the counter, but we have also listed them online:

<https://www.theleedslibrary.org.uk/product-category/gifts/shop-gifts/>





## Reviews from the Tuesday Morning Book Club

### **Mary Lavin's** *Happiness and Other Stories*

Reviewed by Lucy Evans.

Mary Lavin (1912-1996) is hardly known in the UK. I first came across her when I lived in Ireland in the early 1970s. There and in the USA, she is regarded as a sublime writer, particularly of her main medium, the short story. The very first sentence I read of one of her stories, a view of a stark empty landscape, had huge impact on me.

Mary Lavin was born in the USA to Irish parents, brought to Ireland at ten years old, and educated in Dublin. When she started writing stories her father amazingly asked the elderly Lord Dunsany to mentor her. She wrote three novels but found her true voice with the short stories. She is regarded as pioneering woman writer, a subtle and subversive voice. As a widow with three daughters, at one stage farming in the west of Ireland, she wrote much of rural isolation and loneliness.

*Happiness and Other Stories* provoked lively discussion, including debates on interpretation of specific stories and what was really going on. It was felt that her depictions of relationships open up all sorts of questions. One member commented that Mary Lavin gave resonances rather than deliberate narratives and her stories were richer for that. The moral dimensions, philosophic questions, and shifts in focus, the subtle observations, make the stories interesting and compelling. There is also black humour and an undertone of fatalism perhaps, rather than hope.

Usually, Mary Lavin wrote in the third person, with much ambiguity and leaving endings hanging. There is a rare first-person narrative story in this collection.

All agreed that she is a master of style. Her writing is concise, strong, and economic with brilliant phrases and precision.

Although an Irish writer, dealing with the themes of isolation, longing, corruption and society stagnation, her people and landscapes are universal. Some members found there is a Russian feel in her stories with the isolation of country life and the everlasting wish for escape to the city. She has been compared to Chekhov.

A committed Catholic Mary Lavin was one of the first to write of child abuse by priests, and there is a **particular story on this theme in "Happiness"**. **There was some discussion about how she managed to reconcile her faith with the issues she raised.**

I was glad to find that members were as impressed as I had been to encounter Mary Lavin, and several were keen to read further. Why she is not better appreciated in the UK is a mystery.

## **...reviews from the Tuesday Morning Book Club continued...**

Two reviews by Ann Suter

*A Farewell to Arms* by Ernest Hemingway

In June the Book Club read *Farewell to Arms* a book, though, set hundred years ago in the First World War still seems relevant today. Ernest Hemingway (1899-1961) was born and raised in Oak Park (a smart suburb of Chicago). He enlisted as an ambulance driver in First World War for the Italian army and in 1918 was seriously wounded and returned home. These experiences form the basis for *A Farewell to Arms*.

Hemingway then worked as a foreign and a war correspondent in Paris and Spain where he covered the Spanish Civil War, eventually settling as his main home in Key West Florida. He was married four times. He was a thinly disguised alcoholic all his life and this became much worse after unfortunate series of accidents which led to his suicide at the age of 62.

**This was a lively meeting. As someone commented at the end it's much more interesting when we don't agree on a book. We all liked last month's choice of Anthony Trollope's *The Warden* but Hemingway's *Farewell to Arms* met with very different reactions.**

To some this is one of the greatest war novels, especially admired in the 1960s for its anti-war stance and minimalist style. Nearly all the members found the stark description brilliant, giving intense visual impact. **There is no purple prose to distract. Hemingway's deliberate staccato style with the use of repeated 'ands' is powerful, especially in the gripping descriptions of the landscape, the movement of the troops,** and the retreat. Some found the prose lyrical in a hard way and the repetitions hypnotic. Hemingway also slips in unexpected Italian phrasing which gives a sharp variety to the prose. The journalistic, unemotional and economical writing style transformed the novelistic form. This was termed iceberg theory by Hemingway. Some commented that there were other pioneers of this change as well as Hemingway.

The description may be excellent, but the group found much to criticise in the dialogue and characterisation. The conversations between the soldiers and officers work well whilst the exchanges between Catherine and the narrator were variously found to be turgid, unconvincing, as artificial as Noel Coward lines, or cocktail party stuff.

The men, especially the wise and funny doctor Rinaldi, are well delineated. In contrast, Catherine herself is unbelievable - a drippy, self-sacrificing woman, only perceived in reference to the narrator. And beautiful of course. The portrayal of Catherine does women a disservice: she is only a cypher. One member speculated whether she can be viewed as a damaged victim of war. There is no real surprise or planning for her pregnancy. She and the narrator live high above the town with access only via steep, **slippery paths. Catherine and infant are clearly doomed as a plot device and vehicle for the narrator's suffering.** One member commented on how the narrator gorges on drink and food as Catherine endures **labour as well as making insensitive remarks about the baby's appearance. Hemingway struggled with the ending, writing it 39 times.**

Hemingway does not provide the all-knowing authorial voice that, for example, we found with Trollope. Trollope engages the reader in his views of the characters, constantly commenting on these and on the unfolding of the story. The narrator of *Farewell to Arms* is known mainly through his elliptical dialogue and from what can be surmised in the descriptive accounts. Reactions to him will differ depending on personal perspective.

## **...reviews from the Tuesday Morning Book Club continued...**

Some disliked the novel for everything being about the narrator, for its atmosphere of gore and male fantasy, and felt that escapades such as the rowing across the lake are very much Boys Own type adventures. This brought in a debate about the need to look at a book irrespective of what you might know – or dislike – about the author. But this is difficult with Hemingway as there is the feeling that the narrator is a portrait of himself – or as he would wish to be. Someone read out a quotation from Hemingway about writing being a search for basic truth – but then what was his truth?

In conclusion we agreed that Hemingway certainly does not explore psyches, express emotion, or depict women as real people. Characters and dialogues are the weakest. Yet it is a major war novel, one of the **earliest following WW1, based on Hemingway's own experience and delivering an almost journalistic** account of the campaigns in a new style of prose. But whether you like it or not is very much a matter of individual taste.

The Tuesday Morning Book Club read *Fathers and Sons* published 1862 (or *Fathers and Children* depending upon the translator) in March 2022.

This was suggested as we have read few Russian novels of the nineteenth century, in fact few Russian novels at all.

Ivan Turgenev (1818-1883) was a poet, playwright, translator and populariser of Russian Fiction. He came from moderately wealthy Russian family and the family estate (about 100 miles from Moscow) was managed by his tyrannical mother who ruled with a rod of iron. He never married but had a long-standing affair with a Spanish opera singer. He lived for most of his life abroad in Baden Baden.

The book is set against a background of the emancipation of the serfs in Russia and the social upheaval this caused. The book is tragedy of the conflict between generations: between two young men back from **University, Arkady and Bazarov (always referred to by his surname) to their parent's estates in the provinces and the relationships between them.**

**The book set off a storm that was to last the rest of Turgenev's lifetime and is considered to be his masterpiece.** The storm arose out of his portrayal of the tragic hero Bazarov who is a Nihilist (someone **who really denies everything or doesn't take any principle for granted**). Turgenev popularized the idea of Nihilism which had existed before but had been brought to public awareness.

**What did we think? We all liked the book, although one member did say "these people do nothing" but that in a way was the whole tenet of the book. It was described as an "a gem of a book".** The scenes of Russian life and countryside were wonderfully described. The scenes with Bazarov returning to his old parents and being so contemptuous of them reminded us that nothing much has changed over the centuries. I bet many of us have managed to easily embarrass our older children without really trying! If you have not read any Russian nineteenth century novels or any Turgenev I would certainly recommend this.

1. Sandringham House
2. Turkey
3. 8
4. Westward Ho!
5. 14
6. **Henry VIII's waistline**
7. 25
8. Jane Austen
9. French
10. Leeds