

SPEAKS VOLUMES

THE MAGAZINE OF THE LEEDS LIBRARY

"In Leeds, where one would least expect it, there is a very good public library."

James Boswell, 1779

NUMBER 15: A BIG
ANNOUNCEMENT

INTRODUCING THE
NEWEST MEMBER OF
THE TEAM

'IRREVERENT
POSTERITY' AND THE
LOINER LAUREATE



**ANOTHER MAN
IN THE STREET**

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GETTING THE MOST FROM YOUR MEMBERSHIP

Let's all club together

As a member of The Leeds Library, you have the opportunity to join one of our clubs. Meeting regularly at the library, we have not one but three book clubs; and with film, craft, and writing groups proving popular, there are plenty of ways to socialise with your fellow members.

If you are interested in joining, send an email to enquiries@theleedslibrary.org.uk; or ask at the counter. Full details of club dates can be found on our website:

theleedslibrary.org.uk/members-area/members-clubs-the-leeds-library/

Monday Evening Book Club

The first Monday of
every month
6pm - 7pm

Tuesday morning Book Club

The first Tuesday of
every month
10:30am - 12pm

Film Club

Twice a month
Wednesday (6pm)
Saturday (3pm)

Craft Club

The first Monday of
every month
5pm - 7pm

Writing Group

The second & fourth
Tuesday of every month
12pm

Book Chat

The first Friday of
every month
11am - 1pm (ish)

FROM THE CEO

Dear Members

I am delighted to inform you that we have an opening date for No. 15! Please keep the 31st March free for a members' launch - you will receive your formal invites next week. We are all very excited and can't wait to show you the space.

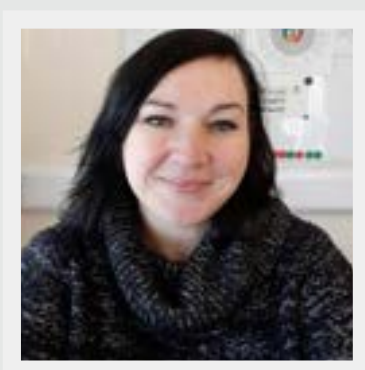
A huge thank you to those that have supported us through loans, donations, spreading the word, volunteering and in so many other ways. Do let us know if there are any particular events you would like to see in the new space once it opens, particularly for 2026 which will mark the 400th anniversary of the Leeds Charter! We will be working with Leeds Libraries and other partners to deliver something truly special for this momentous occasion.

It was wonderful to welcome our Patron Caryl Phillips over from America to discuss his newest work, *Another Man in the Street*. The event was very well attended and a signed copy is now available to borrow.

The damaged pipework in the boiler room is now being replaced and the boiler should be operational in February. Thank you for your patience - particularly the staff!

Our Learning & Engagement Officer Addie is settling in well and is a great addition to the team. She has been getting to know the team and the Library, creating networks and helping to kickstart our engagement strategy. She is also working with students at Leeds Beckett on an exciting new project.

We've got an exciting year ahead at the Library and look forward to sharing more with you all.



A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Nina Corey'.

NINA COREY
CEO

Progress on The Next Chapter



INTRODUCING THE NEWEST MEMBER OF THE TEAM

Addie joined us in January as our Learning & Engagement officer

Hello!

My name is Adrienne, usually known as Addie, and I have just joined the Library team as the new Learning and Engagement Officer. I'm excited to be joining an institution so steeped in history and with so much to learn from, especially at a big moment with the Next Chapter building and plans. My background is in archaeology, history and heritage attraction visitor experience roles, and I've just graduated from York with a masters in Medieval Archaeology so I'm always happy to chat about old stuff!



My role is part of the Next Chapter Project to help make the best use of the new spaces in the new building, and to encourage more people to get involved with the library – from local schools, colleges and universities to current and new members and volunteers. This will involve in person visits and events, but also making the most of online opportunities and creating resources to support learning. All of this will be built up from collaborations that have been done in the past, but also by building new contacts and opportunities.

I've been using my first couple of weeks here to have a proper dig through what kinds of groups, events, tours, workshops, visits and anything else the library has held in the past and therefore build up some ideas for the future. I'm not native to the area, so if you have any suggestions for things you'd like to see here, things that you've enjoyed in the past, or contacts you have that I can work with, please let me know! I'm particularly interested in contacts for local schools, colleges, universities and interest groups that we could engage with, as well as workshops or events you'd be interested in.

If there are any local schools and groups you think would be interested in visiting, collaborating or learning from the library and it's resources, please get in touch or introduce us. When we have the new building up and running, interested volunteers to help with visits and activities will also be needed!

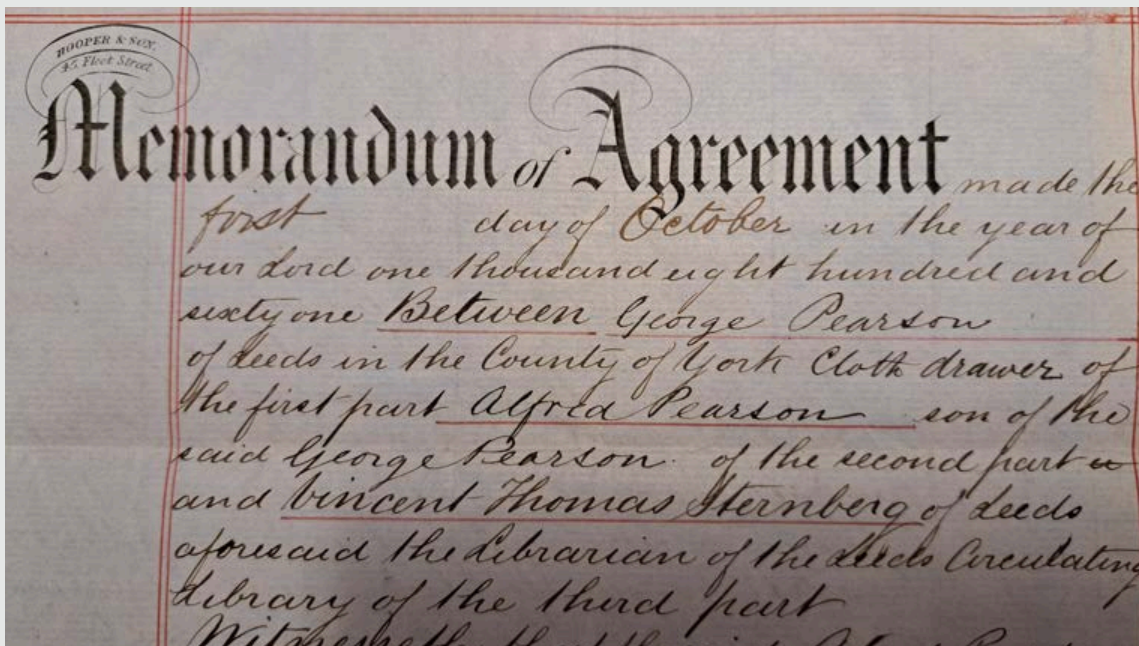
I look forward to meeting, chatting and maybe collaborating with you at the library at some point in the future!

All the best,

Addie Ponsford

COMING IN THE NEXT ISSUE...

Our regular Archive Highlights feature is taking a break, but will return next issue with Assistant Librarian Anna Goodridge on the library's boy and lady assistants, and the handwritten indentures to be found on the archive shelves.



UPDATE FROM JANE AND THE LIBRARY SERVICES TEAM

Reading – pain or pleasure?

A recent conversation with a member made me think about the different reasons for reading, and what we get out of it (if anything!). Also, where and when we read, if we inherited our passion for reading, and if the way we read has changed. I grew up with a Mum who read mainly novels every day on her long journey to and from work, and a Dad who read what we then called textbooks (non fiction!). We had a bookcase at the top of the stairs outside my bedroom, and I would occasionally pick one or two books off there. Some were Book Club editions, so I assume my Mum was a member. I read several of the Dr books by Richard Gordon and *The Group* by Mary McCarthy – which was quite a racy eye-opener for a naïve 14-year-old!

I visited Crossgates public library regularly, and we had an extensive school library, which we were encouraged to use. I never felt pressurised to read, I just did and have continued to do so.

I also read on the journey to and from work, at lunch time, in bed, and on holiday. I struggle with the idea of reading through the day at home, as I feel I should be doing housework. The exception to this is when the weather is kind enough to allow me to sit in the garden – I can't see the ironing pile, therefore it doesn't exist. A colleague has said she feels the same.

Some staff members have said that their reading habits have changed since Covid, and their concentration isn't as good. Has this happened to you?

Helen said "As children we were always encouraged to read. I don't recall that we had many books in the house, but we did use the library and for me that was either Hunslet or Belle Isle. My earliest memories of books are probably the Ladybird series, especially *Chicken Licken*, *Rumpelstiltskin* and *Three Billy goats gruff*.

Dad was an avid reader of thrillers, and I can remember being pleased when I chose books for him, only to find he had already read them! He also had really good general knowledge, all acquired from reading, and this was reflected in his crossword skills.

Books and reading were an important part of life in Mam's dementia journey. We found that we could engage her interest with children's books which she would read aloud, often commenting on the pictures. I was always amazed that though dementia had taken a lot away from her she was still able to read and pay attention to the punctuation. And so together we enjoyed books by Julia Donaldson, Beatrix Potter etc.

I think my reading habits have definitely changed, and I do find it hard to just sit and read. There's a lack of concentration, the feeling of guilt that I should be doing something else. We live in a world with more pressure on us and time spent reading sometimes feels like an indulgence. Even in the summer, sitting in the garden, I start to read and then see something that needs tidying in the garden and the book gets abandoned. I've also got to that age when the size of the print is a factor and eyestrain from spending so much time on a computer means I read less. Now I mainly read on the bus, to and from work".

Nina shared: "I was an early reader; I started at 3 and could read fluently by the time I went to primary school. I spent all of my spare time reading and loved nearly every book - the one exception being *The Call of the Wild*, which I read at the age of 9 'because it has dogs in it' and was traumatised for days afterwards.

My mum worked in a library, so I spent many happy hours there, and always had first pick of the sale stock. These days I struggle to make time to read, although doing the Big Read in December has helped to kickstart this. I do try to read on my commute but often find the train environment too distracting. When the weather gets better, I intend to spend more time outdoors in the beautiful Calder Valley with a book or two".

Hopefully, this article will provoke discussion about reading in general, so do let me know your thoughts for inclusion in the next *Speaks Volumes*

Film Club birthday

On the 7 June, the Film Club will be showing our 150th film! We have laughed, cried (yes, really) and discussed all things filmic since Christmas 2016, when we showed *It's a wonderful life* and *The apartment*. We are planning a celebration on 7th June, and a list of the upcoming films can be found at the counter.

Please note that the Film Club is only open to members because of licensing restrictions.

Door entry system

We have noticed that an increasing number of members are not carrying their door entry cards. Please can you ensure that you have it with you when you visit. All eligible members should now have received their door entry card. If, however, you have yet to receive one, please call at the Counter and one will be issued to you.

10 QUESTIONS

Vice Chair of trustees Philip Walker discusses non-fiction, Bradford City, and home brewing in our regular feature

Which 3 books would you take to a desert island?

Impossible to answer I'm afraid as my reading taste is very wide and I've enjoyed many books over the years. One of the benefits of being a member of the Library is that we have access to a huge range of books covering every topic conceivable. I tend to read more non-fiction than fiction and – looking back at my borrowing history from the Library – it looks like I read history books more than anything else.

Who is your literary hero?

I'm afraid I don't have one! This might be since I read more non-fiction than fiction.

What is the biggest misconception about librarians?

One of the biggest misconceptions about librarians is that they spend most of their time simply organising books. While that's an important part of their job, modern librarians are much more involved in information management, digital resources, research support, and even community engagement.

We are lucky that there is a great team at the library, they help people with research projects, manage the library's archives, provide access to online databases etc. as well as being a friendly, welcoming face. Being a librarian is about much more than just shelving books—it's about facilitating access to knowledge in many forms, both physical and digital.

What is your favourite film?

Zulu – mainly because it's nearly always on at Christmas so it's become a bit of a tradition to watch it.

What was your favourite subject at school?

I wasn't the most diligent scholar at school, but my favourite subject was history.

Do you have any hobbies or interests?

I like cooking and I also make beer at home. I enjoy going to the cinema and theatre and sometimes enjoy watching Bradford City play football. Lesley (my wife) and I have been members of the National Trust for several years and make full use of our membership visiting places of interest.

Where were you born and do you have any siblings?

Born and raised in Bradford – and proud of it. I'm the baby of the family and have two elder sisters and a brother.

Do you have a Kindle or other eReader?

No, good old traditional paper for me! Although I do use the PressReader service that we have access to as part of our subscription. I highly recommend it.

What's your favourite food?

I'm lucky that I like all kinds of food – a nice Sunday lunch is great, fish and chips (nom, nom) and you can't beat a good curry. We try to eat healthy, so Lesley and I like cooking things from scratch.

What would the title of your autobiography be?

I think I've done OK.

ONLINE EXHIBITIONS

Hello everyone! Archive and Engagement Assistant Niimi here. It's nearly the second anniversary of the online exhibitions project, so I thought it a perfect time to spotlight some of my favourites. They're perfect reading material for any long journeys home for Christmas - portable with lots of pictures! To access any of the articles named below, go to <https://www.theleedslibrary.org.uk/whats-on/exhibitions/>.

Lighter Reads:



First Principles: Tracing Developments in European Zoology Through 18th-20th Century Illustrations of Animals.

The Library has dozens of illustrated European natural sciences texts from the 18th-20th Centuries. A careful reader can trace developments in zoology through the way illustrations of animals change over time - and with the help of our collections, this article does just that.



Making the Team: Britain's Role in Founding the Modern Olympic Games.

To celebrate the 2024 Summer Olympics, I explored the lesser-known British influence in the founding of the modern Olympic Games. Uncover the stories of some very dedicated Victorian British sportsmen and women within!



Routes and Connections: How 18th Century Road Guides Connected England.

Dive into the history behind the Library's 18th Century road guides! At the dawn of the Industrial Revolution, Britain's roads were very different than the ones we know now. This exhibition explains how the new networks of roads wound through the country throughout the 1700s.

Longer Reads:



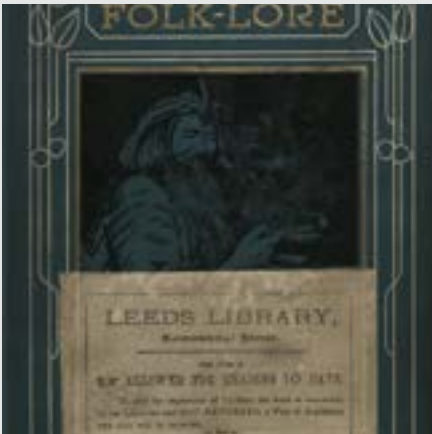
Tutankhamun: The Boy King Rediscovered.

In November 1922, Howard Carter and his archeological team uncovered the almost-intact tomb of Tutankhamun and took the world by storm. This exhibition delves into the boy king's life, death, and legacy through the pages of the Library's Egyptology collection.



Stoking The Fires: 19th-21st Century Stories of Yorkshire's Changing Industries.

The Library has seen Yorkshire through over 250 years of industrial development. Our history collection contains dozens of local stories from across all of these eras of industry. Through them, the wider history of Britain's changing industries can be traced - which we explore through select case studies here.



Colonizing Myths and Legends: Exploring Western colonial attitudes in The Leeds Library's Edwardian mythology books.

The Leeds Library has many Edwardian books about the cultures and myths of non-white and indigenous peoples whose lands were being colonized. These books provide fascinating insight into the way colonialist thought operated in the public - as we explore in this exhibition.



A Pilgrimage of Mercy: Yorkshire's Fight for the Rights of Factory Children in Victorian England.

The Victorian era is marked irrevocably by the industrial revolution - and so is Yorkshire. This exhibition explores the deplorable conditions children worked under in Yorkshire's Victorian textile factories, and the fights to improve them that united thousands of Yorkshire labourers from all walks of life.

IRREVERENT POSTERITY

Communications Officer Ian Harker takes us from Alfred, Lord Tennyson to Alfred the 'Banjo Byron'

How do we judge a writer to be great? Is posterity (meaning people living long after we've all died) better at it than we are? As individual readers, we've all fallen head over heels for a particular book or a particular writer, only to come back to them later and wonder if we weren't getting a bit carried away. Similarly, we've come back to books we read some time ago - or tried to, perhaps giving them up as a bad job - and seen merits in them we didn't see the first time.



A lot depends on contingent things. If we've just read, say, a crime fiction book we've really loved and started another crime fiction book straight after, aren't we in danger of judging it too harshly, perhaps solely because it isn't like the book we've just reluctantly finished? We can feel sentimental about books we read at particular times in our lives, especially childhood, and read them in spite or because of all the faults other people see in them. And we don't read books in isolation: a lot depends on what we have access to - which books are affordable for us, which books we have time for, books we've got the energy for.

And some books have the misfortune to come to us at exactly the wrong moment, when we've had a bad day at work, missed the bus, got caught in a downpour as we walked up the road and forgotten to get some milk on the way back. Two sentences in, and that book gets dropped face down on the sofa. And this is before we consider who gets published and who doesn't, and why. Isn't it the same for whole groups of people living and reading at the same time?

Immediately opposite the head of the gallery stairs in the New Room you'll find our historic poetry collection (214 - 218 using the library's old catalogue numbers). Occupying half a shelf are the works of the poet Alfred Austin. In a later age, Tony Harrison of Beeston became known as the Loiner Laureate; Alfred Austin literally was. He was born in Headingley in 1835 (the 1841 census doesn't get more specific than that his family were living on 'Headingley Hill') and became Poet Laureate on New Year's Day in 1901.

Austin succeeded Alfred, Lord Tennyson. Tennyson was the rockstar of his day: he died leaving a fortune worth over £6million at 2024 prices and was buried in Westminster Abbey. Not that Tennyson himself was entirely satisfied with his achievements - his last words were reportedly "Oh that press will have me now!", meaning that he was finally going to get some coverage from the media. But following Tennyson as Poet Laureate was a tough gig; so tough that it took over three years for a successor to be decided on, during which the post remained vacant and Victorian England muddled through as best it could.

Eventually, they chose Alfred, but only after William Morris turned it down. This was a controversial appointment. Austin was a journalist and editor for conservative magazines and newspapers, a friend of Conservative prime minister Lord Salisbury, and he stood unsuccessfully as the Conservative candidate for parliament in 1865 and 1880. His appointment was attributed by some to his political connections more than to the esteem of his work.



How did he rate the work of his predecessor? Well, he wrote an article as part of a series on contemporary poets for Temple Bar magazine while Tennyson was still alive and laurate-ing cautioning readers not to “make [themselves] a laughing-stock to an irreverent posterity”:

There is yet time to revise and recall our hasty and extravagant praises; and Mr. Tennyson's merits are so obvious and so considerable that, when we have plucked off all the false feathers in which we have bedecked him, some very beautiful plumage will remain. But our attempts to glorify ourselves by over-exalting him can do no possible good to anybody; and if we persist in this ridiculous course, it will only ensure our being scoffed at by less partial times as a parcel of indiscriminating dunces.

Whether Queen Victoria – a Tennyson fan – read this, and whether she mentioned it after Austin became her laureate, is unknown. The articles were published as a book, *The Poetry of the Period*, in 1870. This put some backs up, and three years later he withdrew it from publication, standing by its “strong element of truth” but regretting its tone. The main thrust of his argument (we have the book on the shelf if you'd like to read it in full) is that Tennyson can't be a great poet, because Shakespeare was a great playwright, and Tennyson didn't write anything as good as *Hamlet*.



Was Austin's assessment down to sour grapes, or was he being dispassionate? We may be able to make a more comprehensive survey of the poetry of Austin's day, but ultimately our assessment may not be worth much more than the 'Banjo Byron's'.

But why wait for the judgement of posterity? When the Prince of Wales fell ill, Austin (although there is some dispute about whether it was really him or not) wrote:

*O'er the wires the electric message came,
"He is no better; he is much the same."*

The Times remarked: “Mr. Alfred Austin has a clearly-defined talent, the limits of which are by this time generally recognised.” The Prince of Wales, convalescing, was more direct. He called it “trash”.

Hansel and Gretel: A Nightmare in Eight Scenes

Simon Armitage (with illustrations by Clive Hicks-Jenkins)
Faber, 2023 *Library classification: D/821 ARM*

I suppose if you are the Poet Laureate you can pretty much do as you like – front a rock band, invite the great and good to your garden shed for a chat, develop a fascination with lepidoptera and see in the old and familiar something new, something attuned and relevant to the present. This last is what Simon Armitage has done with the Grimm’s tale of Hansel and Gretel. The familiar story of sibling abandonment, deep and dark woods and a hungry and cannibalistic witch who lives in a confectionery house is given a resonance more suited to Ukraine, Gaza, Sudan than to medieval Germany.

It’s tempting to describe this beautifully illustrated book as a re-telling of the well-known story but, in sense, this would be a mistake as Armitage taps into the much darker roots of the tale, very much deeper than the Brothers Grimm and their early 19th Century take on it. The original story is thought to originate from the 13th or 14th centuries – a period of social dislocation, pestilence and famine historians have seen as the “crisis of the late Middle Ages” – in which the themes of poverty, abandonment and cannibalism in Hansel and Gretel may well have been more commonplace. Armitage’s subtitle – a nightmare in eight scenes – says it all but the nightmare is today’s not yesterday’s.

Here, mother and father are a woodcutter and a baker but the context of desolation is established early – “Hard to cut wood when there aren’t any trees”, “Hard to bake bread...when there’s only cinders and stubble/ when the shelves are bare and the shutters are down”. We are never explicitly told what has happened though clearly it is a time when government is of little help: “This flag one week. The next week another”. With a sentiment of all parents in a war zone mum and dad realise they can’t give their children a future – “We need to hide them where bombs can’t find them” – and the woods beckon. The story unfolds along familiar lines with the confectionery house and the wicked witch who, here, ends up fittingly entombed in in a big boiled sweet, but Armitage constantly slips in more contemporary references – the sugar as an illicit white powder, the potential for the children to be trafficked rather than eaten and the escape told in a riff about leaky boats and stormy crossings.

Hansel and Gretel get home following a road through a war zone littered with the debris of war and forced evacuation, that “led to a pile of stones / that was once a home. / And a husk of a man / sitting there on his own”. Their mother has died in an airstrike but Hansel and Gretel – resourceful and determined – have no time to mourn and, in an ending more twenty-first century, leave with their father for the woods that they have escaped from where, if nothing else, they can eat sweets and make a new start- “And they each picked up a small white stone as a souvenir // and moved on!”. Like so many refugees travelling light in the hope of better things ahead.

So very much a tale for today with its sympathies for the dispossessed clear but it is one enlivened by Armitage’s intensely rhythmic poetry that is almost liturgical at times, the portrayal of the lively squabbling and rowing relationship of the siblings, the attention to detail in, for example, the lists of birds and above all else the fun that Armitage seems to be having while suggesting that whatever the world throws at us we can survive.

Dr Patrick Lodge

Read anything good lately?

Book reviews from the Tuesday Morning Book Group

Small Things Like These

Claire Keegan; reviewed by Chris Stead

This December the Tuesday morning Leeds Library Book Club discussed this book which was published in 2021 and was short-listed for the Booker Prize.

Claire Keegan is an Irish writer known for her short stories and two novellas, one of which is this book.

The setting is the town of New Ross, the year is 1985 and the main character is Bill Furlong, a decent family man with five daughters whose business as a coal merchant puts him at the heart of his community.

The unusual circumstances of his birth and upbringing have given him a perspective on life which is both generous and imaginative. This Christmas he undergoes a personal epiphany about the identity of his father, and he is also led into making a very significant positive choice not to pass by on the other side when he sees suffering, which for him and his family will be a huge step into the unknown.

The town is a community on the edge, with many of its inhabitants undergoing unemployment, hardship and poverty. Many families have the ever-present fear that they could slip into debt and penury from circumstances beyond their control.

On the hill above the town stands the convent and the highly regarded secondary school which some of Bill's daughters attend. The convent runs a laundry service, valued by businesses and the more well-to-do.

Claire Keegan knows that her readers are now well-informed about the abuses of the Magdalene laundries since their operations have been exposed to the light of day.

The question posed by the novella is how and why they were allowed to continue for so long unchecked.

She points her readers in a number of directions: for example the interconnectedness of Church and State at the highest level, the gulf between governors and governed, the cultivation of local elites by the Church and how it has a finger in every pie – “They're all the one” as Mrs Keogh says.

She also explores individual attitudes, such as those expressed by Bill's wife – that what goes on in the laundries has “nothing to do with us”. It is an open secret which is maintained by the willful ignorance of the community.

For this reader, the most shocking episode is Bill's first discovery of the girl in the coal hole at the convent and the suavity and corruption with which the Mother Superior attempts to cover up the cruelty of her treatment.

The book provoked a lively discussion within the group. Everyone had a positive response to it and felt that it packed a very powerful punch. We particularly admired the style of writing – vivid, concrete and muscular- in which not a word was wasted.

At the end of the novella the reader is left to imagine the consequences for Bill, for his family and perhaps for the community of his actions and we can imagine a number of scenarios which do not bode well. The final sentence gives us a glimmer of hope, but not much.

The Towers of Trebizond

Rose Macauley; reviewed by Chris Stead

The Tuesday morning Book Club considered this for their August meeting.

“‘Take my camel, dear,” said my aunt Dot, as she climbed down from this animal on her return from High Mass.’ - the famous opening of this, Rose Macaulay’s last novel, written in 1956.

It is the story of three English travelers from England to Turkey and back. Aunt Dot, is a sort of eccentric Gertrude Bell figure, whose aim is to improve the lot of Turkish women. Her companion, Father Chantry-Pigg “an ancient bigot” aims to set up a High Anglican mission there to convert the Turks and to meet the fanatics in residence at the top of Mount Ararat. Aunt Dot’s niece, Laurie, who is the detached and sceptical narrator accompanies them for pleasure. She is not in a state of grace because of her passionate love affair with Vere, a married man. They also take the camel.

Travelling via Troy and Istanbul, they cross the Black Sea and arrive in the ancient Byzantine city of Trebizond, with its impressive ruins (modern Trabzon), Aunt Dot and Father C-P disappear over the border with the Soviet Union, leaving Laurie and the camel to find their way home through the Middle East. Eventually Aunt Dot and Father C-P turn up undamaged and undaunted by their experiences with the Soviets,(as the reader expects them to do.)

The whole book is infused with religious feeling and enquiry, but in the high-spirited first half the novel dwells on the absurdities of religious bigotry and fundamentalism of all kinds with wit, wry humour and dead-pan satire.

In the second half, Laurie’s journey back from Trebizond is also a spiritual journey for her in which Trebizond takes on a kind of mystical visionary significance.

The novel is also a kind of travelogue giving us a picture of the Middle East which has changed profoundly since it was written. It is a mixture of fantasy and adventure containing wonderful descriptions of landscape and topography, history and archaeology, told with a pacey narrative style.

It is also a love story with a tragic ending and a powerful exploration of grief. This is thought to echo Macaulay's own relationship with Gerald O'Donovan, and indeed there is a strong autobiographical element which seems to be based on the author's own spiritual and religious journeys.

"The Towers of Trebizond" is generally considered to be Rose Macaulay's masterpiece, but most of the group disagreed. We all agreed that there were one or two chapters of this book which should have been edited out, but otherwise there was little meeting of minds. Quite a few found it superficial and unconvincing, others like myself thought it was a wonderful read which would live long in the memory. The discussion was, as usual stimulating - and that is what book clubs are for!

Thames-Clyde Express

On the Tracks of the Thames-Clyde Express by David Pendleton; photography by Gavin Morrison. Great Northern Books, 2004. 128pp. (DQ 385 PEN)

If only I had known! If only I had known that when I was a student commuting term-time from London to Glasgow and back on the Thames-Clyde Express, I would pass within sight of my future home! Mind you, I travelled overnight to get the cheapest ticket, dozing fitfully on a hard, horse-hair seat, so I would not have seen much as we steamed (oops, 'dieselised') through the Aire Valley. I might even have passed then-signalman, now Bradford Antiquary editor, Pendleton in his signal box at Shipley station, or further up the line at Hellifield, where he also worked.

Surprisingly, the journey starts in AD303 with the execution of the fourteen-year-old Pancratus, martyred for being a Christian, whose name lives on in the magnificent St Pancras Station opened in 1868. (Did you know that author Thomas Hardy was in charge of removing corpses at St Pancras?) The book concludes the 428-mile train journey in Glasgow's St Enoch's station after nine chapters of description, hundreds of facts and anecdotes, and over eighty outstanding photographs by Mirfield-based Gavin Morrison. These anecdotes enliven this attractive and absorbing book as the express powered through Leicester, Nottingham, Sheffield, Leeds, Settle, Carlisle and Dumfries.

Focussing on the Leeds part of the journey:

The southern approach to Leeds is an aquatic landscape. The Aire and Calder Navigation ... accommodates large barges from Hull and Immingham. ... Then piled high at Stourton Freightliner Terminal are shipping containers whose weathered names are a mix of the exotic, the corporate and incomprehensible ... The author then takes us through Hunslet where 'It has been argued that Leeds made more locomotives than anywhere else in England, outproducing the likes of Crewe, Doncaster and Swindon.' A note is made of the 'rusty rails' Balm Road branch which led towards the Middleton Railway, 'once a colliery line, now the world's oldest continuously working railway.'

We are now, 'firmly in the no man's land of flyovers, semi-abandoned factories and rampant buddleia...yet a beautiful library is glimpsed.' In Leeds we pass the Whitehall Soap Works, Temple Works, Candle House, the Dark Arches and Queen's Hotel, all with informative context. We leave Leeds passing the 1847 engine roundhouse, sole survivor of the long-forgotten Leeds & Thirsk Railway, the ruins of Kirkstall Abbey, seen from where J M W Turner painted it just twenty-two years before the railway arrived. If not quite in sight, we learn that the Esholt Sewage Works once had a twenty-mile railway system and eleven locomotives. As well as lanoline, grease residue was sold to the LMS as a lubricant for train axles, and human waste was used as fuel to power the locomotives. Not many people know that!

The final run of the Thames-Clyde Express was made in May 1975, though the name is still used by steam charter trains. Whether or not the romance of the named express trains endures, this delightful book by local publisher Great Northern Books adds to our knowledge of how railways contributed to the development of the country by noting the sights en route.

Among the myriad facts, anecdotes and comments the author makes, two stand out for me. One relates to how passengers survived in the early days on long journeys in trains with no corridors, no buffet and no toilets! The role of the then busy Normanton station, midway on the journey, was pivotal. Orders for food were telegraphed ahead and served in baskets during a train's 'comfort break'! The second were the asides made about life in a signal box, whether at busy ones like Shipley, or lonely ones like Blea Moor.

As dusk falls, a fire glows in the stove and the clock ticks the minutes away, the ghosts of signalmen past gather close to the fire to swap tales. (p.94)

Bob Duckett



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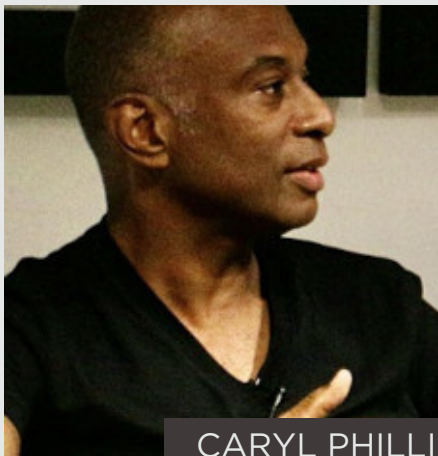
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SIMON ARMITAGE

Simon Armitage was born and lives in West Yorkshire. He is a poet, playwright and novelist and writes for radio, television, film and stage. He published his first collection *Zoom!* in 1989 with several full-length collections in the years since. In 2007 he published his translation of *Sir Gawain and the Green Knight*. His latest collection *Sandette Light Vessel Automatic* (2019) is a collection of some of the hundreds of poems that he has written for various projects, commissions, collaborations and events. In 2015, he was elected Oxford Professor of Poetry and in 2017 he was appointed Professor of Poetry at the University of Leeds. In 2018 he was awarded the Queen's Gold Medal for Poetry and in 2019 he was named UK Poet Laureate.



CARYL PHILLIPS

Caryl Phillips was born in St.Kitts and came to Britain at the age of four months. He grew up in Leeds, and studied English Literature at Oxford University. He is an award winning novelist, playwright and essayist and has written for film, theatre, radio and television. His novel *Crossing the River* was shortlisted for the 1993 Booker Prize. *A Distant Shore* was longlisted for the 2003 Booker Prize, and won the 2004 Commonwealth Writers Prize. He has worked as an academic at numerous institutions including Amherst College, Barnard College, and Yale University, where he has held the position of Professor of English since 2005.

Nima Poovaya-Smith is a curator, speaker and writer. She was the founder Director of *Alchemy Anew*. Previous posts have included Head of Special Projects, National Media Museum, Director of Arts, Arts Council Yorkshire and Senior Curator, Bradford Museums and Galleries. She has contributed to numerous international and national publications including books and journals on subjects ranging from contemporary art, Indian jewellery, textiles, and curatorial and audience engagement practice. She is Senior Visiting Fellow at the Department of Fine Arts, Art History and Cultural Studies at the University of Leeds, and a Trustee of Harewood House Trust.



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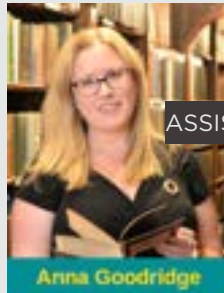
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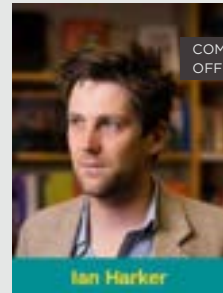
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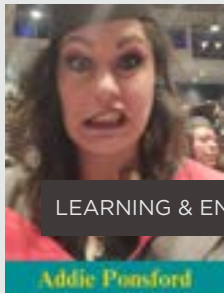
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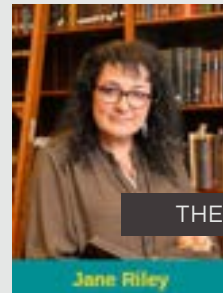
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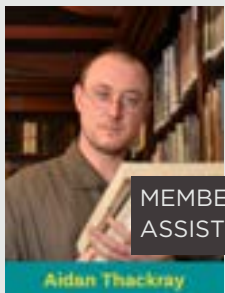
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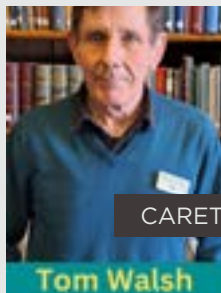
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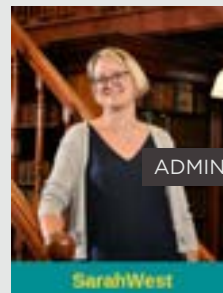
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