

# SPEAKS VOLUMES

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## THE MAGAZINE OF THE LEEDS LIBRARY

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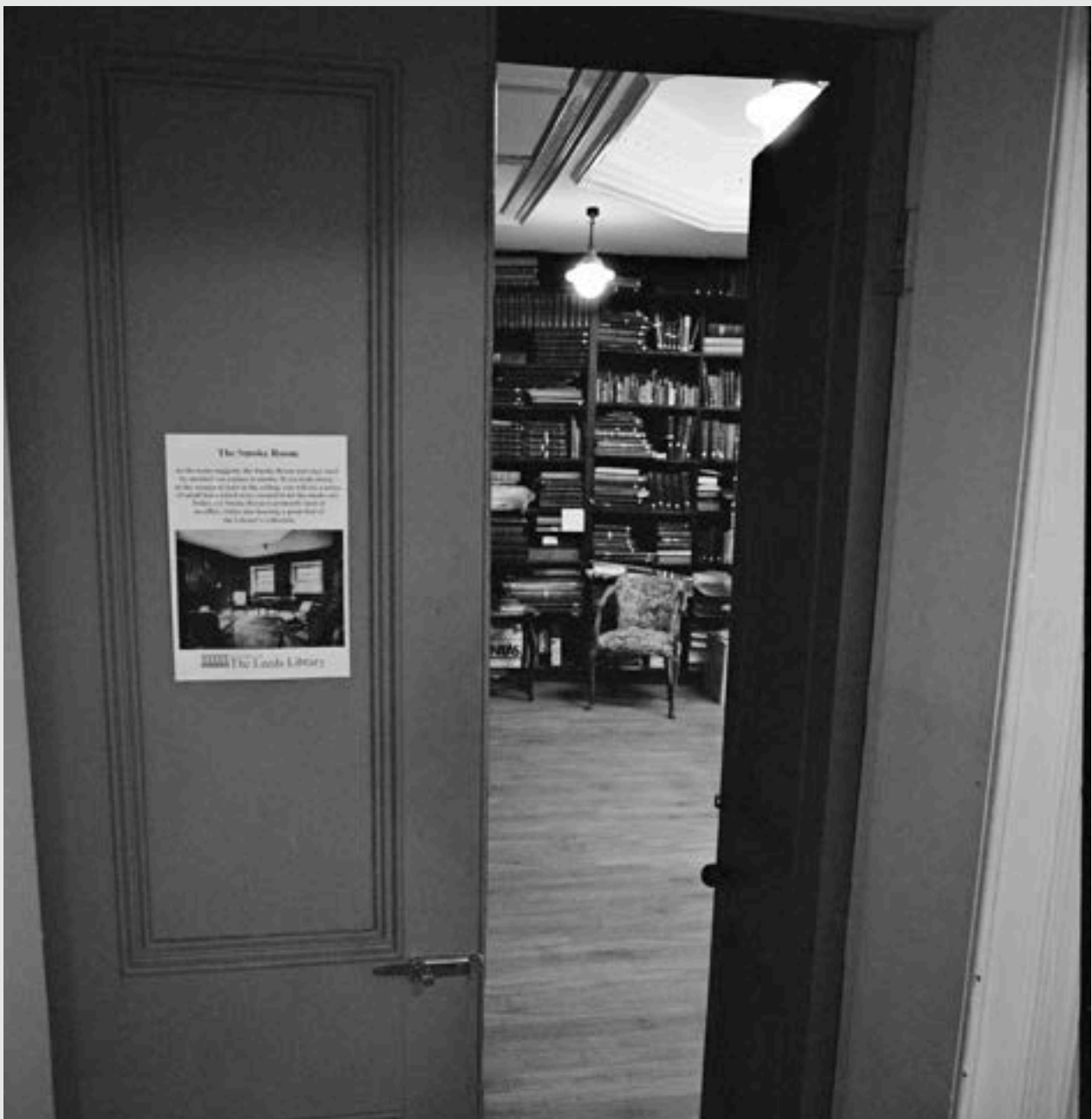
*"In Leeds, where one would least expect it, there is a very good public library."*

James Boswell, 1779

A BIG BIRTHDAY FOR  
FILM CLUB

WHY ON EARTH DID  
WE BUY THAT?  
—PART TWO

FORTHCOMING  
SUMMER EVENTS



# TABLE OF CONTENTS



**4**

## **FROM THE CEO**

An update from Nina on all the latest news

**8**

## **UPDATE FROM LIBRARY SERVICES**

All the latest from Jane and the team

**13**

## **A ROUND-NUMBER BIRTHDAY**

Film Club celebrates in style

**5**

## **THE 2025 MEMBER SURVEY**

Let us know your thoughts

**9**

## **WHY DID THE LIBRARY BUY THAT?**

Part 2 from Ian Dawson on our collection

**14**

## **SCHOOL'S (ALMOST) OUT**

Adrienne on a visit from Beverley High School

**7**

## **FORTHCOMING EVENTS**

From our quiz to talks to an open mic, find out what's coming up

**12**

## **10 QUESTIONS**

Comms Officer Ian Harker on what matters more: poetry or Yorkshire puddings

**17**

## **PATRICK LODGE ON POETRY BY EMMA STORR**

Anna Goodridge takes a look at Victorian staffing

# 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](mailto: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/](http://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

### **Book Chat**

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

## FROM THE CEO

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Dear members,

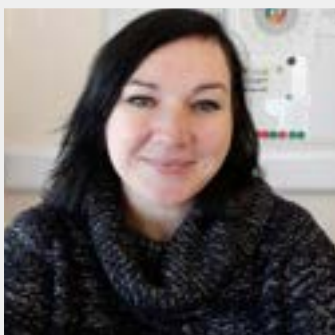
I hope you are enjoying the recent fine weather and perhaps looking forward to a holiday?

Thank you for all your kind wishes expressed to Anna following her recent injury. She has had a (somewhat complicated) operation and is now recovering. The Library Services team is coping admirably while she is off but with a small team any absence has an impact so please do be patient if requests etc aren't dealt with immediately.

The Library's financial situation is now stabilising following the completion of the extension. I am hugely grateful to you for your help in getting this project completed. We are already getting regular room hire bookings which is a low-resource income stream for us. Things will still be very tight for the next few months but now that the contractor bills are paid in full we can work on our future sustainability.

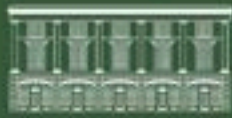
This year's Member Survey is open throughout June - please take a moment to tell us what you like about the library, what things we can do to improve, and any ideas you may have for the future. You can scan the QR code on the next page, or collect a paper form at the counter.

We also have a great programme of events over the next few months so take a look at the website and see if any of them appeal to you. One that I am particularly looking forward to is the members' summer party - hopefully it won't be as hot as last year?!



A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Nina Corey'. The signature is fluid and cursive.

NINA COREY  
CEO



FOUNDED 1768

The Leeds Library

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How are we doing?

Please complete  
the annual member survey

Either online on the QR code  
or take a paper copy.





## The Boardroom

£100 inc. VAT per hour

Wifi

43" smart TV

Lift access

Accessible doors

Accessible toilets on same floor

Capacity: 12

## Event Space

£150 inc. VAT per hour

Wifi

Projector, screen & lectern

Lift access

Accessible doors

Accessible toilets on same floor

Capacity: 90 (audience-style)

Additional charges apply outside library opening hours

## The Old Office

Prices on request

A heritage space

Private room

Wifi

Meeting table

Capacity: 10

## Reading Room

£250 inc. VAT per hour

A heritage space

Private room

Wifi

Meeting tables

Capacity: 30

## The New Room

£300 inc. VAT per hour

A heritage space

Private room

Wifi

Meeting tables

Capacity: 90 (audience style)

# FORTHCOMING EVENTS

*We have some excellent events coming up - visit our website or ask at the counter to book!*

[theleedslibrary.org.uk/events](http://theleedslibrary.org.uk/events)

**Book Sale**

*Saturday 21st June  
10am - 3pm*



**The Leeds Library Sleep over**

*Saturday 21 June  
6pm - 9am Sunday*



**Library Live Open mic**

*Friday 4<sup>th</sup> July  
6pm - 10pm*



**The Sensation Novel: Sex and Scandal in the mid-Victorian Age**

*Saturday 5<sup>th</sup> July  
12pm - 1pm*

with Professor Ruth Robbins



**Members' quiz**

*Friday 18<sup>th</sup> July  
6pm - 8pm*



**Adventures in a Man's World: The Victorian Adventure Story**

*Saturday 19<sup>th</sup> July  
12pm - 1pm*

with Professor Ruth Robbins



**1940S MEMBERS' SUMMER PARTY**

SATURDAY 14 AUGUST  
12PM - 4PM  
£11 INC. BOOKING FEE



# UPDATE FROM JANE AND THE LIBRARY SERVICES TEAM

## **Anna Goodridge**

As you may have seen from the monthly news roundup, Assistant Librarian Anna Goodridge suffered a serious fracture to her ankle a few weeks ago. Anna has had an operation and is currently recuperating. She will be off for some time, and we are all thinking of her and wishing her a speedy recovery.

## **Expansion of Classic Fiction**

If you have visited the Robinson Room recently, you will see that we are expanding the Classic Fiction collection. Our intention is to bring all the books for each author together in one place for the first time. This may mean that some of the copies are too old to borrow, but they can of course, be read in the library!

## **Cataloguing update**

We are still progressing well with the retrospective basement cataloguing programme. Helen is working on the Fiction, and is up to authors beginning with T, and Finn and Jane are cataloguing the history collection.



## **Volunteers**

We would once again like to thank our wonderful volunteers for all their help over the last few months. They have been cleaning books, tidying the basement fiction and pulling out duplicates, listing items in the archive, cataloguing magazines and entering records on the Heritage system. We really appreciate all your help.

## **Mobiles & online meetings in the library**

We have noticed that an increasing number of members are using their mobiles to make calls in the library or having online meetings on their laptops. Please note, that this is not allowed in the library rooms, although calls can be made in the foyer or roof garden if necessary.

# WHY ON EARTH DID THE LIBRARY BUY THAT?

In part two of his article, member Ian Dawson considers suggestions & possibilities

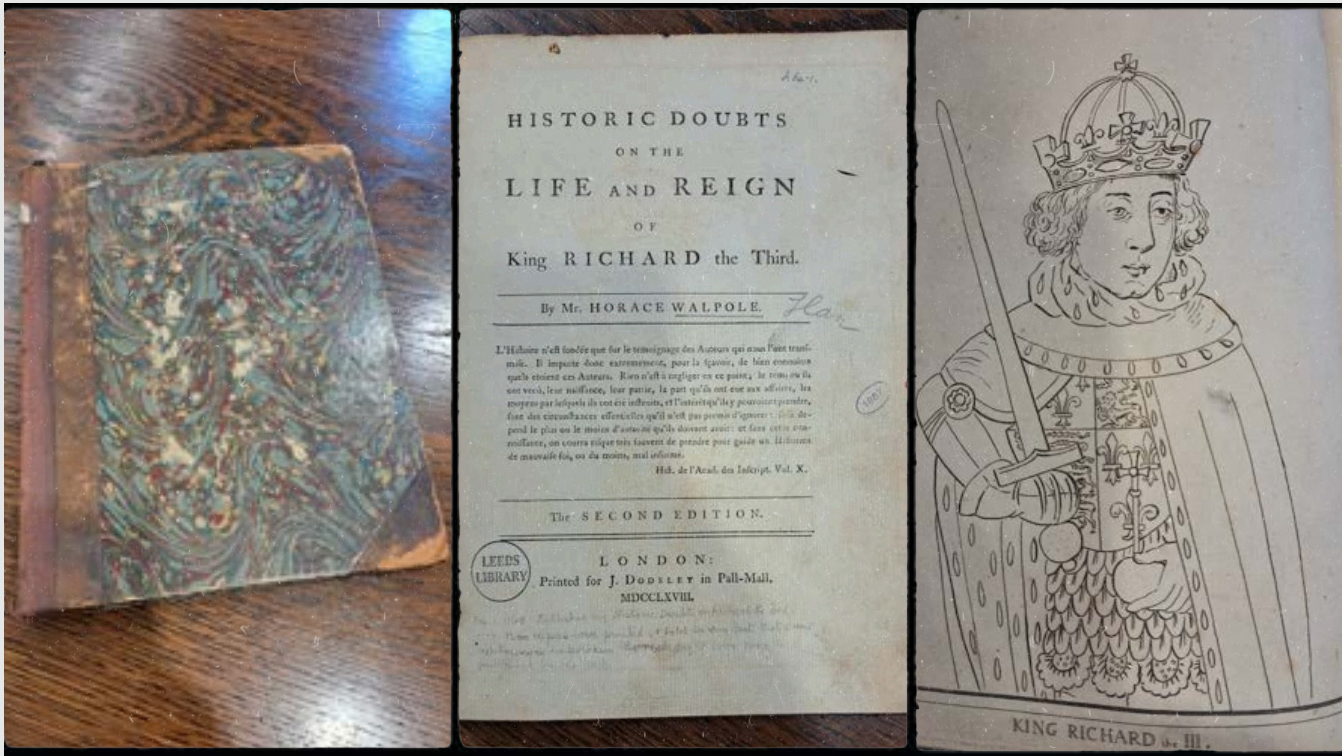
**In the last edition of Speaks Volumes (Issue 43) I wondered why the Library's collections contain a surprisingly wide selection of sources for late medieval history, including wills, letters and government and parliamentary records, most of which are in Latin, French and late medieval English. Why, I wondered, were they bought for our collections?**

As with all the best historical questions, I don't have a definite answer but can offer suggestions, based on the Library's early catalogues and minutes of meetings in the 1800s, on Frank Beckwith's *The Leeds Library 1768-1968* and on essays in *Through the Pages*, the Library's 250th anniversary volume. Here are those suggestions in brief:

## **1. Members' interests, Publicity and Best Sellers**

From the Library's early years, members could recommend books to the committee which decided on purchases so it's inevitable that individuals' interests along with the publicity generated by 'best-sellerdom' influenced purchases. One such best-seller was the literary sensation of 1787 - the publication in two volumes of a selection from the Paston Letters, letters written by and to members of a Norfolk family in the 1400s. Despite the cumbersome title of *Original letters written during the reigns of Henry VI, Edward IV, Edward V, Richard III, and Henry VII*, the first edition sold out in a week and was immediately reprinted. John Fenn, the editor, had shrewdly donated a copy to the Royal Library and taken some of the original letters to be examined by George III. The publicity must have excited the interest of Leeds Library members though when we acquired our copies isn't certain - they appear in the catalogue for 1805 but may have been bought earlier as the previous extant catalogue is from 1785.

Those volumes joined another, more controversial history book on the shelves – Horace Walpole’s *Historic Doubts on the Life and Reign of King Richard III* which sold out its first print run of 1250 copies in two days in 1768. Walpole was overjoyed to receive a letter from Voltaire asking for a copy though less delighted by the critical reviews, including those by Edward Gibbon and David Hume. Happily, those eighteenth-century volumes are still on our shelves.



## 2. Intellectual curiosity

The history titles in the Library’s first catalogue from 1768 rather took me by surprise. I expected them to be dominated by British history but far more numerous are histories of a world-wide range of cultures and places. This seems to reflect the intellectual curiosity of the doctors, lawyers, industrialists etc who were the first members – or, maybe a little cynically, their wish to be seen as intellectually curious and sophisticated! This desire to create a library for the educated elite seems an important part of the explanation for the purchase of the medieval sources I’ve identified, along with the desire to show that the Leeds Library was as significant a cultural centre as any of its rivals in other cities.

However, given that novels made up the largest section of the catalogues, building up the collection of works of historical and cultural importance created a dilemma – could the Library keep all its members happy with its balance of purchases? Strong, even vitriolic, views appear to have been exchanged regularly, one example in 1844 involved an anonymous subscriber (possibly Edward Baines, editor of the Leeds Mercury) who criticised the Library’s purchase of books of ‘ephemeral or trifling interest’ instead of ‘works of greater or more lasting value’.

### 3. Local and Regional Pride

Local pride also helps explain the purchases of books on the histories of Leeds, Yorkshire and the wider north-east of England. Examples in the 1778 catalogue include a manuscript version of the Yorkshire section of Domesday Book and a volume of Pedigrees of the Nobility and Gentry in Yorkshire and the Library went on to subscribe to the publications of The Yorkshire Archaeological Society, The Surtees Society and others which explains why we have, amongst many other examples, Testamenta Eboracensia, the collections of late medieval Yorkshire wills.

### 4. Reduced-price bargains

A couple of intriguing items in the Library's records for 1825 suggest that the Library, ever conscious of costs, was on the look-out for books at bargain prices. I may be reading too much into these words but, in January 1825, the Library Committee asked their President to 'inquire of Mr Caley the terms on which the Commissioners will furnish the Public Records'.

Enquiring about 'terms' suggest there was a possibility of buying these 'Public Records' at a reduced price – so what were these books? They certainly weren't best-sellers! One example, that I was using only last month, was The Proceedings and Ordinances of the Privy Council, chiefly covering the years 1386 to 1471. This was one of many collections of medieval documents published by The Royal Commission, set up by Parliament to preserve and publish historical records. John Caley was the Commission Secretary and it sounds as if he was so keen for its publications to be available in libraries around the country that he was amenable to some gentlemanly negotiation over price because, at the Library AGM in June, members requested:

'the Commissioners of Public Records to accept their sincere and respectful thanks for the liberal, prompt, and courteous manner in which they have granted the Leeds Library copies of the valuable documents published under their Inspection'.

After that brief tour of possible reasons why we have these wonderful volumes of medieval sources, what can I conclude?

1. I suspect that the reasons for purchases haven't changed greatly over time and that our librarians face the same dilemmas as their predecessors about which books to prioritise for purchase
2. There's scope for research exploring the patterns of purchases in different subject areas across the history of the Library and comparing patterns of our purchases with libraries in other cities. That, however, I'm happy to leave for someone else!

*Through the Pages*, the splendidly-illustrated 250th anniversary history of the Library, can be purchased at the Library counter – it's a gem!

You can hear more from Ian on his website: <https://www.thinkinghistory.co.uk/>

# 10 QUESTIONS

*Communications & Marketing Officer Ian Harker talks to us about poetry, Yorkshire puddings, and a love of food history...*

## **Which 3 books would you take to a desert island?**

Paul Durcan's poetry collection 'Life is a Dream: Forty Years of Reading Poems'; an I Ching (preferably Richard Wilhelm's rendering); and a notebook (does that count?).

## **Who is your literary hero?**

Paul Durcan, an Irish poet, who died a few weeks ago.

## **What is the biggest misconception about librarians?**

All conceptions about librarians are misconceptions.

## **What is your favourite film?**

My favourite film is actually three films: Lindsay Anderson's trilogy 'if...', 'O Lucky Man!' (fantastic soundtrack!) and 'Britannia Hospital'. But if I had to pick one, it would be 'O Lucky Man!'.

## **What was your favourite subject at school?**

Drama.

## **Do you have any hobbies or interests?**

I'm a poet, and publish books and perform live, and poetry takes up most of my spare time. But I'm also really interested in food history and the social history of food. Relatedly, I also love to cook.

## **Where were you born and do you have any siblings?**

I was supposed to be one of the first babies born in the Clarendon Wing of the LGI, but I was born around eighth weeks premature, so I ended up being one of the last born in Hyde Terrace Maternity Hospital. I was very poorly (I weight 3lbs 4oz) but the midwife, apparently, simply did not allow babies to die; it was against the rules. I'm an only.

## **Do you have a Kindle or other eReader?**

I have a Kindle...haven't seen it in a while...it might be under a massive pile of books in the spare room...uncharged...

## **What's your favourite food?**

Yikes! Yorkshire pudding.

## **What would the title of your autobiography be?**

You know what thought did...

# A BIG BIRTHDAY FOR MEMBERS' FILM CLUB

On Saturday 7 June, the Members Film Club celebrated its 150th film, with a double bill of Indiana Jones movies, and a spectacular buffet in our new event space!

An earlier iteration of the Film Club started in about 2010 when a small selection of films were shown in Mill Hill Chapel's church hall. It was never very popular however, as there weren't any refreshments or socialising, and as the CEO wanted to get his train home, all the films had to be short ones!

We began the current version of the Film Club at Christmas 2016, with *It's a Wonderful Life*, and *The Apartment*. From then on, we have shown seasons of films, twice a month continuously (with a break during lockdown).

Our most popular films have been the Hitchcock Seasons, *Hunt for the Wilderpeople*, *The Dish*, *Green for Danger*, *Born Yesterday*, and *The Imitation Game* (where a few tears were shed). Less popular were *The Hudsucker Proxy* (a member walked out) and *Alien* (which terrified some of the attendees!).

The Film Club is led by me and Aidan, but our continued success is down to the loyal film fans among you, so even if you've never attended, please do join us for a fun, fact-filled show, with optional wine and crisps. All the showings can be booked through Eventbrite.

Jane Riley  
The Librarian



# Beverley Academy Visit

## Roundup

Learning & Engagement Officer Adrienne Ponsford on the first school visit in our new event space.

We recently had the lovely opportunity to show off the library and some of our lesser-known collection pieces to Beverley Academy. We had great fun on a two-hour long visit from 24 year 10 and 11 students who got to explore the library, learn about a couple of their school house namesakes, and see some of the archive pieces about Beverley.

The visit was organised as part of a reward day for students of 2 of their houses, Mary Braddon House and Margaret Powell House, who had performed well this year. They joined us in the morning before heading to the theatre after lunch for a matinee of 'Little Women'.



One of the school houses is named after an incredibly prolific “sensation” fiction author called Mary Elizabeth Braddon who wrote over 80 books between 1861-1913, the majority of which were serialised in magazines. We have about 30 of these titles still in our collection, of which around half are in a good, handleable condition. The other half are in a very delicate condition due to the dreaded red rot and possibly because they were handled and read so much by Library members in the past. The fact that so many remain in the collection is a testament to their popularity as they were requested to be bought by past members. They are part of the Victorian Fiction collection that gives us so much fascinating insight into members’ interests and reading trends during this time. Comparable authors in the genre who were also extremely prolific writers at the time included Rhoda Broughton, Wilkie Collins, Mrs H Wood and Jane Austen.

This was also a fantastic chance for a school to make use of our new Events Space for the first time. After a brief introduction to the library, the students were taken through to the Events Space which we then used as a base of operations and activity room.

With the generous help and expertise of our Trustee, Ruth Robbins, who's area of interest is Victorian literature, we were able to give the group a talk about "scandalous" female writers of the past and what this meant. In particular, Ruth discussed Mary Wollstonecraft (another of their house namesakes), Mary Shelley and Mary Braddon and how they managed their scandal, reputation and image.



We then had a show and tell of some of Braddon's books and examined pieces in the collection about Beverley. The other house namesake whose students joined us is a former town councillor named Margaret Powell who helped save several historic places from demolition in the 1960's, including the town's North Bar. She ensured they were saved for the future and is credited with keeping Beverley's historic characterful look the way it is today. The students poured over 4 of our enormous map books from the New Room: Carey's 1932 Maps of England, and the 1953-56, 1871 and 1897 Ordnance Survey maps. These, plus items from our Reading Room's local history collection about the Minster and key places of historical interest, helped discussion about town heritage and preserving it for the future.

Then it was time for the tour of the historic part of the library and scavenger hunt! We split the group into two, with one going with Ian on the tour first while the other embarked on the scavenger hunt, then switched.

Ian took the students around the library, giving the history of our origins and our lovely building, as well as pointing out key features like the Sunlight Burners. He also took them down into the basement to show the maze of shelves and bindery equipment, before heading to the Old Librarian's Office for some of the treasures of the collection. The students were specifically excited to see the first edition James Bond, and 'The Vindication of the Rights of Women' by Mary Wollestonecraft that have.

For the scavenger hunt, the students were in groups of 3 or 4 and given a map, a crossword puzzle and a set of 18 questions, the answers to which they would find at locations indicated on the map. These answers would then fill out the crossword.

Each group was asked to come up with a team name and set off around the Main and Reading Rooms to find the answers. Some of these were located on the information cards dotted around the library that point out key features like the clock and old chairs, and some were books found by following the Dewey system classification codes.

The students did fantastically well - the scavenger hunt is certainly not easy! Even a couple of the teachers got involved and everyone seemed to really enjoy the challenge. All groups achieved 15 or above and 2 groups achieved full marks, so rightfully earned their prize of some Percy Pig sweets.

All in all, the visit was great fun and a perfect opportunity to investigate some of the lesser-known and often overlooked items in the collection. The students (and teachers) were all lovely and very well behaved and really embraced the chance to discover what could be learned here. I hope they all enjoyed the visit, as I certainly did.

# The Year of Two Winters

## Emma Storr. Indigo Dreams 2023 D/821/STO

This collection was joint winner of the Geoff Stevens Memorial Poetry Prize in 2022 and it is easy to see why. It is full of diverse and excellent poems by the prize winning and widely published writer, Emma Storr – who might be considered as a local poet with her links to the Leeds Writers Circle and the Calder Valley Poets – “My river is the Aire and Leeds my city” (‘A Topographical map of the past’). Though there is nothing parochial in this collection which ranges widely and offers consistently vivid images and an acute eye for detail which befits a trained GP.

Indeed, Storr is particularly good when writing about the body. In one poem the right-hand talks to the left offering, literally, support to its fellow, broken, member.

In another, in a letter to ‘Dear Heart’ she graphically displays the impact of arrhythmia with text and white space scattered across the page – a semi-jocular poem is given a solemn twist with the closing ‘how long? / have we?’. Storr has no fears of experimenting with form – the marvellously triangular. ‘Rhubarb’ evidencing that.



Poems of family and relationships also bulk large. ‘Midhope, Yorkshire’ is a touching description of a country walk presaging a separation – ‘A silence in you / below the chat / lay deep and dark’. A twelve-year-old offers a view of another separation where the repeated “And me” between stanzas emphasises the emotional weight the child carries. (‘Peril’). The difficulties, but potential leverages, of being the youngest child, of learning to ‘play the trump card at home / as smallest, weakest / incriminating my sisters’ (‘Falcon’) are explored. This last poem juxtaposes sibling quarrels with the predatory bird ripping apart another bird to feed its young. This somewhat macabre perspective surfaces in other poems to. A woman graphically murders a rather slobbish and abusive partner with a fork thrust to the neck after throwing desert at him and missing - ‘A gasp and gurgle. / Then a shudder’ and at the last ‘She scraped the pudding up. / Closed the door.’

Storr's characters seem to be redoubtable women - which befits a poet whose Viking antecedents are explored in 'Heritage' and whose surname in Norse denotes big, large, great - whether sleeping with a weighted sock to hand in case of over-attention by a 'Devotee' or inviting a disruptive horse to flat share ('Horse moves in"). The overall 'feel' is, though, of hope, humour and an honest approach to sexuality and desire. The title poem plays with an undercurrent of dread and dislocation but ends with a soaring optimism. 'I waited for the light to come, / to garland me / with longer days, with hope / that starts in / February, snowdrops pushing / up and through'. Storr is always willing "to trust only the camel and go on' ('Explorer').

Her personal relationships also seem characterised by warmth. 'To a friend' is a tender and warming listing of all the qualities of a good friend to whom you are saying goodbyes and who is in the end, '...the kiss at King's Cross when the train departs for Leeds'. In the cleverly wrought 'The Second Law of Thermodynamics' the negotiations between a warm and a cold bed mate are teased out successfully - 'I wake up warm again and hot for you'. The closing poem ('Insomnia') in this engaging collection may also be useful for those having difficulty in sleeping. Storr's strategy is to count not sheep but 'the men I've bedded' and it certainly seems to work for her:

*I usually find that by ram number eight  
I'm feeling exhausted and not in a state  
To dream any more of the men from my past  
So I slaughter the rest, then drift off at last*

**Dr Patrick Lodge**



## An invitation from The Thoresby Society

This year we celebrate the tercentenary of Ralph Thoresby's life (1658-1725). As part of our celebrations there will be a Commemorative Evensong at Leeds Minster on Sunday October 19<sup>th</sup> at 5.30 pm. Address given by Rev. Dr. Roy Yates. There will be opportunity after the service to view Ralph Thoresby's memorial in the sanctuary, and also to continue in conversation over tea and coffee in the City of Leeds Room. Please come along, it will be a worthy occasion.



“A TRANQUIL ROOM RIGHT IN THE CITY CENTRE WHERE ONE CAN SIT AND READ AND WORK OR JUST DRINK TEA FOR LESS THAN THE COST OF ONE CUP OF COFFEE A WEEK? IT’S PRICELESS.”

## MEMBERSHIP

Individual  
Household  
Concessionary  
Remote

We have a broad range of membership categories—there’s something to suit everyone.

And you can pay monthly by direct debit to make the cost of membership more manageable.

If you’d like to join our community, or would like to pay for your existing membership by monthly Direct Debit, get in touch:

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## COST

£180  
£270  
£87  
£104

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Much better than book tokens - give them access to over 140,000 books instead!

## PATRONS OF THE LEEDS LIBRARY

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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.



NIMA POOVAYA-SMITH

## TRUSTEES OF THE LEEDS LIBRARY

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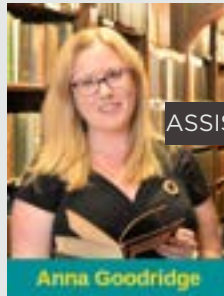
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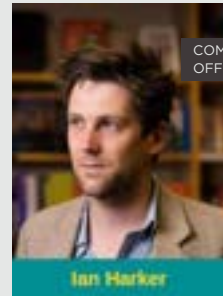
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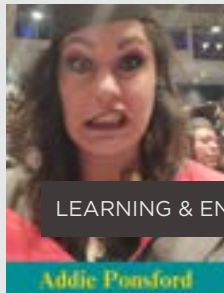
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Ian Harker



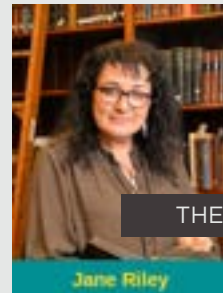
ASSISTANT LIBRARIAN

Helen Holdsworth



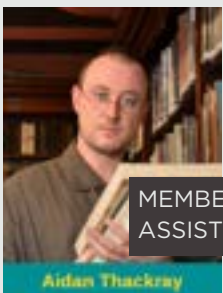
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Addie Ponsford



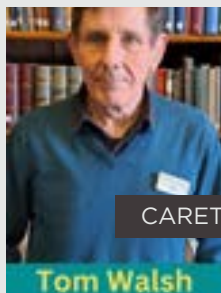
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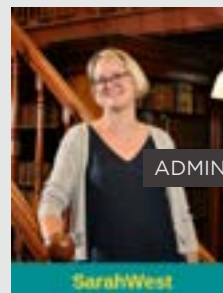
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