

The Annual Review for Reading Sheffield 2018-2019

This has been a year of extensive outreach to many different kinds of community; we have shared with new audiences our interpretations of the histories we have gathered over the last seven years and we have delighted in their interest. We are also working to ensure that these histories are preserved in accordance with our interviewees' wishes.

The Heritage Open Days: Sheffield

We were invited by the HODs network to be part of the 2018 programme in September. Sue Roe and Loveday Herridge gave a talk in Upper Chapel about women members of Sheffield's library societies and four famous Unitarian women in the eighteenth century. Val Hewson gave a talk in the old school next door to what was the Tinsley Library, one of the two Carnegie libraries in the city. We hope to be part of future HODs programmes. Sue and Val are in contact with the management team.

The Leeds Library, 1768-2018: 250th Anniversary Conference 'Books, Readers and Reading'

In September 2018 Val and Mary wrote an account of Sheffield reading during the Second World War. Mary delivered the paper entitled 'Running up Eyre St'. Responses to the paper reinforced our sense that the Reading Sheffield project is a unique exploration of readerships and of great interest to book history scholars across the world.

Val and Mary have also talked about wartime in reading in Sheffield at a session organised by Forgotten Fiction in Sheffield.

Talks within Sheffield

We are often invited to give talks about our project in Sheffield; every audience contributes to our understanding of how reading becomes important to people. Mary's next talk is at the Showroom Cinema on May 17th for the University of the Third Age. It is on Childhood Reading in Interwar Sheffield.

Archiving our material

Loveday Herridge and Sue Roe have been working with Chief Archivist, Robin Wiltshire, at Sheffield City Sheffield Archives to ensure that the audio records and their transcripts are lodged securely and that conditions of access accord with the wishes of our interviewees. Val, Mary, Sue and Loveday are downloading the text of the interviews from the website for Archives to store. The website transcripts have been edited in accordance with the wishes of our interviewees so will be the most suitable version for access to the general public. Some have been anonymised and some have had passages deleted at request. We are very grateful to Robin to working through this with us.

We will keep Robin in touch with our plans to create a mobile exhibition about our project; he offers to consult with other members of the library service on how they can best support us in putting on such exhibition.

Robin is also considering the possibility of Archives maintaining our website when we run out of money to keep it up.

The Reading Sheffield Website is, at the moment, the easiest way to access the reading memories we have collected. Over the last three years Val Hewson has done an enormous amount of archival research on library cultures in Sheffield and Leeds and much of it has been placed on the Blog or the Research pages. It is fascinating material. Val, Mary, Sue and Loveday have also written Reading Journeys about each of our initial 65 interviewees. These are illustrated accounts, around 1,000 words which are enjoyable in themselves but also serve as pointers to the riches of the full interviews. We are hugely grateful to Val for her immaculate editing and for making her research available to the general public in articles which are both entertaining and scholarly: a huge contribution to book history. We are also grateful for the skills of Lizz and Dennis Tuckerman who maintain the site itself and understand how WordPress works.

We have begun to collect reading journeys from readers younger than our original cohort and from across the globe: for example David Flather's daughter, Ruth Potts who grew up in Sheffield in the 1960 gave us a delightful interview which is on the blog entitled 'Reading across six generations'. Any suggestion for further such posts are most welcome. Val is publishing

approximately two new blog posts a month. We have posted 83 blog posts, a considerable number of which are derived from Val's archival research on Sheffield libraries. We have also completed 58 reading journeys so have only six to write before all our interviewees have been profiled. We have 64 followers of our Facebook page and 866 followers of our Twitter feed which is Val's creation. The number of visits to the website has remained fairly constant over the last three years. In 2018 we had 7,309 views. We are grateful to Lizz for keeping us up-to-date with these figures.

Reading Sheffield: the Book is still in the making. Mary is most grateful to all of you who have read chapters as they emerge. She plans to finish by the end of the year so does value your encouragement.

***White Ink Stains* (Bloodaxe Books, 2019)**

Meanwhile we have a completed book to celebrate. Eleanor Brown's second collection with Bloodaxe Books is coming out in October and will be launched at the 2019 Off the Shelf Festival. Many of the poems in the collection have been inspired by our readers. Do join us at the book launch and buy copies of Eleanor's book for Christmas. Date to be announced. Eleanor has also been contributing to the blog.

The Reading Sheffield Christmas Card

Eleanor designed a Christmas Card for our readers and for others interested in our project. In the style of a Girls' Crystal Annual, it contained all our news from 2018 and gave great pleasure.

A copy of **Beyond the Public Library** has been donated to Sheffield Local Studies Library. We are delighted that this volume of essays on book history across the Atlantic is to be permanently preserved in Sheffield. It contains the chapter on Sheffield subscription and private libraries in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries by Sue and Loveday. We are most grateful to Mark Towsey from Liverpool University and to Brill Publishers for making this possible.

Conclusion

We owe a huge amount to Professor Chris Hopkins from the Humanities Research Group at Sheffield Hallam University who has enabled Reading Sheffield to develop. We appreciate his close involvement with our steering group and the financial support he has given us which has enabled us to achieve so much: organising regular events for our readers and supporting Eleanor Brown's poetry and the artwork of Lizz Tuckerman and Jean Compton.

Chris is now working with Mary Grover and Val Hewson on a bid to fund a mobile exhibition which will dramatise the contrasting ways in which the interwar Tuppenny Libraries, the Boots Booklovers' Library and the magnificent Sheffield Municipal Libraries served the needs of Sheffield's booklovers. Our next trip is to the Boots Booklovers' Archive in Nottingham in April. More next year!

Thank you all for your support, shown in all sorts of ways. We do hope to see you at our AGM on Thursday April 11th 6-8 pm Sheffield Hallam University, Howard Building 5531. Light refreshments will be available. Mary will talk her chapter on childhood reading in interwar Sheffield and Val, the children's libraries.

We look forward to seeing you.

Mary Grover
Chair of Reading Sheffield
20 March 2019