

## Reading Sheffield Annual Report March 2013

### 1. Present Officers:

Chair: Mary Grover

Treasurer: Loveday Herridge

Secretary: Sue Roe

Liaison with libraries: Ros Witten

### 2. Accounts

Currently the Reading Sheffield account stands at £160 in credit. Mary has kindly agreed to donate her fee for a recent talk to the Project, and so when that transaction is processed there will be a balance of £210 in credit. There has been expenditure of £8 from the account for necessary expenses for the celebratory event. Unfortunately the application to the Heritage Lottery Fund to grant aid activities was unsuccessful. As described elsewhere, we are grateful to the generosity of Sheffield Hallam University which remains positive to requests for financial and other help. We would be grateful to receive subscriptions from members for next year. The fee is £5, held for the third year running, so a positive saving in inflationary times!

### 3. Reading Sheffield 1945-1965

**a) Interviews conducted:** Having aimed to collect, record and deposit the oral histories of post-war reading from 50 residents of Sheffield, now over 70, we have now collected 61 interviews, 55 of those being audio records which we have saved on CDs or DVDs as requested by Sheffield City Archives.

**b) Transcriptions:** We have transcribed 33 interviews and 8 are in progress. Nine of these have been paid for by Sheffield Hallam University.

**c) Training and equipment:** Our five recorders have been in regular use by our members, the three Sheffield Hallam students involved in the intergenerational project and an A level student who is doing an interview and transcription.

**d) Film and Celebration Day:** Sheffield Hallam University paid for a documentary film maker to make an eight minute film of our celebration of the first 50 interviews in September 2012; this film is now a resource for sharing our project with the community whose reading lives we have been recording.

**e) Sharing the project:** In the last six months Mary Grover has given three talks about the project during which she introduces a showing of the Books in Hand film; the costs of showing the film have been met by Sheffield Library Service. These talks were at the literary festival Off the Shelf, the commemoration of National Libraries Day and at the celebration of sixty years of the flagship Manor Library. Mary has also visited a reading group at Gleadless Library and collected their memories about libraries. Visits to lunch clubs has encourage members to share their reading

memories. All these events have led to the recruitment of more interviewees and transcribers.

**f) Publicity:** Steve McClarence wrote an interesting two page article in the *Yorkshire Post* 2 February 2013 on Sheffield Libraries and Reading Sheffield in the week before our talk on National Libraries Day.

**e) Publications:**

**1. Chaplin Books** is interested in publishing a collection of our reading histories (summarised for publication) with an analytical introduction.

**2. Dramatic monologue collection:** A nationally acclaimed poet, Eleanor Brown (see *Maiden Speech* published by Bloodaxe), is interested in writing a collection of dramatic monologues based on the histories collected.

**f) Exhibition:** Mary has met with Andrew Milroy, Head of Sheffield Library Service, to explore ways of bidding for money to mount an exhibition about our project which would tour the city and beyond. Andrew has offered us space and the time of his staff in helping us create this exhibition. Loveday and Mary are researching costs and possible formats for the exhibition.

**4. Reading Sheffield Librarians 1940-2013**

Ros Witten, our libraries liaison officer, has made links with Red Hat, a large group of retired librarians. They are forming two groups whose memories of their time as Sheffield librarians will be shared and recorded by Reading Sheffield. Red Hat are steering this project and are seeking ways of capturing the personal reading histories of these librarians, a few of whom are being interviewed as part of the RS 1945-65

**5. Reading Sheffield Research Group:** This now consists of Loveday Herridge, Sue Roe and Mary Grover. Sue is making a detailed study of the Sheffield Book Society 1806-1944, Loveday Arnold Freeman and the People's College and Mary is beginning to look at the effect of the exam system on what Sheffielders read. Anyone is welcome to join; we meet once a month share our research.

**6. Reading Sheffield in schools** is being shelved at the moment as Rebecca Arnott, the Museum Studies postgraduate who was interested in the schools project, has got a job in Kent.

**7. Web Presence:** We look forward this summer to working with the History Dept of Sheffield Hallam University who have offered our project a page on their South Yorkshire Community website. We are also preparing to work with Sheffield Hallam University archives about how best to store our material and how it can be linked to the popular fiction archive there. Rebecca made us a blog which we need to learn how to use. Rebeccah Fisher, a final year English Literature student from Sheffield Hallam, is working on maintaining and developing our blog.

**Conclusion:** The project is changing as our initial project has led to increased interest in the community. The support given us by Sheffield Hallam Information Services, their Arts and Humanities Research Centre and the History Department has been invaluable. We are also deeply appreciative of the support that has always been given us by the Sheffield Library Service by Head of Bibliographical Services, the Mobile and Housebound Services and by the Head of Library Services. Many lunch clubs have opened their doors to us and have always said how much their members have enjoyed sharing their memories with us and hearing of the histories we have collected. The project has contributed to its participants' sense of the value of their lives and of their memories.

I want to thank the many individuals who have given their time as volunteer transcribers: Rebecca Arnott, Ruth Dawson, Rebeccah Fisher, Derek Grover, Loveday Herridge, Clare Keen, Marion Milroy, Chris Openshaw, Sue Roe, Alice Seed and Alison Wooding. We were very sad to lose Rebecca Arnott and wish her well in for her professional life in community history. My special thanks go to Loveday and Sue without whose determination and passion for the project we would not have achieved as much as we have.

Mary Grover  
21 April 2013