

## Summer Newsletter 2016

### News

#### Meetings in March and April

'The Great War on Tour' exhibition came to our March meeting, as part of the Doncaster 1914-1918 project. Photographs and accompanying text highlighted the lives of many local people who served in the war, both those who made the ultimate sacrifice and those who survived. A range of other possessions belonging to troops was also on display. (Anyone interested in seeing how the story of war can be expressed through artefacts might like to read the novel 'Anatomy of a soldier', based on the author Harry Parker's own experiences in Afghanistan, published by Faber & Faber in 2016.)

In April Simon Tomson showed many illustrations from the wonderful border decorations in the Luttrell Psalter, some revealing aspects of medieval life in Lincolnshire. The Psalter, commissioned by Sir Geoffrey Luttrell, lord of the manor of Irnham, was produced thanks to the skills, even humour, of one scribe and at least five artists, probably working in Lincoln c.1320-1340. The Psalter can be viewed at website [www.bl.uk/turning-the-pages/](http://www.bl.uk/turning-the-pages/).

#### Committee News

Lesley Nicholson has taken over as Chair of the Society and Mike Goddard is now the Vice Chair. We wish both Lesley and Mike well in their new roles. Lesley with Roger Ranson once again looked after the Society's stand at the Local History Fair held this year on 7 May in Doncaster Museum and Art Gallery. John Millington and Sally Tyas are working their way through our entire archive to ensure that the most useful material is kept, given constraints on storage space.

#### Hesley Hall



Thanks to Donald Thorpe and his brother-in-law David Saunders we have a unique insight into life at Hesley Hall, left, through the 1872 diary entries of a visitor, Mary Elizabeth Dixon See the Snippet '*Hesley Hall – a visitor's diary*'. The comments offer an intriguing comparison with the 1783-1785 diary of Amelia Staniforth of Firbeck Hall (see Newsletter 31). The full text of Donald's explanatory notes is given in the Snippets section of our main website. Hesley Hall survived its change of use from a family home to

a school, opened in 1950, as explained in the Snippet '*Hesley Hall*'. However, Alverley Hall's transformation into a rural education centre after the First World War was much more short-lived and the Hall no longer exists, as discussed in the Snippet '*Alverley Hall*'.

#### Remembering Shakespeare

The recent 400th anniversary of Shakespeare's death led to a brief search to see how local people experienced Shakespeare's plays before the Second World War. Here are some examples. From September 1933 the BBC had monthly radio broadcasts of selected plays on a Sunday evening. Before then the local Church Literary Society arranged periodic play readings at its monthly meetings in the Parish Room. Ron Hill recalled how pupils at the local National School learned sections of plays by heart and could quote passages long into adulthood (see Occasional Paper 6 about Ron's memories of schooldays in the 1920s). Roche Abbey was the picturesque setting for two open air performances of 'A Midsummer Night's Dream' in July 1896, attended by many members of the local gentry, with ticket sales raising money for Rotherham Hospital. The British Empire Shakespeare Society, founded in 1901, had its largest UK branch in Sheffield with c.900 members who enjoyed

lectures and readings as well as performances of plays. They also arranged competitions to promote elocution. Local people could have read about these activities in the press, if not participated.

#### **Notice of the AGM and membership renewal**

The AGM will take place at the beginning of the meeting on 15 September (7.30 p.m. start), in the Methodist Schoolroom, and will be followed by 'Tales of Robin Hood'. The 2016-2017 programme is published in the Next Meeting and Coming Events section of the website.

Members may renew their annual subscriptions by taking £6 per person (preferably a cheque, but cash never refused) with details of name and address, in an envelope marked FAO Lesley Nicholson, to the Library before 15 September to avoid a long wait in the queue at the start of the September meeting. We hope you will all renew your membership. New members also welcome.