Local and Family History Research Guides

Leeds Theatres

Our Research Guides list some of the most useful, interesting and unique items in Local and Family History at Leeds Central Library. Many others are listed in our online and card catalogues.

Contact us for more information:
Visit: www.leeds.gov.uk/localandfamilyhistory
Email: localandfamilyhistory@leeds.gov.uk
Tel. (0113) 247 8290

Please note: Items marked * require an appointment to view.

Further Resources

As well as collections in Local and Family History, the Information and Research Library (second floor, Central Library) has a loanable drama collection with a strong Shakespeare presence. Search the library catalogue for specific items: www.capitadiscovery.co.uk/leeds/

For plays by local authors like Alan Bennett, William Congreve and Dorothy Una Ratcliffe, remember that there are likely also reference copies available in Local and Family History.

The Drama Library on the first floor of the Central Library has a large collection of plays that can be loaned to local drama groups, theatre companies and individuals. A full list of the plays is available at: www.leeds.gov.uk/dramalibrary

The Local and Family History Library is happy to receive donations of material from local groups. Please contact us for further details.

Online Resources

www.leodis.net
Online photographic archive including lots of images of Leeds theatres through the years. Can be searched by keyword or date, or browse by area. Copies of many images can also be purchased.

www.leodis.net/playbills
View many digitised playbills covering all the main theatres in Leeds between 1781 and the 1990s. Copies of playbills can also be purchased.

www.leodis.net/discovery
A history of Leeds by topic. The ‘Leeds Theatres’ subject area looks at the origins and development of theatre in Leeds and includes many images and prints as well, as references for further study.

Local and Family History

articles relating to Yorkshire theatre.

For more information call 0113 247 6016
or visit www.leeds.gov.uk/libraries

Leeds Library and Information Service
The world at your fingertips
General Histories of Local Theatre


The Illustrated History of Leeds by Steven Burt and Kevin Grady (LQ 942.819 BUR) and The Story of Leeds by David Thornton (L 942.819 THO) are both full of information about individual theatres and trends in the art form (see indexes in each).

The Illustrated History of Leeds by Steven Burt and Kevin Grady (LQ 942.819 BUR) and The Story of Leeds by David Thornton (L 942.819 THO) are both full of information about individual theatres and trends in the art form (see indexes in each).

Leeds Theatres Remembered by Robert E. Preedy (LP 792 PRE).

Material for a History of the Theatre in Leeds (18th century) by Alfred Mattison – original manuscript* (SRQ 792.094275 M435 Appointment needed) and microfilm.

“History of Theatre in Yorkshire” by Anselm Heinrich, in Entertainment, Propaganda, Education: Regional Theatre in Germany and Britain between 1918 and 1945, p. 25-76 (Y 792.09 HEI).

The Northern Music Hall by G.J. Mellor (Y 792.7 MEL).

For more extensive coverage of our stock and resources – and books about individual theatres such as The Grand and City Varieties – see our online catalogue (www.capitadiscovery.co.uk/leeds/) and visit the library to view our card catalogue.

Trade Directories (1784-1947)
These list all local theatres, as well as the names of the theatre proprietors. Local dramatic societies may also be listed.

Programmes, Brochures and Other Material

Large collection of programmes from a range of theatres including:
- The Grand, 1892 to date.
- Leeds Playhouse and West Yorkshire Playhouse, 1970 to date.
- Opera North, 1979 to date.
(Please note: None of these give complete coverage.)

Programmes from local dramatic societies including Adel Players, Leeds Sylvians, Headingley Townswomen’s Guild Dramatic Group and the Leeds Amateur Operatic and Dramatic Society (various dates – see card catalogue).

Collection of souvenir brochures commemorating jubilees and opening nights such as Scala Theatre Opening Night, 1922 (LQP 792 SCA) and Leeds Playhouse Opening Night, 1970.
(See card catalogue under THEATRE for more.)

Selection of newsletters and annuals including:
- Yorkshire Owl Pantomime Annual, 1893-95 (Y 793.3 YOR).
- The Yorkshire Harlequin, 1896-99 (YQ 792 YOR).
- West Yorkshire Playhouse Newsletter, 1990-96 (LQ 792 C333).

Leslie Popplewell’s Autograph Collection* (SRQ 091.5P819) – letters and autographs of stars of stage, film, music and TV from the late 1940s to early 1970s (including a small collection of bills and programmes from Leeds and London stage productions of the time). Appointment needed

Alfred Mattison’s Leeds Theatrical Memoranda 1771-1818 – extracted from Leeds newspapers. Original manuscripts* (SRQ 792.094275 M435) and copy on microfilm. Appointment needed

John Waddington’s Annual: The Book for the Playgoer (L 792.3 W117) – Beautiful book from 1902 full of photographs, illustrations and

Newspapers and Trade Directories

Copies of all the Leeds newspapers including the Leeds Mercury, Yorkshire Post and Yorkshire Evening Post, are kept on microfilm. Search for advertisements for theatre productions and reviews of performances. 19th century newspapers can be searched online by using your library card: www.leeds.gov.uk/onlineresources
