

# Free Public Carnegie Library – Castleford

## A brief history of the Carnegie Library in Castleford

### Early beginnings

As more schools became accessible to the middle and working classes, more people learnt to read and this led to a growing demand for reading materials. One of the solutions was the development of Subscription Newsrooms where people paid an annual fee and had access to a variety of daily, national and regional newspapers. Such a



newsroom began in Castleford in 1841. A later development was the formation of the Mechanics Institute Reading Room and Library, which first met in a room on Ferrybridge Road in the 1850s but later moved into purpose built premises in Sagar Street in 1858. In 1865 the Castleford Cooperative Society was formed and within a year members were able to use a free reading room and library.

### 1902 – 1905

By 1902 plans were being made for a Free Library and newsroom open to all. The Mechanics Institute was struggling and Lorenzo Padgett, the Secretary, wrote to the Urban District Council offering the Institute as a gift towards the formation of a Free Library. Andrew Carnegie also promised a donation of £2,500 towards the Free Library, provided certain conditions were met. By 1903 the site in Carlton Street had been chosen next to the Municipal Offices on one side and the Market Hall on the other. One hundred and twenty four people submitted plans and the ones chosen were by Mr G H Vernon Cale. These were approved on 29<sup>th</sup> October 1903. Mr Carnegie began payments in September 1904 and eventually contributed £3,000 rather than the original £2,500 he had promised.

### 1905

At 3.00pm on 30<sup>th</sup> November 1905 the Library was officially opened by Sir John Austin, Bart., M.P. It originally consisted of 3 components: the Reading and Newsrooms for men and women, the Lending Library, made up of adult Fiction and Non-Fiction books and a small collection suitable for children and the Reference Library.

### 1928-1933

During this time the building was altered in order to accommodate the expanding

needs of the Lending Library. Various doors, wall and fittings were altered. The Library also started to supply books to the new Castleford, Normanton & District Hospital and to the Maternity Home

### **1943-1944**

The earlier alterations only solved the problem of space for a while and a further reshuffle took place under the guidance of the then Librarian Mr Bickerton.

### **1950**

The Mobile Book Service began on 11<sup>th</sup> September and it had seven sites to visit during the week. Castleford was the first place in West Yorkshire to have this facility.

### **1951**

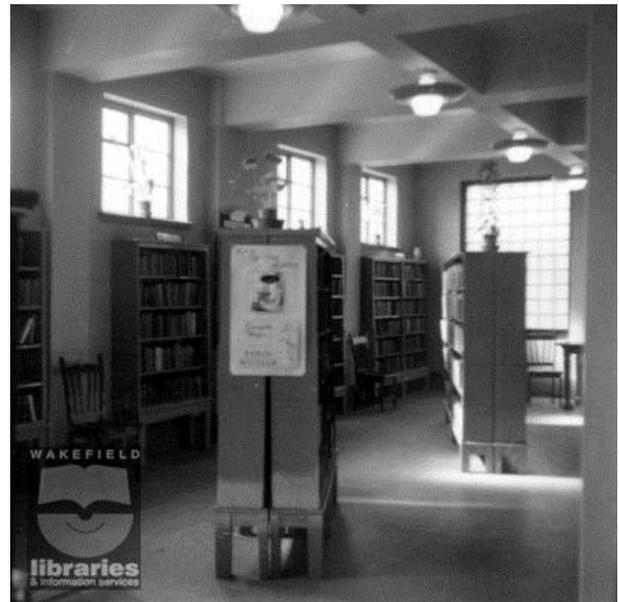
A Gramophone Record Library was opened within the building.

### **1955-1956**

The building of the extension above the Fiction department finally took place at a cost of £7,000. As a result Fiction, Non Fiction, Reference and the Museum all gained increased capacity.

### **1961**

Mounted reproductions of famous paintings were bought and the general public, local firms and schools were able to borrow them on extended loan at a small cost.



### **1974**

Local government alterations caused a huge impact on Castleford's library service. Stock was now bought centrally and a much larger range of material became available.

### **2003**

The People's Network was rolled out in the library, allowing people access to the Internet and other computer services.

### **2013**

Major alterations, which resulted in the library having to be moved to temporary

premises on Sagar Street, were made. Disabled access was significantly improved through the inclusion of a lift to all floors and the floor was levelled on the first floor, thus removing the Librarian's office and resulting in a larger area for Non Fiction and Local History. A new larger Museum was created on the second floor. The new Library and Museum, renamed Castleford Forum was opened on the 9<sup>th</sup> December 2013 by Leader of Wakefield Council and local Castleford Councillor Peter Box.