

Free Public Carnegie Library - Normanton

A brief history of the Carnegie Library in Normanton

1902

Andrew Carnegie offered £2000 towards the cost of a library in Normanton, provided the Council adopt it under the Public Libraries Act, levy a penny rate for its upkeep and provide a site, without paying for it out of the Library Fund.



1905

April 7th - the Castleford road site was bought. Public subscriptions were raised, and the library was built by R.Leake and Sons of Normanton. Mr. W.A.Robinson was appointed Librarian and Caretaker at a salary of 35/- a week.

1907

The library was opened by Sir William Garforth, who was presented with a golden key. Even in those days, inflation had added 20 per cent to the original estimates, and Mr.Carnegie generously added £400 to his original offer.

On opening day there was great enthusiasm, with thousands of people lining the streets, and cheering when the visitors arrived. Borrowers' tickets were first issued on June 6th, when 52 were snapped up immediately. By the end of the year there were 711 borrowers, the average daily issue being 59. At the end of year the borrowers totalled 736, the total issues were 8837, of which 8169 were fiction.

W.A. Robinson, the first librarian, in his report for the year, remarked that the books were used carefully and returned in good condition. The reading rooms were well patronized, and he was able to speak in the highest terms of the order and decorum that has always been maintained.

1908

Minutes of the Council meeting show that there was some debate over the Library being open on Easter Monday. Councillors also discussed whether it should also open on Sundays. It was also decided to grant the Librarian seven days holiday; and to increase his salary from £91 to £96. The Council decided to open the Library on Whit Monday, a count of the number of people visiting to be taken, to see whether it was viable.

1925

Minutes of the Council meeting show the Councillors' sympathy and condolences being expressed to the family of Mr. Robinson on his death' as well as their appreciation for his 17 years of service. On 6th November, Mr. Francis Doughty was appointed Librarian. The opening hours were 10am to 9pm Monday, Wednesday, Friday, Saturday, 10am to 12.30pm Tuesday, 10am to 5pm Tuesday.

Mr. Doughty had a fortnight's holiday each year. Apart from the usual duties of a Librarian, he had to keep all the windows and rooms clean and dust daily, and attend to the heating 'apparatus'. His salary was £170 per year, with a 5 per cent deduction for superannuation!

1928

13 daily newspapers and 20 weekly newspapers were available to read. The library was stocked with over 5000 volumes. The Librarian Mr. Doughty is still remembered today by some of our borrowers, who sometimes wish things could be as they were when he was in charge! During this year 26,277 books were issued.

The Normanton Advertiser reported in 1928 that the Library was always kept clean orderly and healthy; and that it "fulfilled it's function of providing education and mental recreation for the inhabitants".

1963

Issues for the year were 11,186, well down on the numbers in the 1920s, and there was much debate as to the reasons, television being the main one cited. During this year the opening hours were changed to 11am to 7pm Monday to Saturday.



1964

£2,000 was provided for alterations to the Library.

Provision was made for improvement of facilities in the reading room, which would be moved to the reference room, and a new reference room created in the front part of the existing reading room. Alterations would also be made to the children's library.

1967

Normanton Library staged an exhibition of designs for ballet costumes prior to a visit by a section of the Royal Ballet. These designs were by Geoffrey Bubb, a resident of the town. The exhibition included 15 items for the main characters in "Swan Lake", and some ten designs for "Giselle".

1974

Book fines were abolished within the district. A new system for reserving books was also introduced, with borrowers paying for the postage on cards informing them when their request was ready.

2001

The library moved from Castleford Road to new premises in the former Community Centre. Ian Clayton performed the opening ceremony on 9th November before an audience of 70 invited guests, including children from a local school. The library now includes an Environment Centre and there are 12 computers for public use.

2002 -

In July Margaret Dolan, our Senior Library Assistant who had worked at Normanton Library for many years, took early retirement, and a party was held to wish her well.

During the first year of opening statistics showed an impressive increase of 60% for books, 60% for talking books, the number of visitors doubled (to 49,608 per annum), and an extra 1062 borrowers were registered.