

Free Public Carnegie Library - Drury Lane, Wakefield

A brief history of the Carnegie Library in Wakefield

1904

Andrew Carnegie agreed to donate £8,000 to build a new public library in Wakefield

1905

On 15 February the foundation stone for the new building was laid by the mayor of Wakefield, Mr Alderman Childe, whose efforts at obtaining the money made it possible.



1906

On 2 June, Andrew Carnegie made a brief visit to Wakefield to open the new library, which consisted of a news room, magazine room, lending library and reference library. A collection of books relating to Wakefield was presented to the library by a Mr Charles Skidmore.

On opening the lending library had about 2,000 books in stock. The first city librarian was Mr George H. Wood, who remained in post for 32 years.

1935

A new extension to the lending library was opened, along with a store and workroom in the basement.

1939

The new junior library was opened.

1940

A new city librarian was appointed, Mr R. C. Sayell, who had been deputy librarian in Wakefield.

The Fifties

By 1950 the annual book issue was over 400,000. There were 13 members of staff, including a caretaker and a cleaner.

Many new branch libraries were opened in the 1940s



and 1950s. Hospital library services were developed at Pinderfields and Stanley Royd. Libraries were opened at New Hall Prison and Wakefield Prison, and a service to old people's homes started. Later on a service was introduced for housebound readers.

1962 The new Gramophone Record library was opened.

1967 The library won the Winston Churchill award for National Library Week. City librarian at the time Norman Willox, deputy librarian Brian Pearson and Councillor J Deen (Chairman of the library Committee), organised several events and exhibitions, in which staff took part, to celebrate National Library Week.

Towards the end to the 60s the reading room was closed and made into an exhibition room.

1974 Local Government Re-organisation. Wakefield became one of the five Metropolitan Districts in West Yorkshire. Library Headquarters was now transferred to a building in Balne Lane, and Drury Lane became the Wakefield Area Library.

The main reference and local history collections were now housed at Balne Lane, while Drury Lane became the main centre for fiction, non-fiction and junior lending books.

1981

Area librarian Norman Willox retired, and in the same year the library celebrated it's 75th birthday.

Mid 1980s

The junior library became the Add-Lib gallery, a room to be rented out to local groups, and to house exhibitions. The junior library was moved into the main library.

1996

Staff celebrated the library's 90th birthday by dressing in Edwardian costume and re-enacted the opening of the library in 1906.



1999

Wakefield Library Reader Group was formed. A second group that meet in the daytime was formed in 2001. Library staff celebrated World Book Day.

Librarian Andy Wright composed music to a song written by local author Michael Yates. The song was performed by library staff who were dressed in Elizabethan costume.

2003

The library was given 23 new computers as part of the People's Network, allowing the public to access the Internet free of charge. Wakefield Toy Library was launched. This was a collection of toys which could be hired out to local children's groups, and eventually opened to individuals before being disbanded in 2007.

2004

Plans were approved for the building of a new central library, combining Balne Lane and Drury Lane Libraries. This was to be part of the new Trinity Walk shopping centre, which was due to open in 2008. The future of the old library building was to be decided.

2006

Celebrations took place to celebrate the Libraries 100th Birthday. Staff dressed in Edwardian costume and a cake design competition was held and the winning design was baked by local bakers Hoffman's.

2007

Major alterations to the interior and shelving took place with Fiction books moving in to the Add-lib gallery and the Non Fiction collection extended with books moving from Balne Lane Library.

2011

After plans for the previous Trinity Walk scheme were put on hold in 2009 a new location for the library was found in the new Wakefield One Civic Office building. 2010/11 saw good progress in integrating the central library into the office building designs in partnership with other Council departments. The new 1800 square metre library space was opened in October 2012 by musician, writer and broadcaster, Jarvis Cocker and integrated Wakefield Museum into its design.

