

# NEW LIBRARY

## Major Conversion Scheme to Important High St. Property

Christchurch Times 28 Dec. 1951



**ON Wednesday next at 3 o'clock aspirations which have been nourished by a small number of indomitable enthusiasts in Christchurch will finally materialise.**

**Ever since 1926, Christchurch has had a public library —of sorts. On Wednesday the new Druitt Library at 15 High Street will be opened in it there will be found a stock of ten to twelve thousand books; and in it also, those who saw anything of the inside of the premises during the last years of the late Mr. Herbert Druitt or following his death will notice a tremendous transformation.**

Fifteen High Street was built just over 100 years ago by Joseph Lander, grandfather of

Alderman Tom Lander, whose company has been responsible for the present alterations. It was the home of members of the Druitt family for many years—until, in fact, Mr Herbert. Druitt went to live at "Woodstock," Barrack Road, when it became an over-stocked depository. Now the ground floor has become a large and attractive public library, well fitted with 1,260 feet of Japanese oak shelving with Malayan Yang partitions. Whilst up to 12,000 volumes can be accommodated on these shelves, another six to eight thousand may be out on loan at any given time, making a total library of 18 to 20 thousand books. This is still scarcely up to the minimum recommended by the Library Association which is one per head of population, but it is better than Christchurch has ever had before. The accommodation will appear lavish in contrast to what the borough's library supporters have had to put up with for a quarter of a century.

The small outer hall gives access to the recording room, so planned that if there should be any queueing for tickets it can be done in the light, warmth, and comfort of the interior of the premises. This part of the accommodation occupies a section of the building erected sometime after the main house and occupied by domestic offices.

In the library proper, it will be seen that the original ceilings and cornices have been retained, and they have been most attractively decorated. The rose boss is interesting in that it conceals the opening of a ventilating trunk and is original, as are most of the sash windows. Heating is by radiators.

### CATERS FOR ALL TASTES.

One of the problems which has confronted Mr. H. N. Golding, the librarian, in enlarging the library stock was the decision as to the proportions of its various sections. Linked with the South-West Regional Library Bureau, and part of the Hampshire County Library Service, it will be possible to vary its composition to meet almost any demand. For a start, the Christchurch library will comprise a small reference section, music section, children's section, a non-fiction section to meet what is estimated to be about one quarter of the total book-issue demand (but what is hoped will develop to about one-third of the total issues), and the remainder will be fiction.

The library will remain open from 10 a.m. to 7 p.m. on Mondays, Tuesdays, Thursdays and Fridays; from 10 to 1 on Wednesdays; and from 10 to 5 on Saturdays.

Ratepayers of Christchurch or the county area or persons on the electors list for the borough can withdraw books against their own signature. Persons under 21 years of age, or those who work or attend school in the borough but live elsewhere, must secure a guarantor on their registration form.

**The librarian, Mr. Golding, began his career in the Bolton, Lancashire, Public Library. Prior to coming to Christchurch he was senior assistant in the West Suffolk County Library. He lives at Highcliffe, is married, and has a son 2 years old. Three full-time female assistants will staff the library. The committee which administers the library consists of Ald. E. J. Slinn (chairman), the Rt. Hon. the Lord Manners, and Coun. S. Kermode (representing the County Council), Ald. D. Galton, Ald. T. Markham and Councillors Mrs. Baker, P. G. G. King, W. E. Morgan and K. L. Smith, representing the Town Council), and Coun. D Llewellyn and Messrs. A. Hunt, D. H. V. Manuel and J. C. Wyatt (co-opted members).**

## **Druitt Library Starts With 12,000 Books Officially Opened By County Alderman**

Christchurch Times Jan. 4, 1952



**The Mayor, Councillor Mrs. Wallis Power, smiles as Alderman Quilley examines the key before unlocking the doors of the new library. Also in the picture are Alderman E. J. Slinn (centre) and the Council's architect, Mr. A. E. O. Geens.**  
Christchurch Times Photo

**ONE day in June, 1926, a group of people met in Christchurch Town Hall and decided that the town must have a library. Now, 25 years later, the library which some of those at that first meeting visualised is a reality, but few of them could have foreseen the struggles and disappointments which were to come before their object was achieved.**

One of the prime movers of that inaugural meeting was Miss M. B. Robinson, who in 1929 became the borough's first woman mayor. On Wednesday,

from the same platform in the Town Hall, Miss Robinson recalled some of the outstanding incidents during the growth of the library service in Christchurch, when she spoke at the formal opening of the new Druitt Library in High Street. The library, a full description of which was given in last week's Christchurch Times, is housed in the building which was bequeathed to the County Council by the late Miss Charlotte Druitt. Already there are some 12,000 books on the shelves.

The opening ceremony was performed by Ald. A. H. Quilley, chairman of the County Council's Further Education Sub-committee, who was introduced by Ald. E. J. Slinn, Deputy Mayor of Christchurch and chairman of the local Library Committee.

Describing the occasion as one which would stand out in the history of Christchurch, Ald. Slinn paid tribute to the generosity of the Druitt family whose beneficence had made the library possible. He went on to speak of the skill of the architect, Mr. A. E. O. Geens, and the contractors, Messrs. Lander Ltd., in making such a magnificent transformation at 15, High Street. "To some of us who saw the building before the work started, the task of making it into a library seemed utterly impossible." he declared.

Of the craftsmanship, Ald Slinn said: "Any of you who think mass production has robbed the British workman of his skill should look closely at some of the work in this new library."

The borough had reason to be grateful to the County Council and their officials who had done their level best to ensure that the DrUITT gift would ultimately prove of great benefit to Christchurch. The name "DrUITT Library" would give some small recognition of what the town owed to the DrUITT family.

Ald. Quilley spoke of the frustration there had been at all stages in the development of the library service in recent years. The Ministry of Education had laid down that nothing in excess of £4,000 must be spent on new libraries, and when one went into the intimate details of the equipment required for a modern library, £4,000 did not go very far. They could imagine, therefore, the difficulty there was in persuading the Ministry to sanction something over £5,000 for the DrUITT Library.

After adding his tribute to the skill of the architect and contractors, Ald. Quilley pointed out that 6,000 new books had been placed in the library. In addition 4,000 had been transferred from the old Millhams Street library and a further 2,000 had been sent from the County Central Library.

Speaking of the extent of the library service, Ald. Quilley explained that borrowers could draw on the facilities of the whole county if they so desired in respect of non-fiction. Books not in the possession of the local or central library of the county could be obtained from other counties on payment of postage one way by the borrower. This scheme extended even to other countries and he knew of two instances where books had been sent to Prague, behind the Iron Curtain. One of these books was entitled "Some Yorkshire Abbeys, Then and Now".

## A CHALLENGE

Ald. Quilley closed by appealing to everyone to avail themselves of the facilities offered by the new library, because in his view libraries might be termed the universities for the people. He issued a challenge to the people of Christchurch to try and beat the record of his home town of Eastleigh where borrowers from the county branch library represented 32 per cent of the population.

Expressing thanks to Ald. Quilley, the Mayor of Christchurch, Coun. Mrs Wallis Power, thought it unique that during her mayoralty she had seen the opening of the Red House Museum, the Art Gallery and the Library, all of which had become available to the people of Christchurch through the generosity of the DrUITT family.

Miss Robinson, who seconded the vote of thanks, said that the opening of the library was the realisation of a dream which occurred in 1926. In June of that year a special meeting was convened in the Town Hall with the object of starting a public library in Christchurch. A committee was formed and a few weeks' later 150 books were sent to the town by the county library with a promise of 500 more.

## IN THE KITCHEN

"The library was quietly and unofficially opened in the kitchen at the back of these premises," went on Miss Robinson, who added that the books were set out on trestles. In February, 1934, arrangements were made with the County Council for the levying of a ½d. rate which brought in £42 for library expenses. A new committee was formed and the library was moved to the old council chamber.

By 1938 this room was required for other purposes and the library had to be moved again. For several weeks its fate hung in the balance, and then the Congregational Church offered the use of two rooms above their church hall.

Miss Robinson paid a tribute to the work of their voluntary librarian Mr. D. V. Manuel, who had a record of 22 years' service with the library, until the appointment of a full-time librarian in 1949. "We owe a great debt of gratitude to Mr. Manuel for his devoted service, particularly during those difficult early days," concluded Miss Robinson.

At the close of the speeches the visitors, totalling about 150, went across to the library to watch Ald. Quilley unlock the doors. After inspecting the premises they returned to the Town Hall where tea was served.

Ald. Quilley was accompanied by Mrs. Quilley, and also present on the platform for the opening speeches were Mr. H. M. Sherry (County Librarian), Mr. A. E. O. Geens (the Council's architect) and Ald. Tom Lander.

# Druitt Library Attracts Over 2,000 New Readers

DAILY ISSUE OF BOOKS EQUALS FORMER WEEKLY AVERAGE

Christchurch Times Jan. 11, 1952

**THE new Druitt Library in High Street has been experiencing a terrific boom since its formal opening ceremony last week. Membership has gone up by leaps and bounds, and the average daily issue of books is roughly the same as the weekly average was in Millhams Street.**

**Long before the library opens in the morning there is usually a queue of several dozen people waiting outside, and throughout the day, from the minute the doors open until the Priory clock chimes seven, there is a constant stream of people passing through. As a result, the librarian, Mr. H. N. Golding, and his three assistants are kept on their toes every second of the day.**

Anticipating a big rush, Mr. Golding had the foresight to ask the County Council to give him temporary assistance. As a result, Mrs. Lock, who helped in the old branch in Millhams Street, is helping out, although only for this week.

There has been such a rush of applications to belong to the library that the assistants just haven't had the time to complete the tickets during their duty hours. They have been taking them home and working for several hours each evening.

This week a Christchurch Times reporter asked a couple of borrowers how they liked the new library premises. "Perfect," replied one. "It's a pleasure to change a book now — so very different from the room in Millhams Street." Another commented on the excellent selection of books available — there are about 12,000 in the library, including some excellent non-fiction.

## TELEPHONE DIRECTORIES

A member from Mundeford was delighted when she saw telephone directories for London, Southampton and Portsmouth, as well as local ones.

**The library issued its first book last Thursday morning and by the end of its first complete week had issued 6,251 books. This total is made up of 4,416 fiction books and 1,835 non-fictions. Of the 6,251, just over 1,200 were issued to junior members. This means that 29.35 per cent, of the books issued have been non-fiction, which according to Mr. Golding is exceptionally good.**

Open nine hours a day, except for Wednesdays (when it closes at 1 p.m.) and Saturdays (when it closes at 5 p.m.), the average daily issue is 1,136, which is roughly the same as the number of books issued a week at the Millhams Street branch. The largest issue was the first day last Thursday, when 1,808 books were issued in nine hours. For those who like figures, this works out at about seven books every two minutes. However, the heaviest issue was last Saturday, when the library, open for seven hours, issued 1,510 books, which means, about eight books every two minutes. These figures do not include the books which were returned by borrowers from the former branch.

The Millhams Street branch closed in the middle of December, and between then and the opening of the new library last Thursday there were 793 applications for membership. In the last week there have been an additional 1,218, which brings the total of new members to just over the 2,000.

This figure is remarkably high, when it is remembered that the previous membership at Millhams Street was 3,246, which brings the existing membership up to 5,257. Once again, for those who like figures, this means that about 25.64 per cent, of the population in Christchurch now belong to the library.

Asked this week if he had any worries or complaints about the new library, Mr. Golding commented on the behaviour of several of the junior members. He said that so far he had only put up three "No's"—"No smoking", "No dogs", and "No prams"—but that these youngsters had been eating ice creams and potato crisps in the library and generally treating it as a place for recreation.

However, his opinion was that Christchurch, having been starved of a library for so long, wasn't sure how to use it. Silence was usually requested, but although he didn't want to put up a notice asking for this, he did wish people would speak more quietly.

Mr. Golding has just one favour to ask the public, too. Please, if possible, exchange your books after eleven o'clock in the morning, as this gives him and his assistants time to issue new tickets and generally tidy the place up.