

STAMFORD LIBRARY REPORT MAY 1907

In May 1907 the Public Library Committee produced a report covering the period from the opening of the Public Library and Reading Rooms on January 26th 1906.

The Library had in this period received a number of gifts that included 619 volumes of books, a number of framed pictures, a clock for the general reading-room, plants and tubs, various periodicals, umbrella stands and other unlisted items. It was reported that the Library had enrolled 1047 people, and that on March 31st 1907 it had 2,312 volumes on its shelves. Clearly the Library was well used as it had loaned out 28,279 books: which were made up of: - Fiction, 25,169; Travel, 331; Science and Art, 293; Theology, 283; History and Biography, 1,246; and Miscellaneous, 957. The Committee was happy to report that only one book had been lost and that this had been replaced by the guarantor. Clearly not everyone had remembered to return books on time, as the Library had taken in £9 6s 4d in fines; as of the date of the report, there were no outstanding fines.

The clock mentioned in the Report was presented by Mr William Edinborough in January 1906, after 120 years it is still going strong and keeping good time in the Library in the upstairs Local History Reference Room.



Opening times for the Reading and Reference Rooms were 9.00am to 10.00pm, Monday to Saturday; and the Free Lending Library was open on Mondays, Thursdays, and Saturdays from 2.00pm to 5.00pm and from 6.00pm to 9.00pm. The building was closed on Sundays, Christmas Days, Bank Holidays, and such other days as the Committee may have from time to time determined. The Reading Rooms were usually well attended and the large number of active borrowers proved the popularity and usefulness of the Library.

The Building Account fund which had originally been gifted £2,500 by Mr Andrew Carnegie who had subsequently gifted another £100, and after further building contracts and

furnishings had been paid, now stood at £35 11s 8d. The Revenue Account was also healthy:
- Balance £144 6s 5d, grants from Stamford Town Council £285 6s 0d, interest £4 17s 2d, donations £7 17s 0d, sale of papers £22 11s 4d, catalogues £2 2s 6d, borrowers' tickets £5 19s 7d, and fines £9 6s 4d. After an expenditure of £241 6s 11d on the purchase of books, periodicals, etc., and for rates, taxes, and maintenance, there remained a balance in the treasurer's hands of £240 9s 5d.

Based on price inflation (CPI), £240 in 1907 amounts to around £37,750 today. Over three years this equates to around £100,000 today; and by comparison, the average earnings of a manual worker in 1907 were £70 to £80 (for three years wages).

In 1907 the Public Library Committee reminded the public that their income was not large and that it required care and prudence to cover its ordinary expenditure, and looked to the ratepayers of the town to assist them in preserving order in the Reading Rooms and in protecting the property, which after all belonged to them all. Donations were of course welcomed.

One hundred and twenty years later this local free amenity is still going strong. And long may it do so.

Chris Hunt
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