

THE GLAMORGAN PUBLIC LIBRARY.

On this day a century ago a meeting was held at the Pier Hotel, Swansea, which was to have a wide and lasting effect on the people of the Glamorgan Municipality. March 29th, 1862 was the date on which a number of residents of the district met to consider the question of establishing a library. Prior to this time there had been a Book Club in existence under which boxes of books were exchanged between farm-houses but it was thought that this did not cater for the needs of the residents of the growing town.

It was decided to form a Public Library and the following officers were elected :- President, Rev. J. Mayson; Secretary, Mr. J. C. Maynard; Treasurer, Dr. G. F. Storey & Librarian, Mr. A. T. Mayson. Executive Committee, Rev. Thos. Dove, Dr. Storey, Dr. Willes and the Librarian. Messrs. A. Graham, James Amos and E. C. Shaw were appointed Trustees. The following Local Managers were appointed:- Messrs. Alfred Amos (Gala Kirk), Edwin Brown (Apsley), Joseph Tilley (Bicheno) and G. Allen (Little Swanport). Arrangements were made to buy books and periodicals and to have same forwarded to outlying districts in the care of Local Managers.

It was also decided to purchase a metal stamp, embodying the design of a black swan, and it is of interest to note that the original one is still in use after a hundred years.

The Glamorgan Council gave permission for a room at the Council Chambers of that day to be used as a library and during the year 386 Books and magazines were bought at a cost of £78/12/-. As a reading room was provided for the public, a Government grant of £50 per annum was received and this brought the total receipts for the year to £104/10/-.

The records of the library over the intervening years are not available but since that time it has seen many changes. However it has always had the reputation of being one of the best country libraries in the State and visitors to Swansea are loud in its praise.

A small room in the present Council Chambers proving inadequate an old stable was rented from the Council and after making repairs and alterations this was used for some years. But the library soon needed more space to house the 4000-5000 volumes to which it had now grown and an extension was made to the building which continued in use until the library was removed, on Anzac Day 1959, to the present spacious room provided in the Glamorgan War Memorial Institute.

At one time in its history the library was handed over to a local Club but books were lost and, when the club rooms were destroyed by fire, the volumes rescued were returned to the Council. Miss K. C. Smith, Council Treasurer at the time, gathered the remnants together and with the help and encouragement of the local residents laid the foundations of the present collection of 6000 volumes.

Miss Smith gave devoted voluntary service for many years and great regret was felt when she left the district. The library was then taken over by Mrs. H. Finter who also acted in a voluntary capacity for over ten years. During this time a Committee was formed to enable a Government grant to be obtained, the former one having expired when the reading room was closed. This suggestion came from the then Council Clerk, Mr. W. J. B. Temple, who was appointed Chairman, the Committee being Mrs. F. C. Shaw, Miss B. Amos and the Librarian-Secretary. This request for Government assistance resulted in an annual grant of £20 and this was continued until the Free Library scheme came into existence. An approach was then made to the Glamorgan Council which resulted in an annual subsidy which now amounts to £30.

When Mr. Temple left Swansea, Miss B. Amos was elected to the position of Chairman and held it for over twenty years. Sometime after she retired the Committee showed their appreciation of her services by electing her a life member of the Library.

Mrs. E. H. Hill was then appointed President. She had worked hard in the interests of the library over a number of years, stocking a stall at the annual fair by her own efforts. Much regret was felt at her death a few years later.

In 1931 Mrs. Finter died suddenly and her daughter, Miss E. A. Finter, took the position of librarian and remained there for over 15 years. She was made a life member when she retired in 1946.

Since then there have been a number of Librarians:- Mrs. M. Campbell, Miss F. Pederson, Miss N. Wardlaw (who was there for 6 years), Miss G. E. Lyne and Sister Winder. Mrs. S. H. Pettit & Mr. W. H. Room have kindly acted as relieving officers when needed. All these gave excellent service and the present librarian, Mrs. E. L. Reed, is carrying on this tradition. The present President is Mrs. S. C. Stanfield of The Bend.

The Library is financed by subscriptions, donations and the proceeds of the annual fair, assisted by the Council's grant. About 250 books are added to the shelves each year and subscribers show their appreciation by continued and growing support.

In order to cater for the increasing number of readers at the Bicheno end of the Municipality a branch of the library has been opened at that centre in collaboration with Mr. Bryan Winspear and it is intended to keep about 700 books at this branch changing them at regular intervals.

There seems no reason to doubt that the Glamorgan Public Library will continue to flourish and will provide enjoyable and informative reading for the residents of the Municipality and for its many visitors for many years to come.