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The development of public libraries in Southampton, 1887-1921

In this essay, I intend to trace the development of the branch structure of Southampton libraries from the adoption of the Public Libraries Act, 1855 in June 1887 to the opening of the first libraries on the eastern side of the River Itchen in October 1921. It is a theme held together by the restriction that no more than a penny rate be applied to the free library.

Impetus to adopt the Act, as part of the celebrations to celebrate the Golden Jubilee of Queen Victoria, came in late 1886 from the Council of the Hartley Institution. The Chairman of the Hartley Council, J E Le Feuvre, thought that the constitution of the proposed Free Libraries Committee would be but slightly different from that of the Hartley Council. The nucleus of the town library would be the 25,000 volumes in the Hartley Library, with the proceeds of the penny rate used to sustain a branch structure in the poorer parts of the town. The more cynical thought this was a stratagem to appropriate ratepayers' money to prop up an ailing library. The Town Council decisively rejected the proposal. The Hartley initiative, however, was taken up by members of the Southampton Parliamentary Debating Society under its Speaker (*ie* chairman) Thomas Morgan. A Town meeting of ratepayers voted on 13 June 1887 for adoption of the Public Libraries Act. Representatives of the two sponsoring bodies – Surgeon-General William Maclean on behalf of the Hartley Council and Thomas Morgan for the Debating Society – proposed and seconded the crucial motion.

The composition of the Library Committee gave it an independence from the Council which a succession of committee chairman exploited to the advantage of the library. Up to 1901 the chairman was the Mayor (as he was chairman *ex officio* of all Council committees), but effective power lay in the hands of the Deputy Chairman. Thereafter the committee had its own dedicated chairman. For most of the time under review, the actual chairman was not a Council member. The ordinary committee members were split between eight Corporation and seven non-Corporation nominees, the latter including in 1887 Robert Chipperfield, Thomas Morgan and, representing the Hartley Council, Surgeon-General Maclean, J E Le Feuvre and the Institution's Executive Officer T W Shore. There was a delay of over six months before the committee first met, on 16 January 1888. This was a result of the hesitancy of the first Deputy Chairman, Timothy Falvey, to commit the Corporation to further financial adventures given the heavy potential charges following the rating of the Dock Company, a compensation claim from Tankerville Chamberlayne over the Otterbourne waterworks and opposition to the Didcot Railway Bill. It was this nervousness that had led Falvey to oppose adoption of the Libraries Act in both the Hartley Council and the Town Council and to counsel deferment of adopting the act at the June Town Meeting.

The first act of the full committee was to appoint a Sites Sub-Committee, with Thomas Morgan as chairman. Morgan advocated the classic tripartite structure of Free Reference Library, Free Lending Library and Free Newsroom. The first element seemed to be already in place. It would be little more than a change of nomenclature to make the Hartley reference library, in High Street, the town reference library. The large Hartley presence on the Library Committee would seem to guarantee a smooth

transition. This, however, is to ignore the underlying tensions between the Hartley and Corporation authorities. Negotiations broke down within weeks. The Hartley Council in March 1888 asked for an unacceptable £130 *per annum* as the minimum extra charge for adopting the ground floor of their museum: £50 for an Assistant Librarian's salary, £10 to the present librarian for additional work and responsibility, £20 for a boy assistant, £15 for additional gas, £25 interest charges on the money needed to be raised to provide alternative museum accommodation and £10 for incidentals. A fraught meeting the following month in the Audit House between the full Library Committee and the Hartley representatives saw Councillor Edward Bance describe the Hartley memorandum as 'disgraceful'. An epithet innocuous to modern ears, but sufficiently unacceptable to prompt a personal denouncement of both Bance and the committee chairman by J E Le Feuvre, Chairman of the Hartley Council, and the resignation from the Library Committee of Surgeon-General Maclean. Oil was speedily pored over the troubled waters, and Maclean retracted his resignation following a letter from the Town Clerk. Nevertheless, negotiations were effectively at an end. The Hartley Institution played no further part in the plans of the Library Committee.

The second strand in Morgan's prototype proved equally abortive. A branch library in the northern suburb of St Denys seemed to be attainable following a resolution at the annual meeting of the Portswood Workmen's Hall in February 1888 that their premises might be taken as a library to serve the Tything of Portswood. The hall was centrally sited, forming no.124 Adelaide Road. Although small – 37 ft 6 ins in length, 26 ft in width and 15 ft high – it was adequate for a small branch. There was an existing library of 600 books. The chairman of the hall, William James Miller, then rate collector for the district and later a Portswood Councillor, was an energetic supporter of the library movement, and he negotiated a realistic annual rent of £13 *per annum* with the Sites Sub Committee. The proposals, however, fell victim to a members' revolt. The offer was withdrawn in April 1888 following a general meeting. 'The members feel that many privileges they have enjoyed would be abolished such as a place of meeting for the Benefit Society which is doing good service. They also think the Games such as Bagatelle, Chess, Draught &c is the means of keeping many men from going elsewhere…. Several of the members expressed themselves willing to increase their subscriptions than the hall should be broken up after 25 years existence.' (Southampton City Archives TC 26/4).

All that remained of Morgan's original template was a library in the heart of the working class district of St Mary's. This was met by the lease in April 1888 of the vacant St Mary's Hall in St Mary Street. One of the newest buildings in the area, it had become an encumbrance to its owners, William and Thomas Forder, long-established wine and spirit merchants and brewers of High Street. It had been built as a Friendly Societies Hall, designed by William Borough Hill, surveyor and agent to the Forders, and built by John Crook of Northam (the original planning application is in Southampton City Archives: Building inspection plans, 29 April 1884). The hall was opened by the Mayor on 6 February 1885 with Timothy Falvey, a close friend of William Forder, amongst the guests. It held close on 400 people and was the lodge room for those friendly societies which met at the adjoining Kingsland Tavern: the highly influential 'Princess Royal' and 'Hope' Lodges of the Manchester Unity of Oddfellows, with a combined membership of over 1,000, and 'Court Albion' of the Ancient Order of Foresters. The Amalgamated Society of Engineers and Southampton

Secular Society also met here. This was the fourth home of the Oddfellows' lodges, but hopes that they were now 'settled for life' ended the following December when the landlord of the Kingsland Tavern, George Parsons, precipitously ejected them in order to open a music hall. It is tempting to see a connection with the destruction by fire a year earlier of the Gaiety Theatre of Varieties in French Street, also owned by the Forders and being rebuilt by W B Hill. The Oddfellows turned adversity to their advantage by converting the former Primitive Methodist chapel further along St Mary Street into their own Oddfellows' Hall, with W B Hill again as architect.

Figure 1. St Mary's Hall photographed on 26th June 1983

We have only tantalising glimpses of the building the Oddfellows left behind, renamed St Mary's Palace of Varieties. Planning permission was sought in May 1886 for the insertion of a bar window and a pair of bar doors (with fanlights over) on the St Mary Street frontage. By April 1887 it seems that the hall was by now either defunct or very nearly so, for two adverts appeared in the local press, one for the lease of the Kingsland Tavern with or without the Music Hall and the second to let the Hall of Varieties alone for concert or other purposes. What is clear is that when an initial agreement was made in April 1888 for the Library Committee to lease the building for three years at £75 *per annum* it was vacant. The final agreement had to wait until 11 May 1888 as several Councillors, notably the estate agent Edward Bance, considered the rent to be exorbitant, exploiting the lack of alternative sites, and demanded that the committee look again for other sites. None were found. As part of the conditions, the landlords were to remove all stage fittings and to stop all communications with the tavern. Thus sanitised, the library opened on 15 January 1889 (figure 1). Negotiations on the Forders' side had been handled by Thomas's son-in-law Edwin King Perkins, nephew of Sir Frederick Perkins (Liberal MP for Southampton 1868-78), father of Walter Frank Perkins (Conservative MP for the New Forest 1910-22) and himself Conservative MP for Southampton 1922-29 and knighted in 1929.

The physical arrangements of the building predetermined that the short life of the library on the site was a sorry one. There was a ground floor entrance to St Mary Street, but the rooms on either side were let as shops (including for a few uncomfortable months a fried fish shop). The library departments were on the first floor. The former lodge hall served as lending library, book stack and reading room. The closed access book shelves extended on two sides of the hall, reaching from floor to ceiling. In front of the shelves, stretching the whole length of the library, was a raised platform and counter, set at a convenient height for the titles to be seen and easily accessible by the attendants. Books could be read around a single long table, with supplemental seating in the gallery. A smaller adjoining apartment was used as a

newsroom, fitted with large desks for the display of daily papers. An anteroom (possibly the former bar) became the librarian's office. The library environment, however, was dominated by what lay directly underneath the library, behind the shops fronting St Mary Street, and in the enclosed yard directly at the rear: commercial stabling for Kingsland Tavern, replete with loose boxes and manure pit. Given a poorly-ventilated, gas-lit and frequently overcrowded library, the stench could be overwhelming, particularly in summer. For George Parker, in a semi-satirical letter to the *Hampshire Independent* in February 1891, to go to the library was 'to read ourselves into graves and swallow one another's filth'. In September 1893, the same newspaper remembered the unsanitary and insalubrious building 'with feelings akin to horror', rivalled only by the notoriously vitiated atmosphere of the police court in the Bargate. The exhibition for rather too long of a whale in the stables entered local folklore.

St Mary's Hall was but a stopgap. It had, from the day of opening, been unable to withstand the pressures put upon it, with standing room only in the reading room and issues often of over 100 books per hour. Within four months, the committee had begun the process of finding a permanent replacement on the expiry of the lease in June 1892. The main consideration seems to have been to avoid the heartland of St Mary's. The first two sites considered, unsuccessfully, in May/June 1889 were to the north. Colonel Edward Bance was approached about land next to the Artillery Drill Hall then being built for the First Hants Royal Garrison Artillery Volunteers in St Mary's Road. Canon Basil Wilberforce was approached for a portion of the Antelope Cricket Ground, on glebe land belonging to St Mary's Church near the Royal South Hants Infirmary. The first site to be actively pursued was a portion of the public lands at the bottom of Pound Tree Lane (renamed Pound Tree Road in October 1891), east of the Royal Hotel and between Vincent's Walk and Victoria Road. It was the site of the old Houndwell Cottage. Its leading proponent was Timothy Morgan, by now not only chairman of the Sites Sub Committee but also Deputy Chairman of the full Library Committee following the death of Timothy Falvey. The great attraction was that it was a free site, obviating the need for a purchasing loan. The estimated £100 *per annum* thus saved on interest and redemption charges would be released to the bookfund. The choice was hugely controversial for defence of the common lands was a shibboleth to many in the town. The somewhat specious argument by supporters of the site that the library would still form part of the common lands, albeit roofed in and supplied with books and newspapers rather than covered with grass, cut little ice. Despite the opposition, application was made in November 1890 to the Local Government Board for a Provisional Order to appropriate the land and to borrow up to £6,000 for building and fittings, repayable over 60 years. Letters soliciting support were sent to the Borough MPs. It was in vain. The Board was reluctant to grant exemption from the two local acts which safeguarded that part of the common lands: the Southampton Marsh Improvement Act, 1844 and the Southampton Marsh and Markets Act, 1865. Faced with a costly and uncertain appeal to Parliament, combined with determined if irrational local feeling against appropriation, the Pound Tree Lane scheme was abandoned in February 1891.

The floodgates were now opened. A succession of speculative offers of property were made to the Library Committee. The 'battle of the sites' begun, easily outgunning earlier struggles over the location of the Hartley Institution, the Workhouse and the statues to Lord Palmerston and the Prince Consort. As the *Hampshire Independent*

mischievously remarked after the last shots had been fired, if all the suggestions made had been entertained, a free library would have been provided at the door of the house of almost every working man in Southampton. The problem was not the plethora of sites available. It was, as the Borough Librarian O T Hopwood told a Local Government Board enquiry in 1895, that there was in reality not a single suitable site to be had. The two sites considered in 1889 were revisited. William Borough Hill offered 17 Anglesea Place, at the top end of Above Bar Street, the former residence of W C Humphreys JP. Hill estimated that conversion would cost £1,000. Jonas Nichols recommended four houses (5, 6, 7, 8) on the north-west side of St Mark's Road, near Six Dials, an area he himself had developed. Four houses almost opposite were offered by William Podger, a carpenter. Nichols also offered part of the Victoria Skating Rink, to the west of Above Bar, a property he had considerably enlarged four months earlier. A nearby property, with a 100-foot frontage on Ogle Road opposite the Prince of Wales' Theatre Royal, was offered for £1,300. On the opposite side of town, the St John's Free Chapel site in Clifford Street, on the corner of Jail Street, was recommended by Alderman Dyer. The prefabricated tin tabernacle, erected in 1873 by anti-Tracterian seceders from the Church of England, had by then been transported to the Avenue to serve as a temporary chapel for the Congregationalists worshipping there. In the far south, the 'Fish and Kettle' public house in French Street was entered into the lists by Councillor T P Payne. Each site was systematically rejected. The committee ruled out any building that required substantial alteration, and was unwilling to demolish sustainable housing. The sites to the west of Above Bar were considered too removed from the main seat of population. The Drill Hall site was too noisy. The chastity of the cricket ground was protected by the 1844 Marsh Act and the resolution of Canon Wilberforce to see that this was never compromised: the same concerns that prevented the Grammar School being built on the site.

Negotiations over these sites were mere skirmishes. The real battle lay between two sites at either edge of the social spectrum and which polarized the whole debate on the role of a public library in the community. On the one side stood the Kingsland market site, on the Hoglands Common Field at the south-east corner of Kingsland Place and opposite the existing library in St Mary's Hall. To its supporters, a library was nothing unless it was firmly anchored in the most deprived areas of town, within walking distance of its targeted readers. Footfall at St Mary's Hall library showed that demand already existed. The usual objection to appropriation of a common land site did not apply in this case, for the 1865 Marsh and Markets Act had reserved the land for use as a market. The Local Government Board had intimated its willingness to widen this to cover the building of a library. To the majority of the Library Committee, however, the site was too small, too narrow, and too tied to its immediate neighbourhood. As Councillor Gayton remarked, if built the library would simply be a barracks. Councillor Dyer suggested that the site be enlarged by the purchase of the adjoining coach factory owned by James Henry Higgs (formerly the Athenaeum Society's rooms), but this failed to address the question of location.

At the opposite extreme stood the New Place House site. It faced West Park, at the corner of London Road and Bedford Place, and by the late 1880s offered the last major development opportunity along the northern artery of the town. The history of New Place House is traced by A G K Leonard in issue no.10 of this *Journal*. It enters our story in April 1889 when the Reverend Sumner Wilson sold the property to the

County of Hants Freehold Land Society. The *Building News* foresaw the relentless encroachment of neat, closely-packed red-brick terraced houses into the heart of the town. This philistine onslaught was delayed by the purchase of the site by W F G Spranger. The existing house was demolished and foundations laid for a new house to reflect Spranger's rising influence and pretensions. It was a short reprieve. By December 1890, Spranger had moved his attention to sites further to the west and the property was sold, at a loss, to local developer Thomas John Jones. The northern part, above what is now Waterloo Terrace, was sold on to local builder Edward Sandon. The southern part was reserved for the library by the decisive intervention of Thomas Morgan after the collapse of his Pound Tree Lane scheme. He personally conducted the negotiations with the solicitors acting for Thomas Jones, obtained the site for £1,500 and achieved its ratification by a substantial majority in the Corporation. It was a significant *coup*, the culmination of over two years' interest in the site. The previous year, Morgan had urged the radical solution that the whole of the site be purchased by the Corporation, the southern part being reserved for the library and the remainder laid down for houses and shops, the profits from which would help pay for the library.

The 'battle of the sites' was over by March 1891, but guerrilla tactics by opponents of the New Place House site ensured that the war continued. To these, the chosen site was a denial of the Free Library ethos to educate, improve and civilize the working classes. It was a monument to the pretensions of Morgan and his clique. The campaign to overturn the decision in favour of the Kingsland market site was orchestrated by Councillors from St Mary's, Trinity and Northam Wards, assisted by political bodies such as the Southampton Radical Association and St Mary's Liberal Association, and social reformers like Delmar Bicker-Caarten. A Town Meeting of March 1891 voted against the New Place House site by 161 votes to 102. The Corporation simply ignored the vote. The issue was raised at the Local Government Board enquiry later that month, but the Inspector refused to reopen the site question. This led to the Southampton Radical Association sending a deputation to London to meet the Board itself. It was still a live issue during the municipal elections of October 1891.

Against this unsettling backdrop, an open competition was held in the summer of 1891 to find an architect for the new library. It was not an easy commission. The site was an irregular, triangular piece of land. The position seemed to demand a prestigious, commanding building, but the conditions laid down by the cash-strapped Library Committee told against any outward show. Preference was to be given 'to those designs which show the most ample and suitable accommodation for the public, combined with economy of construction both as regards first cost and annual outlay in maintenance'. Given the maximum limit of £3,500 (reduced from £4,000) put on the cost, it was inevitable that the building would be in two phases with ancillaries such as a reference library, committee room, book mending room and storeroom deferred. The building would have to be both complete in itself and capable of extension. Selection of the winning design was in the hands not of the committee but of an impartial assessor, with the designs submitted anonymously. The committee's choice of assessor fell on William Henman, a Birmingham architect whose expertise lay in hospital design: responsible for Birmingham General Hospital and, later, the Royal Victoria Hospital, Belfast. He had no experience of library design.

Entries came from 37 architects. To Henman, there was a clear winner. He believed that the Southsea architect Albert Edward James Guy was the only competitor to follow the outline of the site to create a truly symmetrical internal arrangement. This arrangement, with the lending library in the central line between the flanking reading and news rooms, was indeed commended in the professional press. In articles to *The Builder*, 1 and 8 September 1894, George Washington Browne, architect of the Edinburgh Free library, saw many elements of a model library. Annotations of the copy in Southampton Reference Library show that this praise did not go unnoticed. A very different reaction, however, greeted the exterior of the new central library (figure 2). The correspondent of *The Builder* (12 September 1891) inspected all 37 designs when they were exhibited in the Southampton Art Society's rooms in Marland Place. He found Guy's elevations 'tame to a degree, and … treated in a style that has not hitherto been considered worthy of a name'. To Charles Privett, Liberal Councillor for Nichols Town, 'it was more like a first-class stable or cow-shed'. The Mayor, James Lemon, was diplomatic at the opening ceremony in July 1893. 'He had heard a little adverse criticism as regarded the outside of the building. He would not repeat what he had heard himself, because it might perhaps offend some of the most refined ears in that assembly'. The verdict of the *Hampshire Independent* – 'a fine site spoiled' – was shared by many.

Figure 2. Central Library, London Road. Photograph taken shortly after opening in 1893

The system of open competition for major projects was designed to reduce 'jobbing' in the award of contracts. It did not necessarily produce the best architect. No account was taken of previous work nor of the potential to rise to fresh challenges. In this wider context, Guy was an unlikely choice. His work hitherto had been confined to the Portsmouth area. It was mainly in housing schemes, such as the Eastney estate, or in small-scale projects, such as alterations in 1886 to the Victoria Wesleyan Chapel in

Chester Road, Southsea (where he worshipped) and in 1889 a Bible Christian Sunday School in Fawcett Street, Southsea. He was to become known for his design of clubs and public houses: the Conservative Club in Albert Road (1894), the Eldon Arms in Eldon Street (1899), the Crown in Somers Road (1901) and, outside Southsea, the Magpie in Fratton Road (1901). In May 1889, he had been committed at Portsmouth County Court as a defaulting debtor, although he was financially sound during his work in Southampton. The *curriculum vitae* of architects rejected by Henman suggest that an opportunity to bring a major architect to the town was squandered. Second place went to Sidney Robert James Smith. A native of Southampton, son of former Town Councillor John Smith, he had set up an independent practice in London in 1879. Here he specialized in public architecture, both for the Lambeth Board of Guardians (his father became Chairman on moving to London) and for the parochial library authorities within the borough. The latter included Durning (opened November 1889), South Lambeth (December 1889), Streatham (April 1891) and Brixton (March 1893). Each was a benefaction from William Tate, patron of the Art Gallery on Millbank which bears his name and of which Smith was also architect. Smith's designs for Southampton central library survive in the Special Collections Library (figure 3). Unpremiated, but the clear choice of *The Builder*, was Henry Thomas Hare. The most prolific library architect of the day, he was responsible for libraries in Hammersmith, Islington, Fulham, Wolverhampton and Harrogate. Other major public contracts included Oxford Town Hall (incorporating the central library), Stafford County Offices, University College of North Wales, Bangor, and Westminster College, Cambridge.

Figure 3. Architectural competition for the Central Library, summer 1891. Elevation to London Road in the rejected plan of Sidney Robert James Smith

Relations between architect and client are often fraught. Those between Guy and the Library Committee were no exception. The sticking point was cost. Guy had repeatedly, and very specifically, given assurances that his work would come in under the figure set by the committee. Henman had given similar assurances. The building

tenders, received in March 1892, showed just how unrealistic these were. The lowest - £5,439 by Crook and Son - was almost £2,000 over estimate. The highest - £6,713 - was almost double. The committee enforced drastic reductions in the plans: cutting the cost to a very narrow cloth in Morgan's words. Delays in producing new plans twice led to threats of legal action against the architect, and forced the committee to extend the lease on St Mary's Hall. The revised tender was won by the Portsmouth firm of Scammell and Dowdell, a firm who had worked extensively for Guy. They had been placed third in the original tender. This Portsmouth pairing of architect and builder was exploited politically by those who, like Councillor J E Le Feuvre, believed that Sotonians should be employed in such Corporation contracts. It was a forerunner of the unease over the Portsmouth-inspired Bevois Town Wesleyan Church, opened in 1904. To aggravate matters, the builder's work was substandard. Within two years, the library was found not to be watertight and had to be re-roofed. Guy admitted a failure of proper supervision and paid £70 of the total cost of £220. No recompense could be sought from the builders, whose partnership was by now dissolved. Indeed, bankruptcy proceedings had been started against the firm in February 1893, whilst the library was under construction. The repairs were undertaken by the Southampton firm of A J Dyer and Sons.

The opening of the Central Library on 29 July 1893 left one element of the 'battle of the sites' unresolved. Inhabitants of the Northam peninsula had particularly been disadvantaged by the preference of the New Place House site over Kingsland market, adding 400 yards to their journey to a library. Thomas Morgan had given implicit pledges that Northam would be the next site for a library. The only way a bankrupt committee could honour these pledges was to use School Board property, and after strong lobbying by Morgan, Le Feuvre and H M Gilbert, a recalcitrant School Board allowed the free use of a classroom in Kent Street Infants School as an Evening Reading Room. Four yellow pine tables, ten feet long and three feet wide, were installed, together with a cupboard. A former detective, William Smith, was put in charge. Such scant fittings meant that it was a library without books, solely functioning as a newspaper reading room. Opened on 12 December 1895 it was envisaged as a one-year experiment. In the event, the reading room did not even see out the full year, closing at the end of October 1896 due to uniformly poor attendance figures. The only explanation for this abrupt ending that Morgan could offer was that 'people liked to go where there was plenty of movement and activity, and Kent Street was quiet'.

The first fully-equipped branch library in Southampton was at Shirley, opened on 22 October 1896. It was an act of *force majeure*, imposed on the Library Committee by the annexation of Shirley and Freemantle the previous November. It was not the result of any long-term campaign. It is true that each candidate in the April 1887 Shirley Local Board of Health elections spoke in favour of the ultimate extension to their district of the Library Act recently adopted in Southampton. However, by the time that this would have been possible - under the Public Libraries Act, 1892 which empowered parishes to annex themselves to an adjoining district – the mood had changed. Amalgamation was now in the air, opposition to which in Shirley was taken to the very limits of Parliamentary action. Even the modicum of co-operation envisaged by the joining of library authorities was dismissed as the thin end of the wedge. The opening of the new central library added a further disincentive. It lay closer to the extra-borough districts on the western edge of the town than it did to

many areas within the town boundaries. These non-residents had unlimited access to the reading and news rooms. O T Hopwood estimated, in evidence to the 1895 Local Government Board annexation enquiry, that of the 1,800 daily visitors, 25% came from Shirley and Freemantle, mainly on Thursday and Friday when the new periodicals came in. As Balfour Browne, QC observed, 'That is Shirley people down to the ground'.

In this sense, the speedy establishment of a library in the 'added areas' was a matter of self-preservation. The Southampton bookstock could not withstand a similar influx of newly-enfranchised borrowers. It was equally a matter of political necessity, the need of a grand gesture to show the benefits of the new union. Thomas Morgan captured the spirit during the opening ceremony, in a speech which perhaps only a bachelor could have delivered. 'Shirley and Freemantle were regarded at the time as a coy maiden, not wishing to be united. Well they might regard the library as a wedding present, or, if they liked, the off-spring of the union, in which case he hoped they would say 'Welcome, little stranger' (laughter)'. The site was predetermined. Spacious new offices for the Shirley Local Board of Health had been built two years earlier, a futile symbol of the district's independence. On the abolition of the Board in January 1895, the offices were transferred to the new Shirley District Council, itself abolished the following June. They were designed, according to the Chairman of the Board WA Kilby, to accommodate a free public library at need. The building was centrally positioned, on land bought from the Alton hop grower Edward Dyer, with a 60-foot frontage on Shirley Road. The architect was the Board surveyor, Henry James Weston, and the builder Frederick Osman of Four Posts. When opened in 1897, the library was on two floors (figure 4). The former Board Room (25 feet x 30 feet) on the first floor housed the Reading Room, with magazines and reference books to the left of the entrance and newspaper stands to the right (Southampton City Archives SC/LY 55). The ground floor, away from the Shirley Road frontage, held the Lending Library, with shelving for 5,600 books and an indicator for 4,000 volumes. The two ground floor rooms overlooking Shirley Road were commandeered by the Borough Weights and Measures Department and the Borough Medical Officer of Health. Vacant

Figure 4. Shirley Library. Photograph taken *c*1910

land at the back was used variously by the Watch, Fire Brigade and Works Committees. Joint use caused endless procedural and financial problems, only resolved in 1902 when the Library Committee took exclusive control of the building with the tenant Corporation departments paying rent of £50 *per annum*. The Library Committee progressively gained full possession of its empire. The Weights and Measures Department left in 1903 when the interior rooms were re-modelled in order to double the public area in front of the counter (figure 5). The Medical Officer of

Health left in 1914 with the introduction of ‘Open Access’ and the consequent 30-foot extension built at the rear of the library.

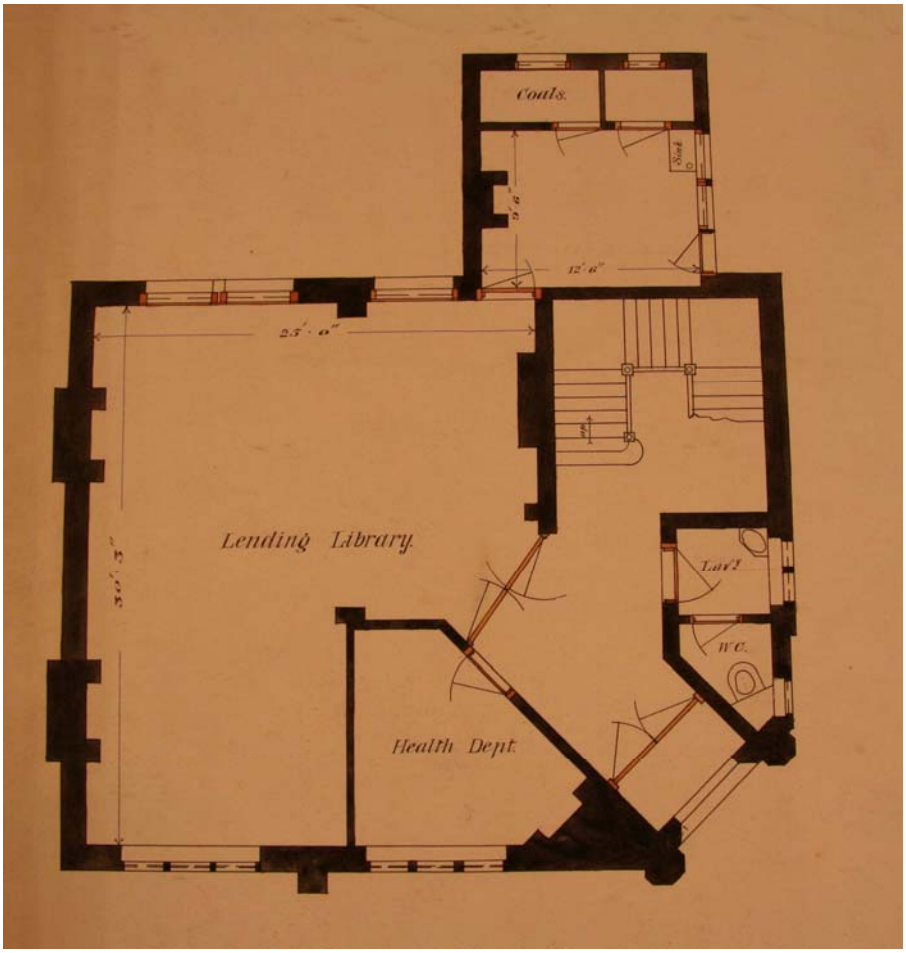

Figure 5. Shirley Library. Ground floor plan taken dating between the alterations of 1903 and 1914

The focus of the Library Committee now turned to the completion of the central library. Guy had reserved the limited space at the rear of the library for expansion. Within six months of opening, Hopwood called for this to be used as a reference library in order to reduce pressure on the Reading Room and to produce that most elusive of library environs, a quiet place of study. The obstacle was money. Morgan ingeniously, but unsuccessfully, tried to circumvent the penny rate restriction by an application to the Town Council to allocate money raised by sale of the mudlands to the London and South-Western Railway Company for their dock extension works to a Reference Library. It was, however, not until the enhanced rate income from the ‘added areas’ began to seep through that the committee, in spring 1901, felt sufficiently confident to approve the extension. Albert Guy was re-engaged as architect, with Dyer and Sons as builders. The events of a decade earlier were replayed. Tightening financial constraints produced the inevitable delays and reductions in specification: less thickness of concrete in the floor, less weight of iron girders to the first floor, less stonework to the front in Bedford Place, use of tiles instead of glazed bricks and cutting out the cellar. For the paired down cost of £2,200, the Reference Library was opened on 4 May 1903 by no less a celebrity than Lord Avebury, reputedly the cleverest man in England. The building, bland in the extreme, hardly merited such an eminent launch (figure 6). It was a plain structure, with a

narrow frontage and extending within inches to the houses to the north. Laurence Burgess, who came to Southampton as Deputy Librarian in 1934, remembered it as a room in which the sun never shone. The stock matched the surroundings. Much was second-hand. In desperation, the Library Committee applied for the transfer, lock and stock, of the Reference Library in the Hartley Institution, a collection many thought to be underused and neglected. As Robert Chipperfield explained, 'there was considerable difficulty, he believed, in getting at the books because they could not be found'. This failed, as did a similarly audacious attempt in June 1912 to transfer to the Reference Library the entire collection of local books bequeathed to the Hartley Institution by Sir William Cope ten years earlier.

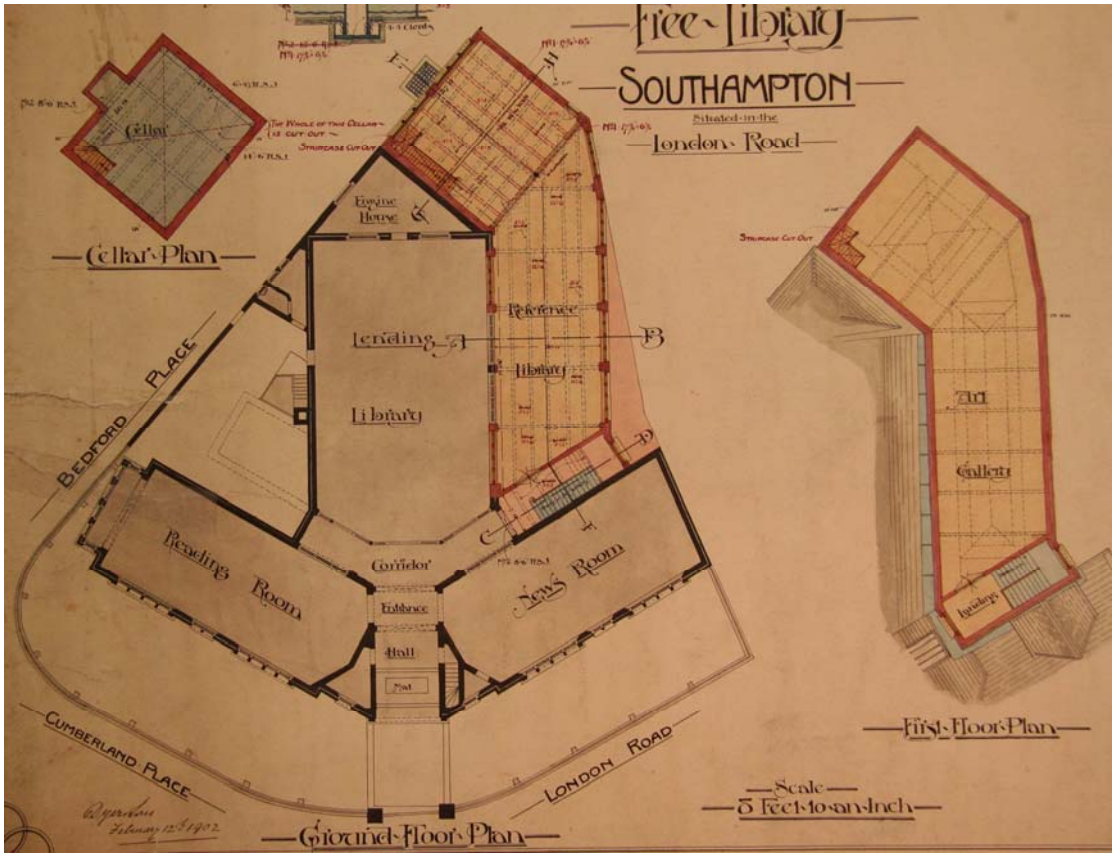

Figure 6. Ground floor plan of the Central Library showing the proposed Reference Library and Art Gallery. Original version by A E J Guy, dated 12th February 1902

The Reference Library was housed on the ground floor of the new building. That there was a second floor, dedicated to an Art Gallery, is testimony to the influence of Thomas Morgan over his committee. In April 1895, the committee had unexpectedly taken possession of about ninety watercolours by C F Williams, a well-respected landscape artist, notably of coastal views in the south of England, a former pupil of David Cox and a Bitterne resident for the last 25 years of his life. He died in December 1891, aged 81 years, leaving the collection to his widow. On her death four days later they passed to his sister and brother-in-law, Lucy and Alfred Fellows of Birmingham, who in turn donated the collection to the Library Committee. Morgan, an art collector himself, saw in this windfall the nucleus of a permanent free art gallery within the library. He received vocal support from such disparate elements as the Southampton Independent Labour Party, the artist Hubert Herkomer (who Morgan escorted around the collection on its arrival and who was his first choice to open the

combined Reference Library and Art Gallery) and councillors like Robert Chipperfield and H M Gilbert. The soundness of Morgan's judgment is a matter of conjecture. On the one hand, without an existing art gallery it is doubtful that the Library Committee would have purchased the important 'Antient Southampton' collection of William Burrough Hill for the town in August 1910, at a cost of £695. A synopsis of this collection of 228 oil paintings, watercolours, pencil drawings and etchings is kept in the Special Collections Library. On the other hand, the gallery proved a financial incubus, drawing funds away from core library activities. It also failed to capture the public imagination. When Robert Chipperfield – member of the Library Committee *ab initio* until his resignation in 1909 – died in August 1911, he left money in his will not for the refurbishment of the library art gallery but for a wholly new art gallery. A J Hamilton, then chairman of the committee, was saddened in May 1914 to find that many of those dignitaries who used the art gallery as a robing room before the Titanic memorial service had been unaware of its existence.

Concentration on the needs of the central library and of the western suburbs was poorly received by those who lived in the north of the old borough, denied a place in the prototype branch structure by the collapse of the Portswood Workmen's Hall scheme. Several projects were floated in the early years of the committee, concentrating on St Denys, where James Lemon warned as early as 1889 that land was quickly being taken up, and Bitterne Park, the only district east of the River Itchen to be included in the 1895 annexation. A Portswood Branch Sub-Committee was established in 1904, on which W J Miller was active. Among projects considered were renting of part of Bitterne Schools as a Reading Room (on the suggestion of Bitterne Park Ratepayers Association), purchase of land offered by the vicar of St Denys, the Reverend E Judkins, and purchase of the New Century Club at 151 Adelaide Road. Each initiative was rejected, with the proviso that as soon as finances permitted the northern suburbs would have priority.

The battle for Portswood library began in earnest in January 1911. It led to three years of, metaphorically if not quite literally, blood-letting, with local communities and local politicians at bitter odds. The first shots were fired by the now-enlarged Bitterne Park and St Denys Ratepayers Association, claiming that the 4d return tram fare between Portswood and the Central Library amounted to a library charge on their constituents. That the only solution the Library Committee (now under the Chairmanship of A J Hamilton) could offer was the use of part of the Tramways Depot on Portswood Road as a Public Reading Room suggests that a new initiative was desperately needed. This came in the approach to the Scottish-born philanthropist Andrew Carnegie for a gift of money to build a branch library: the first time the committee had sought any kind of external funding. The opening letter of 29 May 1911 was crafted to appeal to Carnegie's sensibilities, describing Portswood and St Denys as 'a great industrial centre'. In reply, the committee was told that grant aid would only be forthcoming if Carnegie was convinced that there were sufficient resources to maintain the library when built. There patently were no such resources. A way out of the stalemate was found following a meeting in January 1912 between Hamilton and S J Line, Liberal Councillor for St Denys, and the Chairman of the Bournemouth Library Committee and the Bournemouth Borough Librarian. It was based on the latter authority's successful application in 1903 for £10,000 of Carnegie money to build four branch libraries. First, the amount of money asked for was reduced from £5,000 to £2,000, a sum found adequate in Bournemouth for an

acceptable branch building. Moreover, the committee now had designs for libraries which Carnegie had approved, obviating the need for expensive new architectural designs. Secondly, voluntary subscriptions had paid for the purchase of the library sites, making the expense of a commercial loan unnecessary. Thirdly, and this was on the suggestion of the Bournemouth Librarian Charles Riddle, it could be held that the Art Gallery was a more appropriate charge under the Museums and Gymnasiums Act, 1891, adopted in Southampton the previous year to finance Tudor House Museum, than under the Libraries Act.

With a new sense of purpose, the Library Committee considered two new sites. The first was in the expanding part of the district. A J Hamilton wrote to W Frank Perkins for a site on the Portswood House Estate then in the process of being broken up for development following the death of his father (Walter Perkins) in 1907. Perkins *fils* offered a site on Portswood Road, nearly opposite St Denys Road, for £500, with an assurance that shareholders in Withedswood Estates Limited (which company legally owned the land and to which he was surveyor) would, as individuals, set up a liberal subscription towards its purchase. Despite this virtual offer of a free site, it was rejected in March 1912 in favour of a property more accessible by inhabitants in the east of the district. A provisional contract was drawn up with the builder John Nichol for the purchase of a plot of land on the western approach to Cobden Bridge, linking the older area of St Denys with Bitterne Park, at the corner of St Denys Road and Priory Road. A subscription for the £2,000 purchase price was started and a fresh application made to Carnegie on 20 April 1912. An assurance was given that the estimated annual expenditure of £300 could easily be met once the Library Committee was relieved of its annual Art Gallery expenditure of £210. The library itself was to be a model of Springbourne branch library opened three years earlier with Carnegie money. Carnegie's reply of 11 June was a *douche* of cold water. 'You wish assurance of building before you get assurance of revenue to carry on library work. You should put the matter the other way about'. This caution was justified a few weeks later when the Town Council refused to take over the Art Gallery expenditure. The Library Committee was now in a state of moribund confusion. A draft letter to Carnegie, dated 15 November, optimistically referring to economies having been made and more flexible Borough Treasurer estimates, was never sent. Worse, the Boxing Day floods of 1912 revealed the unsuitability of a riverine location, as residents awoke to find the site under a foot of water.

The debate now came under the influence of a man who was later in his career fundamentally to alter the shape of Southampton. Sidney Kimber had been elected as Conservative Councillor for his native ward of Portswood in 1910. He refocused the debate away from the older, politically more Liberal, ward of St Denys towards his own bailiwick of Portswood, then under development through the break up of the Portswood House Estate and well positioned to service the future development of Highfield following relocation of Hartley University College. It was nothing less than a *coup d'etat*. Using the new and overwhelming Conservative majority on the Corporation, Kimber forced his way on to the Library Committee in March 1913 by engineering two vacancies. One of these he filled himself; the other went to an ally. The opposition was incandescent at this act of *realpolitik*. 'Chicanery', 'one of the least honourable actions done by the predominant party in the Council', 'the increasing scandal of packing committees', '[Kimber] the bad boy of the family' were phrases flung across the floor of the Council chamber. Councillor Line, advocate of

the Cobden Bridge site, spoke of his nemesis as having 'shown himself to be entirely out of sympathy with the free library movement ('No!'). Mr Kimber had no desire to come on that Committee to assist it, but rather to obstruct it. It was well known not only to the Council, but throughout the town, that in reference to the branch library he had endeavoured to throw every obstacle in the way of that library being established ('No!'). He knew what he was saying, and he made that statement deliberately'.

Immediately on his appointment, Kimber was elected on to the Portswood Library Sites Sub-Committee. Within a few days he had forced the full committee, by the narrowest of margins, to rescind their decision in favour of Cobden Bridge and to endorse, at his suggestion, a site at the junction of St Denys Road and Osborne Road, obtainable for £300. In geographical terms, this was not much nearer to the centre of Portswood, but politically it was much nearer. Ratification at the next Town Council meeting was a formality.

'Councillor Bonner: Is that the outcome of the new regime?
The Town Clerk: It seems like it
Councillor Hirst: The outcome of common sense
Councillor Blakeway: It is not the same thing'.

The Library Committee tried to reassert its independence, initially refusing to accept the Town Council's rejection of the Cobden Bridge site. But by June 1913 they had yielded to the inevitable. The climbdown could not have been more embarrassing. Kimber asked the Borough Librarian, A H Davis, to read the whole Carnegie correspondence in front of the committee. How, Kimber taunted, could this correspondence be considered satisfactory? Those who read the correspondence today can but agree. Subscriptions were started for the new site in anticipation of a renewed application for Carnegie money. Hopes that the end was in sight were dashed in January 1914 on receipt of a circular letter from the Carnegie trustees (administering the fund on the founder's death) that the fund was oversubscribed. No new application could be entertained for two years.

The carousel seemed poised to continue on its merry way. This, however, is to ignore the new mood of the committee, freed from the deadweight of satisfying an external arbiter and with a new dynamic driving force. The committee decided, at a meeting on 6 February 1914, to bring the issue to an immediate conclusion. A Sub-Sub-Committee of five, including Kimber, was appointed to reinspect the sites still on offer, *viz* the Withedswood Estate site and the Osborne Road/St Denys Road site. It was to report to a special meeting of the full committee on 20 February. The extraordinary events of the intervening fortnight can be reconstructed by conflating Kimber's autobiography (*Thirty-eight years of public life in Southampton, 1910-1948*, published in 1949) with the minutes of the Library Committee: the two are not fully in accord. Acting on his own initiative, Kimber approached William Edward Bennett, owner of the Docks canteen and purchaser of many of the frontages on Portswood road to the north of the Palladium cinema which had come on the market consequent upon the sale of the Portswood House estate. Bennett was an old friend, now owner of the house ('Roselands' in Highfield) where Kimber had been born. Without telling the vendor or anyone else the reason for which he wanted the property, Kimber bought 58 feet of frontage immediately to the north of the cinema at £10 per foot frontage. He personally entered into a contract of purchase and paid the required deposit. The Sub-Sub-Committee, meeting on 19 February significantly at the Palladium, was presented with a *fait accompli*. The members visited the site next door in company with the

Borough Engineer and unanimously endorsed Kimber's action. The full committee the following day equally unanimously endorsed the smaller committee's report, agreed to apply to the Local Government Board for powers of borrowing, instructed the Town Clerk to finalize the contract and asked the Borough Engineer to prepare plans and estimate costs.

Any hopes that the building would be completed with similar expedition were quashed by an event over which not even Kimber had influence: the outbreak of war in August 1914. It was a bold decision to proceed with the work, coinciding as it did with the extension of Shirley Library, completed in March 1915. Sharp rises in the cost of raw materials, notably steel and imported timber, necessitated a supplemental loan of £842 from the Local Government Board over and above the original loan of £2,500. Labour was a constant headache. The Borough Surveyor reported in May 1915 that the workforce consisted of two labourers and two thoroughly qualified bricklayers laying concrete. Work on the impressive glass dome was delayed whilst the contractors were employed on government contracts. When opened on 25 October 1915, the library had the minimum of facilities. Hot water had to be fetched from the tram depot over the road. That it opened at all is a tribute to the efforts of the builder John Nichol (ironically the owner of the Cobden Bridge site) and the architect, the Borough Surveyor J A Crowther. They were blessed with the minimum of committee interference. Crowther quipped at the opening ceremony: 'his instructions were that there was the land, and he was to do the best he could' (figure 7).

The final library extensions to be begun under the penny rate limitation came as a result of the 1920 amalgamation, in which the Urban District of Itchen, the parish of Bitterne and part of the parish of South Stoneham were incorporated into Southampton. Libraries in Bitterne and Woolston were opened on successive days in October 1921. Each was on the back of earlier campaigns to establish a free library.

Figure 7. Portswood Library. Photograph taken *c*1975

The first initiative in Woolston, in May 1891, was stimulated by events in Southampton. A public meeting to consider adoption of the Public Libraries Act was called by the St Mary Extra Vestry, covering Pear Tree Green and Woolston. Southampton Library committee members were conspicuous on the platform. Thomas Morgan and Thomas Shore spoke on the benefits of close co-operation. Both were Woolston residents. Shore lived in Onslow Road. Morgan lived in Oak Road, was organist and choirmaster of St Mark's Church and, as head of the timber importing firm of Tagart Morgan & Coles based in Cross House Wharf, employed many workers from east of the Itchen. The latter offered donations of books from the borough. A room in

Woolston Boys School was suggested as a site. The meeting, however, decisively voted against adoption, fearing the burden of extra rates, estimated at £65 *per annum*.

The new century saw the campaign pass into the hands of Itchen District Council, following the example of Gosport and Alverstoke Urban District Council which had successfully established a free library in 1901. The best way that a small authority like Itchen could see this realized was to apply for Carnegie money. The first approach was made in July 1902 by a faction led by James Martin, Chairman of Woolston and District Liberal Party, working through Tankerville Chamberlayne, owner of Western Grove and Conservative MP for Southampton. It was made a full Council issue by Peter Barnett Hayward, a fellow Liberal and leader of the anti-annexation movement in 1895. We can already see hints of the factional and personal feuding that was to bedevil the campaign. The application lay unanswered for over a year, lost in a sea of applications from similarly penurious authorities. During this waiting period, Carnegie himself spoke, at the opening of the Passmore Edwards Library in Plaistow, of the applications he had received from more than 800 communities in the English-speaking world. When finally received, in June 1913, Carnegie's offer of £3,000 was made on two conditions. First, the site was to be given freely. This was easily met, for there was vacant Council-owned land at the side of their offices, Leigh Grange, at the corner of Portsmouth Road and Hazeleigh Avenue. The second condition proved intractable. In order to guarantee sufficient funds to run the library, Carnegie stipulated that an annual income of £175 was required. The penny rate was projected to yield £150. The shortfall of £25 was to be met by the investment income from a fund of £500. The District Council had no means to raise this from its own resources. An appeal to local property owners and principal ratepayers failed spectacularly. Five hundred letters, with subscription slips, were distributed to such *grandees* as Lord Radstock, Lady Longmore and the Honourable Mrs Eliot Yorke. They produced the paltry sum of £39-12s-6d, which included a Council promise of 16 guineas. The Council, on Chamberlayne's advice, suggested to Carnegie that he might accept personal guarantees from responsible local people to make up the shortfall, pleading that Itchen was 'a very poor District indeed and very heavily rated' (Southampton City Archives SC/A1/8: letter of 22 July 1903). Carnegie refused to relax any of his financial conditions.

It cannot be said that this was a disaster. Even had Carnegie's conditions been met, it is doubtful whether the Public Libraries Act would have been adopted. Harsh economic conditions, aggravated in a district dominated by the cyclical nature of shipbuilding, meant that there was little appetite for an increase in the rates. The District Council itself was divided on fault lines, defined less by political allegiance than by personal feuds. A series of three debates between September and November 1903 saw eleven amendments, often decided by a single vote, and on one occasion interrupted by the sudden death on the Council floor of James Martin, architect of the first appeal to Carnegie. Systematic opposition outside the Council was orchestrated by organized labour, driven in part by hatred of the way in which Carnegie had acquired his wealth. The Amalgamated Society of Engineers, Woolston Shipwrights' Society and the Woolston Branch of the Amalgamated Society of Carpenters and Joiners all supported the Southampton and District Trades and Labour Council in its resolution that a plebiscite of the district be taken. A poll would have rejected adoption of the Libraries Act.

The Carnegie deal lay on the table until January 1914, when (as we have seen in the case of Portswood) the Carnegie trustees recalled the offer as part of the general reassessment of the fund. Ironically, before the offer expired, there was a brief resurgence of the library movement. In the winter of 1912-13, Woolston and District Labour Party petitioned the District Council to adopt the 1892 Act. In a reversal of roles, every trades union in the district, with the exception of the boilermakers, supported the initiative. A deputation of four met the Council in December 1912. Despite the growing influence of Labour on the Council, a motion a month later to adopt the Act was lost.

It was not until the amalgamation of Woolston into the borough in November 1920 that a public library became more than an aspiration. The first post-war District Council election brought about a pro-amalgamation majority, with the Labour Party in the ascendancy. 'A new King has arisen which knows not Joseph'. Negotiations were held between the respective Parliamentary Committees of Southampton Corporation and the District Council in order to avoid the unseemly wrangles of the 1895 annexation. A memorandum of agreement was drawn up on 20 February 1920 (Southampton City Archives TC 41/5/a). Item 9 was 'a library, to be provided as soon as a suitable site is found'. Ralph Morley, one of the 1912 deputation and now an Itchen District Councillor and Vice Chairman of the Labour Party, explained. 'If acting alone, a free library would cost the ratepayers something between a 4d and a 5d annual increase in the rates. Under amalgamation, there would be free access to the well equipped, amply stocked library of Southampton and in a short space of time a branch library would be provided'. With no money for a new build, the vacant plot at Leigh Grange was no longer an option. It became in 1929 the site for Woolston fire station. Negotiations were begun in 1920 (before amalgamation was a fact) for the purchase for £1,140 of Alston Villa, a house built in 1855 and owned by Spenser John Jeffries, manager of Lloyds Bank (Capital and Counties Bank before merger in 1918) in Bridge Street, assistant secretary of the Clausentum Lodge of Freemasons and, the previous year, honorary treasurer of the Itchen Peace Celebration Committee. The house lies at the corner of Portsmouth Road and Oak Road, slightly nearer to the floating bridge than Leigh Grange. It was clearly too small to serve the growing community of Woolston for more than a few years. Indeed, it was insufficient even to host the opening ceremony, held in the Rechabite Hall opposite. The open garden to the north of the house may have been the significant factor in its purchase, offering a site for the extension that would soon be necessary. Planning permission had been obtained in December 1909 (Southampton City Archives SC/BI/10/659) for an extension on this north side for a billiard room, with bedroom above, but this had not been implemented. The library was opened on 12 October 1921, after predictable delays in receiving loan sanction from the Ministry of Health (successor in local planning matters to the Local Government Board) and reductions in estimates. The architect for the conversion was the Borough Surveyor, J A Crowther, and the alterations were made by H W Small of Chapel Street, Bitterne, for £49, reduced from the £129 originally allocated. The new branch consisted of a lending library on the ground floor and two reading rooms (one for newspapers and one for magazines and periodicals) on the floor above. The librarian-in-charge lived on the premises. At the opening ceremony, the Mayor, Councillor Herbert Blatch, unconsciously echoed the sentiments of Thomas Morgan at Shirley 25 years earlier. 'I sometimes wonder whether this little step is the beginning of Woolston's greatness; it is certainly the first

fruits of the partnership with Southampton, and the credit lies with the free library to be the first in the field'.

The 1920 amalgamation brought in its train a fourth branch for Southampton: in Martin Parish Hall, Bitterne. This prominent red-brick building in Park Road had been opened as a Workmen's Hall in October 1881, the gift of Elizabeth Adelaide Martin, eldest daughter of Admiral Thomas Martin and brother of Captain (later, through a series of promotions whilst a half-pay officer, Admiral), Thomas Hutchinson Mangles Martin. Her aim was to provide suitable accommodation to enable young men to spend their evenings away from public house influences. There was a primitive library, and boxes of books were received from the Hants Union of Workmen's Clubs, to which the hall was affiliated. In 1898, Bitterne Parish Councillor James Brown, a leading Wesleyan, brought the issue of a free library before the Council. The 1892 Act allowed parishes to become library authorities in their own right, but this was a rarity. The mood of the parish, however, was not tested as the then owner of the hall, Mrs Thomas Hutchinson Martin, made it clear that she would refuse to let the hall to the council if the Act were passed.

Control of the hall passed to the Parish Council in 1912. It took over trusteeship on the advice of the Charity Commission, and gained outright ownership shortly afterwards on the gift of Mrs Martin. This included furniture and accoutrements, including books and the stove. It was renamed Martin Parish Hall. The nature of the new acquisition was the subject of an entertaining Parish Council meeting on 24 October. The more conservative members moved a resolution to create a reading room on the ground floor, with daily papers and games of draughts and dominoes. This was a prelude to a full library and consequent extension of the hall. On the other side were those who wanted a men's institute, complete with billiard table. The philistines won a complete victory, leading to the establishment of a Workmen's Club open every evening (Sunday excepted) between 6.30 and 10 *pm* and on Wednesday afternoon. The question of a library was deferred for a year, but was not brought up again. Councillor Bailey spoke for the majority. 'A daily paper would not draw the men to the hall, nor would a game of dominoes. Dominoes was obsolete, the attraction at the present day was billiards'.

The 1920 amalgamation saw a more civilized outcome. Prenuptial discussions between Bitterne Parish Council and Southampton Corporation led to their own memorandum of agreement of 20 February (Southampton City Archives TC/41/5/b). The issue of a library was quickly disposed of: that a Branch Library in Martin Hall be opened twice a week, 6 to 9 *pm*. And so it was, opened a day before its Woolston counterpart (11 October 1921). It was a lending library alone, containing 600 volumes, all brand new and in publisher's bindings. They were held in two stacks of portable shelving, enclosed by doors, ordered from Libraco Limited. An annual rent of £30 was paid to the Parish Council. Future improvements, such as the provision of reading tables, magazines and periodicals, were to be the responsibility of the council as trustees of the hall.

We leave this history of the early Southampton libraries at the start of a new dawn. The penny rate restriction ended in April 1920, leaving the libraries an integral part of the Corporation's finances. The basic branch structure was in place. The buildings mentioned in this essay had a mixed fortune. St Mary's Hall still stands although at

present (July 2009) vacant. It became in 1908 the Southampton Holiness Mission, the first branch of this charismatic religious organisation founded in Battersea in 1901. The central library in London Road became redundant in 1939 as the library moved to new quarters in the Civic Centre. The old library, partially leased to the Ordnance Survey as a map store, was destroyed in the blitz of November 1940. The site is now occupied by the solicitors Paris Smith. An extension was built on the north side of Woolston Library in 1925, and the library still operates from the same site. Bitterne Reading Room increased its opening times by one evening a week but was abandoned in 1935 on completion of Cobbett Road Library. Shirley Library, extended again in 1925, moved to Redcar Street in 1964 and into Shirley Precinct in 2005 .The original building is now owned by Paul Jones Insurance Services. Portswood Library remains very much as it was when built.

Sources of Illustrations

Figure 1. Portcities Southampton no.3920. Taken when the property was occupied by the Kingsland Sports Club

Figure 2. Portcities Southampton no.1614. Undated photograph taken before the anonymous gift of an electric clock in May 1903

Figure 3. Original in Special Collections Library, Southampton Central Library

Figure 4. Portcities Southampton no.4002

Figure 5. Original in Special Collections Library, Southampton Central Library

Figure 6. Original in Special Collections Library, Southampton Central Library

Figure 7. Portcities no.3980