

# BIRCHINGTON LIBRARY

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## It's a golden letter day in Birchington's good books

Patience, pressure and persistence led to the honouring of a 23 year old promise with the official opening on Wednesday of the new £38,000 bungalow style Birchington branch library by Margate's Mayor, Ald. Alfred Adams.

Behind the opening of the neat attractive library on the 2,500 sq. yards Alpha Road site – described as “Birchington's golden letter day” by Birchington Ald. John Henry Thomas, Margate's top town planner – are years of frustration, years of the frequent pigeon-holing of library plans, while Birchington book reading generations continued climbing the narrow staircase to the first floor room in Station Road, converted into a library before Birchington was embraced by Margate in 1935, next door to the cramped office in which Birchington business was handled by the village parish council as a limb of Thanet Rural District Council.

## LECTURE HALL

More than £3,000 has been spent on new volumes for the library which provides 20,000 books and can call on the resources of Margate's 90,000 volumes. In addition to a children's library and reference room, a special study room is available to pupils and a lecture hall will be added next year. (???? – *it is now 2015 and we still have no Lecture Hall – in fact there is talk of closing the library or handing it over to an outside trust!*)

Former Margate Mayor and chairman of the Library Committee for 15 years until it merged with the Parks Committee in May, Ald. Ernest Woodward achieved a personal ambition by presiding at the opening. In May, six years ago, he returned with Margate's civic delegations from the Crimean resort of Yalta in time to open the new Westgate branch library. The need for adequate library facilities was recognised when Birchington was incorporated into the borough, and the village was promised a new library as soon as possible.

“Here it is at last” declared Alan Woodward. He recalled how the library project was deferred 30 years ago by the threat of war and, since, of the frustrating “delays of stop-and-go credit squeezes. But Birchington now has a modern library built in a rather severe style, without frills, but containing some attractive features which make it better than the Westgate library.”

Geared to administration from the central counter it provided maximum efficiency with minimum of staff, and its facilities in the Margate library set-up provided for obtaining any book – even out of print volumes – within 24 hours of special request. The wide normal range included books in Braille for the blind and talking books for the elderly and, for the first time at Birchington, a 3,000 volume children's library.

Library Committee vice-chairman, Westgate's Cllr. Frederick Herbert, spoke warmly of Ald. Woodward's library work for Margate and the borough librarian, Mr George Clarke, recalled the first plan for a Birchington library being framed in 1946. But despite the lack of adequate library facilities, the people of Birchington had, over the years proved avid readers.

“More than 160,000 books a year are borrowed at Birchington and 2½ books were borrowed every minute during old library opening” he declared. More than 750,000 books were borrowed at Margate libraries last year and the volumes now available at Birchington would provide for every taste. Statistics show that half the people in Birchington borrow books from the library. They show the astonishing fact that half Birchington residents read a book every day” said the Mayor, Ald. Adams.

He performed the opening ceremony by turning the key and opening the wooden framed glass door.

Margate provision of the library, following that of a bowling green and pavilion at Birchington, made it a “golden letter day in Birchington's history” declared Ald. Thomas. Birchington Liberal Cllr. William Dawson expressed the general feeling of delight in the village that the long delayed library was at last a factual facility.