



BELFAST CENTRAL LIBRARY

135

EST. 1888



Opened on the day that Belfast was granted City status, Belfast Central Library is an iconic architectural landmark firmly embedded in the cultural, literary and learning history of the City.

On the 13 October 2023 Belfast Central Library will celebrate 135 years of service to the people of Belfast and beyond.

I am delighted to present this colourful and imaginative digital book illustrating the history of Belfast Central Library in 135 objects. Join us in a witty and playful journey through the very best bits of this beautiful building, learn more about our unusual collections, and meet some of the creative people, past and present, that make Belfast Central Library such an incredible place.

- Dr Jim O'Hagan
Chief Executive, Libraries NI

A handwritten signature in black ink, reading 'Jim O'Hagan'.

We've been here since 1888, 135 years, it feels like yesterday, so we've found 135 of our absolute favourite things to share with you. Take a seat, make a cuppa, and have a spoonful of trifle. Not just any old trifle though, Mrs Beeton's very own 1880s recipe.



494.-GOOSEBERRY TRIFLE.

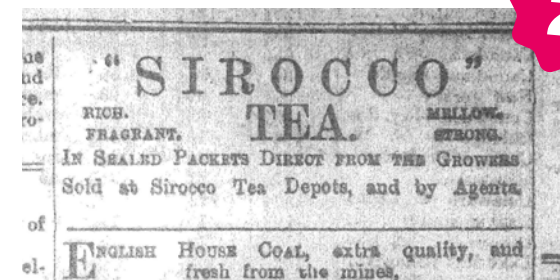
INGREDIENTS. - 1 quart of gooseberries, sugar to taste, 1 pint of custard (No. 491), a plateful whipped cream.

Mode - Put the gooseberries into a jar, with moist sugar to sweeten, and boil them until reduced to a pulp. Put this pulp at the bottom of a trifle-dish; pour over a pint of custard (recipe No. 491), and, when cold, cover with whipped cream. The cream should be whipped the day before it is wanted for table, as it will then be so much firmer and more solid. Garnish as fancy dictates.

Time, about $\frac{3}{4}$ hour to boil the gooseberries. Average cost, 1s. 6d. Sufficient for 1 trifle. Seasonable in May and June.



Original tall stool. Just imagine the librarian looking down sternly at you from this perch.



Sirocco Tea Ad, Irish News, October 1888.



Here's one we made earlier...



Edward Lear
'Illustrations of the
Family of Psittacidae,
or Parrots' 1832.



How it started...



STAFF LIBRARY

READING ROOM



5



REQUESTED



7



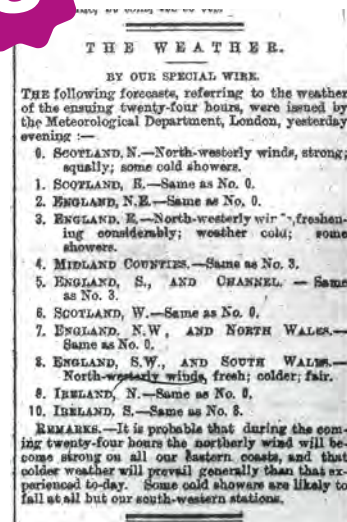
Belfast Central Library, Day One, 13 October 1888.

6

On a cold October day. A strong north-westerly wind was blowing the day Central Library opened to the public.
Belfast Newsletter, 13 October 1888.

Belfast Receives City Status
Our opening, as reported in the Belfast Telegraph, followed by the announcement that Belfast is made a city.

8



9

Last minute preparations for the grand opening of Central Library are well under way by 11 October 1888. The borrower tickets have arrived, the papers and magazines are ordered but poor 'Mr E' has been hurt by a hoist.

10





11



8



12

How it's going...

9



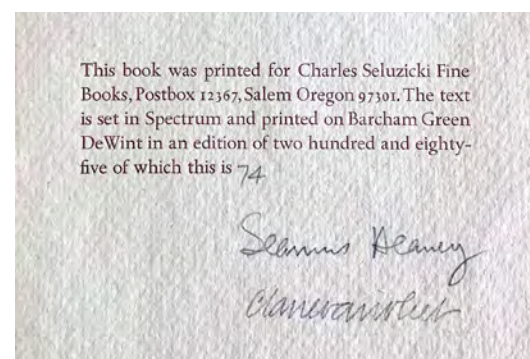
Meet our **Knit and Natter** Group



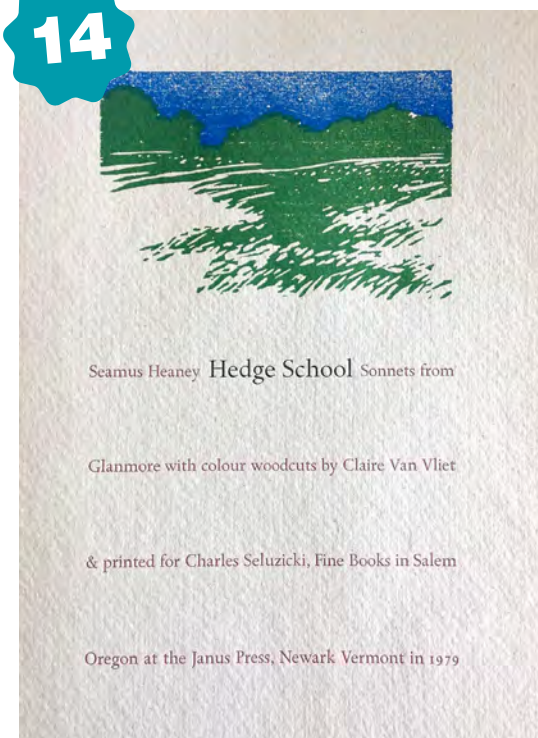
There's been smoke coming from the knitting needles of our wonderful Knit and Natter groups, throughout Belfast and beyond. They've gone rogue and are yarnbombing Central Library along with some of our Facebook followers!

Some of their creations have even sneaked onto these pages, keep an eye out for these little yarnbombers.

We've gathered up a spectacular range of **treasures** over the years, old and new, big and small.



14



One of only 285 copies, we are so happy to have a copy of a limited signed edition of a book by Seamus Heaney.

15



Our oldest books date back to the 1470s. This volume is a book of sermons by Brother Leonard of Utino, printed in Augsburg, Germany in 1474.



16

17

Our largest fine book is 101 cm high, and the smallest is teeny tiny at 6 mm high.



18

12cm

Hey, other libraries, we know you're here for a nosy...show us your biggest asset #thiccboy

19

Staff have long reported spooky sights and sounds in Belfast Central.

Once upon a time, an unassuming staff member took some books from the shelves and was met by a ghostly face looking back. A former librarian, forever looking for a missing book perhaps?

One fateful evening a building attendant (whose anonymity is a closely guarded secret) was locking up the library annexe building. Cheerily going about his duties, he exited the lift, turned a corner and met the eye of a legless figure by the window. Terrified, he turned to run as the phantom fast approached, he got back in the lift in the nick of time and it's been said he hasn't been the same since. What's even more spooky is the sighting took place on the site of the old Brown Horse bar, which was believed to be haunted!

It's also been told that early in the morning, if you listen very carefully, you might hear keys clinking in the Heritage Department.

Have you seen a spectre in the shelves, an apparition in the adult fiction, a banshee in the biographies?

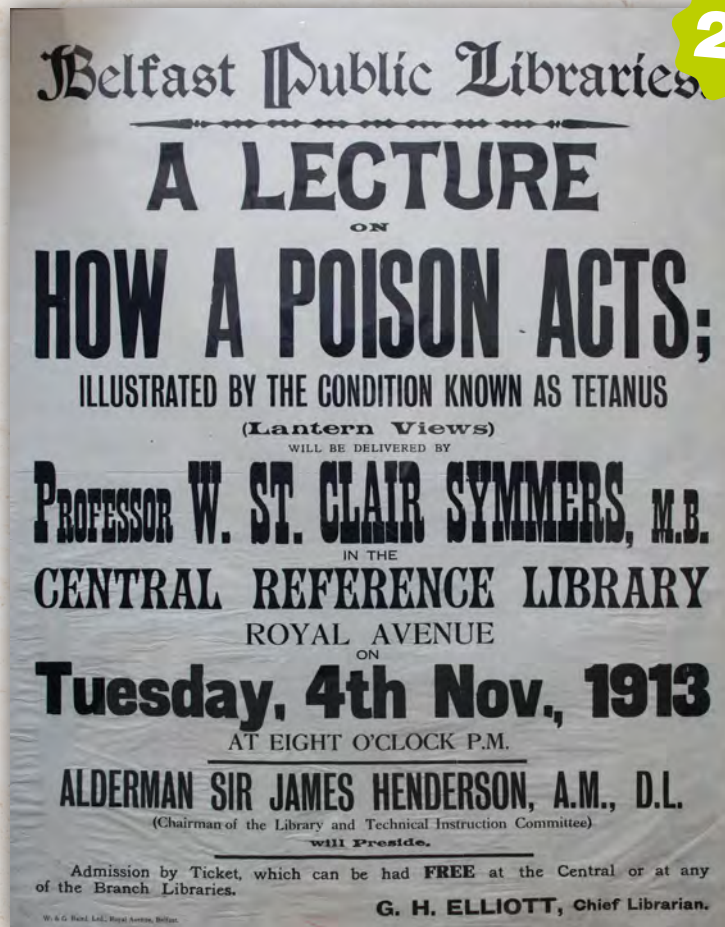
Feel free to share your own Belfast Central ghost stories with us!

#belfastspookycentrallibrary

20

Did you know our birthday falls on Friday 13th this year? We dare you to spot the thirteen friendly ghosts hiding throughout this book... (Psst... The two on this page don't count!)





21

A lecture on how a poison acts...

...and ink in a bottle labelled as poison?!
Where's Miss Marple when you need her?

22



23

Meet The Guild of Library Writers

Belfast Central Library has had a creative writing group for many years. However, with the pandemic in 2020, the group disbanded. In 2023 the writing group was born anew as The Guild of Library Writers, a new name and new members as well as old.

The group meet weekly on Wednesdays at 2:00pm and contribute to exhibits and events throughout the year. This year the group have been awarded a position in CAPs (Community Arts Partnership) Poetry In Motion project which seeks to reach new and emerging poets across the region. This will allow them the chance to submit a piece of work to be included in the anthology and to be put forward for the Seamus Heaney Award for New Writing.

Then and Now Central Lending

24



Mills & Boon (Petal Version) (Written for my Nana)

25

Snuggery was the lamp
That quietly glowed warm upon the page
Its discreet rest as if in a tent
With the torch on

The book would always be there
Ready to read its word-scape of colour
To know of its changeable story
Of two strangers that became a pair.

Microscopically pitted in cream white
With fine detail on a stippled page
Each is thumbled and leafed
In wood pulp mush.

Like a sudden rush of wind
The pages turned to rustle a hush
Across the ground
A sudden swept brush

The dirt unravels passion
In the dance a foot move shuffle
A sweep with the ground
A handkerchief to blow and snuffle

What sharp scratch will be seen?
From the thorns that leave a stinging open wound
Red and crimson seeps a dream
Reading its voyeuristic look
As if to hide behind a changing- screen.

The sweet smell in pink
The soft bite of Turkish Delight
Of a Queen Elizabeth rose
Petal soft: big and silken
Felt in blossom pose

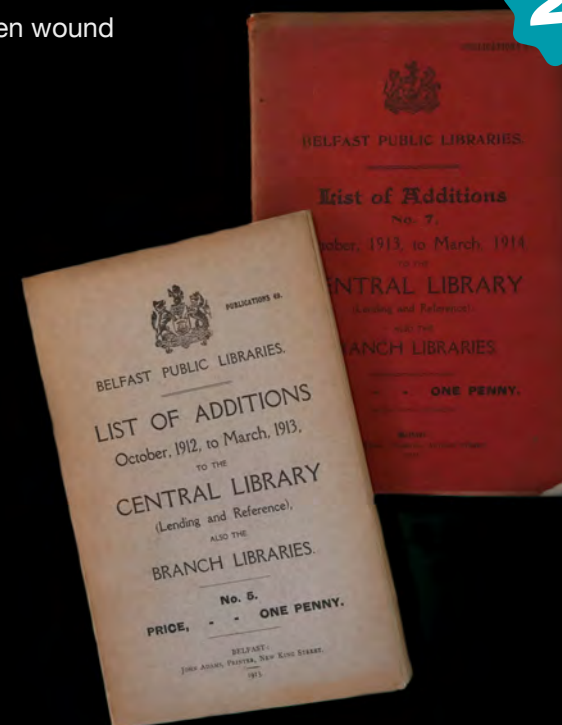
Flips and flops to the bed
Petals sprinkled and spread

Lipstick pink on a mug
As if a petal of a rose kissed its rim
A butterfly pattern,
Mapped in detail of a landscape.

- David Davies

Additions to Stock

26





27

BOOKS FROM THE CENTRAL LENDING LIBRARY IN THE OFFICE.

(FICTION)

| | | |
|------------------------|----------------------------|-----------|
| Artisibasher, Michael. | Serine | |
| Ashes of Incense | | H 6895 |
| Atherton, Gertrude. | The Aristocrats | H 8389 |
| Bashford, H.H. | Fifty the Poor Blind | H 4776 |
| Bennett, Arnold. | The Pretty Lady | H 851 |
| Boles, Agnes (J.A.P.) | The Belfast Boy | H 5152 |
| Brendon, Anthony. | The Bonfire | |
| Clodd, Edward. | Tom Tit Tot | |
| Cournos, John. | The Mask | |
| Cumberland, Gerald. | Tales of a Cruel Country | H 205 |
| Dawe, Carlton. | The New Andromeda | H 9870 |
| Dudney, Henry, Mrs. | The Secret Son | H 583 |
| do. | Spade Work | H 484 |
| Egerton, George. | Discords | |
| Fogazzaro, Antonio. | The Woman | H 9322 |
| Hamilton, Compo. | Adam's Clay | H 3085 |
| Harris, Frank. | Great Days | H 9188 |
| Hichens, Robert. | The Fruitful Vine | H 10891 |
| Hueffer, Ford kadox. | The Good Soldier | H 2437 |
| Irving, George. | Love | |
| do. | For This Cause | H 9315 |
| Joyce, James. | Dubliners | H 7916 |
| Kensaly, Arabella. | Lady Fitzmaurice's Husband | H 10434 |
| Lawrence, D.H. | The Prussian Officer | H 7787 |
| London Girl, A. | | |
| MacGill, Patrick. | The Rat-Pit | H 8935-36 |
| MacKensie, Compton. | Carnival | |
| do. | Sinister Street. | |
| Master Sinner. | | |
| Maughan, W. Somerset. | Of Human Bondage | |
| Maxwell, W.B. | The Devil's Garden | H 6171 |



Did you know one of Ireland's most famous books was once black listed in the library? James Joyce's Dubliners was on a list of fiction removed from the shelves of the Central Lending Library and placed in the office.

The library is now the proud custodian of a first edition of Dubliners from 1914.

28

TABLE II.—SHOWING THE TRADES AND PROFESSIONS OF READERS USING THE LENDING LIBRARY, WITH THEIR AGES.

| FEMALES. | | | |
|------------------------|-----|--------------------------------|-------|
| Apprentices | 12 | Brought forward | 337 |
| Artists and Designers | 7 | Photographers | 2 |
| Barmaids | 3 | Printers | 2 |
| Clerks and Bookkeepers | 32 | Prison Officials | 2 |
| Companions | 2 | Restaurant Proprietresses | 6 |
| Confectioners | 4 | Saleswomen and Shop Assistants | 79 |
| Domestic Servants | 4 | School Girls | 53 |
| Drapery Trade | 10 | Seamstresses | 6 |
| Dress and Mantlemakers | 46 | Shopkeepers | 9 |
| Handkerchief Folders | 15 | Spinsters | 50 |
| Housewives | 50 | Stationers | 2 |
| Ladies | 31 | Students | 15 |
| Machinists | 28 | Tailors and Vestmakers | 7 |
| Matrons | 5 | Teachers and Governesses | 220 |
| Milliners | 27 | Warehouse Girls | 43 |
| Millworkers | 2 | Weavers | 7 |
| Nurses | 5 | Widows | 19 |
| Ornamenters | 7 | No occupation stated | 995 |
| Carried forward | 337 | Total | 1,854 |

| AGES. | | | |
|---------------|-------|--|--|
| From 14 to 20 | 692 | | |
| From 21 to 30 | 617 | | |
| From 31 to 40 | 116 | | |
| From 41 to 50 | 78 | | |
| From 51 to 60 | 36 | | |
| From 61 to 70 | 9 | | |
| From 71 to 80 | 2 | | |
| Above 80 | 2 | | |
| Full age | 97 | | |
| Not stated | 205 | | |
| | 1,854 | | |

Trades and professions of female readers using the Lending Library, 1888. We quite fancy a job as a handkerchief folder!

29

Some of our tools for book binding.



Back in the day...

30

Belfast Public Libraries.

A Lecture on OUR BACTERIAL FRIENDS AND FOES

(Illustrated by Lantern Views)

Will be Delivered by

ANDREW TRIMBLE, Esq., M.B., D.P.H., J.P.

IN THE

CENTRAL REFERENCE LIBRARY

ROYAL AVENUE,

On Tuesday, 11th Mar., 1913,

AT 8 O'CLOCK P.M.

Councillor W. J. GILLILAND, F.R.I.B.A.

Will Preside.

Admission by Ticket, which can be had **FREE** at the Central or at any of the Branch Libraries.

G. H. ELLIOTT, Chief Librarian.

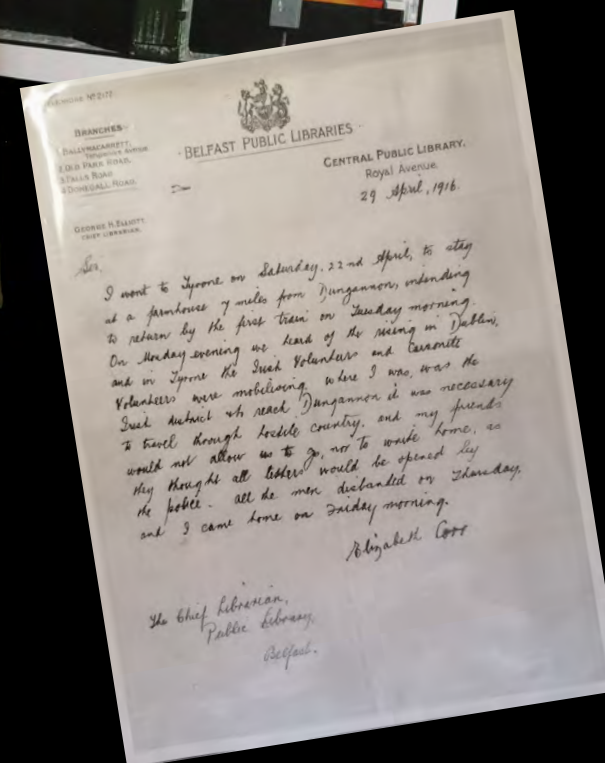
W. & G. Scott, Limited, Printers.

We've no doubt every seat was filled.

Past Staff

31

Elizabeth Corr
A typist employed by the library, Elizabeth was also a member of Cumann na mBan, who went to support the Easter Rising in 1916. She was dismissed after returning to work late after the Easter break.





32

Meet the Central Photographic Association

The Central Photographic Association has its roots going back as far as 1906, when one of their many trophies was first engraved.

The Central Presbyterian Association, Belfast, had many members who were keen photographers and when the Central Presbyterian Association ceased in 1932, this small group of photographers formed the Central Photographic Association (CPA).

The CPA is one of the oldest camera clubs still in existence today in Northern Ireland and pre-dates the founding of the Northern Ireland Photographic Association

(NIPA) 1967, the governing body of Camera Clubs in Northern Ireland.

The club has met every year and has always produced an annual programme. Highlights of the programme have always been the speakers, practical nights, tutorials, competitions, outings (often abroad) and our Annual Exhibition.

CPA President, Vittorio Silvestri, says "We are extremely fortunate to have the Belfast Central Library as our venue for the Exhibition. In the early years, we had our exhibition opening night/prize giving in the reference library and the images displayed in the foyer. We continue

to work closely with Belfast Central, a truly magnificent venue, and we look forward to many years of continued collaboration."

The CPA new season starts in September. If you are interested in joining the Top Club in NIPA 22-23 or for more information check out their website:

www.cpacameraclub.co.uk







Hit the North Festival

33

34



The James Connolly plaque located at the side entrance of Belfast Central Library on Library Street is part of the Belfast Heritage Trail. Launched in July 2021 it is located here as there was a 'speaker's corner' which James Connolly frequented to speak on a Saturday afternoon or a Sunday evening. By scanning the QR code you are directed to the Belfast Heritage Trail and can trace Connolly's steps. Library Street is step 8 and the QR code reveals three augmented reality panels on Speakers Corner, Campaigning for Election 1913 and Connolly speaks in opposition to the war 1914.



35

Staff worked a rota as fire watchers during the Second World War to keep the library safe. This is the hard hat worn by Belfast Central Librarian R. J. Drennan during the air raids. It was kindly donated to the library by his family.



36

The damage to Belfast Central Library and the Belfast Telegraph on 15/16 April 1941, one of four air raids on Belfast during the Blitz.

Hugh Castles and George Spence, both members of an auxiliary fire crew, died beside the library as a result of the bombing.



37

Form No. 16.

**OATH TO BE TAKEN
BY SPECIAL CONSTABLES.**

2 and 3 William IV., Cap. 108.

I Richard Tildland do swear that I will well and truly serve our Sovereign Lord the King in the Office of Special Constable without favour or affection, malice or ill-will, and that I will to the best of my power cause the peace to be kept and preserved, and prevent all offences against the persons and properties of his Majesty's subjects; and that while I continue to hold the said office I will to the best of my skill and knowledge discharge all the duties thereof faithfully according to law. So help me GOD.

Signed Richard Tildland.

Taken before me this 14th day of June, 1922.

Signature J. A. Doran
(Judge of the Peace).

H1729/713. W. 104. 20,000—5/22—B. C. & S. Ltd., B.
H1907/936. W. 104. 20,000—5/22—B. C. & S. Ltd., B.

During the unrest of the early 1920s Belfast Central staff took shifts to stay in the library. They signed up as Special Constables and had to 'sign out' weapons!

July 18th, 1922.
3.20 p.m.

Received from Mr. Gourley,
One Webley - Mark III .38, No. 25949,
in good condition, and ten rounds of
ammunition.

Signed J. Lyons

15th June, 1922.

Received from Mr. Goldsbrough,
One (1) Carbine and Ten (10) rounds
of ammunition, all in good order.

Signed J. Patterson

15th June, 1922.

Received from Mr. Goldsbrough,
One (1) Carbine and Ten (10) rounds
of ammunition, all in good order.

Signed W. J. Paul

Back in the day...

38



Among the many Bibles in the library is this one, with a quirky cover made from wood.

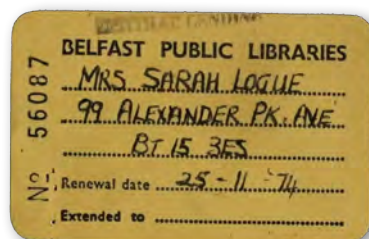
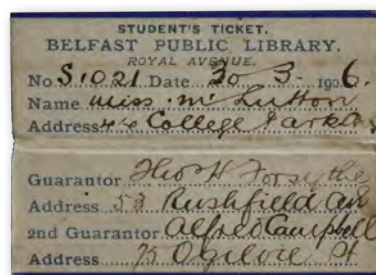


The Evolution of the Library Card

39

Did you know to originally join Belfast Public Libraries you needed two guarantors? These days all you need to do is fill in a quick form...

Become a member



Our current library card



40

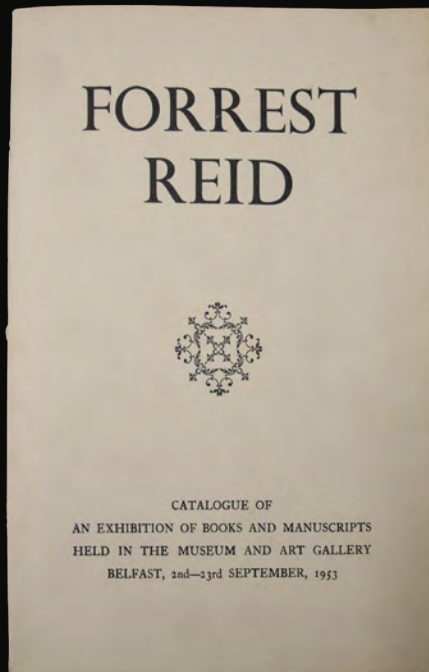


Meet the Classic Book Group

The Classic Book Group has been running now for many years and is very well attended by library members. The group meet on the first Thursday of each month at 1:00pm to discuss the month's read which is normally a classic title from a wide range of genres. Members are invited to bring a packed lunch to enjoy alongside the free tea and coffee.



One of our best loved poets... and worms.



41

Forrest Reid
Belfast born novelist and critic,
Forrest Reid was best known for his
novels about boyhood and
adolescence. Nowadays
he would be regarded
as a member of the
LGBTQ+ community.



43

Lottery ticket 1789, Much more impressive
than the tickets we can buy today.

Barbour Paper Dolls.
This set of paper dolls is too precious to be played with now! They were
an advertising gimmick of well-known Lisburn company, Barbour's.

42



44

Marcus Ward tins. The very successful
Belfast publisher, Marcus Ward,
produced beautiful books, card games,
greetings cards, and even decorative tins!





However, upon the opening of the new dedicated museum for the city in Botanic Gardens in 1929 the contents of the top floor were relocated to what is now the Ulster Museum. It is believed, therefore, that the Egyptian mummy, Takabuti, was resident in Belfast Central Library up until the relocation.

Unfortunately we don't have photographic evidence of her being here. We do however have something far more exciting...



When Belfast Central Library opened in 1888 the library occupied the ground and first floor, while the top floor and ground floor rear extension housed the museum and art gallery. In the ornate plasterwork you can still see the artists palette and brush reminding us of the original purpose of the space.

Then and Now First Floor

The first floor of Central Library has been known by many names over the years: Business, Science and Technology, General Reference, and now the Information floor.

49



47

It's always been very cultural on the second floor, now the Cultural Heritage Department, this room once housed paintings from the Belfast Museum. The collection was cared for by curator Arthur Deane.



48

Art gallery chairs. The original, very hard, chairs used in the art gallery on the top floor.

50



The 'Seed Library' situated in the 1st floor Reference Library, proved to be hugely popular this year.

Members of the public are encouraged to select some seeds from the collection, select an accompanying book with information on how best to grow and look after your plants, and then to send us pictures showing us how you've got on.

You can help our Seed Library continue to grow by donating seeds that you have left over or that have come from your library plant!



51

What we do
when the
library's closed...

52



carion hunter.
rick, a poor miserable
ny. See otomy.
nim the degen, steel
vord.
and prone to vengy,
y, which the upright
tive, after which they
y, (cant) also a com-
uration, a woman of
he law, or hangman,
his circuit with the
nd Tiburne the inco
n of London in art.
ere I leave them, as
aft anchor, if Det-
finall thread in the
ey may be disa-

It was... should go to, heaven or hell,
she chose to secure a friend in both places.
DEVIL CATCHER, or DEVIL DRIVER, a parson. See
snob devil.
DEVIL DRAWER, a miserable painter.
DEVIL'S DAUGHTER'S PORTION,
Deal, Dover and Harwich,
The devil gave with his daughter in marriage;
And by a codicil to his will,
He added Helvet and the Brill.
A faying occasioned by the shameful impositions, prac-
tised by the inhabitants of those places, on sailors and
travellers.
DEVIL'S BOOKS, cards.
DEVIL'S GUTS, a surveyor's chain, so called by farmers,
who do not like their land should be measured by their
landlords.
DEUSEA VILLE, the country, (cant)
DEUSEA VILLE STAMPERS, country carriers, (cant)
DEW BEATERS, feet, (cant)
DEWS WINS, or DEUX WINS, two-pence, (cant)
DEWITTED, torn to pieces by a mob, as that great statel-
like de Wit was in Holland, anno 1672.

him; coming with
woman.
COMMISSION, a shirt, (cant)
COMMODE, a woman's head drefs.
COMMODITY, a woman's commodity; the private parts
of a modest woman, and the public parts of a prostitute.
COMMONS, the house of commons, the necessary house.
COMFORTABLE IMPORTANCE, a wife.
CONFECT, counterfeited.
CONGER, to conger, the agreement of a set or knot of
bookfellers of London, that whosoever of them shall buy
a good copy, the rest shall take off such a particular num-
ber in quires at a stated price; also bookfellers joining to
buy either a considerable or dangerous copy.
CONNY WAEBLE, eggs and brandy beat up together,
(Irish)
COLLECT
F 2
CONTENT,

'We'll be in the black book!'

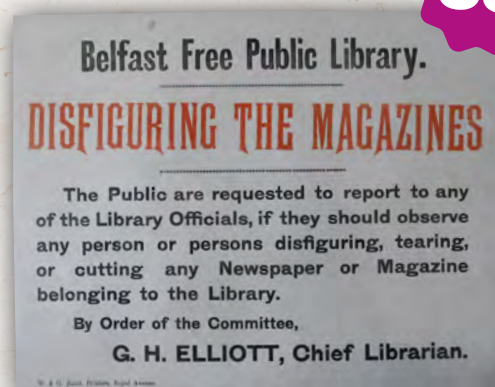
Black Book. He is down in the
black book, i.e. has a stain in his
character. A black book is kept
in most regiments, wherein the
names of all persons sentenced
to punishment are recorded.

'A Classical Dictionary of the
Vulgar Tongue'
Francis Grose, 1785.

We actually really like our customers!

Disfiguring the magazines should be reported to the Library Officials.

53



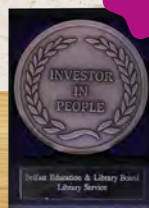
54

Illustrations from the 1930s by Belfast Central Library staff member Robert Gray.



we've even won awards for it...

55



56

Meet the Chess Club

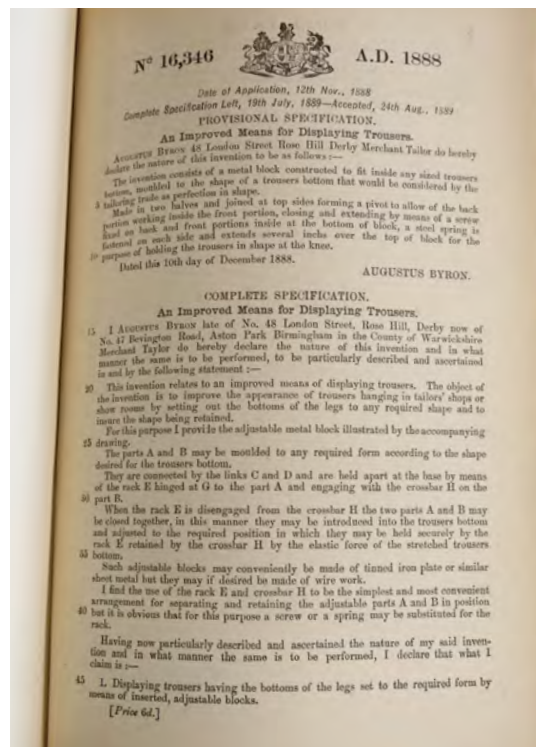
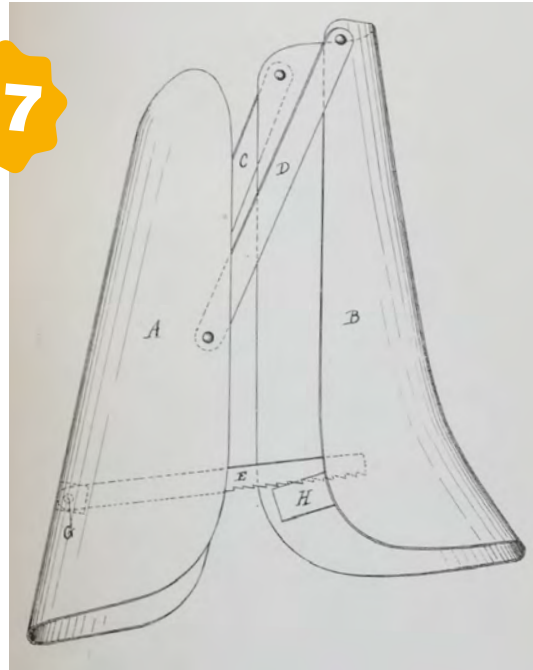
Belfast Central Library's Chess Club meet every Tuesday from 11:00am. There are currently 15-20 active members, both men and women, and everyone is welcome. No need to book ahead, no experience necessary and refreshments are provided. Paul from the group explained that "it's a great way to make friends, supports good mental health and provides much needed social contact." He said "the chess club meets with no expectations or demands, people just show up when they can and have a chat, a laugh, play some chess and unwind. For it to be in a safe and warm space with tea and coffee and the friendly staff makes it all the better."

Patent No 16346 12 November 1888
An Improved Means for Displaying Trousers

Augustus Byron 48 London Street Rose Hill
Derby Merchant Tailor do hereby declare the
nature of this invention to be as follows:-

The invention consists of a metal block
constructed to fit inside any sized trousers
bottom, moulded to the shape of a trousers
bottom that would be considered by the tailoring
trade as perfection in shape.

57



58

While Belfast was on the cusp of
becoming a city and the book stacks
of the Central Library being filled,
dark and sinister events were taking
place in Whitechapel, London.

59

It was all go in Belfast, Robinson &
Cleaver opened its store in Donegall
Place, Ormeau Baths opened and so
did new baths at Peter's Hill, land was
purchased for the creation of Woodvale
Park and new houses were built at
White Star Line Street, East Belfast.

Also in 1888...



60

Did you know
Van Gogh
was painting
his sunflowers
in 1888?
A tenuous
link to our
anniversary?
Well it's a
theme, and
we're running
with it.




The Ghost of John Street

Legend has it the ghost of an elderly woman once haunted John Street, a narrow street of houses demolished to make way for Royal Avenue.

In the locale of what's now Central Library, in 1882, the gruesome discovery of a female skeleton was made by workmen in the yard of one of the old houses. Stories of the ghost of an elderly lady who threw items around a house, and was seen by former residents pacing the yard, had persisted for many years.

Fact or fiction? Let us know what you think!
#belfastspookycentrallibrary

61



quest also with possibly to hold.

STRANGE DISCOVERY IN ROYAL AVENUE.—The workmen engaged in the formation of the roadway for Royal Avenue having had occasion to excavate a part of the street for the purpose of foundations, relaying of pipes, and similar incidentals of the work, made a strange discovery yesterday. While at work at what had been the yard of one of the houses in John Street they exposed a skeleton which, on examination by competent witnesses, showed to be that of a female. The police were, as a matter of course, informed of the fact, and took charge of the bones. Much curiosity was excited by the report, and strange reflections upon the disposal of corpses were suggested. No explanation can with certainty be offered, but suspicions of foul play were not unnaturally entertained.


St. Stephen's Church, Mullfield.—An original

Belfast Newsletter, 17 May 1882

Speculation was rife over the discovery of several skeletons in John Street.

One theory related to the infamous body snatchers Burke and Hare. Burke is believed to have carried out some of his gruesome work in Belfast. The story goes, that Burke, on his way back to Edinburgh, was caught up in bad weather so sought lodgings in John Street, his cart left in the adjoining yard. A storm brewed and so did the smell from Burke's cargo. What was a grave-digging fella to do?

62



...the state of the weather. Let us, by way of illustration, suppose a case. A resurrectionist has succeeded in reaching Belfast in the evening with one or two large boxes, as the case may be. He has them on a cart, and that cart lies in a stabling yard all night. He cannot get lodgings in the public-house connected with the yard, and he is obliged to go to John Street to sleep, and he dare not leave his boxes in the yard for fear of discovery. So he has them conveyed to John Street. The packet is detained by an adverse wind, the bodies in the boxes have been dead so long, that unless a fair wind sets in they must be got rid of somehow. Another day and night pass, and still an adverse wind. This may continue for a week—for a fortnight. What is to be done? A strange odour is beginning to pervade the house, and so we must—but where? We cannot do it outside; it must be in the yard at any cost, though the body should have to be cut in pieces. Such a case as this must have occurred so many times as to adequately account for far more bodies than have yet been discovered. As to the statement about the

63



Now in private ownership, the trowel used to lay the library's foundation stone in 1884.

Laying of the foundation stone

65



Back in the day...

Before the
books arrived

[illegible][illegible]

Telling tales: The first
Liz talks
herself
into a job

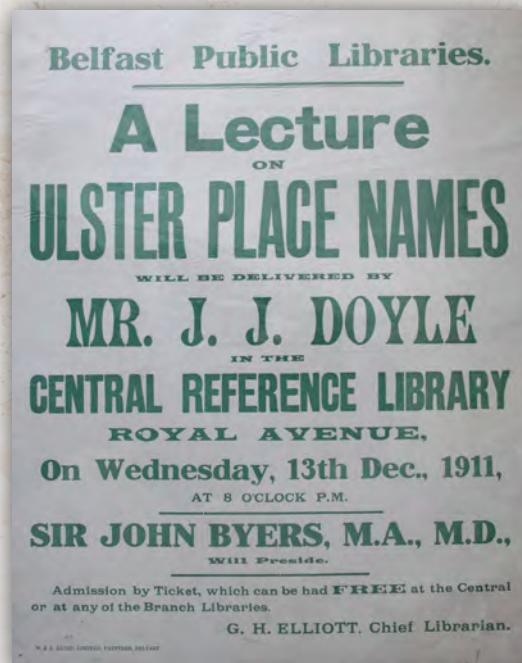
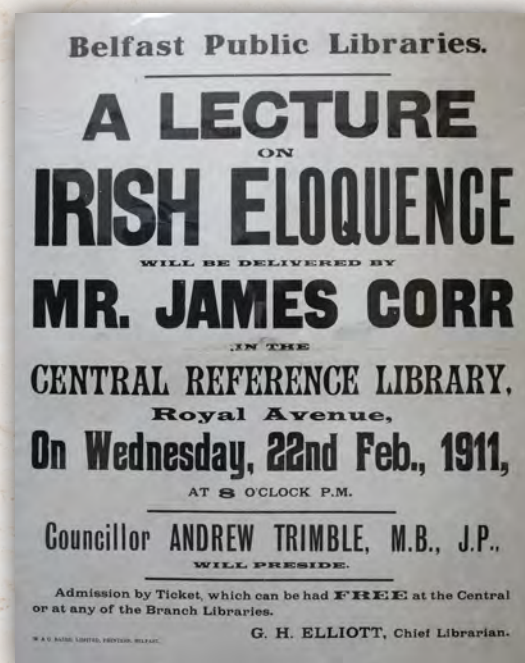
...words for sick children

A dramatic twist
in Liz's own tale

Wait 'Till I Tell
—Liz Weir,
Modern Day
Storyteller **Ye...**
By Karen Bryn

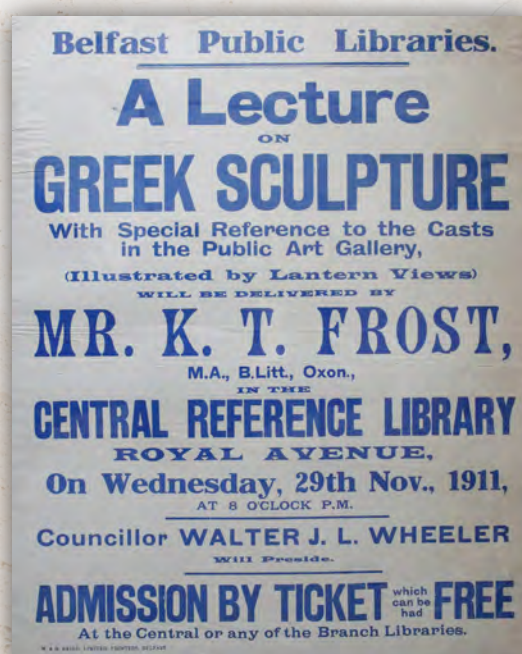
66

Liz Weir
World renowned storyteller Liz Weir
tells of her time working in Belfast
Central Library and where her prolific
career all began.



67

Lecture posters from 1911.



68

Meet the Shared Reading Group

Shared Reading brings people together through great literature to talk, laugh and share. Members enjoy listening to a story or poem with no pressure to talk or read. Led by Sue Donaghy, who trained with The Reader, the group has been running now for some years. Even throughout the pandemic the group met weekly via Zoom until it returned in person to Belfast Central Library in 2022. The group meets every Friday at 2:30pm and new members are always welcome.

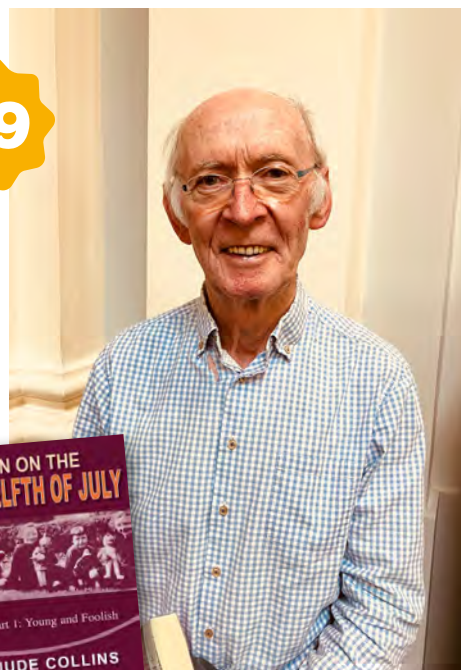
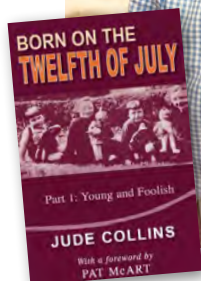
Prestigious Library Users

69

Jude Collins

Jude Collins is an Irish Writer and Broadcaster. A former teacher and lecturer, Jude is now a prolific author having written 10 books such as 'Tales Out of School', 'Martin McGuinness: The Man I Knew' and most recently a memoir titled 'Born on the Twelfth of July Part One: Young and Foolish'. He is also a renowned broadcaster having broadcast on TV and Radio for BBC, CBC, Press TV and RTE.

Jude has always been a great supporter of Belfast Central Library having launched several of his books here as well as being a valuable member of a number of our groups.



70

Wendy Erskine

Belfast writer, Wendy Erskine, is a familiar face in Belfast Central Library.

Her debut collection, Sweet Home, was published by The Stinging Fly Press in Sept 2018 and Picador in 2019, has been translated into Italian and Arabic and optioned for TV. It won the 2020 Butler Literary Award, was shortlisted for the Edge Hill Prize 2019 and longlisted for the Gordon Burn Prize 2019. It was Book of the Year in the Guardian, The White Review, Observer, New Statesman, and TLS.

Wendy's second collection of stories, Dance Move, was published in February 2022.

Her work has been published in The Stinging Fly, Winter Papers, Female Lines: New Writing from Northern Ireland and Being Various: New Irish Short Stories (Faber) and read on BBC Radio 4.

Wendy says that Belfast Central Library is her "favourite place to work in the city." We hope you'll agree.



73

The Hero Musician

Stephen Parker was killed on 21 July 1972, the day that would become known as Bloody Friday. He died trying to save others after spotting a car bomb near his home on the Cavehill Road and was posthumously awarded The Queen's Commendation for Brave Conduct.

Stephen was a talented French horn player and member of the Belfast Youth Orchestra. Following his death, a prize fund was set up and awarded every year to the musician who 'tried very hard' because that's what Stephen always did.

The Stephen Parker Memorial Trophy is held for safe keeping in the Music Library.



Cavehill Road blast victim 14-year-old Glynn Stephen Parker. He predicted "something awful" was going to happen.

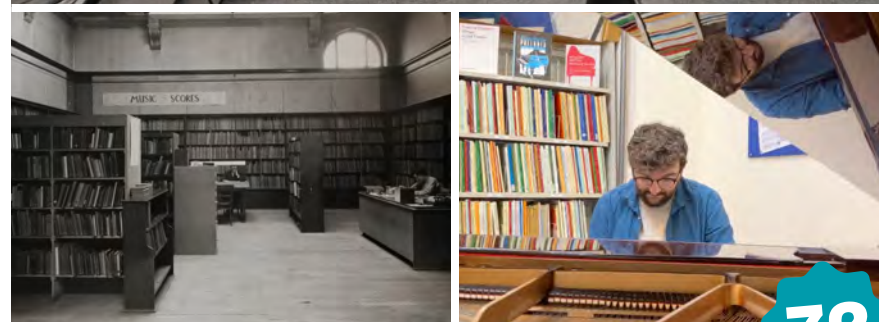
Then and Now Music

71



72

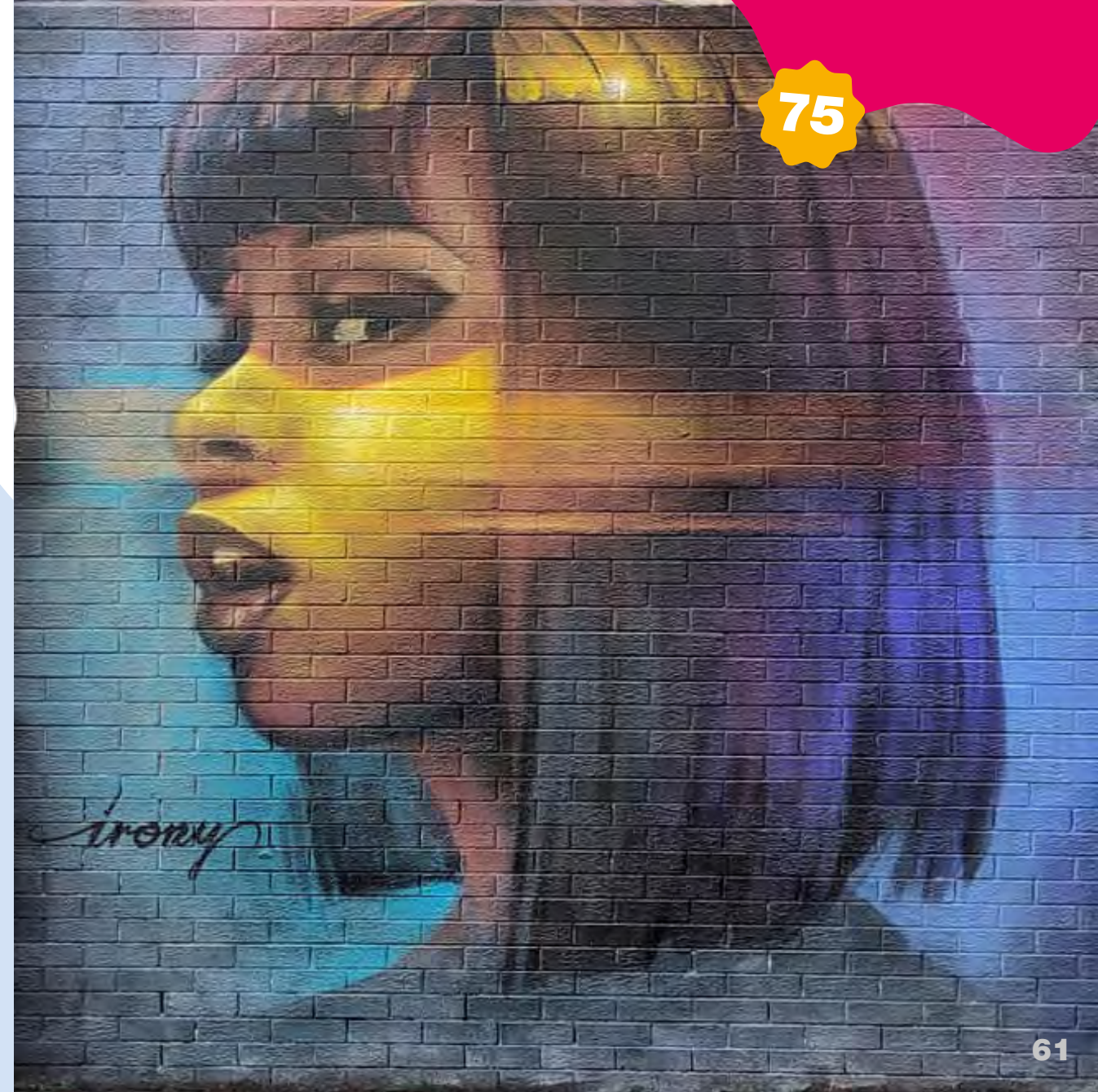
Belfast Piano Players are a community group that meet once a month in Belfast Central Library to play piano in an inclusive and welcoming group. Here, Mark Hamilton from the group plays 'Deux Arabesques' by Debussy, composed in 1888, the same year the library opened.



Donated to the library in 1888, these two statues escaped being moved to the new Ulster Museum in 1929 and have stayed with us ever since. By American sculptor, Emma Stebbins, most famous for the 'Angel of the Waters' statue in Central Park, she would be regarded nowadays as a member of the LGBTQ+ community.



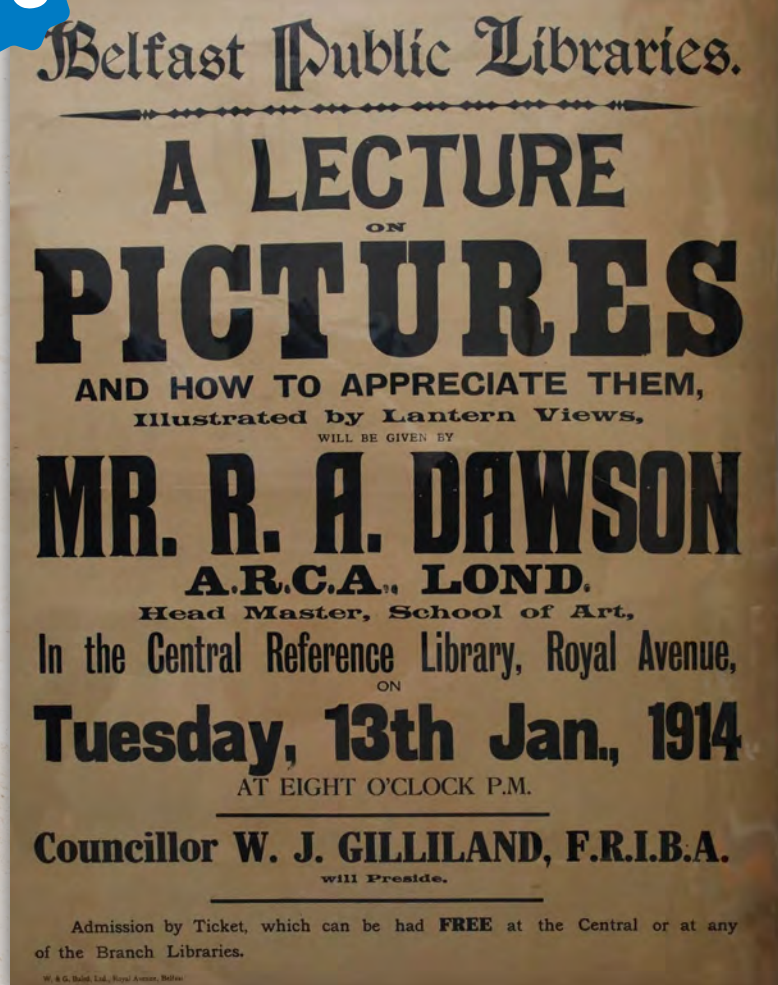
Street Art From The Local Area







76



A lecture on pictures and how to appreciate them, illustrated by lantern views. 13 January 1914.

We are very lucky to have a copy of the 1685 fourth folio of Shakespeare's plays.



77

PRETTY AS
A PICTURE

Past Staff

78



Ould Pat by Robert Gray.



Original lock and key from the front door.

79



80

B.E.L.B. porter's hat.

Closing time!

81



82

Did you know the racing pages used to be blacked out in the library newspapers to prevent betting?



83

Belfast Public Libraries Senior Library Staff in the yard of Belfast Central Library in 1909.

Back row - **William Moore** (Assistant Librarian), **John McCausland** (Assistant Librarian), **David J.H. Simpson** (Branch Librarian Ballymacarrett), **William Rowan** (Chief Assistant Reference Department), **Albert Moore** (Branch Librarian Donegall Road), **D.J. Lavery** (Assistant Librarian), **John Scott** (Assistant Librarian), **Wilfred Gorfunkle** (Assistant Librarian).

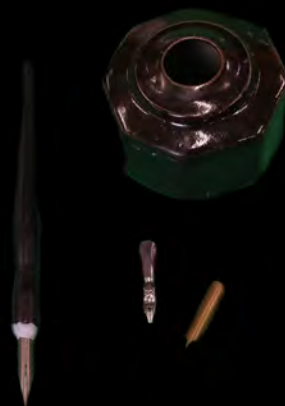
Front row - **Elizabeth Corr** (Typist), **Thomas Coulson** (Branch Librarian Falls Road), **John B. Goldsbrough** (Chief Assistant), **George H. Elliott** (Chief Librarian until his death in 1917), **Robert Gourley** (Chief Assistant Lending Department), **Albert E. Atkinson** (Branch Librarian Oldpark), **Jane Miller** (Assistant in charge Reference Department).

Then and Now

What a contrast in 135 years! Our Deputy Head of Service, Julie Reid, in her office, alongside George Hall Elliott, Chief Librarian until 1917.

84

We still have an original desk used by staff in the first years of the library.



Belfast Central 1893...when work started at 9:30am and ended 12 hours later!

86

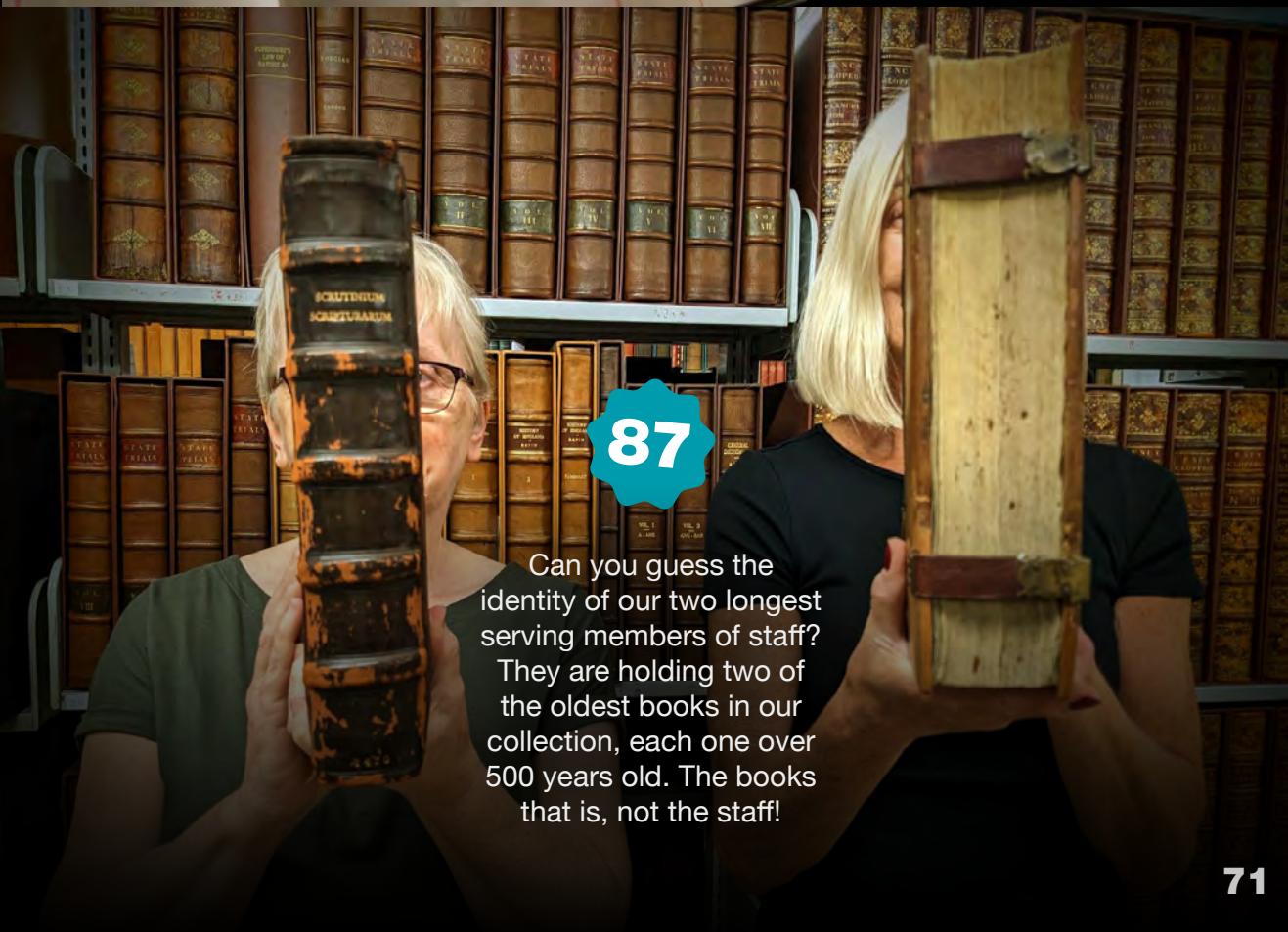
| NAMES | Arrival Morning | Departure for Dinner | Arrival after Dinner | Departure for Tea | Arrival after Tea | Departure for Home |
|------------------|-----------------|----------------------|----------------------|-------------------|-------------------|--------------------|
| J.B. Goldsbrough | 9.30 | 10.20 | 10.30 | 11.00 | 11.30 | 12.00 |
| P.A. Murray | 9.30 | 10.20 | 10.30 | 11.00 | 11.30 | 12.00 |
| Wm. Rowan | 9.30 | 10.20 | 10.30 | 11.00 | 11.30 | 12.00 |
| John Gowanley | 9.30 | 10.20 | 10.30 | 11.00 | 11.30 | 12.00 |
| Miss Miller | 9.30 | 10.20 | 10.30 | 11.00 | 11.30 | 12.00 |
| D. McCorra | 9.30 | 10.20 | 10.30 | 11.00 | 11.30 | 12.00 |
| Wm. Murach | 9.30 | 10.20 | 10.30 | 11.00 | 11.30 | 12.00 |
| W. Owen | 9.30 | 10.20 | 10.30 | 11.00 | 11.30 | 12.00 |
| A. Strain | 9.30 | 10.20 | 10.30 | 11.00 | 11.30 | 12.00 |
| J. Walker | 9.30 | 10.20 | 10.30 | 11.00 | 11.30 | 12.00 |
| J. Bowyer | 9.30 | 10.20 | 10.30 | 11.00 | 11.30 | 12.00 |
| J. Gribben | 9.30 | 10.20 | 10.30 | 11.00 | 11.30 | 12.00 |
| J. Supane | 9.30 | 10.20 | 10.30 | 11.00 | 11.30 | 12.00 |

85



87

Can you guess the identity of our two longest serving members of staff? They are holding two of the oldest books in our collection, each one over 500 years old. The books that is, not the staff!



Our wonderful mobile library staff Paul and Conor.

88



89

We even had a visit from filmmaker Ross White, who used our mobile service as a child. He brought a few friends with him.



Mobile Library

90

You appeared majestically,
out of the bleak, tired, monotonous nothing!
An awkward bucket of nuts and bolts and floorboards,
painfully trembling.
Neighbours used to call you "a dolled-up skip, on wheels".
But to my eight year old eyes, you were a glimmering carriage of dreams.
Many did complain about your rickety stairs, your slipping doors
But I just couldn't wait to speedily scamper on board.

I read volumes of knowledge and nostalgia
I read about the mysterious adventurer
I read about the willing traveler
I read about Willy Wonka.

As your floorboards quake and tremble beneath my tiny feet,
I am aboard the mighty pirate ship of which I excitedly read.
As the turbulence rocks me rapidly from side to side,
I breathe a sigh, and in my mind decide,
You're still my safest haven in which to hide.

(Many years later)

Today, I rode my trembling wooden carriage,
along the Newtownards Road.
Dodging dips, and manholes, carrying a tremulous load.
It's World Book Day, I am an adult now
with many words and stories to deliver.
Today, it is me who causes the passers-by to watch in wonder.

Today "I" bring volumes of knowledge and Nostalgia.
Today, "I" am the mysterious adventurer.
Today, "I" am the willing traveller.
Today, "I" am Willy Wonka.

The triumphant blaze of colour on my carriage,
illuminous to radiant extremes.
Like the precious kingdom of "library" that has inspired me.

Today, I finally got to live out my childhood dream.
Because, today I am The Mobile Library.

- Jim McLean
(from the Guild of Library Writer)

91



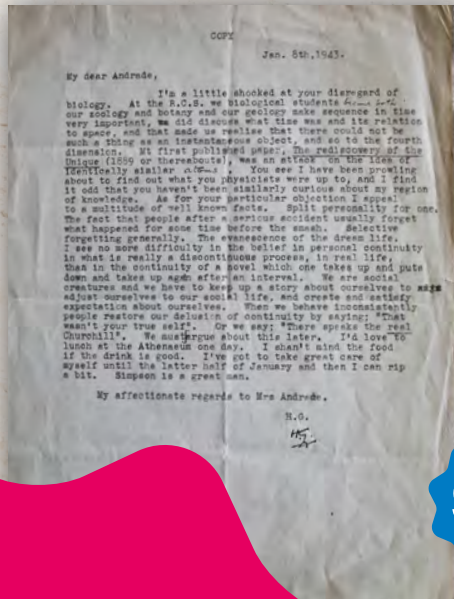


THAT'S A CRACKER



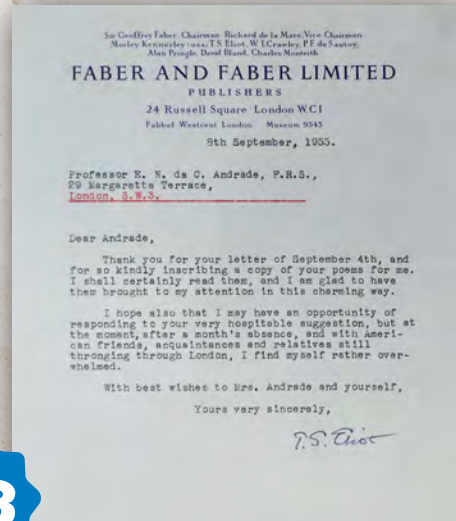
92

Our oldest map, dating from 1573, has a rare orientation of Ireland. West is at the top instead of North.

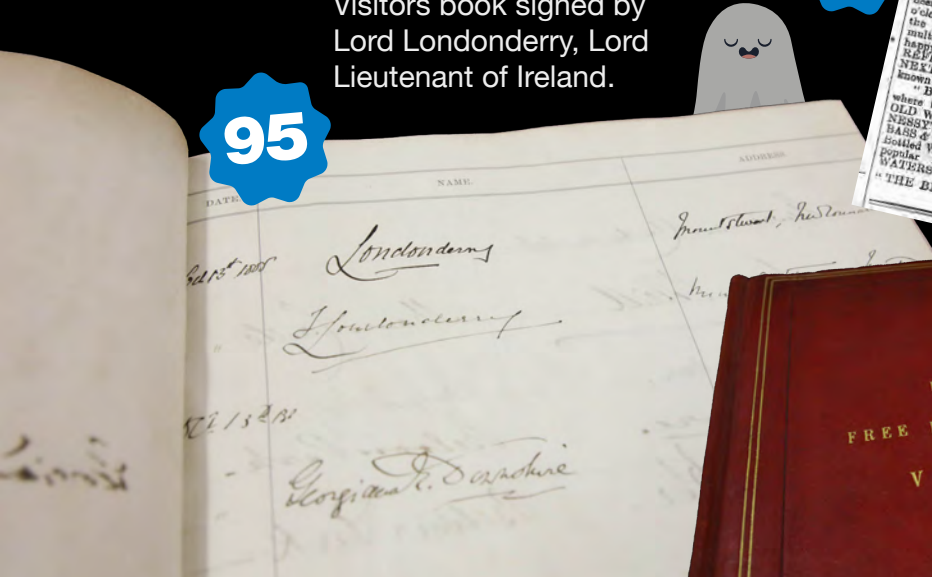


93

The Andrade Collection. Edward Neville da Costa Andrade was a noted physicist and a poet. Among his papers are letters from H.G. Wells and T.S. Eliot.



95



Opening day, 13 October 1888, The great and the good dined on a lavish luncheon at the City Hall, and for the rest, the Brown Horse, where whiskey was 4d a glass!

94

Belfast Central Library
Grand Opening Luncheon
in Belfast Town Hall, October 13, 1888

Menu
Oyster Brunoise
Lobster Patties

~

Roast Sirloin of Beef
Saddle of Mutton
Boiled Chicken and Tongue
Pheasants
Grouse
Wild Duck

~

Damson Soufflé
Chantilly Trifle
Various Fresh Fruits

96

Visitors book signed by Lord Londonderry, Lord Lieutenant of Ireland.



Meanwhile in 1880's

MRS BEETON 1324

General Observations on Breakfasts

3014 FAMILY BREAKFASTS FOR A WEEK IN SUMMER

SUNDAY.— Coffee, tea, hot and cold milk, bread, toast, butter, boiled eggs, cold ham, sardine toast, strawberries or any fresh fruit in season

MONDAY.— Cocoa, tea, hot and cold milk, bread, hot rolls, dry toast, butter, broiled lamb or mutton (some slices of cold meat serve for this) with tomato or any stock sauce, savoury omelette, any fresh fruit.

TUESDAY.— Coffee, hot milk, bread, toast, butter, apricot jam, rissoles made from cold fish and potatoes, buttered eggs, cold tongue.

WEDNESDAY.— Cocoa, tea, hot and cold milk, bread, toast, butter, buttered scones (hot), beef croquettes, ham-and-egg toast, fresh fruit

THURSDAY.— Cocoa, tea, hot and cold milk, bread, toast, butter, buttered scones (hot), beef croquettes, ham-and-egg toast, fresh fruit

FRIDAY.— Coffee, hot milk, bread, toast, butter, legs of chickens or ducks devilled, boiled eggs, cold ham, fruit.

SATURDAY.— Cocoa, tea, hot and cold milk, bread, toast, butter, rissoles of cold meat, poached eggs, cold tongue, tomatoes.

3015 FAMILY BREAKFASTS FOR A WEEK IN WINTER

SUNDAY.— Coffee, hot milk, bread, toast, butter, broiled haddock, boiled eggs, cold ham.

MONDAY.— Coffee, tea, hot and cold milk, bread, toast, hot rolls, butter, kidney toast, savoury omelette, cold meat, marmalade.

TUESDAY.— Tea, milk, porridge, bread, hot rolls, butter, mince made from any scraps of cold meat, angels on horseback, brawn, marmalade.

WEDNESDAY.— Cocoa, tea, hot and cold milk, bread, toast, butter, rissoles made from cold fish and potatoes, grilled ham, cold meat, boiled eggs.

THURSDAY.— Coffee, hot milk, porridge, bread, toast, butter, mutton cutlets and fried potatoes, sardines, marmalade, cold game.

FRIDAY.— Coffee, tea, hot and cold milk, bread, toast, butter, baked fresh herrings, broiled kidneys, marmalade, cold meat pie.

SATURDAY.— Cocoa, tea, hot and cold milk, porridge, bread, toast, butter, legs of turkey devilled, rissoles of cold meat, cold ham, Guinea fowls' eggs.

Unknown Staff Member's Family Breakfasts

SUMMER
SUNDAY.— Chocolate spread, Red Bull
MONDAY.— Lucky Charms, Fanta
TUESDAY.— Pop tarts, Coke Zero
WEDNESDAY.— Banana Bubbles, Sunny D
THURSDAY.— Leftover pizza, Coke
FRIDAY.— Cookie Crisp, Pepsi Max
SATURDAY.— Chocolate cake, Boost

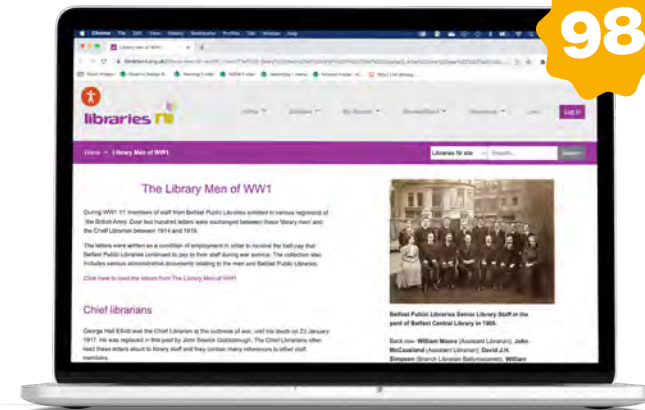
WINTER
 See above, but wear a coat and scarf

Mrs Beeton has many creative ideas, but it is somewhat disconcerting to see the insertion of marmalade between broiled kidneys and cold meat pie...

In addition, angels on horseback seem unnecessarily complicated for a Tuesday morning in the middle of winter.



97



98

Did you know staff from Belfast Public Libraries who 'joined the colours' during the First World War wrote letters to the Chief Librarian?

You can read the letters online-

The Library Men of WW1

Here's a snippet from one of our favourites written by Joseph Fitzsimons, who worked as an Assistant Librarian in the Lending Department, in 1919.

glorious. I would look
 of war have been camouflaged by
 nature. The shell holes and
 trenches are ablaze with poppies
 and other coloured flowers.
 The ruined buildings and barbed
 wire are only reminders of four
 years of carnage
 I sincerely hope you are keeping in
 the best of health

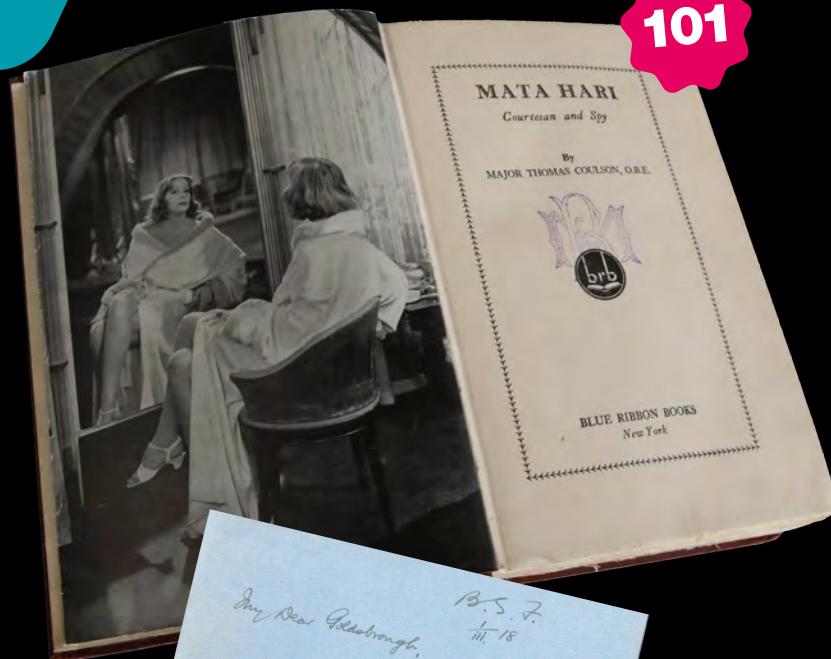
99



100

The Great War

Past Staff



My Dear Goldsborough,
B.S.F.
11.18
I am back again in France among the
wind & the smells. After my course finished at
Aldershot & I was on my way to Ireland I
was suddenly recalled here to do some special
intelligence work & since I came back have

Major Thomas Coulson

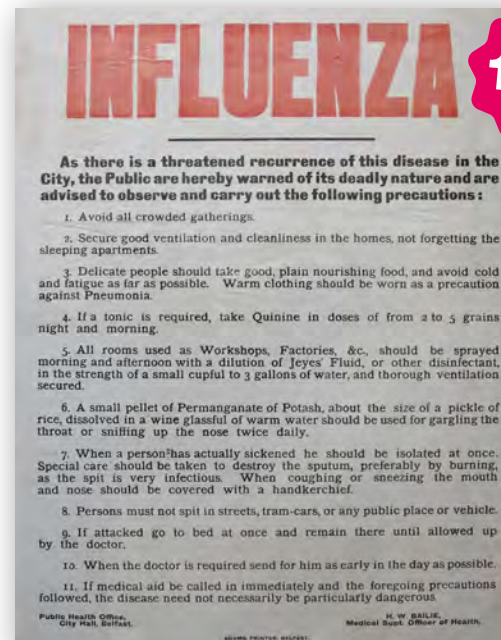
Courtesan and the Branch Library Manager?!

Major Thomas Coulson, author of the novel 'Mata Hari: Courtesan and Spy' which was turned into the major motion picture starring Hollywood icon Greta Garbo, is a former Branch Manager of Falls Road Library.

He 'joined the colours' at the outbreak of the First World War, fought in the trenches of France, wrote vivid and highly descriptive letters home to the Chief Librarian, and ended up resigning from his library career to undertake special intelligence work in the army.

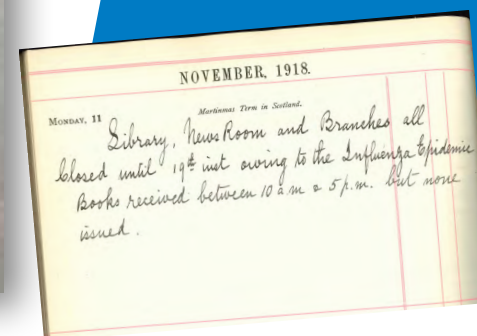
Read his WWI letters here- Letters By Author

101



102

History repeats itself, the library closes following an outbreak of flu in 1918.



103

Ads from October 1888 Belfast Telegraph and Irish News

Need artificial teeth and painless dentistry? Some education in piano, bookkeeping, shorthand, mathematics or Latin?

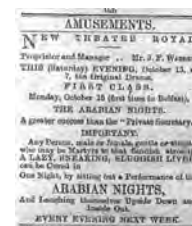
An umbrella for a cold October day?

Lung Tonic?

Dutch flowering bulbs for the garden

Special value in fine and extra quality champagnes, anyone?

A marvellous remedy for Grey Hair Or if you've a 'lazy, sneaking, sluggish liver, Arabian Nights at the New Theatre Royal has the cure.





Jesus, Mary and Joseph and the wee donkey, did you know we've even been on the TV? Our library may have a striking resemblance to Police Headquarters.

104

Our oldest hardcopy newspaper is the Belfast NewsLetter from 1759. The paper is the oldest English language daily newspaper in the world!

105



Did you know our Newspaper Library is back in its original location on the ground floor of Central Library? Call in and see for yourself

106

Our 100th anniversary was marked with a set of postcards, 30 of which were hand franked and stamped 13 October 1988.

107



108

One of the postcards marking our 100th anniversary shows an artist's impression of how the library would look after the first proposed extension. It is a different view now!



A catalogue of the Natural History Collection was printed for our 100th anniversary. We librarians love a bibliography, especially one about our own books!

109



Belle would've left that Beast if she'd seen our library!

Les Roses, Some of our books had famous owners, but perhaps none more prestigious than this one that belonged to the Duc d'Orleans.

110



111

'A description of the Cries of London'

We won the British Library Hidden Treasures competition with the 1797 account of an embassy from the King of Great Britain to the Emperor of China.

112



113

Photograph by
Robert Sergeant
from our Camera Club.



You've made it this far, treat
yourself to a slice of tart.

114

1758.- RED CURRANT AND RASPBERRY TART.

INGREDIENTS.- 1 ½ pint of picked currants, ½ pint raspberries, 3 heaped tablespoonfuls of moist sugar, ½ lb. of short-crust, No. 1680.

Mode.- Strip currants from the stalks and put them into a deep pie-dish, with a small cup placed in the midst, bottom upwards; add the cover with crust, ornament the edges and bake from half to three-quarters of an hour; stew some sifted sugar over before being sent to table. This tart is more generally served cold than hot.

Time.- ½ to ¾ hour. Average Cost, 1s. 4d. Sufficient for 5 to 6 persons. Seasonable in June, July and August.

Raspberries.- There are two sorts of raspberries, the red and the white. Both the scent and flavour of this fruit are very refreshing, and the berry itself is exceedingly wholesome and invaluable to people of a nervous or bilious temperament. We are not aware, however, of its being cultivated with the same amount of care which is bestowed upon some other of the berry tribe, although it is far from improbable that a more careful cultivation would not be repaid by a considerable improvement in the size and flavour of the berry; neither, as an eating fruit, is it so universally esteemed as the strawberry, with whose lusciousness and peculiarly agreeable flavour it can bear no comparison. In Scotland, it is found in large quantities, growing wild, and is eagerly sought after in the woods by children. Its juice is rich and abundant, and, to many, extremely agreeable.



Dubbed the
'world's worst
novelist' Amanda
McKittrick Ros
came from County
Down. The
library holds her
manuscripts and
correspondence.

116

The Great Belfast Bake Off!
Libraries NI challenge you
to make a redcurrant and
raspberry tart from Mrs
Beeton's recipe. Post your
pictures on social media
with the tag @LibrariesNI
#greatbelfastbakeoff
Here's one we made
earlier...

115



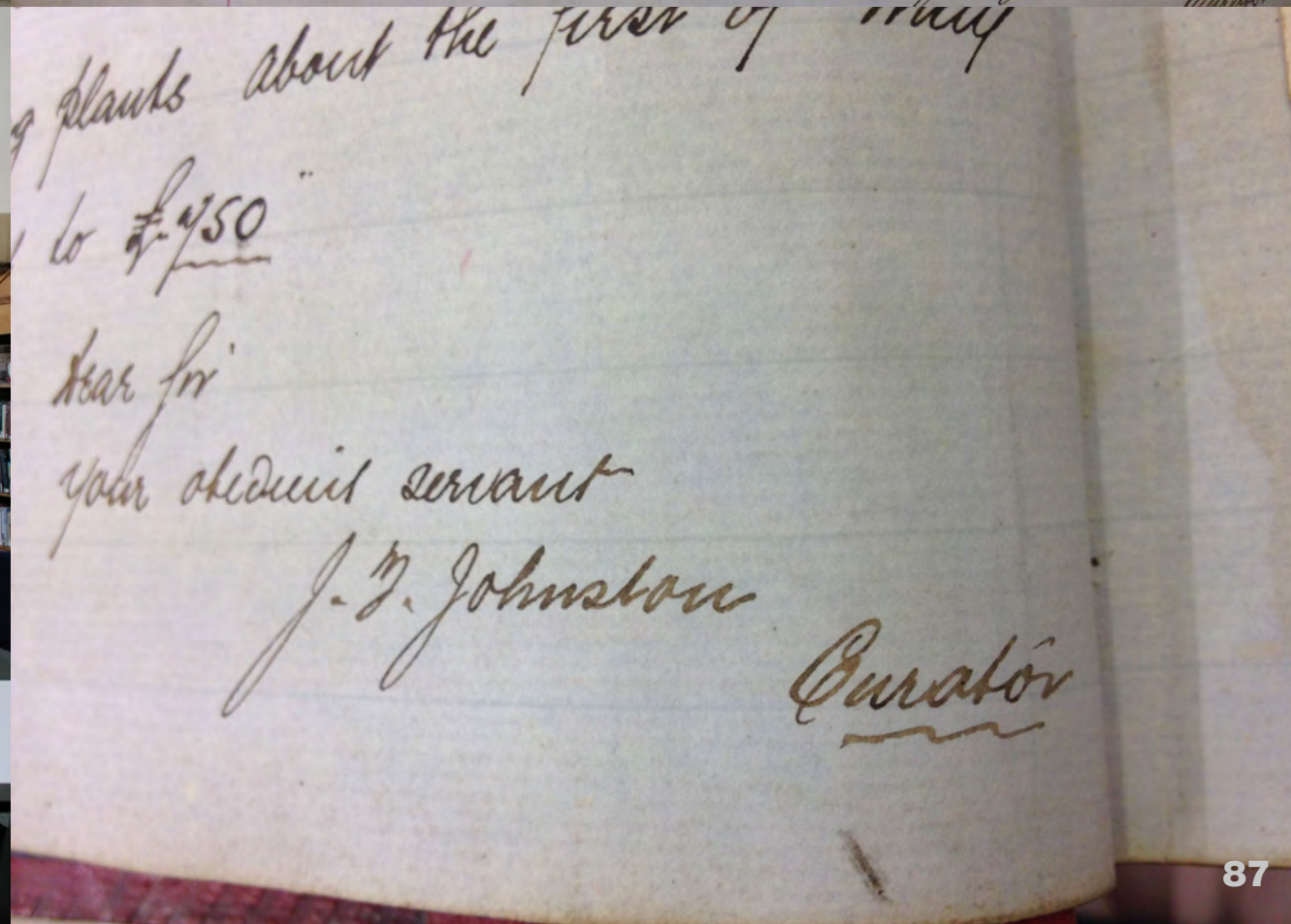
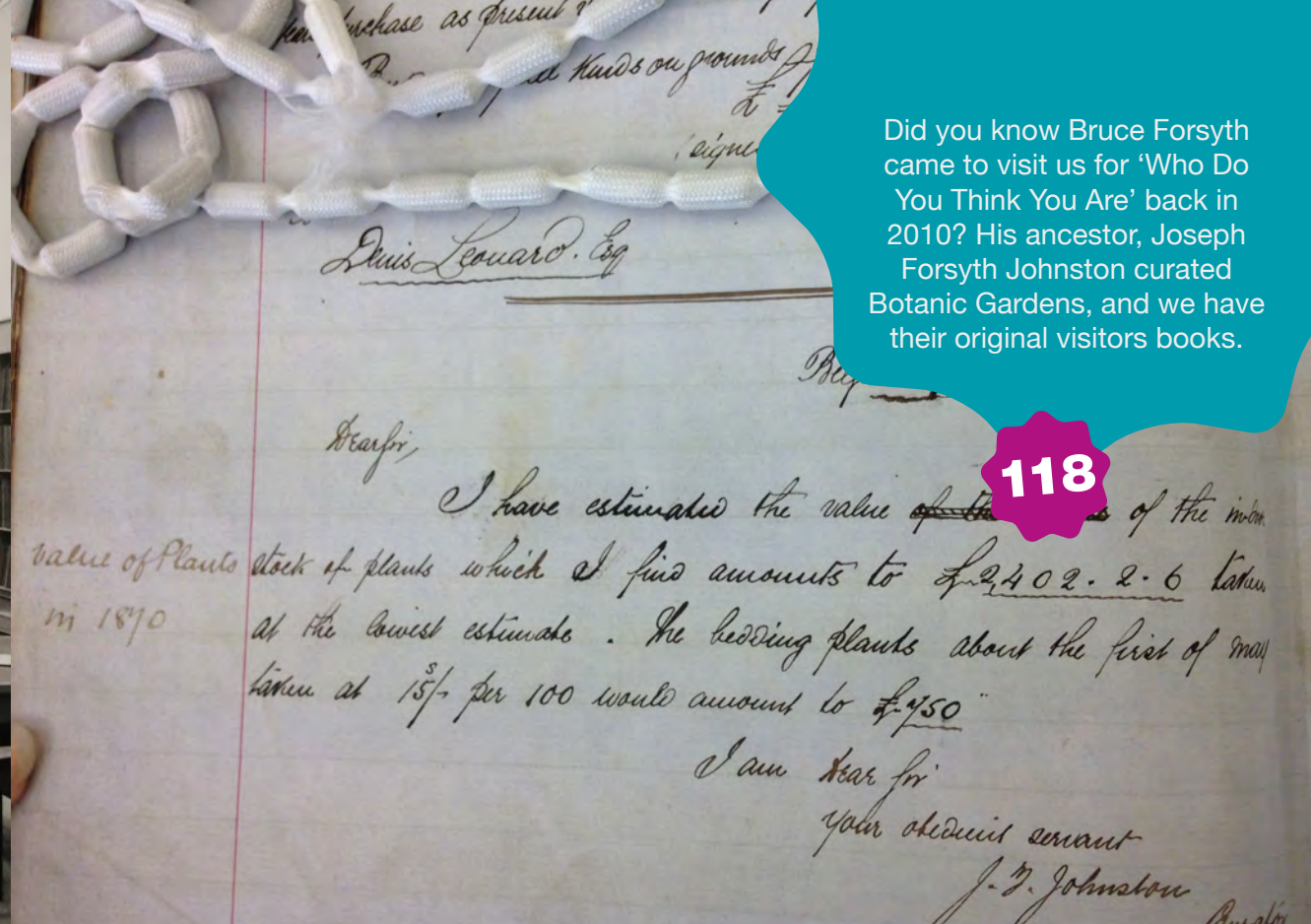
Then and Now Heritage

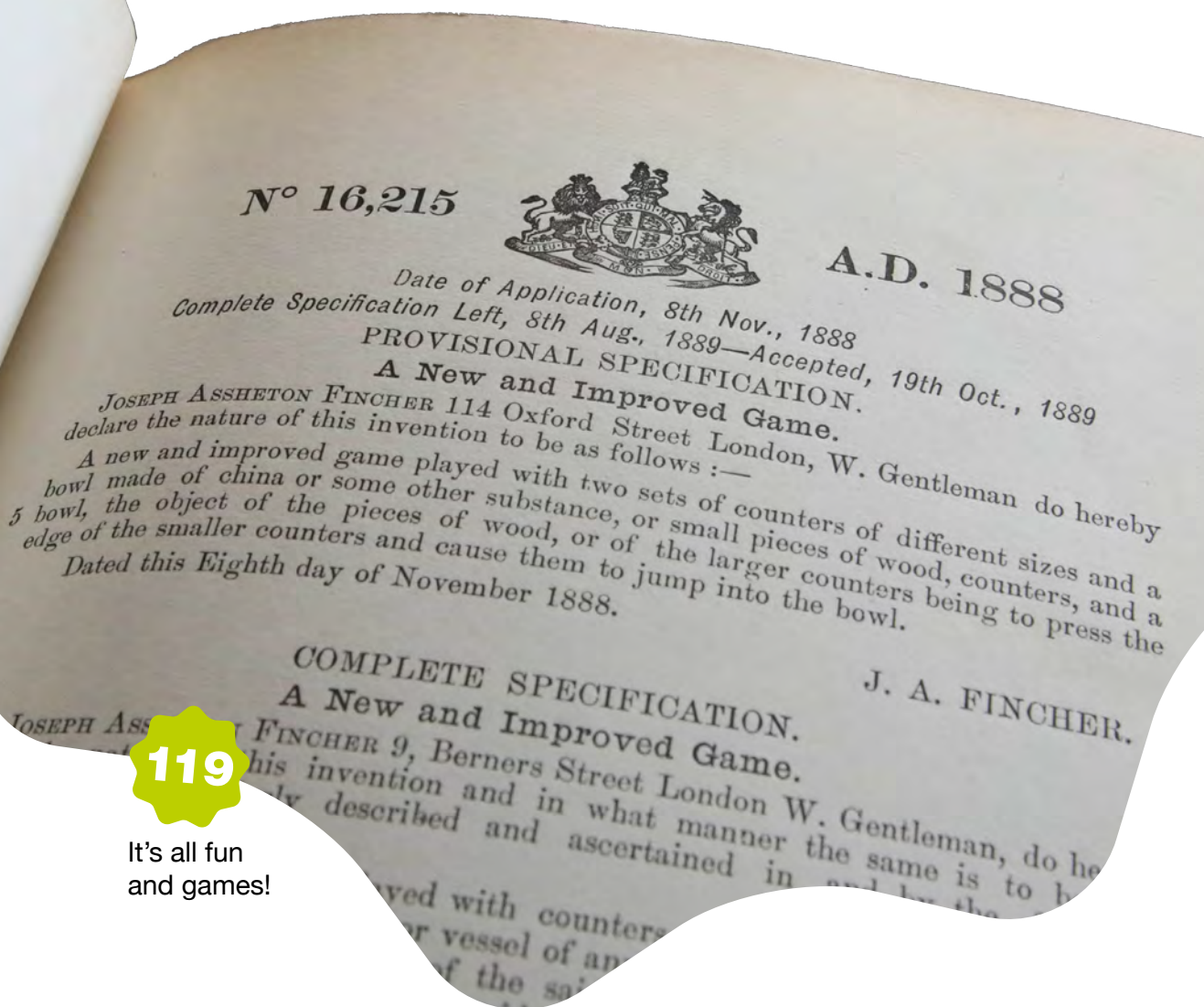
117



Did you know Bruce Forsyth came to visit us for 'Who Do You Think You Are' back in 2010? His ancestor, Joseph Forsyth Johnston curated Botanic Gardens, and we have their original visitors books.

118





119

It's all fun
and games!

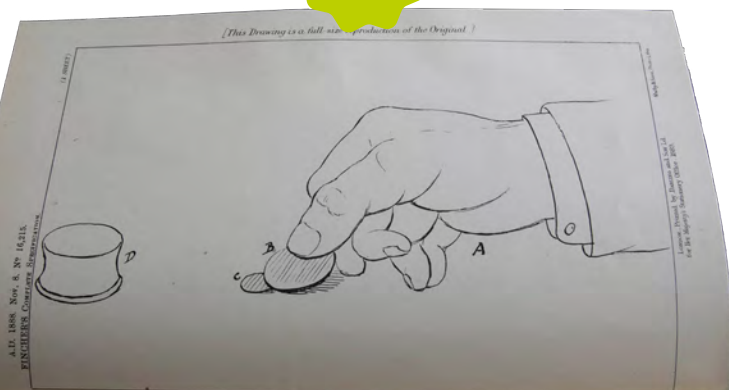
120

Tiddlywinks invented!

Use your squidger to pot your own winks and squop
your opponents' winks!

In 1888 25 year old English bank clerk Joseph Assheton
Fincher filed a patent for a new
game called Tiddledy-Winks. It
quickly became popular, played
by adults as well as children.

Oxford and Cambridge
Universities have been playing
each other at tiddlywinks since
1946, and by the 1960s, 37
UK universities were playing
the game.



121



122

Look who bounced in for a story and slice of birthday cake!

A first edition of 'The House at Pooh Corner' from 1928 where the much loved character of Tigger first appears.



123

Okay, now we're just showing off but the Camera Club are just so talented we can't help it.



124

Did you know we've a fabulous exhibition on in Central to celebrate our anniversary? Call in to visit.



125

Tram mounted photos. The framed photographs that illustrated Belfast's trams still survive among our visual archive collections.



Visitors book signed by Terence O'Neill, Prime Minister of Northern Ireland.

127



Floor plans, including the new extension, from 1962

126



Special editions of local newspapers were hastily printed when the news broke of the assassination. This fuller account followed the next day, Saturday 23 September.

128



Back in the day. The assassination of JFK. The reopening of Belfast Central Library, with its new six storey extension was due to take place and was postponed as a mark of respect.

Then and Now

Designed
by architect
W.H. Lynn

129



A little corner of our
beautiful building.

130



Our Belfast Central Library

131

You appeared majestically,
The red sandstone exterior
Walking into the white pillared foyer
Venturing up marbled steps to the first floor
Above, fine Victorian architecture, blue and white
An exquisite example of a domed ceiling
So many hours spent here, reading, writing
The feeling of the books, the pages
The texture of the covers, leather bound
Hardback, paperback, each unique in its own right
The smell of the paper revealing another age
I feel so comfortable in these surroundings
At peace in the tranquility here, solemn almost
A reverence comparable to church or chapel
Yet it is somehow alive with the activity
Not complete silence but still intimate
Even the walls seem to whisper bygone memories
Mystically disclosing historic recollections
Caressing me pleasantly with gentle thoughts
A warmth emanating from deep within this
structure
An indiscernible aroma of past and present
Not just a building but a serene setting
Disconnected from the city din outside

Isolated from the cacophony of bustling streets
A secretive area we all share yet we keep secret
Thoughts, ideas, studies all unknown, undisclosed
We look but do not see, listen but do not hear
Familiar faces, acknowledged with a nod, a smile
Strangers, ignorant of others, oblivious of
everything
Except, laptops, paperwork, literature. Engrossed
in work
Immersed in the atmosphere this place emits
Radiating an aura that relaxes, inspires or
Just eases the soul, no stress here
No anger, disturbance. Composed, untroubled
An inner contentment, pleasure, even satisfaction
The mind wanders, at times confused, yet
Concentrates, joyfully, easily, drifting with a gentle
tide
For this is a special community and this for the
community
That only this place can furnish, content our needs
For this is my library, our library, the city library
We all salute your one hundred and thirty five years
May you continue to enthuse, embolden, gratify
us all
Young and old, you arouse us.

- Glenn Jones
(from the Guild of Library Writer)



132

Birthday wishes from
writer Jan Carson.



133

So here we are on day 49307
celebrating our 135th birthday, we
don't look a day over 134, right??



134



135

Not a member yet?
We'd love you to join us.

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