

# CLITHEROE LIBRARY



# ASTOUNDING INVENTIONS

HERITAGE OPEN DAY 2022

This guide has been prepared using articles, letters, photographs and plans held in the library's local history department.

Information found in one source occasionally conflicts with or contradicts another, with spelling, geography and dates differing slightly. We have tried use as many reliable sources as possible to reconstruct the history.

The information given here is done so as carefully and accurately as we can. All mistakes are our own and we welcome feedback and suggestions that might help to bring to light the history of our library.

## THE FIRST LIBRARY

The first library in Clitheroe was started in 1838 by the Mechanics Institute. These institutes appeared in many towns during the 19<sup>th</sup> century in an attempt to broaden the lives of ordinary working people. There were several benefactors who donated books to the Mechanics Library, in particular James Thomson, then owner of Primrose Mill, suggesting that he may have been keen to encourage his workers to improve their knowledge.

Books were borrowed from the front room of the house of Primrose Mill's chief cashier, John Keeble. Mr Keeble was a Chelsea Pensioner, a sergeant, and by age 45 in 1838 he and his family lived in Parson Lane.

In the 1852 trade directory the Mechanics Institute library was located at the town hall, however over the years the Mechanics Institute more or less ceased to function and in subsequent years had disappeared from the trade directory altogether. In 1868 the last library subscription was paid.

The books languished unused, and were greatly missed by many of Clitheroe's residents. Ten years after the last issue from the Mechanics Institute library the question of adopting the Public Libraries Act was raised. The Act gave local boroughs the power to establish public libraries to provide universal free access to information and literature.

In 1878 the town council unanimously passed the decision.

The old Town Hall and Bailey's grocers. Before the adoption of the Public Libraries Act the Mechanics Institute library books were stored in the lower room .



In 1879 the room was opened as a library but gradually outgrew the space due to the ever increasing number of library users and books.

## THE FIRST LIBRARY

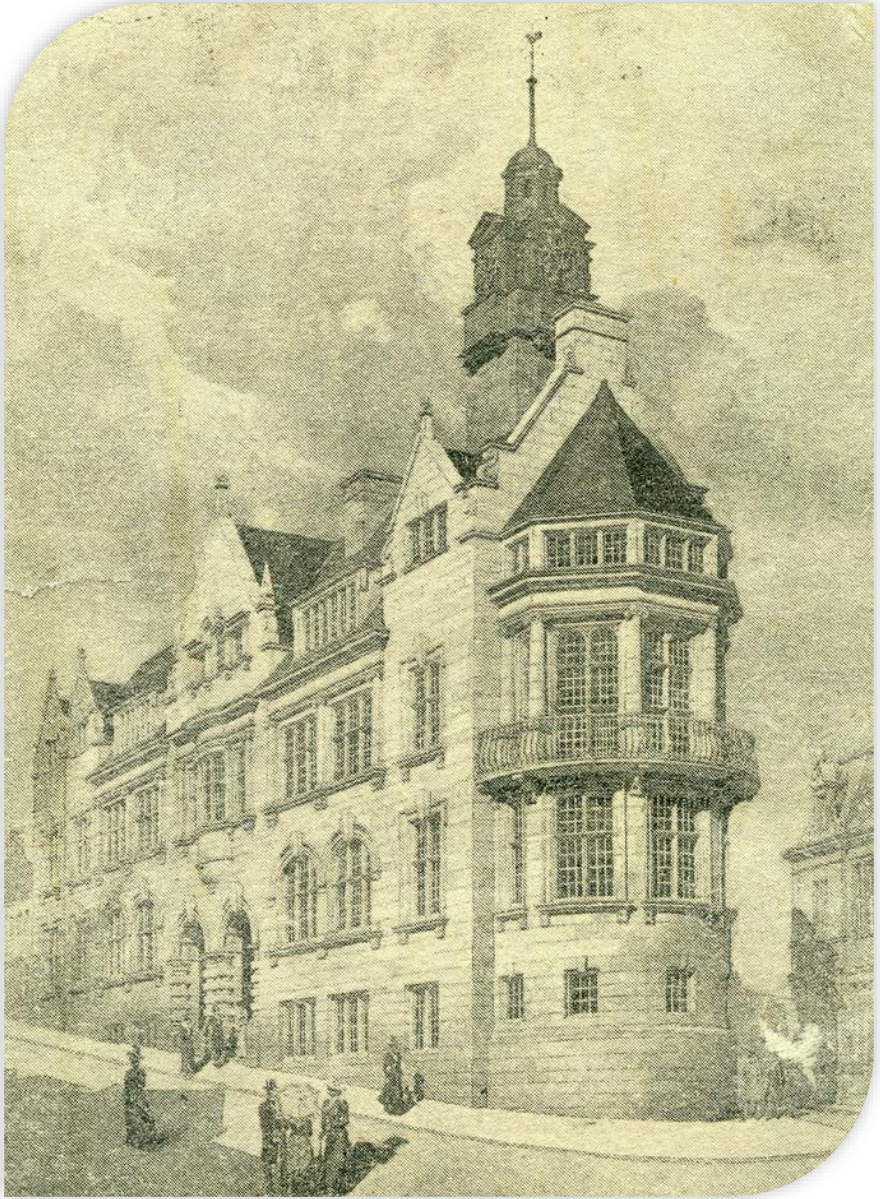
With a nucleus of books already stored at the town hall, the library was opened in April 1879 in the lower room. At first open just two evenings a week, over 20 years it grew in popularity with the residents of Clitheroe and was gradually opened on more days and for longer hours. With an increasing number of borrowers and books a bigger library was needed, and in 1897 it was decided that plans should be prepared to demolish the old town hall and Bailey's grocers and to build a new town hall, Free Library and Technical School on the site.

The technical school was to provide theoretical and practical tuition on weaving, art, clay modelling, domestic economy, book-keeping, maths, and chemistry. However, with planning at an advanced stage, some councillors were becoming alarmed by the amount of council borrowing, having already committed to replacing gas lights with incandescent, resurfacing many of the streets in the town and upgrading the town's sewerage system.

In 1902 the Education Act was passed, which also put responsibility for the administration of education into the hands of county councils and borough councils rather than town councils, and the technical college may have been rendered unnecessary.

The town had applied for funding from Andrew Carnegie towards the cost of a new library, and in 1903 gratefully accepted the offer of a donation of £3,000. The town hall was to remain and a new library would be built on the site of Bailey's. Officially opened in October 1905 it welcomed its first public visitors in January 1906.

This drawing shows the proposed new Town Hall and Library. Ultimately the existing town hall was retained, and the Carnegie library built instead.



The tower would have reached much higher, and for those prepared to make the climb offered an even more extraordinary view.

## CLITHEROE LIBRARY

In 1985 it was reported that the 2,000 square feet of space in the library was much smaller than the 8,000 square feet thought necessary to provide a full range of modern library services. The Carnegie library was no longer adequate in size for a town the size of Clitheroe and its large surrounding catchment area. This was not a new concern however. A letter from 1943, presumed to be written by a librarian, expressed the same view.

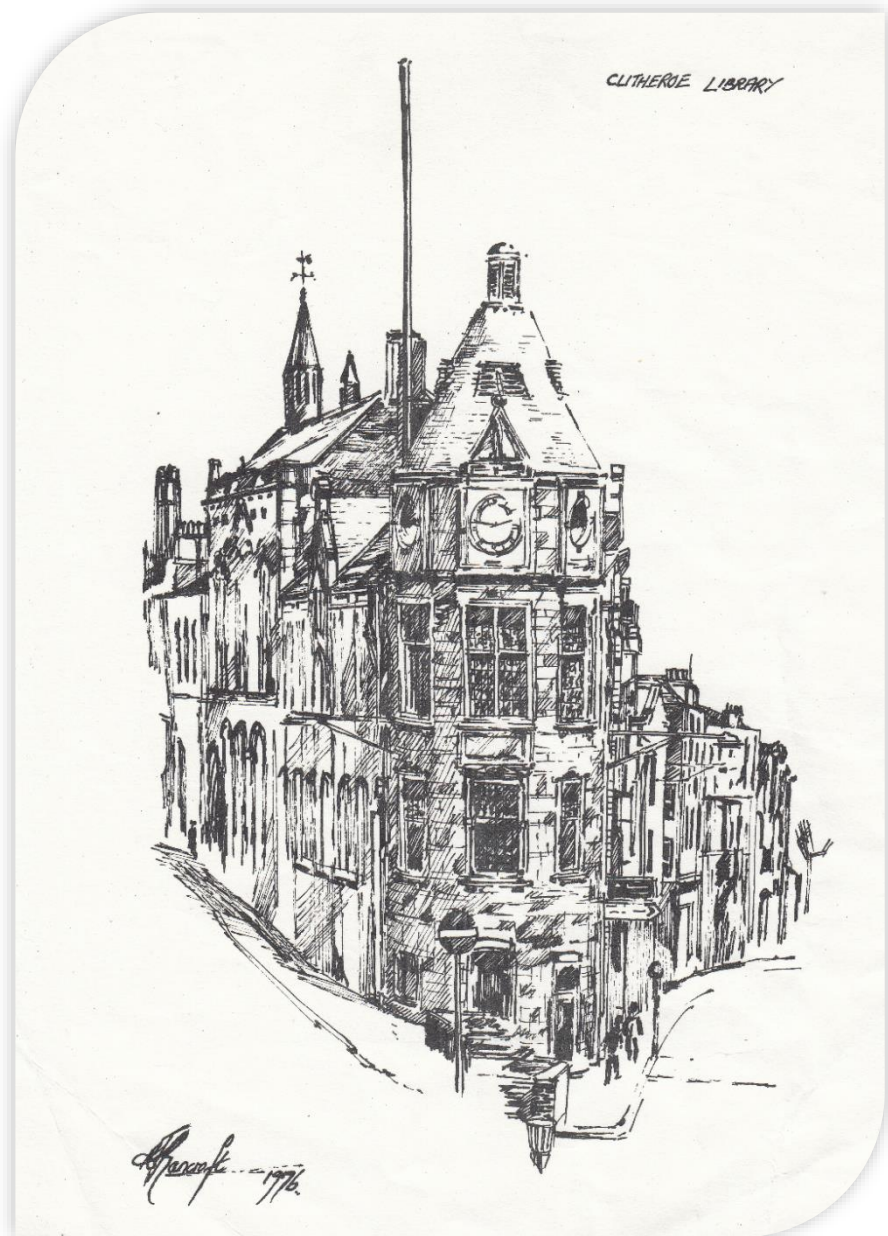
For many years the possibility of building a new library had been discussed, including at the Station Hotel, cattle mart site, and in Lowergate, but no suitable central site could be found. A proposal was made for structural repairs to the old town hall and for its incorporation into the library.

Interestingly the letter of 1943 offered this same solution.

From 1988 to 1990 the major refurbishment and extension into the adjacent building was made. The library service continued, having been temporarily moved to premises underneath the United Reformed Church Hall. On re-opening the library was extensively modernised in other ways, not least a computerised circulation system providing a much wider range of reader and stock information than was available previously.

It also introduced a dedicated space for children. Previously the children's library, reference and local history stock, and newspaper and periodical reading area all shared the same space on the first floor.

This sketch is from the 1976. The York Street extension is yet to be built. Although the library looks familiar you get the sense that something's missing.



The flagpole has been removed, no flag having been flown since 2002, but its mounting bracket is still there. The caretaker would have scaled two ladders and onto the roof to raise and lower the flag.

## MILLENIUM WINDOWS

To celebrate the millennium, Clitheroe Town Council wanted to commemorate the occasion with a stained glass window. The library's central location was deemed the best place to put it, and due to the shape of the building two windows felt most appropriate.

The town council organised a competition for the local secondary schools to submit designs on the theme of 2,000 years of Christianity and Clitheroe.

The joint winners were Victoria Walmsley of Clitheroe Royal Grammar School and Michelle Hincks from Ribblesdale Technology College. Peter Knowles of Castle Stained Glass was commissioned to design and make the windows using the best elements of the winning designs.

Rivers represent both the literal watercourses and the passage of time, with stepping stones becoming large bridges demonstrating how early settlements would become vibrant towns.

The windows feature events such as the birth of Christ, Roman and Norman influences in the area, Clitheroe's market and industrial heritage, and the jet engine which was partly developed in Clitheroe. Two poppies are shown as a token of remembrance. Coats of Arms of local families are also shown.

The Tudor Rose is beneath a bridge resembling Lower Hodder Bridge. The Tudor Rose represents the union of the House of Lancaster and the House of York.



The River Hodder was the old boundary between Lancashire and the West Riding of Yorkshire. Until the Local Government Act of 1974, areas of the Ribble Valley (Bowland Rural District) were in Yorkshire.

## MEETING ROOM

The present building was built in the early 1820s and was designed by Thomas Rickman. He was also the architect for St. Mary Magdalene's church. It replaced a moot hall built on the same site from the early 1600s. At the front of the room is the carved oak canopy under which two bailiffs would sit. A bailiff was one of the chief officers of the Borough, elected for a year, and the pair formed one magistrate, were coroners for the Borough and judges of the Court of Pleas.

After the passing of the Municipal Corporations Act in 1835 the chief officer was the Mayor, who then sat under the canopy. At each side of the Mayor would sit two aldermen with the twelve councillors sat in front of them at a large square table. The Town Clerk would sit on the left of the Mayor. At the back of the room is the gallery in which the public could sit and observe the proceedings at the Council meetings.

Around the walls are painted shields depicting coats of arms of out-bailiffs and out-burgesses of the Borough of Clitheroe, all of whom had many ties to Clitheroe and represented the Lord of the Manor in the villages.

When the library was refurbished in the late 1980s it was extended back into this part of the building. We now use the meeting room for library events, lectures, music recitals, reading groups, author visits, and it is also available to hire.

The old town hall, with extant canopy and wood panelling. Although the table has gone the chairs appear to still be in use.



They're now under the clock used by agile workers, students revising for exams, and local history researchers, albeit with alternate leather to seen here.

## FAMOUS FACES

### **Alderman J.T. Whipp**

Mayor from 1904-1911. Owner of Foullykes Mill where fireproof flannelette was developed. Received the keys to Clitheroe Castle, attended the coronation of George V, and laid the foundation stone of CRGS.

### **William Walter Whiteside**

Mayor in 1923. Heavily involved in the formation of the Clitheroe Gas Works.

### **William Self Weeks**

Town Clerk for 25 years. Wrote many books on the history of Clitheroe. Awarded the OBE in 1934. A founding member of Clitheroe Golf Club.

### **James Thomson**

Founder of Primrose Print Works (1820), he exported printed fabric around the world. Took a keen interest in science and patented and invented new processes. His print works made high quality luxury products in the hundreds rather than millions.

### **Rev. Thomas Wilson**

Headmaster of CRGS in 1775, later appointed head of Slaidburn School. Abolished cock-fighting on Shrove Tuesday, a popular tradition at the time.

### **John Eastham**

Made Town Clerk in 1873, still Town Clerk on his death in 1909. Privately established Clitheroe Waterworks in 1850 after the council refused to fund the project. The council was later forced to buy the waterworks from him at a much greater cost than if they had funded the plan from the beginning.

William Self Weeks, as painted here by James Peter Quinn (1869–1951). Known as Clitheroe’s Grand Old Man, he was a gifted after dinner speaker and author.



He had a particular interest in Clitheroe’s history and its customs, legends and folklore, writing many books on the subject.

## THE CLOCK

The library clock is the focal point of the town centre, and given to the library in memory of Fred and Walter Whipp, two brothers who were drowned in the wreck of the “Drummond Castle” off Ushant in 1896.

The brothers had gone to South Africa to improve the health of Mr Walter Whipp and were on their way home when the ship sank. Another brother, William, died in 1899, and it was felt that the clock would be a fitting memorial to three members of a local family prominent in the textile industry.

On the 21<sup>st</sup> of October 1905, the Mayoress Mrs J.T. Whipp, wife of Mr J. Whipp, older brother of the two who drowned, officially started the clock at a curiously and precisely scheduled 2:43pm.

The clock was manufactured in Leeds by Messrs. William Potts and Sons. William Potts & Sons Limited joined the Smith of Derby Group in 1935. Smith of Derby service the clock to this day.

In the council minutes of 20<sup>th</sup> of November 1905 it was agreed that Mr W. Hanson, the Librarian, was to take charge of winding up the new clock and chimes for the sum of £8 per year. The clock was wound up by hand until 1963.

Today, library staff are responsible for keeping the clock in time. The weight of the pendulum is adjusted using small weights, often made up of fixtures from old library shelving. Library staff are no longer paid for maintaining accuracy.

The Times reported on the sinking of the Drummond Castle on Thursday the 18<sup>th</sup> of June 1896. Of the 245 souls on board there were just three survivors.

## WRECK OF A CASTLE LINER.

### GREAT LOSS OF LIFE.

The Castle Line steamer Drummond Castle, homeward bound from Delagoa Bay, Natal, and the Cape, has been wrecked off Ushant, and all on board, with the exception of three persons, appear to have perished.

Messrs. Donald Currie and Co., the owners of the steamship Drummond Castle, issued the following official statement yesterday evening :—

“ Messrs. Donald Currie and Co. have received the following telegrams respecting the loss off Ushant of the inward-bound steamship Drummond Castle, from Delagoa Bay, Natal, and the Cape to London :—

“ (1) ‘ From the principal Lighthouse-keeper, Ushant (Translation).—Drummond Castle wrecked about midnight 17th, off Ushant. Marquardt sole survivor at Ushant. Two others saved are at Ile Molène. Six bodies recovered, including one officer of the ship about 25 years of age with small light moustaches, and young girl about six years old. Bodies placed in special house. Kindly telegraph instructions for burial. Ship sank in three minutes.’

“ (2) ‘ Ushant, June 17, 4 10 p.m.—Drummond Castle total loss off Ushant. Am probably sole survivor. Proceeding to London as soon as possible.—MARQUARDT.’

To learn more about the accident and about the clock, watch Steve Ragnall’s short film “Clitheroe Library Clock and its Curious Connections” on YouTube.

[youtu.be/tP\\_1AgC57Sk](https://youtu.be/tP_1AgC57Sk)

## LOWER-GROUND FLOOR

In 1922 the council decided to utilise the space under the library and make it into public toilets. If you look closely at the building from York Street, at the pedestrian crossing, you'll see where the entrance would have been. The second window from the left looks slightly different to the others. When the buildings were combined and modernised in the extension this space became a children's library.

During the COVID-19 pandemic the library began to operate on a single floor and the children's library was moved upstairs. In the summer of 2022 the space became a temporary pop-up 'shop' for Ukrainian refugees.

The workroom area is the hub of the library and the area that members of the public don't normally see. The books for our home library service are packed up here and made ready for our volunteer to deliver. Our Home Library Service is a very personal service where staff are frequently in contact with library users unable to visit the library. Staff get to know the customers to find out what they like, and the books are delivered to their door by a volunteer.

The rolling stack shelving is a clever way of fitting more shelves into a small space as it moves along a track. Seasonal stock and a lot of community history material is kept down here due to the format and condition.

York Street during the construction of the 1990 extension. The windows of the old town hall are now hidden from view, but only from the street.



They are still present and visible inside the library on both the ground floor and the first floor.

## THE CELLS

The cells were hewn from solid rock when the first Moot Hall was built, around 1606-8. The land was given by Lawrence Shuttleworth of Gawthorpe to the burgesses of Clitheroe for the purposes of building a “courthouse or moot hall of two heights with shops and cellars below.”

They were used mainly for the imprisonment of debtors who had to live on sixpence a week, the sum that the person to whom they owed money had to pay for their upkeep whilst in prison.

Conditions were unpleasant. It was described by a former town clerk as “a miserable dungeon – small, dark, unventilated and without furniture.” Prisoners could not take exercise and had to provide their own bedding or go without. Conditions were also so rife for abuse that the issue was raised in Parliament and the dungeons subsequently closed.

The author of an article in the Preston Chronicle on 22<sup>nd</sup> of July 1876 writes,

*“At a great trial in 1832, held at Lancaster, Mr. Williams, subsequently Judge Williams, denounced the Court of Common Pleas of Clitheroe, as having been turned into a quagmire of corruption by the rapacity of its legal practitioners, and the long tribe of harpies who hung to their coat skirts... Its dungeon, in which insolvent debtors were confined, was closed in 1834, by the order of a Government Commissioner, and it was arranged that debtors arrested under *capiases* should in future be sent to Lancaster Castle.”*

There is a door in the cells that is never opened. In fact, it is firmly screwed down. We're often asked what secrets lie behind the door.



It's an old Victorian lavatory.

We hope you have enjoyed this year's Heritage Open Day in Clitheroe. To learn more about the library or about any of the people or places mentioned, please visit our local history department.

Many of the images used in this guide are available to view on our online image archive here:  
**[redrosecollections.lancashire.gov.uk](https://redrosecollections.lancashire.gov.uk)**

The painting of W.S. Weeks and other famous faces hanging in the library's meeting room are online here:  
**[artuk.org/visit/venues/clitheroe-library-6189](https://artuk.org/visit/venues/clitheroe-library-6189)**

Steve Ragnall's short film on the library clock and its curious connections can be watched here:  
**[youtu.be/tP\\_1AgC57Sk](https://youtu.be/tP_1AgC57Sk)**

The newspaper extract and other reporting on the loss of the Drummond Castle can be read online via our digital library and the *Times Digital Archive* here:  
**[lancashire.gov.uk/libraries](https://lancashire.gov.uk/libraries)**

