

THE HISTORY OF THE KIMBERLEY PUBLIC LIBRARY

1870 - 1902

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FOR MY FAMILY,  
BEN, PHILIP, NOELINE AND RENETTE  
AND GRANDSONS, IVAN AND BRYCE.

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## PREFACE

The Kimberley Public Library, which was built in 1886 and officially opened in 1887, was vacated at the beginning of 1984 when a new public library came into use. The old building was in a state of disrepair and could easily have been demolished as has happened to so many old buildings in Kimberley. It is to the credit of the City Council of Kimberley that a decision was taken to renovate and restore the building as a repository of Africana material. The Cape Library Services substantially subsidised the project.

The building now houses valuable Africana as well as a large part of the original library stock, which was preserved as part of the assets of the old Public Library when it was affiliated to the Cape Provincial Library Services in 1960.

I was privileged to be appointed City Librarian in 1973 and to be given the opportunity of acquainting myself with some of the books and documents which had obviously been acquired in the last century. The odd references in old newspapers to the early library history stimulated my curiosity about the beginnings of the library and the far-sighted people who collected and preserved material which has now become rare and in some cases, unobtainable. Furthermore, Kimberley is a place so steeped in history, that it is difficult not to become immersed in the past.

I became acquainted with Miss Olive McIntyre, a previous librarian, whose reminiscences date back to the beginning of the century, and Mrs Muriel Macey, whose love of books and tireless search for information infected me with enthusiasm. To these

librarians I owe a debt of gratitude for inspiring me to document the history of the library.

I also wish to record a vote of thanks to the present staff of the Africana Library, in particular Mrs Lesley Brits, for help so willingly given.

This thesis is dedicated to all librarians and bibliophiles, especially the truly remarkable Mr Justice Laurence, who was the force behind the early Kimberley Public Library.

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## CHAPTER 1

### INTRODUCTION

#### 1.1 The problem and its setting

Kimberley sprang up virtually overnight. Where there had been nothing but veld before the discovery of diamonds, there appeared in the 1870's a settlement of approximately 50 000 diggers on the so-called "dry diggings" (Roberts, 1978, p.5). At this particular time there were between 30 000 and 40 000 people living in Cape Town, 12 000 in Port Elizabeth and 17 000 Whites in Natal (Babe, 1872, pp. 73, 77, 81). On the "diggings", the most densely populated area in South Africa, people of all cultures, creeds and races were thrown together and had to make a life for themselves under extremely harsh conditions. A unique city was born, the City of Kimberley.

It is interesting to note that as early as April 1871, mention is made of Hurley's Reading Room at Pniel (today about 20km from Kimberley). Subsequently, various other attempts at establishing library facilities of some kind were made, but, as a result of financial and other problems, they were destined to failure. Nevertheless, the Kimberley Public Library was already well-established by 1889 and considered a model institution.

"The Kimberley Public Library, in a town similar to Johannesburg and the former home of many Johannesburg people, was always cited as a successful institution, worthy of emulation" (Kennedy, 1970, p. 15).

It was a sore point with the Library Committee of the Johannesburg Library that progress did not come up to expectations and that the Kimberley Library seemed to be better off financially despite very little aid from outside sources. As Bertram Dyer, the Librarian of the Kimberley Public Library at the beginning of the 20th century, pointed out:

"The town Kimberley does not owe its library to the benevolence of a Carnegie or a Passmore Edwards<sup>1</sup> nor to that of one of its citizens, who, having made a fortune here, designed a useful provision for the rising generations of the town. The Library has been provided entirely by the collective action of the citizens of Kimberley, practically unaided from any outside source, and it remains as a standing monument of usefulness of such collective action" (Dyer, 1903, p.47).

## 1.2 Purpose of study

The purpose of this study is to trace the origin and development of the Kimberley Public Library and to show that it came into existence as a result of a great need for this facility, which evinced itself from the start but only reached fruition when the community had stabilised; the origin of the Kimberley Public Library's present branch library, the Beaconsfield Library, will also be established and the role of these institutions in the community life of the time will be assessed. The study will be taking a closer look at the so-called "collective action" of the citizens and will seek to identify

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1. J Passmore Edwards, born in Cornwall and MP for Salisbury 1880-85, was noted for his generosity in founding libraries and other institutions.

those who played a significant role in the library history of Kimberley.

For over a century the Beaconsfield Library has been housed in a building which is known to have been built to accommodate the first offices of the London and South African Exploration Company. Very few library records are available, the minute books and reports presumably having been destroyed in a fire which caused a great deal of damage to the building in the nineteen-forties. How this library came to be established and which people were responsible for its founding are aspects which need to be researched and documented. Both the Kimberley Public Library and the Beaconsfield Library have recently been declared historical monuments and a closer look at the past history of both libraries, and an assessment of their relationship to each other, is warranted.

### 1.3 The sub-problems

The first sub-problem is to establish to what extent the socio-economic conditions on the diggings influenced the establishment and nature of libraries which came into operation.

The second sub-problem is to evaluate the role of the library in the community life of Kimberley.

The third sub-problem is to establish how libraries were financed and to what extent the governing bodies were responsible for funding.

The fourth sub-problem is to identify individuals who were involved with the establishment of the library and to evaluate the roles they played in the library history of Kimberley.

### 1.4 The Hypotheses

The first hypothesis is that a community, based on a particular socio-economic infra-structure, will

provide a setting in which a library can grow successfully only when living conditions are relatively stable or when the economic climate is favourable.

The second hypothesis is that the Public Library, as a result of a diversity of functions, recreational as well as intellectual, fulfilled a vital need in the community life of Kimberley.

The third hypothesis is that libraries are unable to exist and develop solely from funds generated by themselves and that financial support from governing bodies is vital for the success of a service of this kind.

The fourth hypothesis is that if it were not for the continued efforts of certain dedicated people, public libraries would not have survived and achieved the success they obviously did.

### 1.5 Assumptions

The first assumption is that the people who converged on the Diamond Fields did not have much faith in the future of the Diggings and intended to leave as soon as their fortunes were made.

The second assumption is that access to the libraries on the Diamond Fields was available to anyone who could afford the required subscription fees;

The third assumption is that government and municipal grants to subscription libraries were inadequate if not non-existent;

The fourth assumption is that the Kimberley Public Library was a successful and respected library by the end of the 19th century.

## 1.6 The Delimitations

The recorded history of the Kimberley Public Library dates back to 1882, but it has come to light that libraries, such as circulating libraries and reading rooms did in fact exist on the Diamond Fields in the preceding ten years. This study will therefore begin at 1870 and span roughly thirty-two years of library history; it will cover early attempts at establishing libraries and will describe events leading up to the founding of the Kimberley Public Library and the Beaconsfield Library and Institute; it will trace their development through the years of depression preceding the Anglo-Boer War and follow through to 1902 when the war ended and conditions stabilised to a certain extent.

The study will not attempt comparisons with library development in other towns in South Africa, but will give a brief survey of library conditions at the Cape and overseas in the early eighteen-seventies as it may be assumed that the library experience of newcomers to the Diamond Fields would have had a bearing on the nature and scope of the facilities that came into existence.

## 1.7 Definition of terms

### Public Library

"A Public Library is an organised collection of graphic materials arranged for relatively easy use, cared for by an individual or individuals familiar with that arrangement and available for use by at least a limited number of persons for general information or recreational purposes" (Johnson, 1965, p.78).

### Reading room

A Reading room implies premises housing a collection of books, magazines and newspapers available for

browsing purposes by the general public, either free of charge or on payment of an admission fee and for loan by subscribers on payment of a fixed registration fee.

#### Circulation/ Circulating Library

A circulation or circulating library is a collection of books, usually of a popular kind, which may be borrowed by the public on payment of a small fee; it may form part of a commercial undertaking.

#### Subscription Library

A subscription library is a public library which is financially dependent on subscription fees payable monthly, quarterly or annually by registered members and which entitles them to borrow books for a stipulated period.

#### Mechanics' Institutions

Mechanics' Institutions are centres which were established in the 19th century by philanthropists for the purpose of providing constructive and cultural leisure time activities, such as lectures, debates and games, to the working class; the library was the most important feature of these Institutions.

#### A Community

"A community is a set of people occupying an area with defined territorial limits and so far united in thought and action as to feel a sense of belonging together"

(Finberg, 1967, p.33).

#### The Diamond Fields

The Diamond Fields denotes the territory in the Northern Cape where diamonds were first discovered in the eighteen-seventies. It covered an area of about 10 000 square miles and was situated, according to Babe (1872, p.11),

"between latitude 28<sup>0</sup>30' south, and longitude 24<sup>0</sup>28' east {Greenwich}. The Vaal River runs north and south through the centre of this country...The Orange River runs along the southern part of the diamond district, and may be considered the southern boundary of the diamondiferous country. The part which lies on the east bank of the Vaal River comprises part of the 'Orange Free State', a Dutch republic".

Initially the Diamond Fields were restricted to the river diggings on the Vaal River, Klipdrift on the one side of the river and Pniel on the opposite side. When diamonds were discovered further inland, resulting in the establishment of the so-called "dry-diggings" at Dutoitspan, Bultfontein (now Beaconsfield), De Beers and New Rush in 1871, the Diamond Fields encompassed this area as well.

### 1.8 Abbreviations

DN is the abbreviation for the newspaper "Diamond News", 1870-1884; published as "Diamond News and Griqualand West Government Gazette", 1874-81. Published at Pniel, Dutoitspan, New Rush and Kimberley.

DF is the abbreviation for the newspaper "The Diamond Fields", 1770-1877; published at Klipdrift, 1870 - 1873; at Dutoitspan, 1873-1874. New series published at Kimberley, 1875-1877.

DFA is the abbreviation for the newspaper "The Diamond Fields Advertiser", 1878 - . First published as "Diamond Fields Advertiser and Commercial Gazette."

DI is the abbreviation for the newspaper "Daily Independent", 1879-1892. Previously the "Independent"

Ind is the abbreviation for the newspaper, the "Daily Independent", 1875-1879, before it became a daily newspaper in 1879.

KPL is the abbreviation which is used for the Kimberley Public Library.

### 1.9 The need for the study

Historical research of any kind is important as it puts past events into perspective and gives an insight into the causes and results of past happenings.

"Our experience in the past," maintains Arnold J. Toynbee (1966, p.3), "gives us the only light on the future that is accessible to us. Experience is another name for history. When we speak of history, we are usually thinking of the collective experience of the human race."

Public libraries of today are beset by problems. As free institutions they are expected to justify their existence in terms of quantifiable services; the future of the public library in its present form is in jeopardy. The belief that all library material should be issued free of charge to all registered members is receiving serious reconsideration and some authorities are no longer prepared to subscribe to the principle of free library facilities.

These and other problems need to be viewed in the light of what has gone before. Perspective will be gained and a pattern in the history of South African librarianship established when findings of relevant studies are carefully examined and correlated. Benade (1977, p.8) rightly contends that research



into the background of individual libraries should prove enlightening, "contributing to an increased knowledge and greater understanding of South African libraries as a social phenomenon".

The findings of other librarians, such as R F M Immelman, R F Kennedy, T Friis and R Benade are of special significance for the substantiation of relevant hypotheses which could contribute to the formulation of theories with a direct bearing on present day problems. This aspect will receive closer attention in the concluding chapter.

Another reason for this study is that it will fill gaps in the historical record of Kimberley. Any supplementary research serves to complete the picture of social life on the Diamond Fields. Many famous figures, such as Cecil John Rhodes, J B Currey, and Justice P M Laurence, spent a large part of their lives in Kimberley and were actively involved with the events of the time. This study will indicate to what extent they and others like them played a role in the library history of the town.

### 1.10 Methodology of study

The heuristic method of research, entailing the tracing of records and documents with a bearing on the history of the early days of Kimberley, was employed to reconstruct the past.

Life on the diggings was filled with hardships and privation and the only records of that period that have survived are letters that were written to family "at home" or travelogues by overseas visitors who visited the Diamond Fields out of curiosity or as part of a journey through South Africa. J L Babe, for instance, was a correspondent from the New York World in South Africa for two years and was

"the first to inform the American public of the very great value of the South African Diamond Mines" and his trustworthiness was vouched for by a Mr D G Croly (Babe, 1872, p.viii).

In trying to form a picture of the living conditions of the early days, use has been made of authentic descriptions by such early Kimberley residents as J L Babe, J Angove, F Boyle, C A Payton and A Williams. Kimberley, turbulent city, the well-researched book by Brian Roberts (1976) was consulted for reliable background information.

It was, however, mainly the early newspapers which had to be searched for authentic accounts of happenings. The editors of early newspapers, such as the Diamond Fields Advertiser, Diamond News and the Daily Independent, were deeply involved with the everyday life on the Fields and expressed their own opinions in no uncertain a manner. Newspapers were the most important and most popular reading material of the time and the editors were important opinion-makers. It was often feasible for a politician to print his own newspaper to enable him to express his opinions freely. Biased reporting often led to confrontation between the editors, with one maligning the other.

For a study of this kind it is fortunate that reporting was so detailed and that even advertisements were worded in such a manner as to be very subjective and revealing. At the same time, discrepancies and errors, resulting from inaccurate reporting, cause innumerable problems for the researcher. Despite all efforts to provide full and accurate information details, such as initials, had sometimes to be omitted.

Fairly complete runs of newspapers dating back to 1870 are available for consultation but often the

papers are too fragile for use and microfilms almost illegible. Nevertheless they are invariably the only source material, and, as such, were used extensively for this study. Official documents and letters, traced in the South African Archives, De Beers Archives and in the records of the Kimberley Public Library, were used to substantiate certain references.

A collection of facts does not, however, constitute a history and Young (1964, p.150) points out that "the social process as a whole must be synthesized and explained". This was attempted in the context of library development.

The approach of this work is chronological rather than thematic so that the sequence of events may be followed. A brief survey of the political and socio-economic conditions before and immediately after the discovery of diamonds will be given in the second chapter; this will be followed by a resumé of library conditions in the Cape Colony and overseas in order to assess possible preconceptions with regard to the nature and function of libraries, and also to place the library development of Kimberley in perspective.

The next chapters will cover events leading up to the establishment of the Kimberley Public Library and the Beaconsfield Library. Chapters 8 and 9 will be devoted to an interpretation of aspects such as library finances, bookstock, policies and staffing. Chapter 10 will briefly relate and evaluate the role played by some of the prominent people of Kimberley; these biographical notes will not be restricted to the three-decade period of study. A summary and evaluation in Chapter 11 will conclude the study.

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CHAPTER 2ECONOMIC, POLITICAL AND HISTORICAL BACKGROUND2.1 The beginning

The birth of the city of Kimberley is directly attributable to the discovery of diamonds at the Cape in 1867. In a wider context the discovery of diamonds can be referred to as "the dawn of prosperity" in South Africa (Angove, 1910, p.198) at a time when the country was in the throes of an economic depression caused by various factors: agriculture had been badly affected by a prolonged drought; the completion of the Suez canal had harmed the economy of the Cape (Williams, 1948, p.560) and the United States had closed its market to South African wool in preference to wool from Australia, causing the price of wool to drop to two and a half pence per pound (Botma, 1947, p.105).

Continual wars between the Basutos and the Orange Free State had drained the country's financial resources and the printing of worthless paper money, the "blue-blacks", had caused a drop in currency which resulted in further economic deterioration (Williams, 1948, p.55).

The discovery of diamonds heralded a new industrial age and transformed the Cape Colony, which used to be the 'Cinderella of the British Colonial family' into a prosperous country "which soon eclipsed her sisters in the brilliancy of wealth" (Angove, 1910, p.199). As a result of a railroad extension to Beaufort West in 1880 and to Kimberley in 1885, places became more accessible and industrial development was facilitated.

The London Missionary Society had penetrated the Northern Cape early in the 19th century, setting up mission stations at Lattakoo, afterwards Kuruman, for the Tswana, and at Pniel and Hebron for the Korannas and Griquas. Boers in the area lived a nomadic existence as a result of absence of winter feeding and transport facilities. Continual livestock raiding by Black tribes and retaliation by White farmers caused a rift between missionaries and colonists, which was one of the causes of the Great Trek (Lucas, 1898, p.124) and of a growing hostility between Boer and British which culminated in the Anglo-Boer War.

In 1839 a mission station named Griquatown was established at Klaarwater to serve as a settlement for half-breeds, known as Bastards (afterwards Griquas). Two hundred miles south-east lay the only other village in the Northern Cape, Colesberg, which was founded on an abandoned station of the London Missionary Society.

In 1853 a village was established on the Orange River and named after the Acting Secretary of the Cape Colonial Government, Major William Hope. Brian Roberts (1876, p.4) remarks that Hopetown seemed an "incongruous choice of name for this forlorn village", but nevertheless turned out to be very appropriate because, by a strange turn of events, it "was destined to bring hope, not only to the Griqua wilderness, but to the whole of South Africa."

It was here, in 1866, that the first diamond was discovered. In 1869 a second diamond, the Star of South Africa, was picked up, presumably on the northern side of the Orange River. A diamond prospecting company, the Diamond Metal and Mineral Company, was founded in Colesberg and negotiations for mineral and mining concessions

in the Griqua territory were commenced with the Griqua chief, Nicholas Waterboer.

When the discovery of diamonds became public knowledge, a large number of fortune-seekers converged on the Hopetown area and then moved further afield, heading for the Vaal River. Two farms, Bultfontein and Dorstfontein, which were regular stopping places for travellers on their way to the Vaal, were also found to have diamonds, as was the adjoining farm, Vooruitzicht, owned by Nicholas de Beer. Licences for digging on the farms were procured by some, but progress was impeded by a chronic shortage of water; consequently, when rumours of rich deposits in the Vaal River area reached their ears, the prospect of having water close at hand enticed the diggers to leave the farms and to join the ranks of those already operating on the river banks (Roberts, 1976, p.20 et seq.).

"The sudden discovery of great mineral wealth", wrote Lucas (1898, p.246), "works something like a revolution. It brings in a stream of adventurers from other lands, men of strength and enterprise."

By 1870 two sizeable towns had sprung up on the Vaal River, Pniel, in the territory of Pniel Mission Station, and Klipdrift, two miles down river from Pniel and on the opposite side of the river. They lay about 40 miles from the nearest town, Jacobsdal, from which their mail was forwarded (Babe, 1872, p.34).

In the meantime the ownership of the Diamond Fields was being bitterly contested. The badly defined boundaries between the Griqua territory, the Orange Free State and the Transvaal had not presented a

problem before the mineral wealth in the Vaal River area was discovered.

The seemingly valid claim of the Orange Free State<sup>2</sup> was contested by David Arnot, a Cape Coloured lawyer acting on behalf of the Griqua chief, Nicholas Waterboer, who maintained that the Diamond Fields lay within the Campbell lands to which he had previously laid claim. He astutely made sure of Britain's backing by offering to cede the territory to her, should it be awarded to him. The Transvaal asserted that the land fell within its province as its boundary was the northern banks of the Vaal River.

A deadlock was reached. In 1871 Sir Henry Barkly, Governor of the Cape, appointed an arbitration court presided over by Robert Keate, the Lieutenant Governor of Natal, to settle the dispute. Keate upheld Waterboer's claim and both the Transvaal and the Free State had to forego ownership of the Diamond Fields.

"To this transaction," maintains Theal (1889, p.301), "more than to any other is due the feeling of suspicion of English policy, mingled with enmity towards it, which, for the next thirty years was entertained by many residents of the secluded farms in the republic".

Despite bitter protestations from the Orange Free State, Sir Henry Barkly issued a proclamation on 21 October 1871, declaring the territory of Nicholas Waterboer, about 17 800 square miles in area, part

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2. Twenty years previously it was accepted that all the land east of the Vaal was included in the Orange River Sovereignty.

of the British Dominion and named it Griqualand West.<sup>3</sup> Included in this territory was the ground on which the mission station, Pniel, was located and which Rev C F Wuras had purchased from Cornelis Kok (Theale, 1889. pp 389-390).

The three commissioners who were appointed to govern the Diamond Fields were unable to maintain order or to solve the problems of the diggers and in 1873 Griqualand West was proclaimed a Crown Colony of Britain and was granted its own constitution. It was to be ruled by a Lieutenant-Governor and a Legislative Council consisting of four elected members and four Government nominees with the Lieutenant-Governor holding the casting vote. The first Lieutenant-Governor, Richard Southey, the former Colonial Secretary, did very little to improve the living conditions on the Diamond Fields and it was only when he was succeeded by Major Owen Lanyon that real reforms took place (Roberts, 1978, p.3).

In 1876 a meeting was called to discuss the institution of a municipality and on 27 June 1877 an ordinance constituting "the town of Kimberley a Municipality" was published.<sup>4</sup>

In 1880 Griqualand West was formally incorporated as a province of the Cape Colony, entitling it to a representation of four to the Cape Parliament. In the next year J B Robinson and C J Rhodes were elected to represent Kimberley and Barkly West respectively in Parliament.

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3. Some five years later the Orange Free State was paid £90 000 as compensation for the loss of the Diamond Fields.

4. Ordinance no 7, 1877.



## 2.2 The birth of a city

In 1870 diamond operations were concentrated on Klipdrift and Pniel. Other sites along the river also came into operation, such as Gong Gong, Delport's Hope, Forlorn Hope, Poorman's Kopje, Sixpenny Rush, Moonlight Rush and others. The focus of the search for diamonds was, however, to change almost overnight. In 1871 diamonds were discovered quite by chance on Gilfillan's Kop on De Beer's farm, about 24 miles from Klipdrift (Babe, 1872, p.64).

As soon as the news of the discovery leaked out, most of the diggers abandoned their claims at Pniel and Klipdrift and streamed to "Colesberg Kopje", as it came to be known.<sup>5</sup> After a rush to peg claims had taken place in July 1871, the site also became known as "New Rush". Johannes Nicholas de Beer, owner of the farm, was astounded at the frenzied activity and only too happy to sell his farm to Alfred Ebdon for six thousand guineas in August 1871. Albert Ortlepp was appointed temporary General Manager at New Rush and G F Stegman was appointed to survey the camp and lay out a town (Roberts, 1976, p.50). By September 1871, there were "at least 5 000 people digging there...Shops, stores and tents ... erected in all directions..." (The Friend, 7 September 1871). The mine in operation on De Beer's farm became known as Old De Beers', but it later merged with New Rush and became known as Gladstone.

In 1873 Lord Kimberley, the Secretary of State for the Colonies, insisted that, before electoral division could take place, the places should

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5. Sarah Ortlepp and Fleetwood Rawstone, who, in conflicting stories, both claimed to have discovered the first diamond on this hillock, came from Colesberg.

receive "decent and intelligible" names (Roberts, 1976, p.115). J B Currey subsequently changed Klipdrift to Barkly to perpetuate the name of the Governor and New Rush to Kimberley after Lord Kimberley. The farm, Bultfontein, was bought by the Hopetown Company, afterwards the South African Exploration Company, for £2 000 (Roberts, 1976, p.18) and Dorstfontein (Dutoitspan) for £2 600 (Roberts, 1976, p.40).

By 1872, these settlements had merged into the township of Dutoitspan, a busy and attractive place, with every prospect of developing into the business centre of the Diamond Fields. In 1883 the inhabitants petitioned to change its status to that of a municipality and it became known as Beaconsfield after the former British Prime Minister, Lord Beaconsfield (Benjamin Disraeli), who had died in 1881.

### 2.3 Social and cultural background

A social survey of the community living on the Diamond Fields in the early days must necessarily be limited to those aspects which are suggested by the hypotheses and assumptions as set out in the preceding chapter. In an attempt to identify the factors which led to the establishment of a library and influenced its character and progress, a closer look at the cultural background of the community, in all its diversity, is feasible.

"A library," states Friis (1962, p.6), "does not act in a vacuum; it is part of the whole economic and social structure and reflects contemporary trends."

By the end of 1870, about 4 000 men were operating on the Diamond Fields; two years later, this figure, according to Beet (n.d. p. xvii), had increased to about 45 000. All writings of the time mention the heterogeneous nature of the community, which seems to have represented a cross-section of all levels of education and all walks of life.

"Merchants, clerks, mechanics, laborers and chronic loafers even," commented Babe (1872, p.23), "could not resist the fascinations of diamond digging."

This motley crowd of adventurers founded a settlement which "became a beacon in the mercantile world, and a centre of diamond traffic." Hotels and saloons were numerous and many were adjoined by halls where theatrical performances and other forms of entertainment were held; there were clubs, where a game of whist or chess could be enjoyed and which even had their own libraries and reading rooms (Hornsby, 1874 pp. 13, 16).

Who were these diggers and where did they come from? According to Hornsby (1874, p.46-47), they were of all nationalities "but chiefly English and Cape Colonials and ... of two classes, men of good birth and education and men of no education"; Boyle (1873, p.368) maintained that most diggers were not immigrants, "they were colonial born and one-third at least were Boers."

From the writings of all the authors of the time, it becomes clear that a large proportion of the diggers were indeed "Boers" and that there was a

great prejudice against them.<sup>6</sup> Williams (1931, p.81) calls them "illiterate, ignorant and in many cases narrow-minded, obstinate and bigoted," while Hornsby (1874, p.45) considered the Boer "the very skunkiest man in existence."

Already there was a growing rift between the colonial-born Afrikaner - the so-called "Boer" - and the British immigrant, to whom Britain was "home". The latter endeavoured to emulate the cultural conditions he was used to, while, in contrast, the Afrikaner was on the whole completely devoid of cultural aspirations due to isolation and lack of education; his cultural tradition revolved round religion; the Bible and Hymn book were his main, if not only, reading material.

Despite the fact that there were many Afrikaners on the diggings, their contribution to the library movement in the early Kimberley days was negligible. Coetzee (1945, p.533) points out that a library was a matter of indifference to most of them and not a concept which had been included in their upbringing. Education at the time was mostly through the medium of English and, in accordance with the anglicising policy of the British, Dutch was suppressed. The Afrikaner race, maintains

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6. In Thoughts of South Africa, Olive Schreiner (1923, p.104) defines a Boer as a "South African European by descent whose vernacular is the Taal, and who uses familiarly no literary European language. It does not denote race of necessity, the Boer may be French, Dutch, German or of any other blood...neither does it necessarily denote occupation; the word 'Boer' means literally 'Farmer', and practically the Boer is often a farmer and stockowner, but he may also be a hunter, trader, the president of a republic, or of any other occupation - he remains a Boer still while the Taal remains his only familiar speech."

Pienaar (1945, p.247) suffered culturally as a result of this policy.

"Die kulturele peil van ons volk was nie hoog nie," comments Nienaber (1941, p.25), "en dit word deur die geografiese en maatskaplike struktuur begryplik."

Van Jaarsveld (1964, p.37) mentions the passive attitude of the Afrikaner during these early years of British take-over.

"It was," he remarks, "in the role of spectators that they [the Afrikaners] witnessed the drama of British annexations unfolding beyond the Orange and Vaal Rivers between 1868 and 1879."

It must be borne in mind that Afrikaans was still in its infancy and was a language only in colloquial use. An early form of Afrikaans was used in print for the first time in De Zuid Afrikaan, a newspaper published in 1830. The first book in Afrikaans, Zamenspraak tusschen Klaas Waarzegger en Jan Twijfelaar over het onderwerp van afscheiding tusschen de Oostelyke en Westelyke Provincie by L H Meurant was published in 1861. It was only towards the end of the century that Afrikaans came into its own as a language worthy of recognition. As a spoken language, however, it was in constant use.

It is interesting to note that a young boy, who in later years was to become a champion for Afrikaans, arrived at the Diamond Fields during this time and grew up in Kimberley. This person was James Barry Munnik Hertzog.

## 2.4 Conclusion

The discovery of diamonds heralded a new phase in the history of South Africa. The focus of the economy of the Cape shifted from agriculture to mining and this brought a new kind of immigrant to South Africa, men of vision, strength and purpose, whose ideas and traditions were to have a great impact on the cultural life on the diggings; it also brought a "new influx of potential readers" (Varley, 1952, p.107).

Although the population on the diggings was initially predominantly Dutch, the initiative for library facilities did not come from this sector. The Boers had no practical experience of a library, their reading being by and large restricted to the Bible and Psalm book due to their Calvinistic upbringing. The lack of educational facilities further hampered the intellectual development of the community. It was the newcomers to the Fields who brought with them their knowledge of reading rooms, cultural institutions and public libraries as experienced by them in their places of origin.

Political friction was to impede the progress of Kimberley. The struggle for ownership of the Diamond Fields and the actions of the British Government were to cause a feeling of antagonism which would cause a rift between sections of the community, thereby damaging the library cause and delaying financial support from the Government.

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### CHAPTER 3

#### EARLY LIBRARY HISTORY

It has been shown that a large percentage of the population of the diggings were immigrants who flocked to South Africa from countries such as Britain, USA, Germany and Australia in search of riches. It is logical to assume that many of these people had experienced libraries in some form or another and that they brought with them certain preconceived ideas about libraries.

In order to assess to what degree overseas library patterns influenced those of the Diamond Fields, a brief survey of existing library conditions abroad is necessary. For the purpose of this study, this will be limited to Britain and USA.

##### 3.1 Library development in Britain.

Libraries were slow in developing in Britain. The British Museum opened its library in 1763, but this was purely a reference library. A number of venturesome and dedicated men strove to provide library facilities in the late 18th and early 19th centuries but these ventures were doomed to failure as a result of a lack of funds and they foundered after the demise of their protagonists.

Thomas Bray founded 61 libraries in Scotland for clergymen and Provost Samuel Brown initiated a system of travelling libraries in East Lothian for the purpose of placing books within the reach of every inhabitant of the country (Murison, 1955, p.20 et seq.). Two municipal rate-supported libraries came into operation in Warrington and Salford in 1848 and 1849 respectively; nevertheless, the Select

Report on Public Libraries, compiled by the House of Commons in 1849, revealed the unhappy state of libraries in general. This Report, which Dyer (1903, p.11) called "one of the most remarkable documents in the history of popular education" revealed that there was only one library in the whole of Great Britain which was "equally accessible to the poor as to the rich" whereas, in USA and Europe, admission was unrestricted.

### 3.1.1 The Free Libraries' Act

As a result of the Report, the Public Libraries' Act was passed by Parliament in 1850 according to which it was possible for libraries to be freely accessible to anyone, funds to be raised by means of taxes levied by municipalities at the rate of one penny in the pound on all rateable value.

According to Murison (1955, p.29) and Aitken (1971, p.74), the demand for free libraries did not come from the people themselves; it was seen by philanthropists as a counter-agent to evils rather than as a positive force for educational and recreational benefit, and as a way to protect the working class against bad habits; Kelly (1973, p.27), on the other hand, maintains that there was a latent public demand for better and free libraries in Great Britain during the 19th century.

The free library movement in Britain was initiated by librarians such as Edward Edwards (1812-86), who was an assistant in the Department of Printed Books in the British Museum and became the "first librarian of the Manchester Public Library, a library which, through his efforts, became free in 1852.

The Free Libraries' Act was not readily accepted by all municipal authorities. Opposition stemmed from the fear that free libraries would be



detrimental to existing subscription and Mechanics' Institute libraries. The movement was supported mainly by clergy and professional men who made generous donations towards it. Funding nevertheless remained inadequate, and in some cases subscription libraries were run alongside free lending libraries in order to raise money (Kelly, 1973, p.37).

One by one the counties adopted the principle of free access to libraries; by 1871, Lancashire, Yorkshire and Midlands had implemented this policy and Edinburgh received a £50 000 donation from Andrew Carnegie "on condition that the city adopt the Free Libraries' Act..." (Greenwood, 1887, p.89).

### 3.1.2 Mechanics' Institutions

The Industrial Revolution had heralded an age of prosperity in England; as working conditions improved and scientific discoveries increased, there was a greater demand for knowledge. In 1840 the Westminster Library founded the Westminster Scientific and Mechanics' Institution, with the idea of improving the knowledge of the working classes.

Mechanics' Institution libraries were run by subscription, however, and this necessarily put them and similar libraries beyond the reach of the average workman (Kelly, 1973, p.4 et passim). Nevertheless, by 1853, there were 700 Mechanics' Institutions in Britain with a membership of over 120 000, support coming mainly from a better class of artisan. Initially they were useful in providing library facilities but, as they could not be properly maintained, they became outdated and were unable to satisfy the needs of the day (Greenwood, 1887, p.38).

### 3.1.3 Book clubs and Circulating libraries

During the 18th century, book clubs and circulating libraries became popular with the working class who could not afford to buy books. As early as 1725, Allan Ramsay began to loan books from his shop and this soon became an accepted side-line for business ventures; popular books, mainly novels, were available on payment of a small subscription fee.

Altick (1957, p.66) stresses the popularity of circulating libraries with their stock of cheap reprints. "When the common man and woman wanted something to read," he states, "they gravitated towards the circulating library."

The prosperity of the Victorian middle class resulted in more leisure time for reading and the practice of evening reading circles "deeply influenced the tastes of children who grew up in such homes" (Altick, 1957, p.87).

### 3.2 Libraries in the United States of America.

USA was ahead of Britain in the field of librarianship, the first free library dating back to 1700. During the 18th century, the middle class emerged and this resulted in the establishment of the so-called "social libraries". These were usually subscription libraries or libraries owned by societies and their objectives were to provide the means by which members could assimilate knowledge, keep abreast of new developments in science, art and politics, and for recreational purposes (Friis, 1962, p.7-8).

At the same time there were also circulating libraries which were commercially run; their owners tried to attract readers by providing a wide selection of books to appeal to all tastes, but they very soon realised that their profits lay in

fiction and popular non-fiction, such as history and literature (Shera, 1965, p.149 et seq.).

While both circulating and social libraries competed for public support, there was little relationship of motive and no historical connection between them. The circulating library remained a thing apart while the social library was engulfed by the public library. The same groups who advocated social libraries, later pressed for the creation of public libraries. By the late 19th century there were 1 200 tax-supported libraries in USA and reading had become universally popular.

### 3.3 Library conditions at the Cape

In 1871, before Kimberley came into being, there were a number of sizeable towns in existence in South Africa already. Almost every small town had a flourishing library by this time but the oldest and most important library was that of Cape Town.

#### 3.3.1 The South African Library

The library history of the Cape Colony goes back a long way; Dyer (1903, p.7) remarked that, "with one exception in London, one in Manchester, and possibly two in America, there exists no modern English library that can claim an antiquity of more than a hundred years," and went on to point out that America's claim that a public library was first provided for by public funds when New Hampshire made provision for the upkeep of its public libraries by means of taxation in 1849, was completely false, as it was as far back as 1818 that funds for a public library were derived from taxation in the Cape Colony, and this "entitles the Cape Colony to rank as the pioneer of state-supported public libraries."

The Public Library in Cape Town was already well established in 1872. It stood at the entrance to the Gardens, "a vast structure of an elegant architectural design" (Babe, 1872, p. 74) and had a bookstock of some 30 000 volumes. This unique and valuable collection of books and manuscripts had "unrestricted privilege of admission" (Babe, 1872, p.74).

The nucleus of this collection was collected and bequeathed to the consistory of the Groote Kerk by Joachim Nicholaas von Dessin at his death in 1761. The very fact that he was able to build up a collection of 3 800 volumes during a period of 30 years, shows that there were many books in private ownership at the Cape in the 18th century. The Dessinian collection was open to the public but, according to Friis (1962, p.70), was seldom used as it was far too intellectual to suit the community's tastes.

In 1820 this collection was placed in the South African Public Library which was established in 1818 by Lord Charles Somerset and funded by means of a tax levied on wine. Regulations were framed by which "all burghers above the age of 26, officers of the army and navy, civil servants and other fixed residents were free to make use of the library" (Union of South Africa. Report of the Interdepartmental Committee on the Libraries, 1937, p.2).

As a result of financial problems, the allocation of money to the library ceased in 1825 and in 1829 the South African Library became a subscription library run by a committee of subscribers elected annually. It was through the mediation of Sir George Grey, Governor of the Cape, that the prestigious Public Library came to be built in the Public Gardens of Cape Town and that annual

government grants were allocated to the library. The vast and valuable collection of books and manuscripts which he donated to the Cape Colony was housed in a section of the Public Library and was officially opened in 1864.

In 1871 it emerged that many patrons found it difficult to reconcile the reference and recreational functions of the Public Library and it was suggested that these should be separated; a strong reference collection, "which could be consulted by privileged members of the so-called intelligentsia" should be built up, while a circulating library should operate separately in a room, "where a clerk would be in attendance." (Cape Monthly Magazine, 1871, p.303). Already the dual function of the public library was recognised.

### 3.3.2 Other South African libraries

A number of other circulating libraries and reading rooms were also established in Cape Town. There was the Commercial Exchange library which was a mixture of a businessmen's reference library and a general lending library, the South African Literary Society, which was restarted in 1829 and provided its members with a reading room containing a selection of magazines, the Young Men's Christian Association's Reading Room, the Cape Town Wesleyan Mental Improvement Society, the Mechanics' Institute, the South African Christian Book Union and the Temperance Lending Library (Cape Town Directory, 1866, pp. 73-84). There was also the Popular Library, which was in operation from 1834 to 1867 and provided mostly fiction and magazines to the public at a lower rate. Funding was the responsibility of public-spirited citizens (Immelman, 1972, p.23).

In the early 1800's circulation libraries appeared in Cape Town and stocked English, French, German and Dutch books which could be borrowed at a nominal fee. Immelman (p.18) contends that these early circulating libraries were not very successful and that none lasted for longer than a year or two.

During the period 1818-1874, which may be regarded as the pioneer stage of South Africa's library movement according to Friis (1962, p.72), 39 libraries were established in South Africa, 36 in the Cape Colony and three in Natal. These libraries were all run by funds obtained from subscriptions paid by registered members, and no financial assistance was received from the Government except in the case of Port Elizabeth, where a small grant of £100 was received annually

#### 3.4 Conclusion

Many of the people who arrived on the Diamond Fields from Britain, America and other overseas countries, had had prior contact with libraries and had already developed the reading habit. Benade (1977, p.33) agrees that

"By the beginning of the nineteenth century the reading habit was firmly entrenched through the interaction of elementary education, grammar schools, dissenting academies, scientific and other societies, periodicals, pamphlets, newspapers, books, coffee houses, social and intellectual gatherings and libraries."

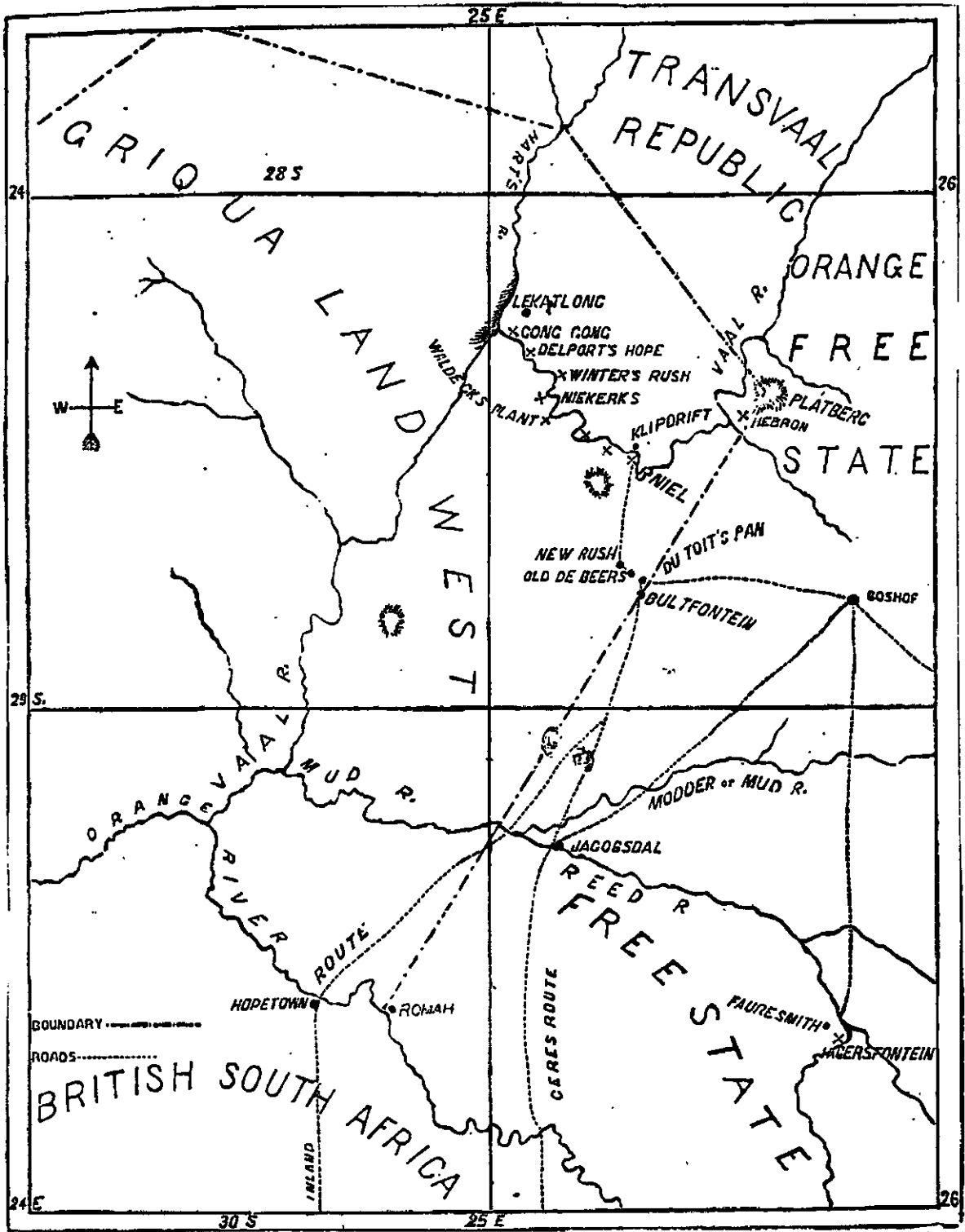
The concept of free public libraries was one with which many immigrants would already have been familiar. In the absence of any library facilities, they would readily have supported reading rooms and

circulating libraries, where popular novels could be had for a small fee.

Mechanics' Institution libraries were well known overseas and were seen by the more philanthropic as the solution to the problem of idleness and a means of upliftment of the working class.

Taking the prior library experience of newcomers to the Diamond Fields into consideration, it was to be expected that a need for reading facilities would soon emerge. Among the newcomers, there would have been those who would consider the establishment of a well-stocked public library one of the necessities of life, particularly in a place so far removed from cultural amenities of any kind.

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The Diamond Fields - 1873, showing Pniel, Klipdrift, Du Toitspan, Bultfontein and New Rush (Hornsby, 1874)



## CHAPTER 4

### THE FIRST ATTEMPT AT ESTABLISHING A PUBLIC LIBRARY IN KIMBERLEY

#### 4.1 Early Reading Rooms and Circulating Libraries

In 1872 there were about 3 000 White diggers living at Pniel and 2 000 at Klipdrift (Babe, 1872, pp. 45, 48.). They worked long hours, starting at daybreak and often continuing until 10 at night. On Sundays all mining ceased and a religious service was held in the committee tent. Everyone lived and worked in anticipation of finding diamonds and there was a constant air of excitement and suspense, interspersed with gloom and downheartedness.

Housing consisted mostly of tents but there were also canvas, corrugated iron, and unburnt brick houses; the winding streets were lined with "rows of rickety wood and iron shacks [which] served as shops, canteens, billiard rooms, eating houses, diamond buying offices and lawyers' rooms" (Roberts, 1976, p. 23).

When J L Babe arrived at the diggings in 1870, he found that there were very few English diggers and that the majority of the Whites were Dutch (Babe, 1872, p.30), but later he recorded that the Colonial Government had been "very liberal to emigrants [sic]" and that the English language was "the prevailing one at the mines" (Ibid, p.49), indicating an influx of English-speaking miners during the year. When Hurley's Reading Room came into operation at Pniel in April 1871, it promised its subscribers a selection of the latest English as well as Colonial papers and periodicals,

obviously with a predominantly English readership in mind.

The Reading Room, which was "well roofed and hung around with green baize", was attached to a General Dealer's situated next to the Post Office at Pniel and was owned by a Mr Hurley who offered his prospective clients "a cosy place of amusement for the approaching winter evenings...the best liquors and...the best attention and civility" (DN, 15 April 1871). A subscription of two shillings and sixpence per month was payable in advance, but subscribers were admonished that "defacing or jumping of any papers or periodicals will be liable to a penalty of 5/-" (DN, 15 May 1871).

In Klipdrift a Circulating Library was opened by Richards, Glanville and Company (DN, 13 May 1871) and, at a charge of threepence per book, a large stock of books was available for the convenience of the public of Klipdrift and Pniel.

In 1872 Klipdrift was, according to Babe (1872, p.48), gradually assuming the shape of a laid-out town but it had, in actual fact, already reached its peak and was soon to become practically deserted as diggers, finding it unpleasantly overcrowded, started departing and returning to the diamond-bearing farms.

Widespread publicity accorded to the discovery of diamonds found embedded in the mud plaster of the homestead at Dutoitspan, attracted more fortune-hunters and, when news of exciting diamond finds on "Colesberg Kopje" on the farm Vooruitzigt became known, the ensuing "rush" to peg claims was the biggest in the history of the Diamond Diggings.

The camp<sup>7</sup> which arose overnight was described by Frederick Boyle (1873, p.285), who visited it soon after its establishment, as "a forest, a labyrinth of tent-poles and a billowy sea of canvas". The population, according to his estimate, was more than 20 000 and, what impressed him more than the size of the camp, was the energy of its population. Before the end of the year 1871, there were six stores, four hotels, butchers' and shoemakers' shops, a billiard room and a saloon on the lower street and three hotels, several diamond merchants' offices, provision stores, clubs and billiard rooms on the main street (Stones of fire, 1910, p.9).

This new breed of digger felt the need for "a commodious and substantial building suitable for hire as a school, for lectures and concerts, a reading room and for religious services" (DN, 23 December 1871). Consequently, the Mutual Hall Company was founded and 300 shares were put up for sale at five pounds each. I R Taylor, the secretary, explained ,

"In a society as ours, so hurriedly congregated together, hardly any time has been found to arrange for the want of schooling, now so pressingly felt and here is at present no building whatever adapted to public entertainment. Tent accommodation has been found to fail for various reasons" (DN, 23 December 1871).

The reasons referred to included the unpleasant conditions experienced when church services were held in "the miserable structures of wood and canvas" where "the sandy soil underfoot was swarming with fleas, innumerable flies buzzed about

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7. "New Rush", afterwards Kimberley. Vide pp. 17-18 and 38.

life-span was short as a result of a lack of publishing and bookselling facilities.

On the Diamond Fields, however, circulating libraries ran successfully for many years. Possibly they suited the lifestyle of the digging community, who were not ready for more serious literature. After a hard day's work, an entertaining novel, which could be borrowed at a reasonable fee, provided the kind of relaxation sought after by many of the people on the Diamond Fields.

Subscription fees at Allen's Reading Room were initially advertised at one pound per month (DN 13 January 1872), but were reduced to fifteen shillings (DN, 27 January 1872) and then to seven shillings in August (DN, 3 August 1872). Non-subscribers paid an entrance fee of sixpence on weekdays and one shilling on Saturdays (DN, 3 February 1872).

Mr Allen obviously realised that, to attract potential readers to his shop, fees should be kept as low as possible and other attractions should be offered by way of bait; he consequently incorporated a music shop with the reading room and also held literary readings on Saturday evenings, an ambitious project, when one takes into consideration that his venue was a canvas structure of 15 feet by 20 feet (DN, 6 May 1873).

In the following year he extended his service to Klipdrift by undertaking to deliver four books and a catalogue per individual through Hurley & Company's passenger carts on payment of twenty shillings, of which ten shillings would be refunded on the return of all the books loaned. Copies of Lloyds, Reynolds, the Weekly Times and other English newspapers could also be forwarded at a fee of two

shillings per month for four copies (DF, 13 March 1873).

Another "librarian", Mr Phillips of the Phillips' Reading Room, conceived the idea of starting a gymnasium on his premises for the benefit of his clients (DN, 31 October & 5 November 1872).

Hurley's Reading Room had in the meantime moved to New Rush and was used for a number of purposes, including as a venue for readings and songs (DN, 17 February 1872), for meetings of the shareholders of the Mutual Hall Company (DN, 3 February 1872) and by the Masonic Brethren to discuss the proposed establishment of a Masonic Lodge at De Beers, New Rush (DN, 10 February 1872).

In 1872 there was great uncertainty about the future of the Diamond Fields and many people considered their stay on the Fields to be temporary. Earlier in the year, a bill had been introduced in Parliament annexing Griqualand West to the Cape Colony, but it was withdrawn as a result of opposition from the diggers.

When Sir Henry Barkly arrived at the Diamond Fields in September 1872, he put forward the suggestion that Griqualand West be made a Crown Colony of Britain, to be administered by a Lieutenant-Governor with the aid of a small Legislative Assembly elected by the diggers. An autonomous government, dedicated to handling the peculiar problems of the diggers, seemed to offer the logical solution to the political needs of the community, but this was not the case, as future events were to show.

Richard Southey took up his appointment as Lieutenant-Governor of Griqualand West in January 1873, assisted by his secretary, John Blades Currey. In the next month, Griqualand West was officially

proclaimed a Province<sup>8</sup> and New Rush was renamed Kimberley.

According to the new constitution, the diggers had limited representation on the Legislative Council and Southey had the casting vote. This led to open confrontation between the diggers and the Government. To add to the problems of the diggers, there was the continual threat of either a decline in the price of diamonds or the petering out of the diamond supply altogether.

Despite these problems, or perhaps as a result of them, a united community with a common goal - that of improving living conditions - emerged on the Diamond Fields. A hospital was built, a park established, many restaurants were opened and theatrical performances were given at the St. James and Craven Clubs. The camps had never looked more prosperous; New Rush and Old De Beers merged to become Kimberley, and Bultfontein was incorporated with Dutoitspan to become the township of Beaconsfield. More and more wives joined their husbands on the diggings and there were signs of growing stability and permanence.

During this time the first schools appeared on the Diamond Fields, a certain indication that families were settling down. Small one-man schools had opened during the previous year; Mrs R Campbell from Port Elizabeth opened a morning school for the Dutoitspan families (DN, 9 March 1872), Mrs Longhurst from Richmond, Natal offered daily intuition "in all branches of a sound English education" at Colesberg Kopje camp (DN, 2 March 1872); Mrs Davies opened a day school for children

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8. Proclamation no 20, 5 July, 1873.

of both sexes at New Rush and, according to Nathan (1925, p.207), Olive Schreiner taught in a school at New Rush from 1872 to 1873.

In 1872 a school opened in Dutoitspan under the auspices of the Dutch Reformed Church and was run in the tent where the church services were held; Boyle (1873, p.326) describes the "crowd of little maidens, armed with slate, book and pen ...chattering gayly in Dutch for the most part." It was a good thing, he added disparagingly that "the savage Boer children" would be taught to read and write, "accomplishments almost unknown...amongst the women of the district."

#### 4.2 The establishment of the first Public Library

Intellectual activity increased and interest in culture and self-improvement was in evidence in a society in which "the British element, of course, predominated" (Beet, n.d., p.71). Impetus was given to the movement when, in March 1873, gambling was declared illegal.<sup>9</sup>

"This is just the time," wrote the editor of the Diamond News (13 March 1873), "...to start something more national and harmless to beguile man's leisure hours." The idea was supported by a correspondent who suggested the establishment of a society at New Rush "for the purpose of...miscellaneous entertainment at a cheap rate, of musical and literary nature, combining also a debating society" (DN, 31 May 1873).

The scheme of starting a Literary Society and Library gathered momentum and in August 1873, at a

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9. Proclamation no 82, 17 March 1873.

preliminary meeting under chairmanship of R W Murray, editor of the Diamond News, it was proposed,

"That it is desirable that a Literary Society and Public Library should be established at New Rush" and that the purpose of the library should be to obtain and circulate among the members "the best current literature of the day and standard works". (DN, 9 August 1873).

At a charter meeting held on 13 August 1873, the project was officially launched and it was resolved that a steering committee of seven members be appointed and that Mr Richard Southey, the Lieutenant-Governor be invited to become President of the Society; Vice-Presidents, Mr J B Currey, Secretary to the Lieutenant-Governor, and Mr S Shippard, Attorney-General for Griqualand West; and Honorary Secretary, Mr N Solomon (DN, 14 August, 1873). Richard Southey accepted the invitation and agreed to chair the next meeting of the Society which was to take place in the Kimberley Hall during the following month (Southey, 1873).

A report, read by R W Murray, stated that the idea of establishing a Literary Society and Library had received great support from the community. It was further stated that the Society would have no sectarian, party, or class bias and that the main object of the library would be to provide recreation for the whole community, which, it was claimed, had a reading population of about 10 000 of which a large portion had been "accustomed to the use of public libraries and up to the time of taking up residence [in Kimberley] have been in the full enjoyment of the current literature of the day..." and should certainly be entitled to have the same facilities as other towns of the same size. Periodicals and newspapers could be delivered regularly as there were two mails per month.



The report stated that many inhabitants of Barkly as well as Kimberley would be prepared to subscribe funds for the purpose of establishing a public library. It was recommended that suitable premises for the library be found, that members be enrolled and a secretary and librarian be appointed. The library would be governed by a council of 20 members and the President and Vice-presidents would serve in an ex-officio capacity. There were to be two classes of subscribers with subscriptions as follows:

1. For admission to Library and Reading Room - £3 per annum.
2. For admission as well as the privilege of taking out books and periodicals, £4 4 0 per annum.

The rules of the library, it was decided, would be based on those of the Cape Town Public Library, and the Literary Institute "shall be founded on models of similar institutions in Europe and the colonies [which are] most popular and especially adapted to the wants of the Fields."<sup>10</sup>

The Colonial Secretary, in his address, reiterated that nowhere were there so many educated men as on the Fields and then resolved "that an institution be established to be called the Kimberley Library and Institute." A committee of ten was appointed to arrange preliminaries (DN, 4 September 1873).

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10. The concept of a Literary Institute as part of a library was based upon the Mutual Improvement Clubs which sprang up in abundance in England in the middle 19th century. "Hardly a village," states Altick (1957, p.212), "was without a club. The emphasis was on reading, discussions, essays, verse etc."

There was an immediate and gratifying response from the public and, at a meeting held at the Parker's Pavilion Hall at which Mr Southey presided, the Secretary stated that 200 subscribers had already been enrolled, giving a projected income of between £600 and £700 (DN, 9 September 1873). The editor of the Diamond News optimistically estimated the annual income at £2 000 and declared that he was certain that His Excellency, "who evinces a most praiseworthy interest in the undertaking," would follow the examples of the governments of the Cape Colony and Natal<sup>11</sup> and recommend to the Legislature that a grant be given to the library.

He expressed the hope that "the Council would make the Institute attractive for evening assemblages" so that the young men who worked hard and had little leisure time, could enjoy some evening entertainment. The editor finally admonished that care should be taken in the appointment of a librarian; he should be "a gentleman accustomed to such work and should have some knowledge of letters."

"It must not be supposed," he profoundly observed, "that all they do is to give out books, for a librarian's work is more than that. Much of the success of the institution will depend upon the fitness of the librarian for his office." (DN, 11 September 1873).

A week later a council made up of the following 26 members was established: Messrs R W Murray, D Sherriff, Buyskes, St. Leger, W Ward, James Hall, W A Hall, D'Arcy, E R Moses, S Siddall, A

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11. In 1862 a government grant of £600 was given to the South African Library. In 1864 the Port Elizabeth Act was passed. In Natal no Government acts had been passed by 1873.

Dunkelshahler, H Green, T Lynch, N Solomon, G Doidge, A Von Bressendorff, J Stamper, D Matthews, Dr Graham, the Reverends Lehain, J Richards, J Calvert and J Louw, the Lieutenant-Governor, Mr J B Currey, Advocate Shippard and members of Council ex officio.

The first problem facing the Committee was that of finding a suitable venue for the library. This time some words of wisdom came from the editor of the Diamond Fields who advised the Committee not to settle for second best.

"With a mean and shabby start," he warned, "[the library] will never survive the first year. Let its supporters exhibit their faith in its stability by housing it in comparative luxury and it becomes an institution from the beginning with certainty of thriving...as long as there are diamonds in Colesberg Kopje" (DF, 3 September 1873).

Unfortunately the Committee were so eager to start the library service that this warning was not heeded; they promptly rented a house in Bowling Street Alley, belonging to a Mr Ferguson, to serve as a temporary reading room and advertised for a librarian at £20 per month (DN, 18 September 1873). The Natal Mercury enviously remarked that "such a stipend bespeaks the existence of a library worth the name and of people capable of appreciating such a basis as well as capable of supporting it."<sup>12</sup>

Mr John Rorke was appointed Secretary\ Librarian and the library opened next to Sanger's Bowling Alley on 1 October 1873 with a literary and musical

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12. Quoted in DN, 21 October, 1873.

entertainment which subscribers could attend free of charge (DN, 27 September 1873).

The programme of music and song included a rendition of "Let me like a soldier fall" by Dr D Matthews, accompanied on the cornet and drum. It was an evening which "augurs well for the infant society..." (DF, 22 October 1873). Soon afterwards, however, a rain storm saturated the roof of the building, but fortunately there was little damage to the small stock of books, which consisted only of about "20 cheap paper covered novels and a few volumes of Chambers" (DF, 8 October 1873).

As there had been no time to procure enough books, the public were asked to donate suitable works to the Library, a plea to which Richard Southey responded with a donation of twenty-seven volumes (Rorke, 1873). By October 1873, the reading room was completely furnished, "well ventilated and lighted" (DN, 7 October 1873). A suggestion book was placed on a table together with newspapers "of every party, religion, social, political and scientific" (DN, 18 October 1873).

A library was now in operation, but the building was completely inadequate for activities such as debates, discussions, chess or whist and it was suggested that the proposed library building should make provision for these and also incorporate a smoking room and a lavatory, because "societies ought to offer some of the advantages of a Club though of course not aiming at any pretence of exclusiveness" (DF, 8 October 1873).

A few other societies did, in fact, already exist. In August 1873 a Literary, Musical and Dramatic Society was founded. After the establishment of the Public Library and Institute, it combined with this institution, membership to the one

automatically providing eligibility to the other (DN, 18 October 1873).

At the same time a Working Man's Institute was opened in Main Street, Dutoitspan. It had a Lecture and Reading Room, and "the best leading periodicals and newspapers" were available at a fee of one shilling and sixpence per month to members and at three shillings per month to non-members, and was open from 6 to 9:30 pm in the evenings (DN, 14 August 1873).

The Phillips' Library and Allen's Circulating Library were both holding their own in the face of this opposition. In August 1873 Allen's Circulating Library had 279 novels in stock and customers were promised regular additions every week (DN, 23 August 1873). Later that year, the reading room was enlarged and evenings of song and music were instituted.

By advertising new additions to stock regularly, Mr Allen strove to convince the public that they should give him a trial "before rushing into expensive subscriptions to other New Libraries" (DN 14 October 1873). His charges were, however, practically identical to those of the Public Library and Literary Institute: for a fee of seven shillings per month (four guineas a year), subscribers could borrow books and use the reading room; for a fee of five shillings per month (three pounds per year) they could either use only the reading room and listen to good music or take out books (DN, 11 October 1873).

By the end of the year, it was obvious that, contrary to the prophecies of doom, Kimberley had not only managed to keep going for another year, but had succeeded in generally improving the quality of life of the community. The editor of the Diamond

Fields pointed out that there was a lot to be learnt from shops:

"See what there is to be sold," he wrote (1 November 1873), "and you may pretty well guess what are the habits, manners and customs of the people." Plate glass windows had been introduced to the Diamond Fields and the goods displayed differed greatly from the bundles of ready-made goods stacked in the shops a year or two before. The stock on display revealed a high standard of living. "We are," he declared, "getting refined as well as reformed."

But as the year 1873 drew to a close there were signs that conditions were deteriorating. The prices of diamonds were very low and the cost of mining was high. There was, at that time, no company or government to control the output of diamonds and, by flooding the market with diamonds, the miners had caused a drop in price.

The year 1874 was not an easy one; the drought of the previous year was followed by heavy rains which caused the mines to flood, bringing work virtually to a standstill and necessitating the pumping out of mines at great cost. In a bad rain storm in January 1874, gale force winds tore the roofs and 'flies' off many buildings,<sup>13</sup> including that of the Public Library; canvas buildings were torn into ribbons and wooden structures completely flattened (DN, 27 January 1874).

The future of Kimberley and its diamond mines appeared to be in jeopardy when, later that year, hard blue ground was struck in the mines and the prospect of a diminishing supply of diamonds had to

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13. The word 'flies' is not presently in use, but seems to denote a prop or stay abutting from under a roof to accommodate an extension of the building, probably an 'afdak' or 'lean-to'.

be faced. When Mr J B Robinson built a brick house in New Main Street in 1874 at a cost of between £300 and £400, "everyone thought him mad, as any day the Mine might be worked out" (Steyn, 1919, p.197).

Despite the uncertainty about the future of Kimberley, the town started assuming permanent features: the "untidy conglomeration of tents and wagons" was replaced by buildings of galvanised iron and brick, such as the Government House, which became the focal point of the town (Roberts, 1976, p. 125).

The inhabitants of the town relaxed in bars, billiard rooms and bowling saloons and read papers and periodicals in Phillips' Library (Hornsby, 1874, p.30), the Craven Club, with its comfortable reading room (Roberts, 1976, p.125), and the Public Library.

"Of the library's popularity there can be no doubt," maintains Roberts (1976, p.128) "but financially it was not an immediate success," and already there was growing dissatisfaction with the library which was "mean in appearance, of scant dimensions and enormously dear" (DF, 11 April 1874). The opinion was also expressed that it was all very well to make reading material available to the young but it was equally important that the library should be pleasant and comfortable and not a "wretched makeshift" little room like the one the library was presently occupying (DN, 11 April 1974).

Small wonder that the library, which had no additional attractions besides its books and which was dependent upon subscribers for its existence, had a continual battle for survival. Fund-raising projects in aid of library funds became necessary and these sometimes took the form of lectures by erudite visitors, such as Mr G W Stow, who delivered

an address on "The study of geology" (DN 14 March 1874).

It was soon realised that the Griqualand West Library would never survive without the financial aid of the Government. It was a well known fact that the Cape Town library had been erected at a cost of £15 000 and that, not only had the Government provided most of the funds, but an annual grant of £600 was being paid towards its upkeep (Friis, 1962, p.108).

At this time, the Colonial Secretary, Sir John Molteno, who had previously been a library assistant at the South African Public Library (the Cape Town library), issued a "Memorandum of Regulations"<sup>14</sup> which had "the Encouragement and Proper Management of public libraries in smaller towns" in mind.

According to these regulations, towns were entitled to library grants of amounts not exceeding the subscriptions received during the first year or the average of the first two years that the library was in operation, with the stipulation that it should be freely available to everyone and that regular annual reports should be presented to the Government.

The Kimberley library, it was felt, could qualify for a grant from the Government.<sup>15</sup> In July 1874 John Rorke, the Secretary of the Griqualand West Library and Institute, as it came to be called, wrote to Richard Southey, the Lieutenant-Governor stating that the concern's assets were £75 as opposed to liabilities of £328 and enquired what

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14. G.N. 442 of 1874.

15. Subscriptions for the previous year had amounted to £522. This denotes a membership of 125



financial assistance could be expected from the Government (Rorke, 1874).

At a meeting of the Legislative Council held in August 1874, Dr P J H Graham, a well-known physician and member of the Council, asked the Secretary to the Governor, Mr J B Currey, whether it was the intention of the Government to give the Griqualand West Public Library a grant from the £1 000 which had been voted by the Council for Education, Libraries, etc.<sup>16</sup>, to which the latter replied that the Government would assist to the extent of £300.<sup>17</sup>

Mr Currey confirmed this in writing, stating that

"the Lieutenant Governor will sanction a grant of £300 sterling for the present year for the purpose of discharging existing liabilities but that in His Excellency's opinion the Institution requires to be remodelled and that for the future, grants from the Public Treasury can only be made in aid of permanent Public libraries for the purpose of Standard works."<sup>18</sup>

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16. G W Legislative Council. Minute xcvi, 1874.

17. Sir Henry Barkly, Governor of the Cape, tried to raise a loan of £25 000 for Griqualand West but this was refused by Lord Carnarvon, the Colonial Secretary. In the Expenditure listed for 1874, only an amount of £304 is debited to "Education" - presumably the grant made by the Lieutenant-Governor to the Library. It is further noted on new budget, "No grants received". (Britain. Parliamentary papers, vol. 27. Africa. Cape of Good Hope, 1875 - 99, p.39).

18. Grant of £300 made to J Rorke. Treasurer Authority Book 175, 25 August 1874.(GLW 64. Misc. Letters.)

When the news of the grant became known, there were two schools of thought. The Diamond Fields (26 August 1884) voiced the opinion that a proper income and expenditure statement and budget for maintenance costs should be drawn up to establish what was needed to run the library, and that two-thirds of the required amount should be raised by subscription and a third by government grant, adding that the library had done nothing to prove itself and that it would be a fiasco if it were to peter out despite financial aid from the Government.

The editor of the Diamond News vehemently repudiated the insinuations of ineffectiveness, maintaining that the library was indeed fulfilling its mission and that the Government, fully aware of the importance of the Institution, had promised assistance which, he assured his readers, was both "timely and proper" (DN, 27 August 1874). Unfortunately he was unduly optimistic, as future events were to show.

The two newspapers were at this time in bitter opposition to each other. R W Murray, editor of the Diamond News, championed the cause of the Government while the Diamond Fields, which was under the editorship of Alfred Aylward, had become the mouthpiece of the diggers since it was taken over by the Committee of Public Safety, a committee which had been formed to look after the miners' rights subsequent to the abolition of the old Diggers' Committees.<sup>19</sup> The diggers resented J B Currey's highhanded treatment of them and his influence over

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19. The Diggers' Committees were abolished by the Mining Ordinance of 1884 and were replaced by Mining Boards.

the Lieutenant-Governor, Richard Southey, and were agitating for a change of government.<sup>20</sup>

The Diamond News subsequently published a notice issued by the librarian, J Rorke, informing the public that a grant had been approved and that the Government had consented to the erection of an appropriate library building (DN, 3 September 1874).<sup>21</sup>

On 12 October 1874 the first general meeting of library subscribers took place, with Mr R W Murray in the chair. Mr Southey was re-elected President of the Public Library and Literary Institute and the new committee was made up of Messrs W Ward, R W Murray, W Hall, Adv. Shippard, A von Bressensdorf and A G Biden; Mr G B Attwell was elected Honorary Secretary and Mr W Hall, Treasurer. Three more members were to be nominated by the Lieutenant-Governor as representatives of the Government.<sup>22</sup>

The first annual report, written by Mr Rorke, was published in full in the Diamond News (17 October 1874); it gives an indication of the odds with which the newly established public library had to contend. Subscriptions for the year had amounted to £522, which, Mr Rorke stated, proved that there were

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20. The political unrest culminated in the Black Flag Rebellion which took place the following year.

21. This may have been a verbal communication as the letter received from Mr Currey makes no mention of erecting a library building.

22. In the margin of Rorke's letter to Southey, dated 13 October, 1874 (GLW 64), Southey noted, "Secretary to furnish strength of Council and inquire whether the three members the Govt. is asked to nominate must be subscribers and in that case must ask for list of subscribers."

many people who were prepared to pay for the privilege of reading. The stock of about 500 books was, however, insufficient to hold the interest of the public and a lack of funds precluded a regular flow of new books; the premises were inadequate and the rental of £200 too high; a full-time librarian was required but a salary of at least £20 per month should be offered.

He suggested that, if expenses could be reduced to £20 per month in total, £30 could be spent on new books every month. He reiterated that the Government would be willing to erect a new library if a suitable site could be obtained and stated that a stand in New Main Street had generously been set aside for this purpose.

The suggestions put forward in the report were implemented. The library was moved to cheaper premises so that more funds would be available for the purchase of books. The choice fell upon the stationery warehouse of Messrs Richards, Glanville and Company which was situated in Main Street, opposite the Standard Bank. It was much bigger than the previous library, measuring 24 feet by 18 feet and was much more attractive.

This was possibly considered a temporary measure until a proper library could be built, but, sadly, this step led to the eventual decline of the library. The previous library, small and cramped as it was, was situated next to Dodds' Billiard Saloon (previously Sangers') and visitors to the library used the card room of the saloon as a library smoking room (DN, 15 September 1874). It appears that the congenial atmosphere of the old venue outweighed the prospect of a bigger assortment of novels in an uninviting stationery warehouse.

At this time too, the dedicated Secretary\ Librarian, John Rorke, resigned his position in favour of a post as Secretary of the Mining Board. Mr C Shaw, who replaced him as librarian, lacked the drive to promote the library; he nevertheless commenced with the cataloguing of the existing stock of books in anticipation of a large consignment of new books to come (DN, 8 June 1875).

The library functioned for about two years but, without funds for purchasing books, it led an ineffectual existence. Both Southey and Currey were recalled in 1875; the library had lost its President and Vice-president, as well as all hope of further support from the Government.

In November 1875 the booking for the opera, 'Maritana', was still done at the Public Library (DN, 5 November 1875), but by 1876, it had ceased to exist. Richards and Glanville dissolved their partnership at the end of 1876 and vacated the premises which had housed the library.

The Daily Independent, mouthpiece of its proprietor, Mr J B Robinson, stated in a leading article (1 May, 1877) that, "so long as there was no by-play connected with the Public Library, it was worthy of support, but from the time that it became merely a concern supplementary to the bookshop it deservedly declined in public estimation and lost all claim to Government support." He went on to challenge the editor of the Diamond News, Mr W R Murray, who was one of the founders of the library and a member of the Council which was originally appointed to run the library, to publish a full report on the financial affairs of the library as well as a list of books in stock and "a statement of what has become of books which have disappeared."

Mr Murray did not take up the challenge and more than a year later he admitted that the library had been "wrecked by the surf of broken promises which rolled in upon it from the Government Office" (DN, 3 December 1878). He went on to bewail the fact that "in this community, remarkable for its intellectual power and vigour, there should be neither a public reading room, library or literary institute."

The library was not mentioned in any of the newspapers again and one can only surmise that what was left of the library stock was absorbed into Goch's Circulating Library which came into operation in 1879. Despite the failure of the library, there still existed a great need for this facility on the Diamond Fields and the project was shelved temporarily only.

#### 4.3 Conclusion

The people who congregated on the Diamond Fields were representative of many nationalities from all over the world. They felt completely ostracised and cut off from civilisation and one of the first needs which manifested itself was the need for reading rooms of some kind where newspapers and magazines could put them into touch with the outside world and give their dreary lives a semblance of culture.

While the future prospects of Kimberley were uncertain the community life remained unstable. When things started settling down, attention was given to recreational and cultural matters but progress was closely linked to the socio-economic conditions on the Fields, and the vicissitudes of the precarious existence on the Diamond Fields vitally affected the fortunes of new enterprises.

Kimberley was in a very unsettled state; it was, as Brian Roberts (1976, p.391) aptly named it, a "turbulent city" and as such, was unable for many years to provide the infra-structure for a successful public library. The town's whole existence depended upon diamond mining and the diggers had no guarantee of the duration of the diamond fissures. It was a long time before a sense of permanence developed.

As library financing had to come from the pockets of the residents, the success of the library depended largely upon the prosperity of the community. It was only when the economy of the town improved and more business and professional men settled in Kimberley, that a serious interest in the establishment of a library evinced itself. The Library Committee of the first library was composed mostly of professional and educated men who were aware of the educational and recreational potential of the library.

The provision of reading material was not considered the only purpose of a public library. Another important function was the encouragement of a wide variety of stimulating activities such as games, lectures, debates and music. To be able to offer these, suitable premises were of vital importance.

The physical conditions experienced on the Diamond Fields precluded extensive reading and the library had little to offer by way of comforts. The lack of lighting was also a factor to be contended with. Kimberley was known for its heat, the fine dust from the mines and for many other discomforts. Despite concerted efforts, the early attempts at establishing reading rooms and libraries were doomed to failure because of inadequate buildings and the lack of funds to improve matters.

The lack of assistance from the authorities made it virtually impossible to keep the library going. Income from subscriptions was insufficient to cover expenses such as salaries, rentals and the purchase of new books. There was no local governing body which could be approached for financial assistance and the authorities in Cape Town and in Britain were unsympathetic towards Kimberley as a result of political upheavals. Southey's application for a loan from overseas was ignored by Lord Carnarvon, who saw Kimberley residents as nothing but trouble makers.

The library was a luxury that many advocated but when the facilities were actually made available, the utilisation was disappointing; the whole way of life on the Diamond Fields was geared to the excitement of diamond prospecting and mining and anything else was mundane by contrast. Many of the newcomers had prior experience of Book Clubs and Circulating Libraries and were eager to obtain light reading matter for a fee of a few pence. Nevertheless, dealers who ran Circulating Libraries were obliged to branch out into other lines of business to attract customers to their shops and the Public Library itself packed up.

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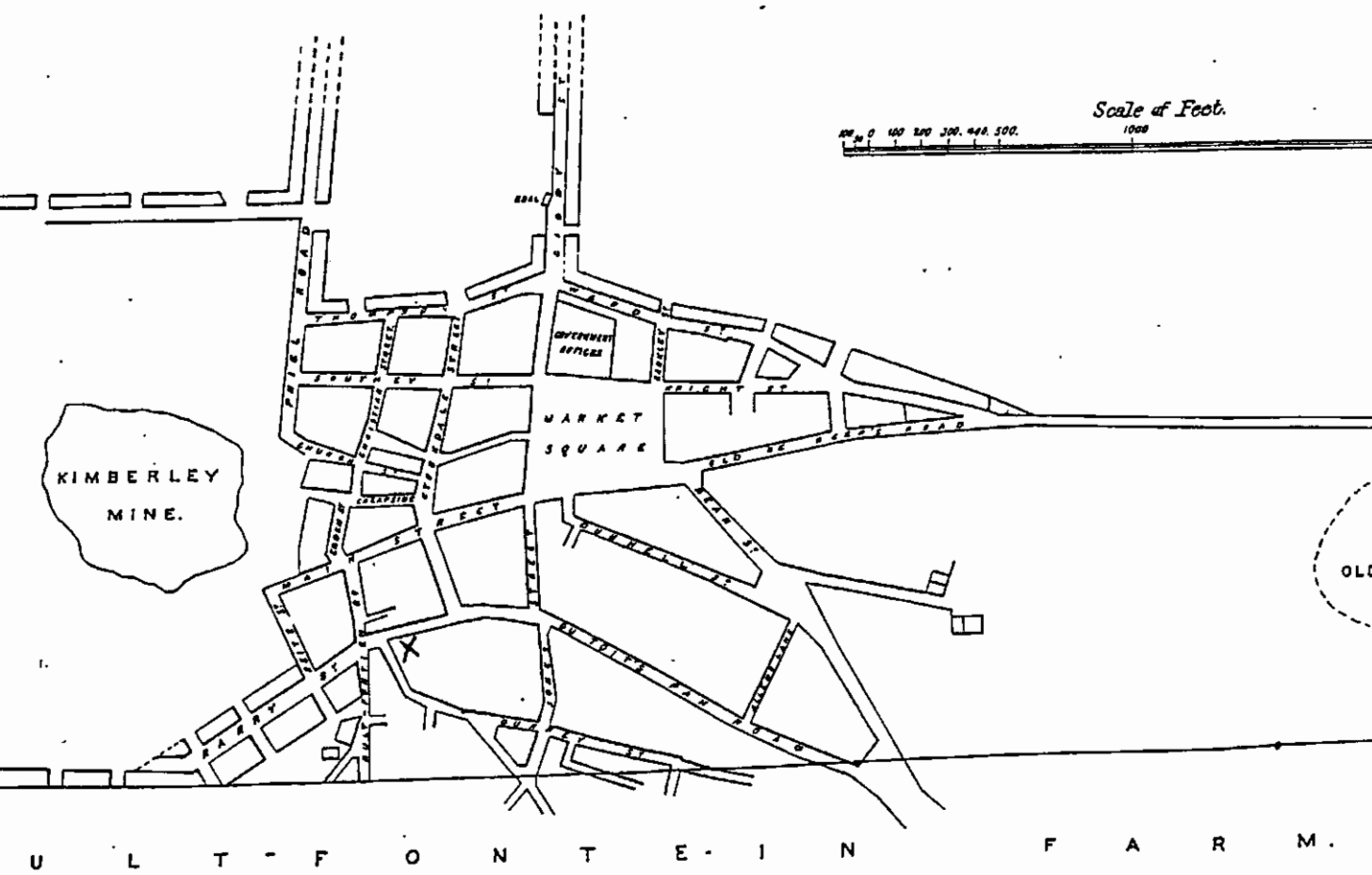
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# KIMBERLEY.

plan of

## TOWNSHIP AND MINES.

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Kimberley Township 1875, showing the site of the library built in 1881, on the corner of Currey and Du Toit's Pan Roads (Britain. Parliamentary Papers, 1875 - 1899).

CHAPTER 5THE SECOND ATTEMPT AT ESTABLISHING A PUBLIC LIBRARY  
IN KIMBERLEY5.1 Conditions on the Diamond Fields after 1876

There were, at this time, other important matters which weighed on the minds of the people living on the Diamond Fields. Apart from political upheavals and the subsequent Black Flag Rebellion engendered by the dissatisfaction of the diggers with the Mining Board, the first of many landslides at the mine occurred in November 1874 resulting in the unemployment of about 1 000 people. The situation was exacerbated by an influx of diggers who were lured to the Diamond Fields by the prospect of debris washing, a practice which started at that time and which permitted anybody to wash debris from old diggings by obtaining a licence at ten shillings (Angove, 1910, p.103).

Many of the newcomers were willing to join the "Rebels", who were in opposition to the "Government's Party". Incitement against the Government led to open confrontation. Troops were sent from Cape Town to quell the revolt but it had already died down by the time they reached Kimberley. After the recall of Richard Southey and J B Currey, Major William Owen Lanyon took over as the new Administrator, assisted by Colonel Crossman. An enquiry into the problems of the diggers and subsequent recommendations were to affect the future of the Diamond Fields substantially.

Lanyon stated that Kimberley should never have become a Province under the administration of the Cape Government and that it could have been administered as a municipality. He advocated the

abolition of the newly-proclaimed Ordinance 10 (1876), which made it impossible for an individual or company to hold more than ten claims, thereby enabling the formation of holding companies and eliminating indiscriminate competition.

The abolition of gambling and other illegal practices made living conditions in Kimberley more civilised. Schooling was rapidly expanding; the Roman Catholic church started a night school for young men which offered "opportunities for a sound English education" (Ind., 2 October 1876); a Catholic Public School for children of all denominations opened on 1 May 1876 (DN, 17 April 1876); and Mr Alexander Noble, teacher at the West End Academy and Training College, suggested the formation of a teachers' body which could agitate for a government grant (DI, 18 November 1875).

Although literacy does not necessarily affect the reading habit, as Tyrrell-Glynn points out (1972, p.5), it does indicate development and upliftment of the community as a whole.

An important event, which affected life on the Diamond Fields, was the opening, in February 1876, of a telegraph office in Kimberley, linking Kimberley to Cape Town via Fauresmith. Despite prohibitively high rates for telegrams, it was nevertheless "the means of changing the current of public life, giving it a stimulus to trade and commerce hitherto unknown in this part of the world" (Angove, 1910, p. 127).

## 5.2 Goch's Circulating Library and other Reading Rooms

The idea of erecting an effectual library with a good stock of educational material came to the fore again in 1876. The now defunct Public Library had not succeeded in providing stimulating reading

material for which there was so obvious a need, especially since many more professional and educated people had now settled in Kimberley.

The Independent Order of Good Templars took matters in hand and decided to raise funds for library purposes. In 1876 the Diamond News (16 May) reported that they (the Good Templars) had "subscribed the required sum for a new hall and public circulating library to contain 30 000 books" and stated that Mr G H Goch was busy compiling a list of books to be ordered from England and any recommendations from "clergy, doctors, editors, lawyers, engineers, merchants, mechanics and the reading public generally" would be welcomed.

Mr George H Goch, probably a member of the above-mentioned order, was a public-minded businessman of Kimberley who realised that the provision of good books to the public would not only be of great cultural benefit to the community but would also be a profitable business venture. He ran a Jewellers' Shop in Dutoitspan Road, and was also the Vice-president of the Kimberley Literary Institute (Turner's, 1877, p.44).

He requested that "anyone interested in having a thoroughly efficient library in Kimberley" leave suggestions for titles to be purchased at his business in Dutoitspan Road. By March 1877, he had on hand a stock of well-bound "works of reference, poetical works, novels, historical works, travels etc.", and was ready to open his circulating library to the public (DN, 15 March 1877); he promised his readers regular additions of new books to make the collection as large and complete as possible. Subscriptions payable in advance amounted to two guineas per annum, one guinea for half a year and fifteen shillings a quarter. Catalogues were

available upon application and the library was to be open until 8 pm in the evening.

Goch's Circulating Library proved to be very popular and ran successfully for a number of years. Its closing time was extended to 9 pm for the convenience of its patrons; its wide range of material "provided nourishment for the intellectually weak and strong, for the student and the statesman, for those with leisure and the busy, for the low-spirited and the troubled mind, as well as for the soaring animated spirit, who rises superior to the depressing influence of even these hard times" (DI, 11 September 1877).

In 1879 the library reportedly received a consignment of 500 new books (DN, 8 March 1879) and a year later it was stated that "books to suit all (except vicious) tastes will be found on the shelves" (DI, 1 April 1880). Alfred Allen's Circulating Library was still in operation but was secondary to the music section of the shop. Haskell's Reading Room opened in Dutoitspan Road in 1879 (DFA, 28 May 1879); in the following year it became Campbell's Reading Room, offering recreational pastimes, such as bagatelle, chess and draughts as well as the latest English and Colonial newspapers and magazines (DN, 8 April 1880). At the same time, books were being collected in the Town Council's Office for use in the Kimberley Hospital<sup>23</sup> (DN, 1 April 1879).

Despite all these efforts, there was still the problem of all the young men who had nothing to do in the evenings and the "young women who were condemned to perpetual housekeeping." One must either

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23. This was probably the first hospital library service in South Africa. The hospital library is mentioned as early as 1876 in a fund-raising advertisement (DN, 21 October 1876).

crush out their [ mental and intellectual ] powers, suggested the local newspaper, or supply them with suitable material to work on. "Hence", concluded the article, "another argument for a library of useful literature" (Ind, 19 June 1879).

Soon afterwards, the Grand Templars started a Reading Room in the West End Hall for anyone who was able to pay the subscription rates of £1 10 0 (Ind, 8 July 1879) and in the following year a society called the Kimberley Mutual Improvement Society was instituted by the Presbyterian church for the purpose of organising weekly meetings where young men could be profitably occupied with intellectual entertainment such as debates, readings, impromptu speeches and music (DI, 3 March 1880).

Steps were also taken to start a Mechanics' Institute and Reading Room. Commenting on this, the newspaper again deplored the lack of educational and self-improvement facilities in Kimberley, remarking that it was certainly not to the credit of "this wealthy, prosperous and fairly intelligent community that they have done literally nothing for the cause of education" (DI, 10 November 1879).

### 5.3 The Kimberley Literary Institute

A cultural organisation, which was established in 1876 and came into operation in 1877, was the Kimberley Young Men's Mutual Improvement Society. It held weekly meetings in the vestry behind the Trinity Church in Dutoitspan with the object of promoting improvement amongst its members by means of recitations, readings, essays, papers and discussions about the political and social problems of the day.

In March 1878 the venue for meetings was changed to the Mining Board Office and the society was renamed

the Kimberley Literary Institute. Mr R M Robert was elected President, Mr G H Goch, Vice-president and Mr Fischer, Secretary, but replaced by Mr A Saalfeld at the next election of members.

The Literary Institute was very active throughout 1877 and 1878, and the wide range of topics discussed is indicative of the intellectual standard that was achieved. Subjects discussed included,

"The future of Kimberley" (DN, 3 July 1877); "Would steam navigation between the Cape and Australia confer any benefits upon the two communities?" (DN, 16 October 1877) "The Native question of the Cape Colony" (DN, 19 March 1878); "Has the establishment of the English Government in Griqualand West been conducive to the welfare of the community and the honour of the British flag?" (Ind, 7 May 1878) "Will annexation to the Cape be advantageous to Griqualand West?" (Ind, 4 June 1878) "Are Mr. Trollope's remarks in his book on South Africa, as to the Diamond Fields, justifiable?"<sup>24</sup> (Ind, 25 June 1878)

The programmes were certainly intellectually stimulating and the Diamond Fields commented that it was "very gratifying to see that the Literary Institute of Kimberley is beginning to strike out vigorously" (DF, 15 May 1878) and that in a quiet way it was doing very useful work (DFA, 13 July 1878).

But, as was the case with most cultural efforts in Kimberley, the interest started to wane and by the end of the year, it had flagged considerably.

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24. Mr Anthony Trollope visited Kimberley in 1877 and the residents went to great lengths to make his stay a pleasant one, hoping that he would be impressed with the town, only to be sadly disillusioned by his outspoken criticism of the place.

"Effort is being made," wrote the paper (DFA, 4 December 1878), "to resuscitate the Kimberley Literary Institute which for some time has been in a state of coma."

At a meeting called to discuss the decline of the Institute, it was concluded that the Mining Office was unsuitable and unattractive as a venue for meetings and that the members should be offered something else by way of entertainment besides weekly discussions, possibly a reading room and library (DFA, 6 December 1878).

At a general meeting chaired by Mr Goch, it was resolved, "to wind up the affairs of the old Institute and to start a new Institute on a broader basis." Messrs Jackson, Goch and Webb, the Secretary, were directed to find a new venue for meetings (DFA, 6 December 1878) and all the records and documents pertaining to the Institute were handed to Mr Goch for safe-keeping until a new Institute could be established (DN, 8 December 1878).

#### 5.4 The second Public Library in Kimberley

The year 1877 was an important one in the history of Kimberley. In June the Municipality of Kimberley was formally constituted<sup>25</sup> and in July, Griqualand West was annexed to the Cape.<sup>26</sup> According to this act, three years would be allowed for the incorporation of the Crown Colony into the Cape Colony.

During this year, a population census was taken which showed that Kimberley was the second largest

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25. Kimberley became a municipality by Ordinance no. 7 of 1877, Govt. notice no 197).

26. The Griqualand West Annexation Act, Cape Act No 39 of 1877.



town at the Cape with a total population of 13 590 (Turners', 1878, p.54). According to the Deputy-Inspector of Schools, F H Ely, who was sent to the Diamond Fields to report on the state of education, there were 32 schools and a total of 861 scholars in Kimberley (Griqualand West Gazette, 1877, p. 208-209). Ely found the standard of education to be generally low and, although a high school could be established with a government grant, he feared that "in a mixed and ever-shifting population like that of the Fields", it was hardly worthwhile.<sup>27</sup>

Ely's report substantiates the lack of hope for the future of Kimberley which was characteristic of the whole decade. John Nixon, who paid a visit to Kimberley in 1878, was, like Anthony Trollope, not at all enamoured with the place and was struck by the "speculative and temporary nature of business" (Nixon, 1880, p. 149).

"The whole town," he remarked, "gives the impression of having been built with the idea of being prepared for removal at a moment's notice...Nobody thinks of it as a place to live in..."

Despite the obvious lack of faith in the future of Kimberley, the first municipal elections took place in December 1877 and on the Council were men like George Bottomley, Alexander McGregor and Arthur Stead, with John Birbeck as mayor. It was evident "that there were many men who had come to regard Kimberley as their future home and were willing to devote time and money to make it a creditable town."<sup>28</sup>

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27. Government aid to the schools could only be put into practice after the official annexation of the Crown Colony to the Cape Colony .

28. Quoted by B.Roberts (1978, p.9) from the S Hawthorne Ms.

The newly-elected Council had taken on a difficult task because they found that there was no money for improvements and next to no co-operation from the rate-payers; within the first six months after the election a quarter of the 12 members had resigned (Roberts, 1978, p.12).

Yet improvements gradually started taking place. The first tasks were the valuation of properties, naming and numbering the chaotic streets and the fixing of rates. The only income for the Council was from dog and cab taxes, hawkers' licences and the toll in Dutoitspan Road and was not nearly enough to finance the many matters which required attention, including "the establishment of a library and kindred institutions" (DN, 20 April 1878).

The two circulating libraries in operation at the time were commercial undertakings and there existed a great need for a municipal library with free access for everyone. "Now that we have settled into a municipality, we ought also to have a public library and reading room," wrote the Independent (18 June 1877) and pointed out that the South African Library had a stock of 38 000 volumes and the Port Elizabeth Library, 9 890 (DN, 16 July 1878). Bloemfontein, which was much smaller than Kimberley, had all kinds of cultural societies and there was "scarcely a town or village in South Africa that has not a public library and reading room, and yet we have none," complained the editor of the Diamond Fields Advertiser (15 November 1878) and added, "Is Kimberley too Bohemian in its character for the institutions to take root here?"

The Diamond News (3 December 1878) remarked that it was strange that in a community such as that of Kimberley, which was "remarkable for its intellectual power and vigour," there was no library or literary institute. There were indeed many

well-educated men in Kimberley, as noticed by Nixon (1880, p.163) "It is not at all uncommon," he remarked, "for a man sitting next to you at the table...to be an old University man."

In a long article which appeared in the following year, the Daily Independent<sup>29</sup> (6 August 1979) pointed out that there were no societies of any kind in Kimberley, neither an Agricultural society nor a Chamber of Commerce, and this could mean, the editor scathingly commented, that the people of Kimberley had no aptitude for organisation; they were so absorbed in trying to make money that they had little time for anything else. There were quite a number of professional men in the community but they had "contributed nothing towards public life." Neither the clergy nor the lawyers had any library or reading room and the doctors were "too busy to bother with anything intellectual." Anthony Trollope (1878, p.203) had expressed his scepticism of diggers' ever reading "The diamond seeker," he maintained, "cannot get out of his task and calmly take himself to his literature at 4 pm, or 5 or 6."

In the election of 1879 Barney Barnato was returned to Council and J B Robinson became Mayor. The community started taking a greater interest in civic matters and gave Sir Bartle Frere a rousing welcome when he visited Kimberley despite the fact that very little financial assistance had been forthcoming from the Government for educational or cultural purposes. Even the Port Elizabeth Telegraph commented that the Diamond Fields was "one part of the dark continent that had received very little

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29. In August 1879, the Independent became the first regular daily newspaper in Kimberley and changed its name to the Daily Independent. It continued under this title until April 1892.

attention in the way of encouragement towards higher education."<sup>30</sup>

The very next year, 1880, was to bring an upswing in the economy which was to put Kimberley on the road to stability and prosperity and place a public library within the reach of the community once again.

When the ten-claim restriction was lifted in 1876, the way was paved for amalgamation of claims. In April 1880 the Rudd-Rhodes partnership combined with other mining companies and formed a syndicate which became the De Beers Mining Company. Cecil John Rhodes, realising the enormous potential of the diamond industry in South Africa, focussed all his attention on this Company. Any fears he might have had about the mines working out was a thing of the past.

"There is every chance," he wrote to J X Merriman, "of our prosperity lasting ...this is now the richest community in the world for its size and it shows every sign of permanency."<sup>31</sup>

Overseas investors were only too eager to back the big mining companies which were formed in 1880; Kimberley experienced a boom and everyone was riding on the crest of the wave. The share mania ran high and every "spec" which was put on the market was immediately snapped up (Angove, 1910, p.81).

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30. Quoted by the Daily Independent, 22 September 1879.

31. An extract from a letter from C J Rhodes to J X Merriman, Kimberley, 16 May 1880, In Lewsen, Phyllis ed. Selections from the correspondence of J.X. Merriman, 1870 - 1890, quoted by B Roberts (1976, p.179).

The Town Council was in desperate need of a suitable hall in which to hold their meetings. What better way to raise the required sum of £5 000 with which to build a Town Hall than to offer shares for sale (DFA 21 May 1880)? In no time at all 1 000 shares were taken up and all that was needed was a suitable site. Shortly afterwards, the same scheme was to be introduced to raise funds for the building of a library.

It was the Daily Independent (11 May 1880) which again broached the subject of a Public Library and a Botanical Garden "for the social, mental and physical health" of the community. The paper accused the inhabitants of selfishness and greed, maintaining that there could have been twenty reading rooms if only the wealthy diamond magnates would "lift their eyes out of the pit in which their whole soul seems centred." The article went on to say that the lack of interest in schools or libraries was due to the fact that most of the people had not settled in Kimberley permanently and intended returning to Europe as soon as they had made their fortunes. These unsubstantiated prophecies were soon to be refuted, however.

At this time, James Rose-Innes, a Cape magistrate, was sent to Kimberley as Acting Administrator prior to the annexation of Griqualand West to the Cape Colony. In a speech made by him soon after his arrival, he mentioned the bad state of education and the lack of a public library on the Diamond Fields, hinting at "impending changes". What, speculated the Daily Independent (6 May, 1880) did he mean by 'changes'? Was he referring to the new political dispensation?

Later in the same month, Rose-Innes presided at a meeting where the issue of the a public library was again discussed. It was common knowledge that the

old Public Library had become defunct as a result of inadequate housing and it was imperative that a new building be erected specially for library purposes, if it were to be a success. Mr R W Murray, a staunch library supporter, proposed, "that a building capital of £3 000 be raised in shares of £1 each, the shares to bear interest at a rate of 10% per annum from the date of the opening of the Institute" (DFA, 24 May 1880).

He suggested that the proposed library should provide for "higher intellectual development" as well as the usual recreational facilities such as a reading room and circulating library. Subscriptions would be the main source of income, but funds would also be raised so that there could be "no taint of charity about the matter."

Mr Rose-Innes stated that the Government would provide a suitable site for a library building and that he himself had, in fact, already looked at two sites. The Committee which was appointed to report to the meeting of subscribers, consisted of Reverends C D Maude, M Mendelssohn, H Lenoir and J Calvert; also Messrs T D Brown, H Green, J L Truter, L Hoskyns, C T Campbell, M Cornwall and A Levy.

The Daily Independent (22 May 1880) congratulated the public "on the privilege they will shortly enjoy" and expressed the hope that the paper had in some small way contributed to the realisation of a dream. It was hoped that the poorer people would also make use of this opportunity to become shareholders of the Public Library.

A month later the Committee held a meeting in the Town Office at which J Rose-Innes again presided. A library, it was agreed, would "provide the means of improving and educating the children's minds" (DI, 17 May 1880). Mr J C Haarhoff a local

attorney, then put forward a proposal, which was seconded by Mr Foster, that

"an Institution to be called "The Kimberley Library and Institute" be forthwith formed."

Mr Cecil Rhodes proposed and Mr A von Bressendorff seconded that,

"with a view to securing a suitable hall, efforts should be made to induce the Town Council to provide a room in part of their proposed Town Hall."

Rev Mr Tobias proposed,

"that a Committee be appointed for the purpose of forming a scheme for carrying out the formation of the Library and Institute by means of capital raised in shares and debentures," and that the Committee would report at a future meeting.

Mr J C Haarhoff proposed that the following committee members be appointed : the Mayor of Kimberley [J B Robinson], the Acting Attorney-General Jos Calvert, D Brown, Father Lenoir, Rev M Mendelssohn, the Hon H Green, Advocate Forster, Messrs J L Truter, R W Murray, J P Ablett, C J Rhodes, Colin T Campbell, A von Bressendorff, M Cornwall and G C Cator.<sup>32</sup>; that the Committee approach the Government for a yearly grant and for a site for erecting the Public Library and Institute

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32. The Diamond Field Advertiser's list of Committee members differs from that of the Daily Independent, as it includes Rev Maude and Rev Tobias, but omits Jos Calvert, D Brown, Rev Lenoir, H Green, Adv Foster, M Cornwall and G C Cator. The Diamond News did not publish a list of names.

and that Mr B T Knights be appointed Secretary for the time being (DI, 17 May 1880).

The Diamond Fields Advertiser expressed its satisfaction with the proceedings and voiced the opinion that "the Government as well as the Municipality ought to assist in this laudable object which can hardly fail from being appreciated by the large proportion of young men on the Fields...who at present spend their time in the billiard saloons and such like places for want of better entertainment and more wholesome recreation" (17 May 1880).

The Diamond News (15 May 1880) drew attention to the Burg Street Institute in Cape Town and the St Patrick's Society at Port Elizabeth as models to be copied. In a later issue of the Diamond News (20 May 1880), the editor enthused about "the prospect of having "a well-lighted, warm and cosy reading room to beguile away the long winter's evenings" and a lecture room and debating classes which "will quicken the thought of those who attend them," adding that "the time has gone by for people to talk any longer about the collapsing of the Diamond Fields."

The Secretary of the Library Committee, Mr Knights, placed an advertisement in the paper, notifying the public that there were 3 000 shares for sale at £1 each, the capital thus raised to constitute the building fund; it was pointed out that if each member of the Institute bought five shares, the building could be erected in six months' time (DN, 22 May 1880).

A more progressive member of the public, writing under the pseudonym of "A Ratepayer", commented that it would have been better if the building project had been initiated by the Mayor and a voluntary rate levied on all rate-payers for the purpose of



"establishing a free Public Library and Institute to which every well-behaved working man would be made heartily welcome" as was the case in other libraries in South Africa and "at home" (DN, 24 May 1880).<sup>33</sup>

The building sites offered by the Acting Administrator were found to be unsuitable for library purposes and it was decided to purchase a stand in New Main Street from Mr Charles Roberts, a local blacksmith, as it was in a central position and large enough for further building expansion, should this be required (DI, 21 June 1880).

At a meeting of the shareholders held on 24 June 1880 and chaired by Mr C T Campbell, it was proposed that a provisional Board of Directors, consisting of nine members should be appointed to purchase Mr Roberts's stand, to supervise the erection of the building, to handle the financial matters and to prepare the Trust Deed (DI, 26 June 1880).

Mr Stonestreet proposed that the Provisional Board of Directors should consist of the Hon Mr L Hoskyns, Revs Maude and Mendelssohn and Messrs C T Campbell, R M Roberts, W Ward, Alex Levy, M Cornwall and G H Goch. The following Trustees were appointed: the Acting Mayor (Mr G Bottomley), the Resident Magistrate (Mr D J Haarhoff, brother of J C Haarhoff) and Mr Alphonse Levy. It was also decided that the Provisional Committee could start ordering books and periodicals, not exceeding the value of £500. Shares, it was proposed, were payable as follows: ten shillings on 1 July, five shillings on 1 September 1880 and five shillings on 1 October 1880 (DI, 26 June 1880).

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33. According to the Free Public Libraries' Act passed in Britain in 1850, the cost of all public libraries would be borne by the rate payers who had to contribute 1d in the £ per annum on rateable value.

A competition was organised, inviting plans and specifications for the erection of the library building which was to consist of a hall, reading room, library and offices; the hall was to be at least 35 feet by 60 feet in size and the reading room at least 20 feet by 24 feet. A prize of 20 guineas would be awarded to the winning entry on condition that the tenders for the erection of the building did not exceed the sum specified by the architect. The closing date of the competition was 31 August 1880, giving competitors exactly a week to prepare plans (DI, 24 August 1880)!

No further mention was made of the competition or whose was the winning entry, but by September 1880 the tender documents for erecting the library were available from A Grellet of Crowden's Chambers, no 6 (DN, 14 Sep 1880)<sup>34</sup> and in October the building tender was awarded to Messrs Nolan & Longmead. It was resolved to raise the capital of the company from £3 000 to £4 000 and to convert it into a Limited Liability Company; clauses of the Trust Deed were drafted, and the Provisional Committee were empowered to start building operations (DI, 2 October 1880).

Prospects for the year 1881 looked very promising. The share market was in full swing and fortunes were being made daily. It was a year of progress in every respect: the first sod of the Kimberley Waterworks at Newton was turned by the Mayor in May and the Kimberley Waterworks Company was established in October; the first locomotive imported by Messrs Teague & Co started operating on the mine, carting away debris; and towards the end of the year the Council authorised the installation of electric street lights.

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34. It appears from later reports that A Grellet was in fact the architect whose plans were accepted.

There was a great deal of building activity and the brick companies were kept busy; the Public Library, the Standard Bank, Barnato's Exchange, the Queen's Hotel and the Dutch Reformed Church in Dutoitspan were in the process of erection, while tenders were called for the building of the Club, a tramway, the Commercial and Mutual Exchange Company's offices, the proposed offices of the London Exploration Company in Dutoitspan<sup>35</sup> and other buildings, showing "that the camp days of Kimberley are events of the past" (DFA, 8 August 1881).

### 5.5 The Athenaeum Club

In February 1881 a number of professional men representing the church, the bar and side-bar, the medical profession and members of the general public, all of whom were said to be "tired of waiting for a public library" (DFA, 7 February 1881), met in Mr McKenna's courtroom to launch a society to be known as the Athenaeum Club. Judge D Buchanan who was elected chairman of the meeting, also invited members of the Public Library Committee to attend so that they could see for themselves that it was not intended as a rival to the Public Library. It was to be simply a convenient meeting place for people who enjoyed exchanging ideas on intellectual subjects, liked to browse through newspapers, magazines and works of reference, or to play games of skill.

The Athenaeum Club encouraged the formation of cultural societies, and soon there was a Debating Society and a Literary Society. The committee of the latter was composed of Judge Buchanan, the Mayor [M Cornwall], the Reverends Tobias and

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35. The building erected as offices for the London and South African Exploration Company afterwards became the Beaconsfield Library and Institute.

Mendelssohn, R M Roberts, R H Heath and Mr H Smith  
(DFA, 7 February 1881 & DI, 8 Feb 1881).

The Athenaeum Club leased premises in a building on the Market Square. There was a spacious club room with two interleading rooms which could be used for writing, chess, or whist and another large room where lectures, recitations and musical entertainments could be presented. There were many young men in Kimberley who were delighted to have the use of comfortable rooms for "the ventilation of social and intellectual topics" (DFA, 16 February 1881) and, as a result of interest, the membership quotient of the Club was raised to 75 at the second meeting and a Committee of Management consisting of 15 members was elected (DFA, 25 February 1881). It was stated that the Athenaeum was established by way of an experiment to see whether a sufficient number of young men could be attracted by entertainments without the incentive of a liquor bar.<sup>36</sup> The formidable programme arranged to launch the society attests to the enthusiasm and eagerness of the organising committee:

Monday : Formation of a chess circle;  
Tuesday: Formation of a whist circle;  
Wednesday: Establishment of a dramatic club;  
Thursday: Establishment of a music club;  
Friday: Formation of a literary society.

It was to be open to all members during the day and at night (DFA, 9 March 1881).

The Literary Institute, under Presidency of Judge Buchanan, met on Monday evenings. By May, it was reported that the attendance was disappointing and a committee of seven members was appointed "to make

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36. The outcome of this experiment is not known, but one presumes that, like many similar undertakings, it was not very successful.

the objects of the society better known to the public" (DFA, 11 May 1881).<sup>37</sup> The first annual general meeting of the Athenaeum was held on 29 June, 1881. Judge Buchanan was unanimously re-elected and Mr A Dawson was elected treasurer in the place of Mr Clarence.

At this meeting a sub-committee was appointed to arrange a meeting with the Committee of the Public Library to ascertain whether provision could be made for the Athenaeum Club by an addition to the library building under construction, as they had not yet purchased the premises they were at present occupying (DFA, 1 July 1881). This was impracticable, however, and when the building leased by the Club was put up for sale, the Athenaeum seems to have dissolved and was only revived again in the next century.

#### 5.6 The opening of the Public Library

The building of the Public Library was progressing well, "the walls...gradually beginning to rise from their foundations" (DFA, 11 April 1881). The building contractors, Messrs C T Campbell & Co, suffered a setback when the ordinary burnt bricks crumbled in the continuous wet weather and use had to be made of bricks patented by Stonestreet and made by the Kimberley Brick Company, costing an additional £400.

According to the Report for the year ending 30 April 1881, 2 753 £1 shares had been sold but only £1 539 collected, and the anticipated cost of the building had escalated to £3 200. While every effort was to be made to obtain a government grant, shareholders were requested to sign the trust deed in the

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37. This Committee included Sidney Mendelssohn, the well-known bibliophile and book collector. He was the son of Rev Mendelssohn.

meantime so that the Company could be registered under the Limited Liability Act.

The Public Library shares which were up for purchase were the subject of some good-humoured bantering at the stock market. Most of the subscribers realised that it was more of an act of charity on their part than a financial investment and they were perfectly willing to donate their shares to the Company and turn the Joint Stock Company into a Public Trust Fund (DFA, 20 May 1881).

The financial situation on the Diamond Fields showed a decline towards the middle of the year 1881; banks started clamping down on loans and there was a general stampede to sell shares. The financial crisis also affected the Public Library significantly. At a meeting of the Library Committee, attended by Judge D D Buchanan, Rev M Mendelssohn, Messrs M Cornwall, G H Goch, W Ward, S M Landshute, G C Cator and W J Coleman, it was reported that there was only £213 in the bank, but that shares now amounted to £3 098.

Despite the financial implications, the rear wall of the library was pulled down to make room for a larger stage, should this become necessary (DFA, 29 June 1881) and the post of librarian was advertised at a salary of £400 per annum (DN, 2 July 1881).

The choice for this position fell upon Mr H Smith, the Secretary of the Library Committee, (DFA, 22 July 1881) but, for some reason, Mr H Stock was appointed librarian (DI, 3 September 1881). He was on duty at the library from 12 to 1 pm and from 4 to 5 pm daily to register subscribers and furnish them with information (DFA, 19 August 1881). The sale of more shares brought the financial affairs of the library on a sound footing and indicated support from the public, encouraging the Committee to invite

shareholders to send in suggestions for books to be purchased.

"The great thing," advised the press, "is to hit the general taste of the public, then the aim should be to raise the public taste by degrees to higher standards" (DFA, 17 August 1881).

Excitement mounted as the building progressed, the daily newspaper elaborating on the possible uses of the spacious library hall as a place "suitable for lectures, concerts, tragedies, comedies, farces, burlesques and all other inventions for providing intellectual advancement as well as offering recreation" (DI, 3 September 1881).

In September the Committee of Management held a meeting where it was decided that the library would open its doors to the public on 1 October 1881. The terms of subscription were fixed as follows :

An ordinary subscription of £2 entitled the member to take out one work, consisting of between one and three volumes, and one back number of a periodical;

A subscription of £3 or £4 entitled the member to take out more books at a time and periodicals of a more recent date;

Deposits of 10/-, 20/- and 30/- were payable depending upon the subscription rates.

The Reading Room would be open to the public free of charge from 10 am to 10 pm daily, except on Sundays, the names of visitors to be recorded by the Librarian (DFA, 21 September 1881).

The opening of the library, which was to have taken place on 1 October 1881, had to be postponed to 11 October in the vain hope that lamps donated by Mr S

Marks would have arrived by then. The anticipated consignment of new books from London had also not arrived on time, with the result that the book stock, which included donations from Mr Frank Williams and Mr Hall, was relatively small.

The library, at the time of its opening, consisted of a spacious concert hall, 60 feet by 35 feet 6 inches, with provision for the addition of a stage and dressing rooms at a later date. The reading room, "lofty and well-lighted", was 25 feet by 20 feet in size. There was another room similar to the reading room and this was intended as "a sort of club room" where subscribers could play chess and draughts, and where "a soothing pipe will not be a prohibited luxury" (DFA, 3 October 1881).

The formal opening of the library was performed by the Mayor, Mr M Cornwall, and Justice Buchanan delivered the inaugural address. He stated that the opening of the library would probably not be of similar importance in any other town in South Africa, but in a place like the Diamond Fields, where "men give themselves night and day to the acquisition of material wealth," the occasion was a momentous one; there was, he maintained, a great need for a quiet place to sit of an evening after a hard day's work.

He praised the Committee for their hard work in selling shares and mentioned Mr W Ward in particular, who had sold 3 000 of the 4 000 shares. He thanked the London Committee of old Diamond Fields residents for liberal contributions of books selected by Mr R W Murray, and made special mention of Messrs Roberts and Goch, fellow-committeemen who were in London at the time, giving all the help they could.



He reminded the audience that there was still a long way to go. "There have," he stated, "been libraries before, but they exist no more," and added that it would take "dauntless determination to make a success of this venture." Little did he know that the project was already doomed to failure!

A programme of music followed, with the orchestra playing the Overture to Offenbach's Tambour Major and Mr Neale singing "Will o' the wisp", followed by the choir's rendition of "Let the hills resound" (DFA, 14 October 1881).

### 5.7 The collapse of the library scheme

The first indication that all was not well with the library came from the editor of the DFA (4 November 1881) when he despondently remarked that it would be a matter of lasting regret should this Institute fail to receive the support necessary to make it successful. He observed that there was a debt of £1 500 on the property and that the rate of interest on this was 12% per annum. Most of the shareholders had offered to cede their shares to the Company which showed that there was no lack of public support.

The main reason for the failure of the scheme, he maintained, was the divided interest of proprietorship; he was certain that when once the library was placed on a basis of a public institution, it would receive support and become successful.

Another reason for its failure, the editor added, was the purchase of the stock of Mr Goch's Circulating Library by the Committee for £450 on the understanding that he would donate £100 worth of new books to the library. The books from Goch's Circulating Library had been read by just about

everyone in the years when this was the only place where books could be borrowed.

Financial aid, it was stated, could be expected from the Government on a £ for £ basis; it was important to procure aid from the Government as soon as possible, as £1 000 was required annually to run the library satisfactorily.

Despite the precarious financial position of the Public Library, it was being put to full use. In November it was the venue for a bazaar advertised as "Ye olde English Fayre (DFA, 23 Nov 1881); a week later Mr Bertie Phillips put on a variety show (DFA, 30 November 1881) and in December there was a "Ballad concert" in the library (DFA, 14 December 1881). This trend continued in 1882, with concerts and musicals the order of the day.

The reading room was utilised extensively and it was a matter of pride that the Kimberley Library was open from 10 am to 10 pm, while other libraries in the Cape Colony, such as the South African Library in Cape Town, closed after business hours, giving the working man "no chance of enjoying the instruction and amusement derived therefrom" (DFA, 23 January 1882).

Another innovation of which the people were justly proud was the "large chandelier...which enables readers to read the smallest print in the remotest corners" and which was a big improvement upon "the small lamps which were distributed here and there previously." A large lamp over the entrance lit up the whole vicinity (DFA, 23 January 1882).

The year 1882 saw the collapse of the share market and the large number of auction sales advertised during the year attests to the financial crisis experienced in Kimberley. There were other

disasters as well; Roberts (1976, p.198) remarks that "there was something uncanny about the onslaught of disasters that rocked Kimberley throughout 1882".

Rockfalls in the mines caused severe damage which resulted in considerable financial losses to many of the smaller mining companies. Mining came to a standstill and, as a result, Moses Cornwall had to stop fund-raising for schools and the Public School project had to be temporarily shelved. A smallpox epidemic broke out at the Cape that year and, to prevent it from spreading to the mines, a huge vaccination campaign was launched and the disease was staved off.

Despite these setbacks, the Town Council forged ahead and Kimberley began to develop as a town. The scheme of piping water from the Vaal River to Kimberley was completed and electric lights were installed in the streets. In March a chamber concert held in the library was a memorable occasion as the library hall was to be lit by electric light<sup>38</sup> (DN, 8 March 1882). It was reported afterwards that the hall "presented quite a brilliant aspect" and that the light burned "very steadily almost the whole evening" (DN, 16 March 1882).

The first annual meeting of shareholders of the Public Library took place in the library hall in March 1882. The library was in serious financial difficulties as no more shares could be sold; it was suggested that the library should be closed until other arrangements could be made. Most of the shareholders were willing to donate their shares

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38. This library was the first library in South Africa to make use of the electric light. Kimberley was the first town in the southern hemisphere to install street lighting in 1882.

to the library without expecting any returns on their investment.

According to the library's Annual Report (DFA, 17 March 1882), the average circulation of material was 60 books per week and the average attendance per week was 56; membership totalled 160, instead of the anticipated 500 to 600. The cost of the building had amounted to £4 350, which included £1 000 for the stand. Other costs, which included the architect's fee, the temporary stage, books, shelving, furniture and salaries, amounted to £7 000.

The report stated that, "while your Committee are able to report favourably on the state of the assets and liabilities, they are not in a position to present favourable chances of continuing the Institute on the present basis." Despite a rental fee of £10 per month, the library was running at a loss of £80 per month.

The scheme that was proposed by the Committee was that the present concern should be dissolved and that shareholders should take debentures at 5% interest for their shares. The Mayor should be approached to call a public meeting and appoint a committee to take over the library and to provide capital for the Institution by means of a loan raised with the library as collateral.

Besides the present liabilities of the library, another £3 000 was required to build a stage, side-rooms and two stores. Projected income from rentals and subscriptions amounted to £1 910 while expenditure was estimated at £1 900. A government grant of £300 would be available for books and, according to a letter received from the Colonial Secretary's Office dated 12 January 1882, the full allowance of £100 per annum, as prescribed by

Government Notice no 442 of 1874, would be granted (DFA, 17 March 1882).<sup>39</sup>

The Diamond Fields Advertiser (22 March 1882) was quick to express an opinion on the reason for the failure of the library project. It pointed out that originally the local clergy had put forward the idea of a library where young men could go in the evenings to keep themselves occupied with reading instead of wasting their time in billiard rooms. A good situation was found and a feasible plan for the library was accepted, but unfortunately some people were carried away by enthusiasm and launched into expenditure that was beyond their means. The promoters forgot that they were responsible for the funds put into their hands by the subscribers and that they had not been given carte blanche to run up a debt of thousands of pounds. The good intentions of the originators have, the paper declared, been "completely knocked on the head."

Just as the Diamond News was lamenting, "Oh, for a Peabody or a Baroness Burdt-Coutts!"<sup>40</sup> to come forward with a donation to help the library (DN, 9 May 1882), an unexpected turn of events solved everyone's problems for the time being.

For some time the Town Council had considered various alternatives for obtaining suitable office

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39. Refers to the provisions of the Molteno Regulations of 1874.

40. George Peabody (1795 - 1869) was an American philanthropist who lived in London and gave away one and a half million pounds to charity; Angela Georgina Peabody (1814 - 1900) was an English philanthropist who used her fortune to mitigate suffering.

facilities.<sup>41</sup> On 12 May 1882, Councillor Mark Foggitt drew the attention of the Council to the predicament of the Public Library, stating that the library building would be ideal for their needs and that they would require only £2 000 to furnish it as a Town Hall (DFA, 12 May 1882).

Justice Buchanan having resigned as chairman of the Library Committee owing to the failure of the library project, the Committee appointed a sub-committee to meet the Town Council to discuss Foggitt's proposal. Messrs Levy and Goch represented the library at a Council meeting which took place in July 1882.

It was resolved that the Town Council would pay £6 000 for the building plus furniture, exclusive of the lamps donated by Mr Marks; the Council would build two rooms on to the east side of the building, which the library could lease at an amount not exceeding £50 per annum for a period of 18 months, after which it was subject to six months' notice on either side. The Library Committee was to be paid £4 500 immediately and the balance of £1 500 would be paid in instalments in six and twelve months' time (DFA, 7 July 1882).

At a meeting of the shareholders it was resolved that the library would continue to operate but that the property would be transferred to the Town Council immediately (DFA, 24 July 1882). The fact that the Town Council offered this assistance to the Library Committee is an indication, according to Roberts (1978, p. 43), of a growing civic pride.

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41. Various proposals for a Town Hall had been put forward, but each was unacceptable. The rental for the premises occupied by the Town Council was £300 per year and the place was completely unsuitable.

At this time Mr T G Heath was appointed full-time Secretary of the library at a salary of £400 per annum; he set about "arranging into classes" a consignment of 318 new books, which included the Encyclopaedia Britannica.

The Diamond Fields Advertiser commented (7 August 1882) that it was very sad to see the Institute languishing for lack of funds, adding that a subscription of three shillings and sixpence was little enough to pay "even in these hard times."

The transfer of the library building to the Town Council was finalised on 8 September 1882. At a public meeting attended by about 200 people, Mr Goch explained to the assembly why the library had to be sold to the Town Council and stated that the books, valued at £1 716, were to be handed over to the public as a gift by those who had bought shares in the concern, which meant that they were willing to donate half their shares to the library; the following proviso applied:

"that the Committee and Trustees appointed shall, in writing, undertake to carry on the library in an efficient manner for at least two years, failing which, the books, furniture etc. shall revert to the Company, subject to the Town Council being in a position and willing to take it over as a public institution."<sup>42</sup>

It was stated that two rooms would be provided for the library in the new Town Offices. Mr G G Wolf, on behalf of the meeting, accepted the offer of the

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42. This stipulation was in accordance with the Molteno Regulations of 1874, which empowered all municipalities to establish and maintain libraries.

Library Committee and Mr D Matthews moved that the Mayor and Civil Commissioner be appointed Trustees for the library and that a committee, composed of Mr Justice Buchanan, Mr Justice Laurence, Mr Justice Jones, the Reverends Hanbury, Lenoir, Barton, Phillip, Kestell and Mendelssohn, Dr H A Wolf and Messrs G Bottomley, L Hoskyns, G G Wolf, J E Dell, H Crawford and D Matthews represent the public (DFA, 8 September 1882).

The New Committee of Management held a special meeting under the chairmanship of Mr E A Judge to accept the conditions on which the library was to be handed over to the Town Council as drawn up by the Old Committee of Management. The conditions were set out as follows :

1. That the public shall agree to the appointment of two Trustees in whose names the property shall be vested on behalf of the public;
2. That a Managing Committee shall be elected annually to maintain the library in an efficient manner, on the basis of either entirely or partially free;
3. That, should it be found desirable for the Town Council to take over control of the library at a later date, nothing in the conditions should prevent them from being able to do so;
4. That the present subscribers retain their full rights until their subscriptions expire;
5. That the Committee and Trustees undertake in writing to maintain the library in an efficient manner for at least two years, failing which, the assets will revert to the Company, subject to the Town Council



being in a position and willing to take it over as a public institution.

A sub-committee of three, consisting of Messrs Matthews, Dell and Judge, was appointed to organise the legal transfer of the books in co-operation with the Old Committee of Management. The rules and regulations as drawn up by the Old Committee would be adhered to and a list of subscribers would be handed to the New Committee.

Once again the dream of a Public Library, with all the facilities required to render a recreational as well as a cultural function to the whole community, was shattered. After all the planning and negotiating, the people of Kimberley had to make do with two small rooms attached to a building which they had originally planned and for which they had such high hopes as a library.

#### 5.8 Conclusion

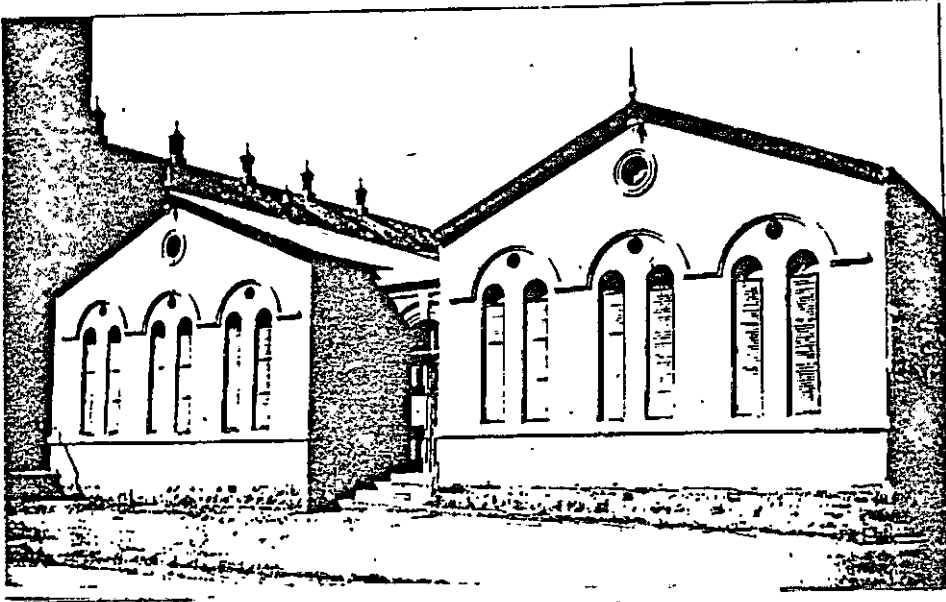
The uncertainty about the future of the Diamond Fields deterred development and prevented people from settling down completely. The amalgamation of the mines and the subsequent formation of the De Beers Consolidated Mining Company brought about a stability to the economy of the Diamond Fields. It was only after schools, churches and a local government had come into existence that the necessary infra-structure was created for a Public Library.

Men like G Goch, A Allen, and F Haskell succeeded by means of private enterprise in satisfying the reading needs of certain sections of the community; the reading rooms could not survive on their own, however, and were always run in conjunction with other commercial undertakings.

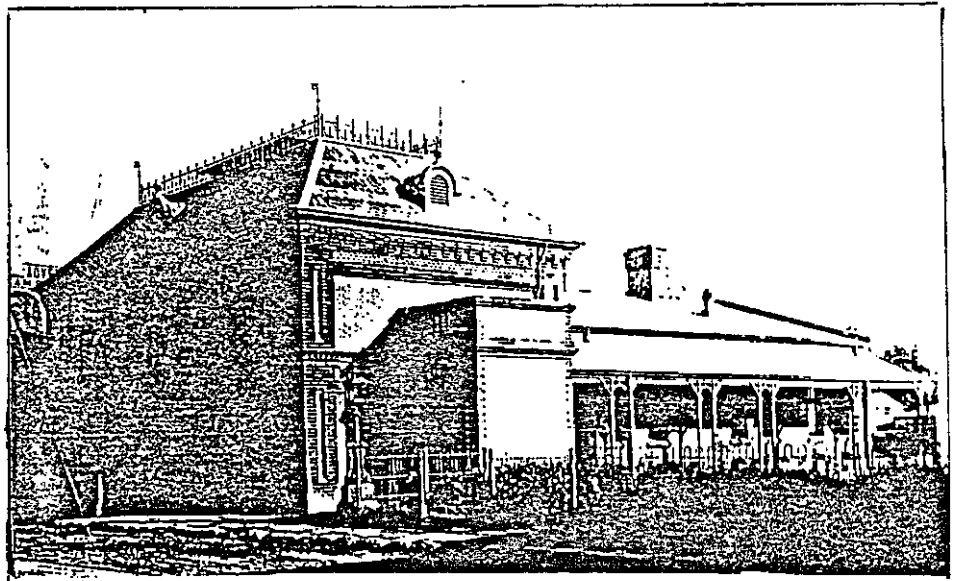
The role of the press was important in influencing public opinion and action. People like R W Murray, the editor of Diamond News, were constantly stressing the need for a Public Library and, if it had not been for the continual pressure from the press, the project might have been delayed even longer.

The main reason for the failure of the library was the lack of funds. The failure of the previous attempt at establishing a public library had been blamed on the unsatisfactory venue and it was thought that a building planned specially for library purposes would ensure the success of the scheme. The scheme for raising funds involved the founding of a company and the sale of shares to the public. It soon became obvious that a building alone could not make a library and that provision had to be made for running costs; without the support of either the Government or the Municipality the undertaking was not able to achieve any great success.

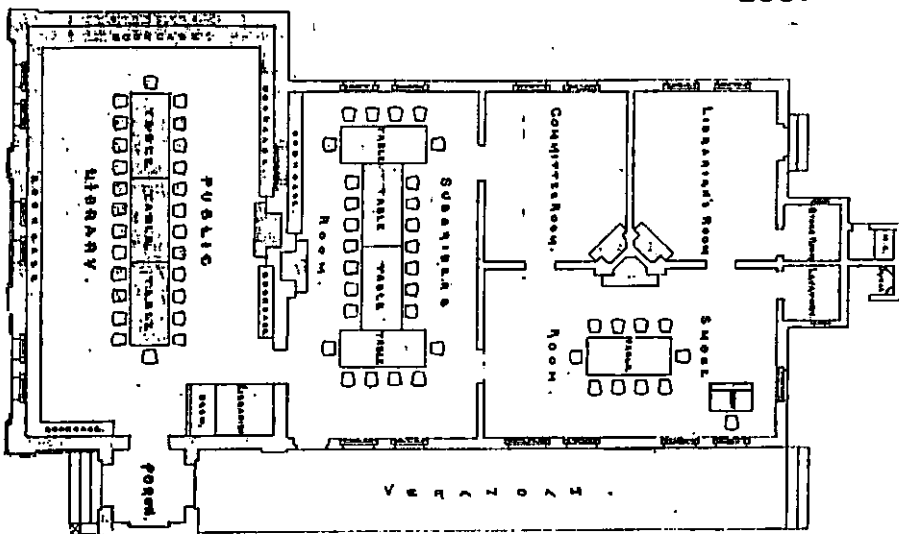
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Kimberley Public Library  
1882 - 1886



Kimberley Public Library  
1887 -



Kimberley Public Library  
Floor plan 1887

CHAPTER 6THE ESTABLISHMENT OF THE KIMBERLEY PUBLIC LIBRARY6.1 The liquidation of the second library

In October 1882 the Limited Liability Company ceased to exist and the Kimberley Library became a public institution; shareholders in the defunct company were to be paid a first dividend of five shillings in the pound on their shares. At a joint meeting of the Old Library Committee, represented by Messrs G Goch, M Foggitt, W J Coleman and M Mendelssohn and the New Management Committee, consisting of Messrs E A Judge, J E Dell and Dr J W Matthews, the books and deposit money of the library were legally transferred. Mr [J C?] Haarhoff was instructed to draw up a Deed of Gift by which the library and the deposit money, amounting to £113, was to be handed over to the New Committee (DFA, 2 October 1882).

The closure of the library was indeed a bitter blow to its protagonists and supporters. The Diamond News expressed regret and remarked bitterly that "in this community, philanthropists are as rare as IDB's are numerous" (25 November 1882). Even in London, where the people of the Diamond Fields were "greatly rejoiced to hear that the Public Library established at Kimberley is not to be lost," there was not much hope of financial backing (South African, 4 January 1883, p.3)

In reply to a letter by Mr Justice Buchanan, asking whether old residents of Kimberley, now living overseas, would be willing to support the library, the editor of South African stated pessimistically that even when the institution was first started, the only response had come from Mr H B Webb of the

London and South African Exploration Company and Mr D P Blaine, of Messrs Macdonald, Blaine & Co, "whereas there ought to have been no stint in the pecuniary support given by those whose fortunes have grown out of the diamond industry" (4 January 1883, p.3).

The Town Council lost no time in occupying the library building. No sooner had the liquidation of the library been finalised than the Town Clerk, the Town Treasurer and the Town Collector moved to the 'New Town Hall' in Main Street and renovations were commenced to accommodate the Sanitary Inspector and Town Surveyor (DFA, 13 October 1882). The assets of the library came up for sale in the next month at an auction conducted by A Rothschild and was advertised as follows:

"Sic transit gloria mundi."<sup>43</sup>  
Books, furniture etc. of the late lamented  
Public library will be sold without  
reserve tomorrow at 12 o'clock" (DFA, 26 November 1882).

In accordance with the instructions of the new Management Committee of the library (DFA, 4 October 1882), Mr G G Wolf, who was nominated to represent the Committee at the sale, purchased the books and shelves for £75 (KPL. Minutes, 28 November 1882 and DN, 28 November 1882) and arranged with a carpenter to install the latter in the rooms allocated to the library.

## 6.2 The library in New Main Street

The library reopened in the new, rather cramped premises on 18 December 1882. Subscriptions were payable from 1 January 1883 on the following basis :

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43. "So passes away earthly glory."

Class 1

Deposit	£3 0 0
Annual subscription	£4 0 0
Half-yearly	£2 10 0
Quarterly	£1 0 0

Class 11

Deposit	£2 0 0
Annually	£3 0 0
Half-yearly	£2 0 0
Quarterly	£1 0 0

Class 111

Deposit	10 0
Annually	£2 0 0
Half-yearly	£1 5 0
Quarterly	15 0

A First Class subscription entitled a subscriber to take out three sets of books (a set not to exceed three volumes) and three periodicals; a Second Class subscription, two sets of books and two periodicals and a Third Class subscription, one set of books and one periodical.

When the New Library Committee met on 20 December 1882, it was resolved that :

1. The salary of the Librarian be fixed at £300 per year;
2. The offices of Secretary and Assistant be offered to the present holders of these offices;
3. The salary of the Librarian's Assistant be £2 10 per week;
4. It would be advisable for one member of the Committee be in attendance at the library every evening, arrangements to be made accordingly;

5. The Librarian should be at liberty to absent himself from the library three hours a day at times to be fixed by the Sub-committee.

The Committee revised the list of subscriptions to include the following wide selection of magazines :

Field; Funny folk; London news; Graphic; Judy; Pall Mall Budget; Pictorial world; Public Opinion; Punch; Sporting Time; Spectator; Truth, Vanity Fair; World; Atlantic Monthly; Belgravia; Blackwood; Cornhill; Nineteenth Century; Monthly Popular Science; Chambers' Journal; Macmillan; Temple Bar; Theatre; Edinburgh Revue; Fortnightly Revue; Quarterly Revue; Harpers' Monthly; Longman's Magazine; Bailey's Magazine

and the newspapers listed below:

Daily Times; Cape Times; Cape Journal; Cape Mercury; Natal Mercury; Volkstem; Lloyd's Weekly; Cape Argus; E F Herald; Natal Witness; The Friend (KPL. Minutes, 20 December 1882).

In March 1883 Mr G H Goch was invited to become a member of the Committee in the place of Rev Lenoir and Mr S T Solomon was appointed Librarian. It was resolved to open the library on Sundays and it was agreed that Messrs Justice Laurence, E A Judge and G H Goch would form a committee to arrange supervision during these times (KPL. Minutes, 10 April 1883). The Committee added the following titles to the list of subscriptions :

Harpers' Weekly; Scientific American; Canadian Illustrated; Australian Sketches; Sydney Illustrated News; The Colonies and India; Fliegende Blätter; über Land und Meer; Koenische Zeitung; Deux mond revue.

Men like Mr G H Goch and Mr Justice Laurence were imbued with enthusiasm for the library and they were determined to make it a success. It was Goch who undertook to negotiate with the Town Council about a possible reduction of rental for the two rooms used by the library on the grounds that the accommodation was not up to the standard agreed upon originally. It was also Goch who arranged a dramatic performance and musical entertainment as a fund raising project for the library and handled the bookings at his shop.

The library was in great need of money; only about 100 people had joined the library, bringing an income of a paltry £186 from subscriptions. "The enthusiasm of the promoters," maintained the Diamond Fields Advertiser (8 August 1883), "did not meet with the ready response of the public" and the subscription rates were much too high. A flat rate of £1 for everybody, it was suggested, would be a much better solution. There were other causes for complaint as well: the accommodation was completely unsatisfactory and the stock of reference material inadequate.

The precarious state of the library finances was stressed by the Chairman of the Library Committee at the first Annual General Meeting of the Library, held on 4 October 1883. Mr Laurence stated that, despite a full report on the finances of the Library to Parliament, the grant of £200 had not been increased and that the financial estimates for the next year revealed a shortfall of £440.

At this meeting the preliminary rules of the Library, formulated by Mr Laurence, were read and accepted. According to these,



- the library would be freely accessible to the public but the news room would be open to subscribers only;
- books could be taken out for a two-week period and periodicals for six days;
- fines for overdue material were calculated at the rate of threepence per day and after three months the full value of the book had to be refunded or the book replaced;
- a fine of one pound could be levied if a member loaned the book to another person;
- books could be reserved by entering the title in a "Bespoke book"
- and suggestions could be noted in a "Proposal book".

One of the duties of the Librarian was to "cause the rooms, books, furniture etc. to be kept well aired and dusted and to maintain and preserve good order in the library" (KPL. Minutes, 4 October 1883).

A new committee, composed of Messrs Justice Laurence, Justice Jones, G G Wolf, Hamburg, G H Goch, B T Knights, H Crawford, W J Coleman, A E Caldecot and J E Radford, Rev Mendelssohn and Advocate Davison, was elected; the name of C J Rhodes was also put forward but was withdrawn.

In November the Librarian carried out a stocktaking at the library and reported to the Committee that the stock totalled 3 055 books and 435 magazines; 35 books were found to be missing. Equipment listed games chessmen and boards, draftsmen, dominoes and cribbage boards, two baskets, one ladder and two spittoons (KPL. Minutes, 5 November 1883).

New books recently acquired included Lieutenant Durnford's, A soldier's life in South Africa; Carter's History of the Boer War; F E Colenso's, History of the Zulu War; Ralph Iron's A story of an African farm and Anthony Trollope's Marion Fay.

The first year of the existence of the Kimberley Public Library had not been easy. The problems with which the inhabitants of Kimberley had to cope were, however, far greater: the year 1883 saw the occurrence of the first major industrial strike on the Diamond Fields and also a small-pox epidemic which took its toll.<sup>44</sup> The next year started off with yet another setback when a fire broke out in the Town Hall causing a great deal of damage to the Surveyor's and the Sanitary Offices. Although the library was not affected, the Library Committee considered it expedient to insure the library against fire with the South British Insurance Company at a premium of twenty shillings per £100 (KPL. Minutes, 7 February 1884).

George Goch, who had already been involved with civic affairs since 1878, had the opportunity of pleading Kimberley's cause in Parliament when he, together with G G Wolf, M Cornwall and C D Rudd, was elected to the House of Assembly in 1884. At the same time he became chairman of the Kimberley Town Council's Estimates's Commission; he soon realised that the Town Council's finances were in a bad way and that, not only were all the votes overspent, but the Council had a debt of £55 000 which called for severe retrenchment and taxation (DI 29 February 1884).<sup>45</sup> Nevertheless, by September 1884, Mr Goch

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44. Mark Foggit, the Mayor of Kimberley, was one of the first victims of the small-pox epidemic.

45. Mr G Goch implemented a rate of a penny and a half in the pound to be levied on all rateable property.

could report to the Library Committee that a sum of £25 had been received from the Municipality as a grant-in-aid.<sup>46</sup>

Library funds were running very low despite the fact that many shareholders had donated their shares to the library. Public support of the library did not come up to expectations and subscribers were tardy about paying subscriptions,<sup>47</sup> placing a heavy burden on the Committee members.

An appeal was made to members to pay outstanding subscriptions without delay<sup>48</sup> and a fund-raising sub-committee was appointed to organise entertainment programmes to swell the funds of the library. "It would, however," remarked the Daily Independent scathingly (10 April 1884), "scarcely be accurate to talk of swelling the funds, which, according to all accounts, are practically nil."

The sub-committee, consisting of Messrs Knights, Wolf, and, needless to say, Goch, arranged a programme of "literary and musical entertainment" in

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46. The Kimberley Borough Amendment Act no 30 (section ii) of 1884, empowered the Kimberley Council "to grant such sums of money in aid of public libraries within the Borough as may from time to time be voted by a majority of two-thirds of the Borough Council...to establish, maintain and regulate public libraries." In the light of this, a request for funding was made to the Municipality by the Library Committee..

47. Subscription rates were too high. The year before, a flat rate of one pound per member was suggested; now the idea was put forward that the yearly subscription should be divided into twelve equal parts of three shillings and sixpence a month. In this way they would get more than two pounds per annum "and catch the casual novel buyer" (DI, 30 August 1884).

48. According to the Library Minutes (22 September, 1884) it was decided that the Librarian would receive a commission of 10% on all subscriptions over £400 collected in one year.

the Town Hall (DI, 27 August 1884) and £20 was raised. Messrs Justice Buchanan, H S Caldecott and F G Goodliffe offered to deliver addresses to raise funds and Mr G G Shaw gave a lecture on "Jews, past and present". Mr Justice Laurence started compiling a catalogue of books of which 300 copies were to be printed and sold at two shillings per copy.

There certainly was no lack of interest in the library, contrary to a statement by the Daily Independent that "in many small colonial towns [there was] far more liberal support than on the Fields" (27 August, 1884). Mr Hoskyns presented 100 shares in the liquidated library to the new library, in return for which he was given First Class membership for a year (KPL. Minutes, 1 May 1884). Mrs Gibson, wife of Francis Gibson, presented four volumes of her husband's collected works on Medicine and Physiology, edited by W M Ord, to the library (DI, 24 June 1884) and Mr D Holt donated a bust of Sir Bartle Frere (KPL. Minutes, 2 October 1884).

Andrew Smith's Illustrations of Zoology of South Africa was on offer from Mr Ortlepp at £15 but the Committee, considering this an exorbitant price, stipulated that he first obtain three new First Class subscribers or other subscriptions to the equivalent (KPL. Minutes, 6 March 1884).

At the second Annual Meeting of the Kimberley Public Library, held on 2 October 1884, it was reported that £200 had been received from the Government, £30 from the London and South African Exploration Company and £25 from the Municipality. Membership of the library had increased from 350 to 472 and circulation from 1 883 to 2 388. Attention was drawn to the inadequacy of the present accommodation

and the necessity for better premises in the near future.

The new committee for the forthcoming year consisted of Messrs Justice Jones, Justice Laurence, J B Currey, H Crawford, G G Wolf, G H Goch, A E Caldecot, W J Coleman, B T Knights, J E Radford, F G Goodliffe and Rev M Mendelssohn. Mr Justice Laurence, the newly-elected chairman, had just returned from England, where he had purchased books for the library to the value of £180.

At a meeting of the Committee held on 5 February 1885, it was resolved to apply again for a parliamentary grant and for a renewal of the lapsed Special Grant of £500 for building purposes. The Chairman approached the Colonial Secretary appealing for a grant-in-aid of the building fund and an increased annual grant.

"I understand," he wrote, "that the Civil Commissioner has placed an additional £100 for the latter and the sum of £1 000, (the grant of which might, if thought fit, be made conditional on a similar sum being raised locally) for which former purpose, on the estimates submitted by him for your approval, and it is earnestly hoped that you will approve of these estimates and feel justified in giving them your support in Parliament.

The Library Committee has long been anxious to obtain some addition to the Parliamentary grant in aid, and we think we have very strong claims to such assistance. For the last two years we have received from the Government £200, a similar grant to that received by the Grahamstown and King Williamstown Public

libraries; but it need scarcely be pointed out that our expenses here for salaries etc. are inevitably so much heavier than in other parts of the Colony that a grant of £300 to Kimberley would really not be greater, or at all events could not be made to go further than one of £200 to the places I have mentioned. Moreover Grahamstown appears to receive £400 in aid of Public Gardens and £150 in aid of the Albany Museum, while the only corresponding grant to Kimberley is one of £150 in aid of the Gardens.

These observations are not made in any spirit of local jealousy, but merely in order to show that a small addition to our grant could not be said to involve any excessive or unfair liberality to Kimberley, as compared with other towns. I need scarcely remind you that the South African Public Library at Cape Town, which of course stands in some respects on an exceptional footing, receives a Parliamentary grant of no less than £600 a year.

From another point of view we think our claims may be fairly pressed. No effort has been spared by the Committee to raise a sufficient revenue locally, and as will be seen from the Report of the Library for the year 1883-1884, we raised during that period a total revenue of about £850, or about double that of King Williamstown and Grahamstown and considerably more than was raised by any public library in the Colony. The local supporters of the library thus think they may fairly address

Parliament in a phrase which has recently become famous, 'do ut des'.<sup>49</sup>

The library here certainly does a work of which it is impossible to exaggerate the utility, and both the public room and the subscribers' room are constantly crowded and over-crowded. The Library is open from 10 a.m. to 10 p.m. and the facilities thus afforded for rational recreation and instruction are widely appreciated by all classes of the community.

Our present rooms are however quite inadequate for the purpose and the Committee have long felt convinced of the necessity of obtaining more suitable accommodation, which, at the present time, considering the depression in the value of landed property etc. could probably be acquired on exceptionally advantageous terms. The Committee believe that for from £2 000 to £2 500 a suitable site could be obtained and a commodious building erected, which would permanently satisfy the requirements of Kimberley in this respect.

A sum of £500 was placed on the estimates two years ago in aid of the library building fund; but owing to the inadequacy of the sum and other circumstances no steps in the matter could then be taken

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49. "I give in order that you may give." [Latin].

and the grant was allowed to lapse..."<sup>50</sup>

(Laurence, 1885)

The Town Council placed on the library vote for 1885 an amount of £100, which, the Daily Independent stated, would be useful to "an institution which is productive of much good to the place and which, in spite of appeals so far has not received the public support to which it is justified" (7 March 1885).

In June 1885 another letter was sent to the Colonial Secretary, this time to enquire whether the Government would be willing to make a grant of land on the Vooruitzicht Estate available for sale as building plots and to donate the money so raised to the proposed library building fund (KPL. Minutes, 4 June 1885). The reply which came from the Crown Lands Department regretted its inability to accede to this request (KPL. Minutes, 4 June 1885).

Despite frustrations, the Committee continued with their fund-raising campaign. It was optimistically hoped that the library's finances would show a surplus, which could furnish a nucleus for the building fund (DFA, 17 August 1885). A series of lectures was organised, the proceeds of which would be used for the purchase of new books. Individual lectures cost two shillings and the whole course, ten shillings; the programme was as follows:

19 August	Rev Canon Gaul	Historical riddles.
26 August	Dr J W Matthews	The mad men of Shakespeare.
2 September	H S Caldecott	The scramble for Africa.

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50. At the Annual General Meeting of 1 October 1885 it was reported that the grant from the Government was to be raised from £200 to £300 for the following year, an increase which was greatly appreciated in the light of the "considerable depression" of the time. (KPL. Minutes. 1 October 1885).



9 September	R L Cousens <sup>51</sup>	Electricity.
16 September	M Cornwall	Irish wit and humour.
30 September	Dr H Sauer	Alcohol and its effects.

### 6.3 Cultural societies in the nineteen-eighties

There was clearly a need for mental stimulation of some kind in Kimberley; the library was seen as a place where the man in the street could obtain "intelligent and elevating recreation" (DI, 2 September 1885) especially if he happened to be "of a literary turn of mind" (DI, 17 October 1885) but its passive function had to be supplemented by societies or clubs where young men could actively participate in cultural programmes.

#### 6.3.1 The Presbyterian Literary Society

This society, which was formed in 1882 under presidency of John Bottomley, was an undenominational organisation with an annual subscription of ten shillings.

The Society met every week for talks which covered a wide range of topics, including "The progress of science in the 19th century" by R C Coussins [R L Cousens?]; "George Eliot" by T Reunert; "Ancient mythology" by John Bottomley and "The rise of the drama" by W Norrie.

In the five years of its existence, it was "a source of pleasure and intellectual improvement to many" (DFA, 22 May 1886) and did much "to redeem Kimberley from the charge, perhaps unjustly made

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51. R L Cousens, formerly attached to the South African Brush Electric Light and Power Company, was the borough electrical engineer in Kimberley from 1884 to 1889.

against it, of being altogether too sordid and too occupied with the pursuit of gain" (DI, 9 July 1886).

### 6.3.2 The Young Men's Musical, Dramatic, Literary, and Debating Society

This was launched on 3 November 1885. Mr G H Goch, a charter member, told the audience that he, as a young man, had belonged to a similar society and he was well aware of the problems besetting an organisation of this kind (DI, 7 November 1885); Mr Sidney Mendelssohn, son of Rev. M Mendelssohn, and afterwards one of the Society's most enthusiastic supporters, who was also present (Roberts, 1976, p.247).

It was decided that the first and third meetings of each month would be devoted to music, the second to debating and the fourth to lectures and essays; ladies would be allowed to attend the second musical evening every month (DI, 9 November 1885).

The Diamond Fields Musical and Literary society was very active during the next year, Mr Goch; the Vice-chairman, often standing in for the Chairman, Justice Buchanan. The programme of events included talks on "The suppression of Sunday trading" by Mr Taylor (DI, 7 January 1885); "Diamonds and the Diamond Fields" by Mr Justice Laurence (DI, 13 January 1886); and "The scheme of the Unified Company"<sup>52</sup> by S Mendelssohn (DFA, 23 January 1886).

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52. The unification of the mines under the De Beers Company was only achieved on 18 July 1889, but for many years Cecil Rhodes worked towards attaining this ideal and it had become a debatable subject among the people.

### 6.3.3 The Newton Debating and Dramatic society

When launching this society in August 1886 in the Dutch Reformed Schoolroom, Dr J D Kestell, the Chairman, pointed out in his inaugural address that "where there is a great want of educational means, as there is in the Fields, a debating society goes a great length towards supplying in that want...To obtain facts it will be necessary to read...each member will be obliged...to be led beyond the light and shallow reading which too often is the only literature of a great proportion of young men" (DI, 21 August 1886).

We see thus a great movement towards informal as well as formal education during the mid-eighteen eighties, hereby enhancing the need for a "larger and more convenient" library.<sup>53</sup>

### 6.4 Events leading up to the establishment of the Kimberley Public Library

Two important occurrences in 1885 indirectly affected the prosperity of the Public Library of Kimberley: a year after the industrial strike in Kimberley - caused by stripping and searching miners leaving the mining premises - the first 'closed compound' was instituted by the Central Mining Company. The annual profits from the stores in the compounds were in the vicinity of £10 000 and this money was used to benefit Kimberley through generous donations to the hospital, schools and the library<sup>54</sup> (Roberts, 1978, p. 231).

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53. At a public meeting held on 25 November 1886, the resolution to build a public High School was finally passed.

54. In 1886 Mr G H Goch proposed a bill in the House of Assembly to the effect that the profits of the compound sales be paid by the mines to the Kimberley and Beaconsfield Municipalities and that 10% be deducted for the Hospital and the Public Library (DFA, 17 June 1886).

Another important happening was the completion of the railway line between Cape Town and Kimberley and the arrival of the "Iron horse" on 28 November 1885. The result was that building material became more easily available and the mail was more reliable. A more direct result was that the Library Building Fund benefited to the extent of £50 from the surplus left over from the Railway Festivities Fund, largely as a result of the sympathetic approach of the chairman, Mr J B Currey, to the appeal for funds made by Mr Justice Laurence on behalf of the Library Committee (DFA, 27 February 1886).

The 1886 Library Committee, consisting of Messrs Justice Laurence, Justice Jones, H Crawford, G G Wolf, G H Goch, A E Caldecot, J B Currey, B T Knights, J E Radford, J D Forster and Rev M Mendelssohn, were given the authority to try and buy a building site for the library in the new year (KPL. Minutes, 1 October 1885) and to appeal to the public for donations to the Library Building Fund (DI, 3 December 1885). Library patrons were thoroughly aware of the need for a new library and ready to offer their support.

"The present limited accommodation," complained a reader in a letter to the Diamond Fields Advertiser (16 March 1886), "is quite unworthy of so valuable a collection of books and tends to keep away readers..." and then went on to mention the inconveniently high lamps, suggesting that "they should be placed eighteen inches to two feet lower."

Progress was slowly being made by the Building Committee. A stand was purchased in Dutoitspan Road for £600 (KPL. Minutes, 19 February 1886) and a sketch of the proposed library, prepared by Mr R E

Wright of the Public Works Department,<sup>55</sup> was accepted in a revised form by the Committee in June 1886; Mr Rhodes sounded out Parliament on the possibility of convict labour for the erection of the library (DFA, 18 May 1886) while the Committee approached the Commissioner of Crown Lands for a grant of bricks from the Public Works Department and authorised Mr J B Tucker to survey the library stands (KPL. Minutes, 3 June 1886). Plans and specifications were ready in July and tenders for building could be invited (DFA, 15 July, 1886).

The joint tender of Messrs Westlake and Coles and Messrs Smith and Bull was subsequently accepted and construction work could begin. Parliament had authorised a grant of free bricks from the Public Works Department<sup>56</sup> and Mr R E. Wright, the District Inspector, was appointed as architect and was also given the responsibility of designing and preparing specifications for the library furniture and fittings (KPL. 4th Annual Report, November 1886).

Excited anticipation at the prospect of a new prestigious library was mounting. The Diamond Fields Advertiser (24 July 1886) gave its readers an enthusiastic preview of what was to be expected: The library would be forty-four feet by twenty-six feet and twenty feet high; the subscribers' room, thirty-seven feet by twenty feet and the smoking room, thirty feet by eighteen feet. The committee room and the Librarian's office would each be eighteen feet by fifteen feet. There would be ample room for lavatories and store rooms. Only the best quality "pressed bricks" would be used, the "main

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55. A sketch of the proposed library by Mr Wright and dated as early as 1883 is in the possession of the Kimberley Public library.

56. Parliament agreed to give them 100 000 bricks but this had later to be increased to 150 000.

portion of the front in ordinary coloured bricks, but pilasters and other mouldings will be composed of bricks of deep red hue; below the windows, panels will have a diaper pattern in black brick."

The entrance to the building would be on the side of the building, through a porch with an ornamental iron gate.<sup>57</sup> Both the main library and the subscribers' room would have "lantern lights" in the roof; the roof itself would have alternate bands of green and purple slate with an iron railing encircling the top; the entrance porch and the lavatory were to have floors of encaustic tiles.

"It will not only be pleasing from an architectural point of view," the Diamond Fields Advertiser assured its readers, "but the space has also been used to the best advantage." That this was indeed the case, is substantiated by the decision to utilise the upper portion of the walls for additional shelving by adding a gallery of patterned cast iron with a spiral staircase leading to it. The elevated windows would ensure quiet reading by eliminating noise "caused by passing traffic" (DFA, 6 December 1886). This and other innovations, such as a durable floor covering and the possibility of electric lighting, would push up costs by between £400 and £500. Many donations were being received but these were insufficient to cover the estimated costs.

A Sub-committee, consisting of Messrs Justice Laurence, Justice Jones, Advocate W S Lord, Dr L S Jameson and Mr J B Currey, was appointed to organise

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57. Messrs Henwood & Co provided much of the material, including the pendant lamps and brackets and the wrought iron gateway which was said to be "highly graceful and artistic" and was on display, prior to its installation, at Henwoods' on the corner of Market and Main Streets (DFA, 17 February 1887).

a bazaar for fund-raising. Justice Laurence wrote to the Borough Council requesting that the additional grant of £100, which had been placed on the estimates pending the start of building operations, now be paid to the Committee. He explained that the cost of the building would amount to at least £4 000 of which £1 200 still had to be raised.

"There is no test," he claimed, "by which the public spirit and character of the community is more frequently and fairly measured than by the support given to an institution such as the Public Library. In England the Free Libraries' Act permits the levying of rates for libraries. In South Africa, I believe the Kimberley Town Council stands alone as a municipal body in having assisted the local public library..."(DFA, 16 August 1886).

A long discussion by the Council resulted in an increase of the grant to the library from £100 to £300. Subscriptions, the only steady income of the library, showed a decline during the year. It was not to the credit of Kimberley, Mr Laurence reprimanded the citizens of Kimberley (KPL. Report, 1886), that subscribers only numbered 183, adding that there were 400 in Port Elizabeth, so why not in Kimberley (DI, 9 October 1886)?

There was, however, another valid reason for the drop in circulation. The discovery of gold in the Transvaal in 1886 had lured away many men from the Diamond Fields. Mr Laurence mentioned this in his report and appealed to the many artisans in Kimberley to use the library, citing Birmingham as an example of a place which was "largely populated by mechanics" and where a million books were circulated annually. He thanked the Treasurer, (Mr

H Crawford) for his "caution and sobriety" and mentioned the Committee, saying that their task was a thankless one (DFA & DI, 9 October 1886).

Interestingly, no mention was made of the Librarian, Mr S Solomon who had, during the past year, reclassified 4 500 books in a manner which was "really admirable and reflects credit to the obliging and genial librarian" (DFA, 17 October 1885). The scheme he devised was one of broad classes under the letters of the alphabet:

- Class A: Fiction, according to the author;
- Class B: Voyages and Travels;
- Class C: Biography and personal literature;
- Class D: History, essays and speeches; etc.
- Class E: Poetry and Drama;
- Class F: Philosophy and Political Economy;
- Class G: Science;
- Class H: Theology;
- Class I: Classical;
- Class P: Periodicals;
- Class O: Miscellaneous;
- Class R: Reference.

The library was said to possess "a collection of high class works really astonishing, art nor poesy as well as foreign masterpieces in the original tongue being absent from the shelves" (DI 19 November 1886).

Titles suggested for possible purchase when funds were available were The ring and the book, Spinoza, Westward Ho, Taines's History of the English



Literature<sup>58</sup> and "a little more Ruskin." Smith's Zoology of South Africa in five volumes was purchased from W Fry for £13.<sup>59</sup>

Recent new subscriptions were the Cape Law Journal, the Dublin University Review, Law Quarterly Review, Law Times and Reports, Builder, Engineering, Era, Portfolio, Sydney Morning Herald, Whitaker's Almanac and Statesman's Yearbook.

By the end of 1886 a balance of £1 200 still had to be collected. Justice Laurence promised the people that when once the library was built "there would be no necessity for any further appeal to the generosity of the public and we shall have in Kimberley a working memorial of that year of Jubilee which has now begun and with the date of which so many great undertakings are likely to be associated" (DI, 15 December 1886).

The Daily Independent (16 December 1886) urged the public to raise the required sum of £1 200 if Kimberley "who prides itself on being the most intelligent and cultured community in South Africa" wanted to have a fine library such as already existed in Cape Town, Port Elizabeth, Grahamstown or Beaufort West. "Don't spoil the venture for a lack of pennyworth of paint," pleaded the editor.

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58. Robert Browning. The ring and the book. Smith & Elder, 1872; Dichter & Kaufman. Spinoza. Cotter, 1871 and Taines's History of the English Literature. Edmonston & Douglas, 1871 are still in the old stock of the Kimberley Library. Charles Kingsley. Westward Ho! (Publisher unknown) is not in stock anymore.

59. Two years previously Smith's Illustrations of Zoology was offered to the Committee at £15 by Mr Ortlepp. The condition for the purchase was that he should introduce three new First Class subscribers. Vide p.98. Evidently this was not done, hence the purchase of this set from Mr Fry for £13. This set is still in the possession of the Kimberley Public Library.

Donations poured in and by March 1887, the sum of £4 000 was reached; a list of donations was published after the opening of the library ( DI, 30 September 1887 and DFA, 1 October 1887) and included the following :

Borough of Kimberley	£300
De Beers	£200
C J Rhodes	£175
A Beit	£150
London & S A Expl Co	£105
Mr Justice Laurence	£105
Dr Jameson	£40
C D Rudd	£30
Barnato Bros	£25
J B Currey	£20
G H Goch	£20
L Phillips	£5 5 0
B Klisser	£2 2 0.

At this time the Committee thought it advisable to purchase the stand adjacent to the library building and measuring forty-five foot six inches by a hundred and twelve foot six inches from the owner, Mr E K Green, at £575 (KPL. Minutes, 3 February 1887); this had to be enclosed by iron fencing at an additional cost of £40 (KPL. Minutes, 3 March 1887). Costs escalated as a result of this and other additional unforeseen expenses, and more money was required.

It was fortunate for the library that 1887 was the Jubilee year and that the British residents of Kimberley were enthusiastically raising funds with which to celebrate Queen Victoria's fifty years of reign, and equally fortunate was the fact that Mr Justice Laurence, the library's main protagonist, was on the committee which was formed to organise the Jubilee celebrations.

When it was decided, therefore, to use £650 for Jubilee festivities, £100 for a bust of Queen Victoria and the rest for deserving causes, the Library Building Fund received £250 and another £250 was donated towards the purchase of books (DI, 28 March & 7 April 1887). The library was also notified that the Queen would present a copy of her book containing her autograph to the Kimberley Public Library on the occasion of the opening of the new building (DFA, 17 March 1887).<sup>60</sup>

The supreme effort at fund-raising was undoubtedly the bazaar which was organised by a group of ladies under the direction of Mrs G Lord.<sup>61</sup> It was held in the Town Hall and lasted for a week and included evening entertainment, such as dancing and dramatic performances.

Mr Justice Laurence performed the opening, standing on a "rather unsubstantial table" in the "brilliant light of the electric lamps"; he expressed his gratitude towards the conveners and to Mr J B Currey, who had acted as Honorary Secretary of the Bazaar Committee until his time of departure (DI, 9 May 1887). The Daily Independent, in its leader (10 May 1887), remarked that "a library bazaar is certainly one in which the end can be said to justify the means" and went on to extol the benefits of a public library as "a great educating agency."

The goods which were not sold at the bazaar were auctioned by Mr Rothschild and a grand total of £1 309 was realised. After expenses were subtracted, an amount of £913 could be handed to the

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60. Queen Victoria. 1884. More leaves from the Journal of a life in the Highlands. 5th ed., London, Smith Elder.

61. Mrs Lord was later to become the Librarian of the Kimberley Public Library. Vide p.159.

Library Committee, bringing the total amount raised for the building to £5 350. The estimated costs had, however, by this time risen to £5 500 (DI, 9 June 1887).

The library building had now reached completion. Clocks were purchased from Mr Goch, a pair of 36 inch globes were ordered at £36, and a safe at "not more than £20"; the chairman was authorised to procure chess boards, smoking requisites and various other articles for up to £50 (KPL. Minutes, 7 July 1887).

#### 6.5 The opening of the Kimberley Public Library

The opening of the library was scheduled for Saturday evening 25 July 1887. The public were warned before the time to buy tickets if they wanted to attend the opening as space was very limited (DI, 21 July 1887). Mr Justice Laurence, as Chairman of the Building Committee, chaired the inauguration of the building; on the platform with him were Mr J Grever, Mayor, Mr E A Judge, Mr R E Wright of the Public Works Department, Advocate W S Lord, Dr L S Jameson, and Messrs H S Caldecott, H Crawford, Henrichsen and J B Currey.

"Everything," said Mr Laurence, "comes to those who can wait." After a wait of almost seven years, Kimberley was at last to have its own Public Library, built with money raised almost entirely by voluntary contributions. Mr Justice Laurence handed over the library to the Civil Commissioner and the Mayor as trustees and declared it open "as a free library, dedicated forever to the public of Kimberley."

He added that he hoped that the relationship between the library and the Town Council would remain cordial and pointed out how much could be done in regard to local institutions "in a spirit of mutual

emulation, each town vying with the other and trying to make it more pleasing and attractive..." (DI, 30 July 1887).

The library was indeed a building of which to be proud. On entering it, the Librarian's office was immediately to the right; running down the room was a polished teak reading table with newspapers and periodicals spread out on it, each with its own label. Bookcases of polished teak ran along the lower part of the room and the gallery ran round the top.

The Librarian's office was made of polished white pine and glass and fitted with a polished mahogany desk with a "slab" in front for books; under the bookcases were cupboards with sliding doors of polished white pine and the chairs were upholstered in leather. Each room had "handsome" fire grates and mantelpieces of black polished slate inlaid with encaustic tiles and enamelled panels. The building was lit with Hinks' Patent Duplex lamps in chandeliers, but electric lighting was to be considered in the near future (DI, 30 July 1887).

Justice Laurence concluded his address with these words:

"May this library, with its store of information and knowledge prosper- may it prosper even when he who is speaking and those who are listening have passed into the land where all things are forgotten."

The Public library was to prosper for almost a hundred years in this building.

## 6.6 Conclusion

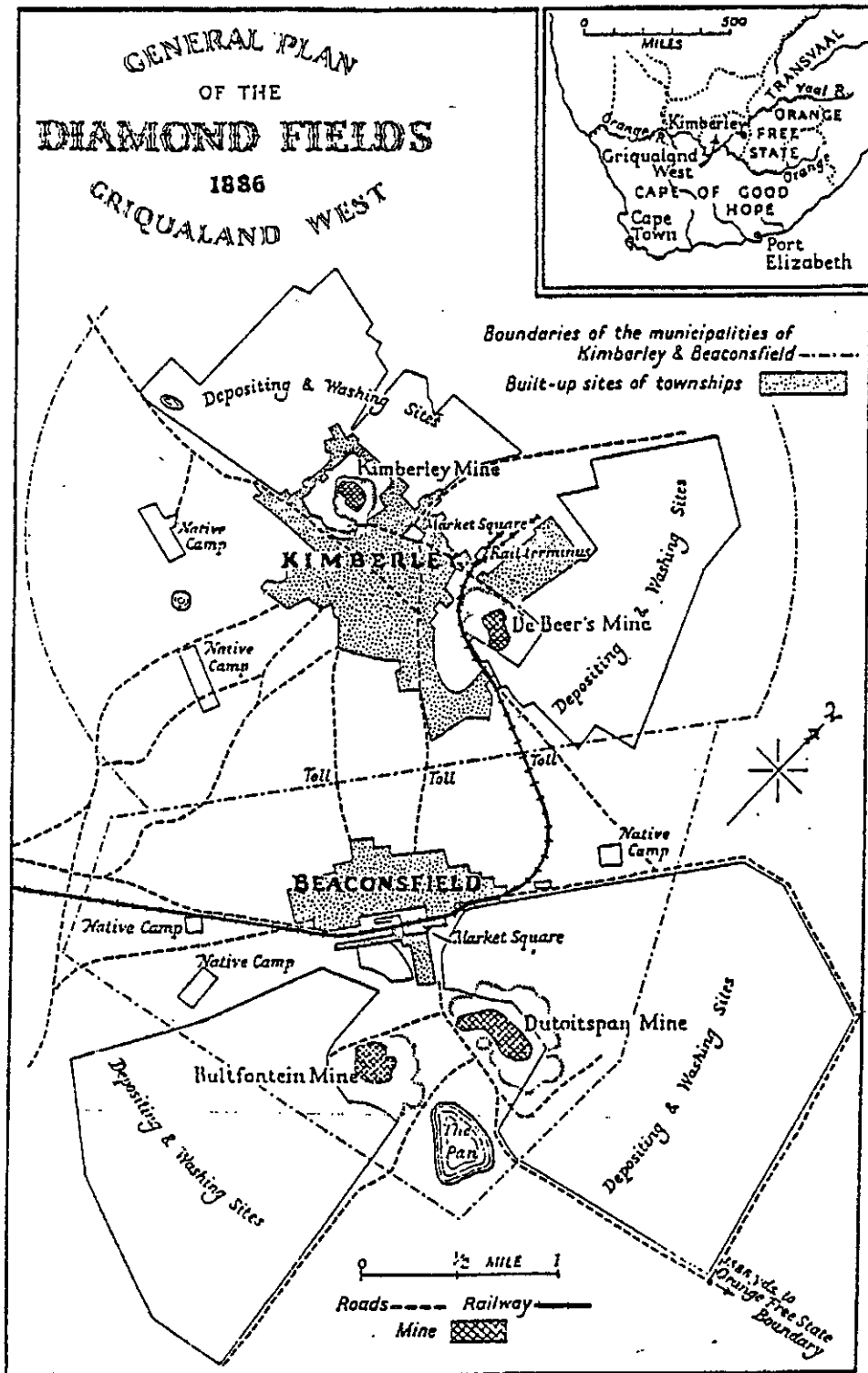
After a number of attempts at establishing a Public Library in Kimberley, success was achieved. The

reason for this was that sufficient funds for a suitable building were first raised and an adequate selection of books procured. The library was the result of careful planning and budgeting and on-going fund-raising.

For the first time the local authority had become involved in the project, regarding it their duty to assist with the establishment of a library despite their own precarious financial position. The public themselves had also thrown in their weight and had made fund-raising a community project.

But it was mainly through the exertion and perseverance of Mr Justice Laurence that the Kimberley Public Library had come into existence.

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The Diamond Fields, 1886. Showing the towns of Kimberley and Beaconsfield and the mines. (London & S A Exploration co. 1886).

CHAPTER 7THE ESTABLISHMENT OF A PUBLIC LIBRARY AND INSTITUTE  
AT BEACONSFIELD

In 1869 the diamond-bearing farm, Bultfontein, was sold to L Lilienfeld and Partners - later to become first the Hope Town Company and then the London and South African Exploration Company - for £2 000; in March 1871, this Company acquired the farm Dutoitspan from the owner, Adriaan van Wyk, for £2 600. The London and South African Exploration Company, which was formed in London on 21 November 1870, belonged to a syndicate which was headed by Henry Webb, Louis Hond, Edgar Hurley and the Lilienfeld brothers; their properties extended over 35 000 acres (Currey, 1900, p.219), making them the biggest landowners on the Diamond Fields.

The land was divided into stands which were leased to the mining community; the property was administered in a very high-handed manner and very little was done to improve the living conditions at Dutoitspan, the general attitude being that "though our tenants numbering something like two thousand might grumble, they were not likely to go away" (Currey, 1900 p.220).

In 1881 John Blades Currey was appointed manager of this Company and returned to Kimberley, which he had left under a cloud in 1875.<sup>62</sup> He found the

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62. As Richard Southey's secretary, J B Currey had an unfortunate experience in Kimberley in 1875, when the diggers' rebellion was laid at his door. The post of Lieutenant-Governor was abolished, Richard Southey recalled and J B Currey paid off.



place greatly changed; there were many buildings, including churches and schools and, he noted, "a public library" (Currey, 1900 p.219). He was to become very involved with this library for many years.

At the time of Currey's arrival at Dutoitspan, the construction of offices for the London and South African Exploration Company was in progress and the architect, S Stonestreet, had already advertised for stone masons (DI, 4 January 1881). It is not clear whether the Company ever occupied any part of this building even for a short time because, by the end of the 1881, they had moved to a venue in Lennox Street (DFA, 18 Jan 1882); the building in Dutoitspan became something of a white elephant and Currey had the task of finding tenants for it.

In January 1884 J B Currey wrote to the London Office notifying them that he had let part of the "new offices" at Beaconsfield to the Government and asking them what he should charge if they wished to purchase the whole building (Currey, 26 January 1884). In April 1884 he sent a plan of the offices to London and explained that he had let Rooms 3,4 and 5 to the Inspector of Dutoitspan and Bultfontein Mines at a rental of £120 per annum and Rooms 8,9,10 and 11 to the Custom House authorities at £300 (Currey, 4 April 1884). However, by July, only two rooms were ready for leasing, the rest still being unfinished, resulting in a considerable loss of income from these premises. Meanwhile a verandah was added and the stonework was pointed (DI, 4 July 1884); two years later a wall was built round the property (DFA, 22 April 1886).

Currey had no sooner taken up his post in Dutoitspan, than a number of civic-minded citizens held a meeting to consider combining the two wards, Dutoitspan and Bultfontein, and establish a

township to be named Beaconsfield<sup>63</sup> (DFA, 9 May 1881). A petition to change the status of Dutoitspan to that of a municipality was sent to the Cape Governor and on 16 August 1883 the petition was granted. Dutoitspan, which was generally regarded as Kimberley's "poor relation" (Roberts, 1978, p.50), took on a new lease of life; plans for sanitation, water systems and the laying out of streets received attention from the Beaconsfield Town Council under the mayorship of S C Austin.

The Daily Independent (19 March 1884) referred to "our ambitious neighbour's" plans, exclaiming, "Goodness gracious, what will be their next move? It will want a daily paper, and a Town Hall, and a library...!" And this was exactly what happened. The newly established municipality very soon started looking for a Town Hall. It was suggested that after the expiry of the Inspector of Mines' lease of the Beaconsfield Offices on 30 June 1886, the Town Council should rent the building and use it as a Town Hall.

The Town Council, however, decided to proceed with the erection of their own Town Hall, especially in the light of a suggestion from the Volunteer Memorial Committee that they transfer the Memorial funds to the Council<sup>64</sup> as well as the two stands which they had already leased at a nominal rate from the London and South African Exploration Company for building purposes (Record and Beaconsfield Advertiser, 16 July 1887), on condition that the Memorial Hall form part of the

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63. Vide p. 18.

64. The Volunteer Memorial Committee had to decide how best to use funds amounting to £800 which were collected to put up a memorial to the Colonial War of 1878 and to the Diamond Fields Horse.

proposed Town Hall on Market Square (Record and Beaconsfield Advertiser, 30 July 1887).

The hall, it was agreed, would be named the Volunteer Memorial Hall and all revenue from it would accrue to the Town Council.

Soon after this decision was taken, the Town Council of Beaconsfield received a petition drafted by Mr G R K Bradshaw and signed by Messrs Bradshaw, C A Blackbeard, and G C Dreyer, Rev C F Tobias and Dr E H Croghan asking whether, when the plan of the Memorial Hall was drawn, provision could be made for a "lean to" on the side of the hall, which could be added on when funds were available and which could serve as a library and reading room. Mr Brauer, the architect, accordingly made provision for a library of twenty-five feet by fifteen feet at an estimated cost of between £200 and £300.

The Provisional Library Committee, composed of the signatories of the petition, decided, after two or three interviews with the Council, that the "lean-to" could not be made large enough for the purpose they had in mind. It was suggested that they hold the matter over to the next year as another site would then be available. (DI, 24 August and 15 September 1887).

Mr Currey had in the meantime conceived the idea of opening a Branch Office of his Company in the Beaconsfield building "now that telegraphic communication can be provided at moderate cost" (Currey, 1887). He explained to his Head office in London that Beaconsfield had grown very rapidly of late and that a Town Hall had been built and a Standard Bank branch opened, making it a viable proposition to accede to the wishes of their tenants to establish in Beaconsfield a Branch

Office where they could pay their rent. He intended allowing Mr Illig, the Beaconsfield Collector, to live on the premises; he would establish a telephone between the offices and would have a small stable built on the grounds (Currey, 1887).

At this time, the Provisional Library Committee decided to put a proposal to Mr Currey that he lease a section of his Company's building to them as a temporary library venue. Mr Currey, who had been on the Kimberley Library Committee since June 1884 and had done much towards the founding of the Kimberley Public Library<sup>65</sup>, was very sympathetic to their cause, stating that they deserved to have a library as he realised that the Provisional Committee "had sprung into existence out of a long felt want of the public," but that it depended upon the sanction of his Company and also on how much support could be obtained from the public (DI, 15 September 1887) .

A meeting was immediately convened in the Beaconsfield Court House to notify the public about the outcome of the meeting with Mr Currey. Rev Tobias, who chaired the meeting, said that, before all else, it was necessary to obtain the names of prospective members of the proposed library.

He then moved

"that the co-operation of the Beaconsfield Town Council and mining companies be solicited; that the Government of the Cape be contacted to ascertain what support could be obtained;

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65. The Kimberley Public Library was established on 23 July 1887, a month prior to the request from the Beaconsfield Committee for lease of the property.

that the co-operation of Mr Justice Laurence and the Kimberley Public Library be obtained."

The subscription rates to the proposed library were also decided upon, if somewhat prematurely. The terms for the Library and Subscribers Reading Room were:

£1 yearly, 10/6 half-yearly, 5/6 quarterly.

Subscription to the whole Institute :

£2.2.0 yearly, £1.1.0 half-yearly, 11/- quarterly and 4/- monthly.

Furthermore, it was resolved that only yearly subscribers would have the right to vote at "Jubilee meetings" and they would have control of the library generally. Mr Brauer offered to draw a plan of the Company's offices, showing the proposed alterations; he would also calculate the estimated cost of the project and submit this to the Committee in a week's time. The library could come into consideration for a government grant on the £ for £ principle, but fund-raising, it was agreed, should commence without delay. A subscribers' list was started and Mr Bradshaw, the chief instigator of the scheme, put his name at the head of the list (DI, 14 September 1887).

At the next meeting it was resolved to try and raise the sum of £1 000. Beaconsfield was divided into three sections, the Bultfontein and Dutoitspan Mines, the Beaconsfield and Dutoitspan townships and the commercial community, with fund-raising committees for each (DI, 22 September 1887).

Rev Tobias (1887), in an impassioned appeal for support, wrote to Mr Currey, stating

"You know this place well and what are the temptations of our numerous young men, taken away from school at an early age, working at unintellectual occupations for the most part, earning enough to have spare cash to waste and yet not enough to induce them to attempt the accumulation of capital...They have scarcely an amusement open to them except the canteens, the club and, to speak openly, the brothels..."

The Honorary Secretary of the Provisional Library Committee, Mr J H Liley, wrote to the London and South African Exploration Company through Mr Currey, setting out proposed leasing conditions. The lease of the Company's rooms, he said, would be of a temporary nature, possibly not for longer than two or three years; the Committee would, however, not be able to pay the full rental of the building, and were not in a position to offer more than £100 per annum (Liley, 1887).

In his letter he referred to the "acknowledged want and readiness with which a large number of inhabitants have already sent in their names."

Mr Currey forwarded the letter to his Company, stating that he supported those who were "endeavouring to create a nucleus of intellectual life by establishing a Reading Room and Library" in view of "the present lamentable moral condition of Beaconsfield." He added that the library wanted the use of rooms 1, 2, 9, 10 and 11<sup>66</sup>; although he considered the sum of £100 per annum to be "wholly inadequate" he pointed out that the rooms were still unfinished and that the cost of plastering,

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66. Rooms 3,4,5, and 6 were evidently occupied by the Branch Office and numbers 7 and 8 would be let.

flooring and ceiling would amount to not less than £500 (Currey, 1887).

Rev Tobias (1888) listed the members of the Provisional Library Committee as Mr M B Robinson, Messrs C A Blackbeard, I E Tucker, G C Dreyer, Dr E H Croghan and himself, with Mr F Fraser, Manager of the Standard Bank, the Treasurer and Mr J H Liley, the Secretary. He affirmed that, although many of the prospective members had left for the gold fields, they were confident of collecting at least half of the amount aimed at through donations. Membership already stood at 200 and the Committee were preparing to launch the undertaking officially.

"We hear at the Pan", remarked the Daily Independent (12 May 1888), "that the Library Committee are sanguine of collecting the whole amount of £1000 during the week..."

At the opening of the Volunteer Memorial Hall<sup>67</sup> at which Mr J B Currey officiated, he mentioned that his Company was "assisting in preparing a large building for the public to use as a library and reading room" and that it only remained to sign the lease (DI, 12 June, 1888).

In the meantime, some of the go-ahead citizens were forming their own plans for a Reading Room, where British and Colonial newspapers and periodicals were to be available; a society named the "Athletic and Literary Association" was established in 1888 with the idea of providing recreational facilities for the young men on the mines to "effectually serve as an antidote to the temptation of the bar and the billiard room" (DI, 26 February 1888).

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67. The Volunteer Memorial Hall measured 90' x 50' and was built at a cost of £2 098.

Dr E H Croghan was elected the President, Major Wollaston, Vice-President, and Mr W L Scarles the Secretary of the Association which was to have five sections: Gymnastics, Swimming, Cricket, Football and the Reading Room and Library.

It started off well with 60 members enthusiastically planning to raise funds by means of a concert; their programme took off with a paper delivered by Mr Scarles and the reading room, which was already in operation, was thrown open to the general public from 9 am to 10 pm daily, including Sundays (DI, 16 April 1888). An ambitious scheme to erect their own reading and billiard rooms on a share principle was put forward (DI 28 April 1888) but the establishment of the Beaconsfield Library during the next year put a spoke in the wheel and apparently the society became purely a sports club.

The go-ahead for the Beaconsfield Library was obtained on 17 January 1889 and a five-year lease was negotiated with the London and South African Exploration Company at £100 per annum. Early in 1889 a public meeting in connection with the proposed library was held and all the inhabitants of Beaconsfield were invited to attend.

"Come forward and take an interest," the Daily Independent urged (31 January 1889), "in bringing about the consummation of one of the best schemes that has ever been put forward for the benefit of the inhabitants of the township."

The building was now ready and occupation could be taken of the required section. Rooms measuring twelve feet by eighteen feet and twenty-one feet by thirty feet were allocated to the library and the public reading room respectively; one of fifteen feet by eighteen feet to the subscribers' room;



another of ten feet by eighteen feet to a smoking room. The last, measuring eighteen feet by thirty-four feet was later to be fitted out as a billiard room (DI, 8 February 1889).

It was hoped that an arrangement could be made with the Kimberley Public Library whereby books could be loaned and duplicates passed on to them. "The Kimberley Library," the Daily Independent (31 January 1889) remarked, "would surely meet the request for assistance from the sister township in its endeavour to establish so important and useful an institution."

In reply to the request for books, the Committee of the Kimberley Public Library resolved to allow the Beaconsfield Library a special subscription of £50 for 12 months or £30 for six months, with a deposit of £20 payable in advance, in return for which they would be entitled to not more than 200 volumes at a time, of which not more than 10% could be selected from the latest consignment of books received (KPL Minutes, 21 February 1889).

The main problem was the matter of finances. In July 1888 a concert was held in the Volunteer Memorial Hall to raise funds for the library and in February 1889 a ball was given. Mr M Cornwall had kindly secured a government grant of £100 for the library (DN 8 February 1889) and Mr Liley undertook to approach the Borough Council for a financial aid, but was informed that they did not have the power to grant funds for this purpose, but would support the library individually (DI, 13 February 1889).

In March 1889 Mr Currey notified his Head Office that the lease of the Beaconsfield building to the Library Trustees had been finalised and that £20 had been paid as rental for the first quarter

(Currey, 1889). Realising the desperate need for funds, Mr Currey then gave the library a generous donation of £25 from the London and South African Exploration Company (DI, 17 March 1889).

On the evening of 21 May 1889, the stone building was "brilliantly illuminated with Chinese lanterns" for the inauguration of the Beaconsfield Library and Institute. The central room, which was to be the recreation room, was decorated with greenery and the tables were spread with cakes, biscuits "and all manner of sweetmeats and jellies" prepared by a team of ten ladies. The guests, numbering more than 100, included Mr E A Judge, Archdeacon Gaul, Major Browne, Rev Tobias, Major Wollaston, Dr Croghan, Dr Stanley, Councillor E Lonsdale and the Town Clerk, Mr O Moloney. Everybody gathered in the room which was destined to become the billiard room.

Mr M B Robinson, the Acting Magistrate of Beaconsfield, who chaired the meeting, mentioned some of the problems with which they had to contend before a library could be established, "the greater of which has been to overcome the apathy of the public," and pointed out that the success of the institution depended entirely upon the support it received from the public.

He paid special tribute to Judge President Laurence for assistance given to the Committee and to Mr John Blades Currey, in his absence, for his intercession on their behalf in obtaining the sanction of his Company for the lease of the Beaconsfield building. Mr Robinson closed his address by expressing his "earnest desire...that the Institute may prove a lasting and increasing benefit to the inhabitants of the township." (DI, 22 May 1889 and DFA 25 May 1889).

The Secretary, Mr Liley, informed the audience that a meeting would be held for paid-up subscribers to approve the rules of the library and to elect a permanent Library Committee; he explained the loan arrangement between themselves and the Kimberley Public Library, whereby it would be possible to obtain anything on loan within the space of a few hours (DI, 22 May 1889).

Rev Gaul amused the audience by recounting a few anecdotes about his first arrival at the Diamond Fields and went on to extol the benefits of a library and to try and persuade those present to read a better type of book; there was a need for recreational reading matter of an "elevating" kind, he maintained, but it was better to obtain some general knowledge from books.

"Some literature," he added, "is not only frivolous, but absolutely empty and not so much wicked as abominately [sic] vulgar!"

At the end of the speeches, the guests went to the adjoining room where they were entertained with a musical programme, which included the singing of "Il Baccio" and "Coming through the rye" by Madame D' Arch, a clarinet solo and a recitation, after which the guests danced till midnight "highly delighted with the happy manner in which the evening had been spent."

The library started its service to the public on the next day and was open from 9 am to 11 pm daily. Soon afterwards, a billiard table was installed in the billiard room and the first match was played by Messrs Nicholas and Watson<sup>68</sup> (DI, 22 June 1889).

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68. No gambling was allowed in the library.

A £20 deposit on books and a subscription of £35 was paid to the Kimberley Public Library, but subsequently a reduction on subscription fees to suit their limited budget was negotiated. Despite being heavily dependent on the Kimberley Public Library for books, they (the Beaconsfield community) were "a very high-spirited and independent people" and resented being called "a branch of the Kimberley Library" (KPL. Minutes, 7 November 1889).<sup>69</sup>

When Cecil Rhodes amalgamated the mines under De Beers Consolidated Mines in 1888, he expressed his intention of making a fair offer to the 'poorer mines', Bultfontein and Dutoitspan. They held out against him but disastrous reef falls in 1888 gave Rhodes the opportunity he required to step in and acquire the Beaconsfield mines. After protracted negotiations, the mines gave in and joined the De Beers group as this was the only alternative to a complete collapse of the diamond industry (Roberts, 1976, p.261).

Amalgamation was beneficial to the industry as a whole, as the output, and consequently the price of diamonds, could be controlled effectively. However, the effect on Beaconsfield was disastrous as the mines at Dutoitspan and Bultfontein had to be closed down to reduce production, and hundreds of miners were put out of work. Other small mining companies, which had not been included in the amalgamation, also went under, exacerbating the situation.

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69. The Beaconsfield Library was to struggle on by itself, rendering an excellent service to the community for 70 years, before it did indeed become a branch of the Kimberley Public Library.

As a direct consequence of the serious unemployment, the use of the public rooms in the library increased substantially, but the depressed state of the economy precluded new members from joining and compelled many old members to resign, causing the number of subscribers to drop to 77, which was half the original number. The government grant, which was on a £ for £ basis, was reduced accordingly.

The library's hopes for financial support from the various mining companies in Beaconsfield were dashed and, as a result of the precarious position of the library's finances, the library staff had to be reduced, effecting "a considerable saving"<sup>70</sup>. The Beaconsfield Town Council was approached for a grant and the sum of £50 was voted "with the assurance from some of the councillors that, had funds permitted, a larger sum would have been given" (Beaconsfield Library and Institute. Report, 1890 - 1892). Funds raised by a 'Cinderella dance' totalled £24 and the Government grant received amounted to £100. The library had come to depend to a great extent on book donations from various sources and gratefully accepted a reference collection from the Charles Warren Lodge.

Mr H P Dennison, the Honorary Secretary, was at his wit's end and turned to De Beers Consolidated Mines for financial assistance (Dennison, 1891); the resultant donation of £100 from De Beers "saved the precarious life of the Institution" (Beaconsfield Library and Institute. Report, 1890 - 1892).

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70. No indication is given as to the staffing of the early Beaconsfield library and it is not clear what a "reduction in staff" would have meant. The annual report was written by the Chairman, and the Librarian did not feature at all.

Dennison also sent out a circular to the residents of Beaconsfield explaining the need for subscribers and begging them to promote the library to their friends. He stated that there were now 956 books on the shelves and that 200 more were on order; he listed 38 titles of magazines and a large assortment of South African dailies which were available.

The billiard table, he pointed out, was "large and lofty" and the best on the Fields, a new cloth and new cues having been purchased recently and the rates charged for games were half those of other places on the Fields (Beaconsfield Library. Circular, 1891). This circular did not have the desired effect, however. and the number of subscribers dropped to 55.

In an effort to attract more subscribers to the library, and perhaps with the Athletic and Literary Association in mind, a number of men decided to form a Lawn Tennis Club at the library and to lay out two courts on the Recreation Ground of the library. Seventeen members joined the club and the following office-bearers were elected: President and Chairman: L Powys-Jones, Resident Magistrate and successor to M B Robinson; Secretary/Treasurer: H P Dennison; other committee members: C A Blackbeard, J H Liley, Dr E H Croghan and J H Thorp (DFA, 13 March 1890).

Unfortunately there is no indication of how long the Lawn Tennis Club survived and how successful it was, but an item appearing in the Diamond Fields Advertiser more than a year later (17 October 1891) put forward a plea that the Library and Lawn Tennis Club dances be continued.

Mr Currey, now President of the Beaconsfield Library, assisted the library by negotiating a

remission of the rent of £133 owing to the London and South African Exploration Company (Dawson, 1890). The chairman of the Library Committee at the time was Mr H O Badnall; members were Messrs E G Green, J W Dale, W Sagar, J S Cowie, A Macfarlane, P Grassie, W Reed, J H Thorp and H P Dennison, Honorary Secretary. The Trustees were Messrs C A Blackbeard and H O Badnall, in the place of Rev C F Tobias and Mr M B Robinson.

Mr J B Currey was closely involved with both the Kimberley and Beaconsfield Libraries and he tried to bring about a closer co-operation between them. In 1891 the Kimberley Library Committee approved a resolution to sell some of their books to the Beaconsfield Library but, according to the financial statements of the Kimberley Public Library, no payment was ever received.

By the end of April 1892, membership had dropped to 43 but Mr Dennison stated that the Committee had not lost faith and that the recent increase in circulation was "full of promise for the future..." He added that there were "signs of vigorous health in our library, which augurs well for future stability and usefulness" (Beaconsfield Library and Institute. Report, 1892). The Librarian, Mr Edwards, assisted by his daughter, Miss Edwards, drew up an alphabetical catalogue for the 818 volumes in stock.

The finances of the Beaconsfield Library did not improve to any extent. Mr J B Currey (1894) wrote to the Library Committee, telling them not to "burden themselves with the responsibility of a new lease in the present condition of Beaconsfield" and then enquired of them what rental they were prepared to pay for the building. The reply from the Committee indicated that they could not afford more than £1 per month and that they were trying to

increase the number of subscribers; they had also made arrangements to reopen the billiard room, which had in the past proved to be a good source of revenue. Mr Currey (1895) accepted this proposal, saying that his Directors had a great interest in the Institution.

In 1899 C J Rhodes negotiated the purchase of the London and South African Exploration Company and J B Currey received the news "in the fewest possible words" that the Company, which he had managed for sixteen years, had ceased to exist<sup>71</sup> (Currey, 1900, p. 254). De Beers took over all the properties of the London and South African Exploration Company but allowed the Beaconsfield Library to continue as an autonomous subscription library, while at the same time retaining a say in library matters by means of representation on the Library Committee and financial support.

In 1901 Walter H Pacy, an assistant in the "St Martin's-in-the-Field Library, London, was appointed Librarian at the Beaconsfield Library at £150 per annum (Kennedy, 1970, p. 12).

Kimberley became a Cathedral City in 1912; soon afterwards Beaconsfield and Kimberley united to become the City of Kimberley and the Beaconsfield Library became to a certain extent the responsibility of the Kimberley Municipality. It ran successfully as a subscription library for many

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71. After the amalgamation of the mines, De Beers became the largest tenant in the Dutoitspan and Bultfontein Mines, the property of the London and South African Exploration Company. The mining activities of De Beers were hampered by unnecessary restrictions imposed upon them by the London and South African Exploration Company, and Rhodes offered to purchase the Company for £17 0 0 a share, bringing the total purchasing price to £1 625 000.



years, with financial assistance from De Beers and annual grants from the Kimberley City Council.

When it was incorporated with the Cape Provincial Services as a branch of the Kimberley Public Library in 1960, an agreement was reached between De Beers and the City Council of Kimberley whereby the Beaconsfield Library was leased to the Municipality for a period of 21 years with the option of renewal for a further period of 21 years.<sup>72</sup>

In 1964 the De Beers Board of Directors "agreed to donate to the Kimberley City Council, free of consideration except for a nominal charge of R2 (Two rand) the Gardner Williams Hall and Library building, situated on the Lot 2298, Central Road, Kimberley, in freehold title, costs of survey and transfer to be borne by the Council" (De Beers, 1964). The Deed of Transfer in favour of the Municipality of Kimberley was registered on 12 July 1966 (De Beers, 1966).

The library is still housed in the same building today.

### Conclusion

In contrast to the Kimberley Public Library, the Beaconsfield Library was not founded as a result of the efforts of professional men who were endeavouring to emulate the conditions they were used to by building up a library of reading matter which would satisfy their own intellectual needs.

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72. A Memorandum of Agreement of Lease was drawn up between De Beers Consolidated Mines and the Municipality of Kimberley, represented by L Jawno, Mayor, and Albert Edward Bebington, Town Clerk, on 29 August 1960, according to which a rental of 1/- per annum was payable by the City Council to De Beers on or before 1 December every year.

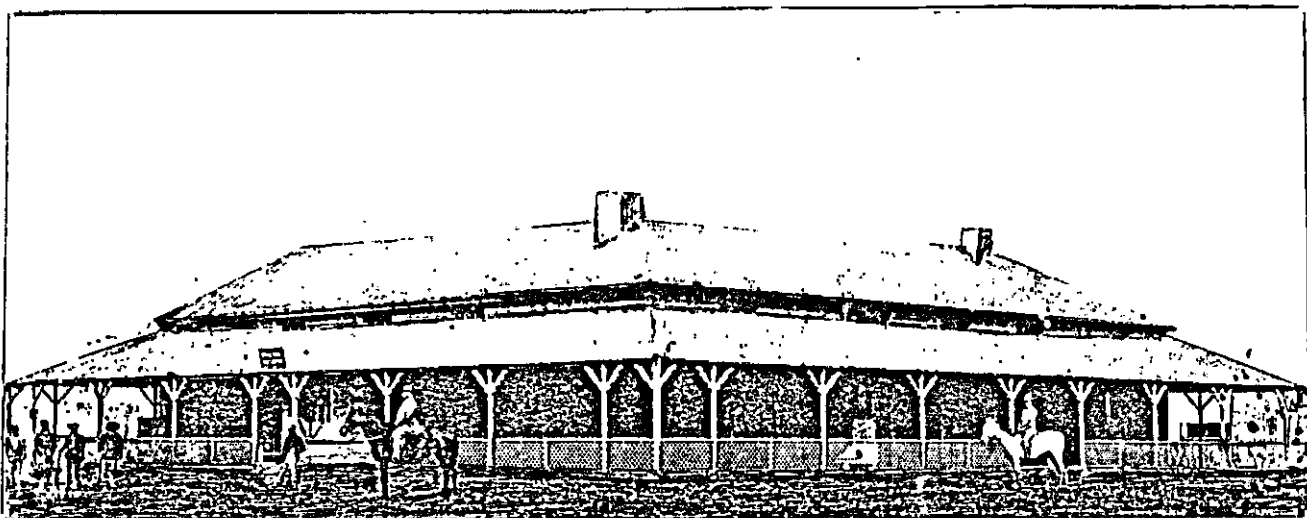
The Beaconsfield Library originated as a result of philanthropic motives of people like Rev Tobias, who saw a library as a means of occupying the time and attention of the young miners who had nothing to do in the evenings but frequent saloons and brothels. J B Currey gave the project his full support as he fully agreed with the motives expressed by the instigators of the scheme. He mentioned the "lamentable moral condition" of Beaconsfield and the "long-felt want for more uplifting diversions."

The library's purpose was mainly recreational, yet little active extension programmes were offered. The main attraction was the billiard room, which was an integral part of the Library and Institute; not only was the game of billiards seen as an attractive pastime but also as a lucrative source of revenue.

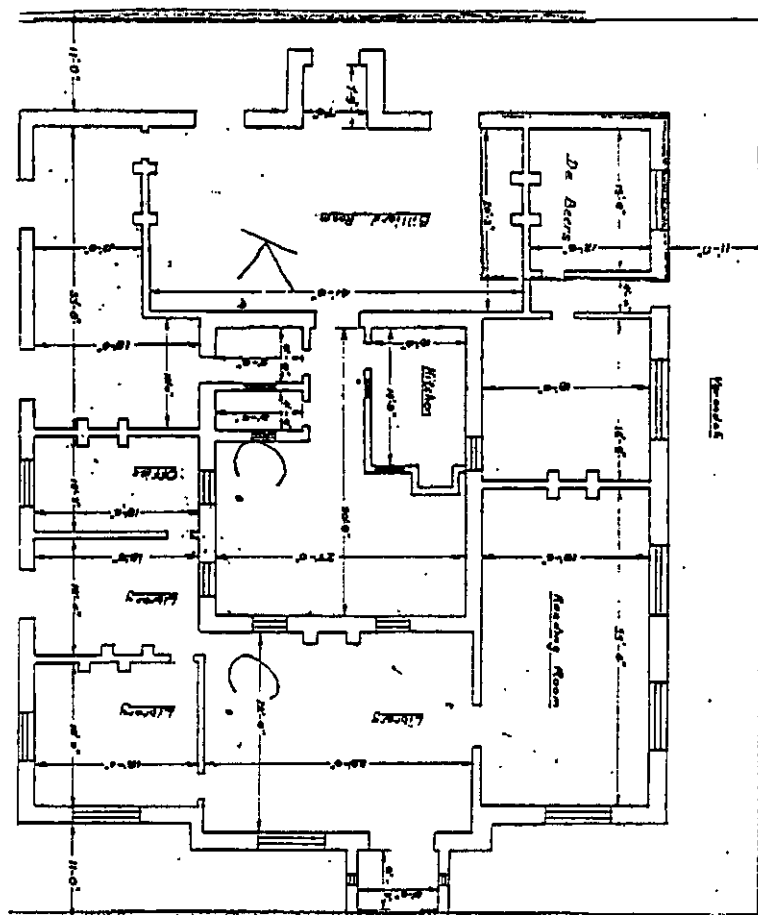
The need for a library was not so much expressed by the residents of Beaconsfield themselves as by ministers and others who were concerned about the welfare of the community.

The lack of sufficient response from the public handicapped progress and the library struggled to maintain an existence. The free reading room was utilised to a certain extent, but revenue from subscriptions was inadequate to keep the library going and, were it not for the generosity of the London and South African Exploration Company and the De Beers Mining Company and for the periodic grants from the municipalities of Kimberley and Beaconsfield, it would not have survived.

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Offices of the London and South African Exploration Company, afterwards the Beaconsfield Library and Institute (1889). (Photo: McGregor Museum).



Beaconsfield Library floor plan.  
(Date not specified)

CHAPTER 8LIBRARY GROWTH INTO THE 20TH CENTURY8.1 An outline of general progress, 1887-1902

In the first month after the opening of the new Kimberley Public Library 50 new members registered. The Daily Independent (4 August, 1887) called it "a great acquisition to the town." The exterior of the building was not particularly attractive, "not exactly what one would term a very elegant attraction or a very imposing example of modern, medieval or classic architecture" (DI, 7 October 1887), but a feature of the library which was greatly appreciated by the public was the cool and comfortable interior, which contrasted very sharply with that of the previous library.

When surplus money was available, the Committee grasped the opportunity of purchasing the adjoining piece of land with the idea of converting it into a garden to enhance the appearance of the library. The Kimberley Waterworks, when approached for a free water supply, not only agreed to this but also paid a five guinea subscription fee for a year's membership to the library (KPL. Minutes, 1 September 1887). A garden was laid out and maintained under supervision of Mr F Graham and in his absence, by Mr J B Currey (DI, 12 October 1888). An arrangement was approved whereby the Kimberley Public Library agreed to purchase a lawn-mower jointly with the Kimberley Club with the stipulation that the cost was not to exceed £5 (KPL. Minutes, 2 February 1889).

At this stage it was discovered that the cornice of the front portion of the library building was

encroaching upon the property of Mr W Roper of the DFA; he agreed to sell this portion of his property as well as the right of way through his grounds to the library for the sum of £100, the sum to be registered as a servitude on the title deeds at the expense of the library; he later intimated that he would present this amount as a donation to the library (KPL. Minutes, 4 July 1889).

By 1890, the circulation had increased by almost 50% and it had become necessary to order titles in duplicate and even triplicate to satisfy the demand.

At the beginning of 1892, the economy started on a downward trend which soon affected the Public Library. The "superior attractions" of the gold fields of the Transvaal, the drop in the share market and the general commercial depression resulted in some "of the most liberal and intelligent and public-spirited" residents of Kimberley moving away, and the lowest circulation of books ever was recorded (KPL. Report, 30 September 1892) .

The situation worsened in the next two years, everyone feeling the effects of an acute world-wide depression. The publishers stopped publishing new books and the library was largely dependent upon gifts from the public. Despite the waning number of subscribers, the circulation showed a slight increase.

In 1896 subscribers were allowed to borrow extra sets of books and this boosted the circulation statistics (KPL. Report, 31 December 1896). In this year the South African School of Mines was opened in Kimberley and the library consequently gave special attention to the purchase of books

dealing with mining, engineering, mineralogy and precious stones.<sup>73</sup>

The library now had a stock of 20 000 volumes and the limit of space on the shelves had been reached (KPL. Report, 31 December 1896). Plans for an extension to the existing building were drawn by the architect, Mr D W Greatbach; provision was made for about 20 000 additional books and also for an upper storey, should this become necessary in the future (KPL. Minutes, 10 June 1897). Negotiations for the purchase of the stand behind the library were entered into with the owner, Mrs H M Simpson<sup>74</sup> (KPL. Minutes, 8 July 1897).

The tender for the extension, which specified shelving on a "racket system", was awarded to the firm, Messrs Grant and Downie (KPL. Minutes, 30 September and 3 December 1898).

By the end of 1898 the new section was almost ready.

"We have constructed," Mr Laurence (1898) explained, "a room which is really a sort of warehouse or depository, or stackroom for books. When the extension is

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73. The School of Mines was the first of its kind in South Africa and was an outcome of the amalgamation of the mines. James Lawrence introduced a motion in the Cape Assembly which led to the establishment of the School. The premises were donated by De Beers and the Cape Government in conjunction with De Beers gave it financial support. In 1903 it was transferred to Johannesburg and later it became the University of the Witwatersrand.

74. In a letter dated 26 July 1897, the Honorary Treasurer of the Kimberley Public Library wrote to Mrs Simpson offering to buy Lot 23 G outright for £400, or to pay her £250 and allow her to receive the rental of the cottage on the stand for three years, or, alternatively, to buy only the strip required for the library extension for the sum of £75. She was to reply by cable. It appears that she accepted the first alternative.

completed; we will have room for between 50 000 and 60 000 volumes, provision for say, the next quarter of a century. It will be admitted that we are providing in a fairly liberal way for those who will come after us...If our successors find it necessary, [they can] elongate the stackroom and so provide for the requirements of Kimberley of, say, the middle of the 20th century."

He added that the question of electric installation would receive attention in the near future.<sup>75</sup>

The Librarian's suggestion that a "lamp room" be erected under the architect's supervision was approved by the Committee on condition that it should be, "as far as possible, isolated, to prevent fire risk."<sup>76</sup>

The new rooms opened in 1899, but the excitement was overshadowed by anxiety caused by the pending war and the realisation that Kimberley, an extremely vulnerable spot, was completely unprepared and defenceless. In September 1899 Lieutenant-Colonel Robert George Kekewich arrived in Kimberley to organise its defence; a great deal of activity ensued, but when war was declared on 10 October 1899 and the siege of Kimberley by the Boers commenced on 14 October 1899, the town was caught unawares.

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75. Subscribers complained about the heat given off by paraffin lamps but the installation of electric lights would have meant an additional expense of £150 per annum (KPL. Report, 31 December 1896). A system of electric lighting was installed through the whole library in 1900 and a pole with an electric light was put up in front of the library.

76. This was probably a room where paraffin lamps were cleaned and filled.

For the next four months Kimberley was virtually cut off from the outside. Food, water and other commodities were very scarce; the town was subjected to continual bombardment and women and children had to be taken down mine shafts for their safety. The library, however, carried on its work without interruption but closed in the evenings and on Sundays.<sup>77</sup> It became a boon to the residents of Kimberley, the books being avidly read in place of magazines and newspapers which were unobtainable.

All the privileges of First Class subscribers were extended to Colonel Kekewich and the officers under his command without fee or deposit (KPL. Minutes, 19 October 1899) with the result that, despite greater utilisation, the increase in subscribers was negligible and the income from subscriptions showed a considerable decrease. The recovery of books loaned to the troops proved a problem and the Librarian was forced to send a list of overdue material to Colonel Chamier, requesting his assistance in this matter (KPL. Minutes, 14 June 1900).

Captain Penfold, the De Beers representative on the Library Committee, was commissioned to erect a flagstaff outside the library, the cost of which was not to exceed £5 (KPL, Minutes, 14 October 1897) and to purchase a sundial for the library during his sojourn in England in 1900; he had the latter shipped to Kimberley via Port Elizabeth where it was kept until after the Siege, arriving in Kimberley in April 1900. It was erected in the garden of the Kimberley Public Library under the supervision of Mr Sutton (KPL. Report, December 1900). Mr Laurence said he hoped that the shadow of the library slanting on the dial would remind them "to

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77. A curfew between 9 pm and 6 am was instituted.



endeavour so to number not merely the passing days but the creeping hours that perish and are imputed, that they may learn to live wisely (DFA, 19 April 1900).

A marked improvement in the library statistics occurred in 1901, due perhaps to the continued military presence in Kimberley as well as a greater optimism about the future. The Library Committee resolved to purchase the stand and cottage adjacent to the land already acquired behind the library.<sup>78</sup> There were now "equal frontages on both sides for future expansion of building, should this become necessary" (KPL. Minutes, 24 October 1901).

The death of two of the library's supporters, namely Cecil John Rhodes and Captain Penfold in 1902 was a severe blow to the Library Committee, who had depended on them for assistance from De Beers.

The Anglo-Boer War came to an end on 4 June 1902 and the monthly meeting of the Library Committee had to be postponed as a result of a civic reception in honour of General French. A month later the library participated in the coronation festivities of King Edward VII by closing on Coronation Day and empowering the House Committee to spend £15 on the illumination of the building; the Librarian was instructed "to see that no risk of fire is incurred" (KPL. Minutes, 16 June 1902).

After the Anglo-Boer War, there was nothing to impede the steady progress of the Kimberley Public Library except the continual struggle to maintain a balance between lowering of subscription rates to encourage library utilisation and generating enough income to achieve a high standard of service.

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78. Woodley street no 24 was purchased for £875.

"Few libraries," wrote a correspondent (DFA, 18 June 1902), "save those which the wealth of a Carnegie, a Tate or a Rylands has endowed, can show such a record as that of which this town may be justly proud".

## 8.2 The finances of the Kimberley Public Library, 1887-1902

The amended Borough Act passed in 1884 empowered the Kimberley Borough Council to levy a rate for the purpose of education.<sup>79</sup> The Council failed to make use of the authorisation granted in this Act and their financial contribution to the library fluctuated from year to year. An amount of £100 was budgeted for the years 1885 and 1886 and this was increased to £200 in 1887 as a donation to the Building Fund.

When the grant came up for discussion in 1888, Councillors T W Goodwin and J Grewer were in favour of maintaining the increased grant but Councillor D Strachan considered the hospital and public garden more deserving causes. He admitted that he had only been in the library once but he believed "that there were a number of books in the foreign languages that were scarcely ever disturbed" (DI, 24 February 1888). A proposal to reduce the grant to £100 was accepted.

In his speech at the Annual General Meeting of 30 September 1888, the Chairman of the Library Committee pointed out that it was impossible for the library to rely solely on subscriptions and that

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79. The Kimberley Borough Amendment Act of 1884 authorised the Borough "to grant such sums of money in aid of Public Libraries within the Borough as may from time to time be voted by two-thirds of the Borough.

more help should be forthcoming from governing bodies and companies.

"The reputation of a community," he stated, "is gauged by its public spirit and its enlightenment and its liberality" (DFA, 13 October 1888).

The Committee subsequently resolved that the Chairman should approach the Mayor for additional support from the Borough Council, at the same time suggesting increased representation of the Council on the Library Committee (KPL. Minutes, 3 January 1889). In an open letter to the Mayor published in the Daily Independent (2 February 1889), Mr Justice Laurence pointed out that the Municipality of Port Elizabeth had recently made a grant to the library on a £ for £ basis, a system which held obvious advantages for the library.

He also suggested that for every £100 given by the Borough, one representative of the Council could act on the Library Committee. "Such representation," he added, "would ensure weight being given to the views of the Council, both as to the expenditure of the amount voted by them, as to the general administration of the library."

Laurence's plea was to no avail, however. When the year's estimates came up for discussion again, the amount of £100 was not increased. As Mr Laurence was very anxious to raise money with which more books could be purchased to justify the printing of a new edition of his catalogue, the Committee authorised him to approach the Prime Minister for a grant additional to the £300 received annually from the Government (KPL. Minutes, 21 February 1889).

The Prime Minister, in reply to a written request from Mr Laurence, stated that an additional amount

had been budgeted for this purpose (KPL. Minutes, 6 June 1889). Mr E H Jones, the Mayor at the time, and Mr M Cornwall undertook to ask Messrs B I Barnato and T Lynch, Members of the House of Assembly, to use their influence in support of this vote.

The Library Committee subsequently resolved that, in view of the proposed increased grant from the Government, they should persuade the Borough Council to follow suit and appointed a deputation, consisting of the Chairman, Mr Justice Laurence, the Acting Treasurer, Mr J H Lange and Dr Watkins, to meet the Council to plead the cause of the library (KPL. Minutes, 1 August 1889). However, despite a promise from the Mayor to increase the grant of the library to £300 when the new budget came up for discussion (KPL. Minutes, 7 November 1889), only £200 was received in 1890 and 1891; in 1892, the grant dwindled to £100 and thereafter to £50 annually for the next ten years.

"The city fathers," explained the editor of the Diamond Fields Advertiser (26 February 1892), "have to face a rapidly failing population and reduction of revenue from rates; there has been much cutting and carving."

The Colonial Treasury, on the other hand, carried out their commitment and increased their grant to £600 for 1890. De Beers also came to the rescue by donating an amount of £250 to the library and promising to provide electric lighting for the whole library at a cost not exceeding that of the cost of lighting by paraffin lamps, the library to pay for the initial cost of installation (KPL. Report, 30 September 1890). Life membership fees of £25 each were received from six people, including Mr C J Rhodes and Dr L S Jameson, while the London and

South African Exploration Company donated £50 towards the library.

A considerable saving was effected by obtaining permission from the Cape Government Railways for books to be sent at third class rates, instead of second class as was the practice. This concession was accorded to all the public libraries of the Cape as a result of the Committee's initiative (KPL. Report, 30 September 1890).<sup>80</sup>

Kimberley, remarked the editor of the Diamond Fields Advertiser (10 October 1890), did not have much room for complaint.

During the next years, however, the financial situation deteriorated steadily, mainly as a result of the prolonged state of depression that was experienced country wide. In 1891, income dropped from £1 145 to £968 and the library tried to canvas more subscribers. Surely more than 300 people could be found in Kimberley "willing to avail themselves of the advantages offered!" exclaimed an exasperated Mr Laurence (KPL. Report, 30 September 1891).

A letter which appeared in the local paper explained that the reason people were unwilling to subscribe to the library was that non-subscribers were allowed free and unrestricted use of all books, magazines and newspapers which were purchased with subscription revenue and government funds and that paying members had too few additional privileges to attract subscribers (DFA, 16 October 1891).

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80. The Librarian wrote to the Railway Department, suggesting a reduction of freight on consignments of books to the library. A reply dated 24 April 1890 was received from the Railway Department, agreeing to carry books at 3rd class rates. (KPL. Minutes, 3 April and 1 May 1890).

An unexpected windfall came in the form of an amount of £254 which represented the unclaimed balance of dividends paid by the liquidators of the Cape Bank to the Griqualand West Loan Company, the liquidators of the former Library Company and which the library paid into their Endowment Fund (KPL. Minutes, 4 February 1892).

In 1892 Mr J H Lange, Member of the Legislative Assembly and previous member of the Library Committee, introduced a bill in Parliament by which certain libraries, including the Kimberley Library, which were situated in towns not incorporated under the General Municipal Act of 1882, could obtain exemption from the payment of municipal rates<sup>81</sup> (KPL. Report, 30 September 1892).

The chairman reiterated that the library should have more municipal support; he added that at least £1 500 was required annually to run a library effectively and that 20% of this amount should come from the Borough Council.

In the next year the Colonial Secretary was persuaded by Mr R Solomon, a member of the Library Committee, to place a supplementary grant of £50 on the estimates for purchasing reference works. The finances of the library also received an unexpected boost through a legacy of £500 left to the library by Mr John MacFarlane<sup>82</sup> and a donation of £50 from Mr B Barnato.

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81. The Public Libraries' and Museums' Relief Act, no 19 of 1892 exempted public libraries and museums from the payment of municipal rates and taxes.

82. John MacFarlane, who farmed on the farm "Eerste aanleg" in the Kimberley district, was Scottish by birth. He died on 11 March 1892 and left bequests to the library and various other institutions.

In 1898, when the lack of space became a crucial problem, an "extension fund" was opened to finance the proposed addition to the library.

The Chairman of the Library Committee, Mr Justice Laurence, approached Mr C J Rhodes, who had always been very sympathetic towards the library in the past, and suggested that a grant could be made towards the library extension out of the "compound profits". In a letter dated 26 May 1897, Mr Rhodes acceded to this request (KPL. Minutes, 10 June 1897) and authorised De Beers to contribute £2 000 towards the Extension Fund. In addition, Parliament agreed to place £1 000 on their estimates to be granted on a £ for £ basis.

Other contributions came from Kimberley supporters in London whom Mr H Robinow, a member of the Library Committee, had canvassed when he was abroad; the Borough Council and the London and South African Exploration Company donated £50 and £150 respectively. These amounts, together with many personal contributions, brought the total raised to £4 323 (KPL. Report, 31 December 1898).<sup>83</sup>

On completion of building operations, the Extension Fund was closed and the balance of £1 068 which remained was deposited into the General Revenue and Endowment Accounts.

The Chairman suggested that these funds be allocated as follows (KPL. Minutes, 12 April 1900):

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83. A full list of donations was printed as a supplement to the Annual Report for the Year ending 31 December 1898.

£500 for the purchase of books,  
 £250 towards the estimated cost of electric  
 installation and  
 £300 towards the estimated cost of a new  
 edition of the General Catalogue

When he visited England later in the year, he was authorised by the Committee to spend a sum not exceeding £350 on books.

Funds for administrative costs were derived from fluctuating subscriptions, cash donations and fairly regular grants of £250 from De Beers. By dint of careful budgeting and wise investments, the assets of the Public Library were slowly accumulating. By 1902, these amounted to £16 236, which was made up as follows:

Library Site	£1 277
Library building	£5 128
Furniture and Fittings	£2 081
Books	£7 750

In addition, investments amounted to £8 217 (KPL. Minutes, 18 February 1902).

### 8.3 Extension of the Library services

Soon after the opening of the library, a Chess Club was formed and the Committee sanctioned the use of the Committee Room for their meetings at a fee of £20 per year. An application signed by ten prospective Club members stated that the library building was considered "the fittest and most suitable" for the purpose (KPL. Minutes. 30 August 1887).

Although the library did not have a hall which could be utilised for literary and recreational pastimes,



the Committee encouraged the public to make use of the library for their cultural activities, albeit apparently not free of charge. The Committee of the Kimberley Public Library saw itself as the parent library reaching out to all sections of the community and rendering a service to individual as well as corporate subscribers.

The first institute which approached the library for a block loan of books, was the De Beers' West End Compound Reading Room; the Library Committee resolved to allow them the loan of 12 sets of works, but not exceeding 36 volumes, at an annual subscription fee of £10 and a deposit of £4. Subsequently, the Police Club was allowed to borrow 100 volumes at a subscription of £25 per annum and on payment of a deposit of £10 (KPL. Minutes, 5 July 1888).

Prior to its official opening in May 1889, the Beaconsfield Library and Institute applied to the Kimberley Public Library for books to circulate amongst its members and soon afterwards took out the first instalment of books, having paid £35 for a seven months' subscription together with a £20 deposit, (KPL. Minutes, 6 June 1889).

"The Beaconsfield Library," remarked Mr Laurence, "is practically a branch of the Kimberley Public Library and subscribers at Beaconsfield possess the same advantages as are enjoyed by our own subscribers" (DFA, 12 October 1889).

Kenilworth, a model village, which was established in 1891 for the employees of De Beers Company, had an "excellent billiard room and a library, drawing a periodical supply of books from the Kimberley Public Library" (South Africa, August 1892, p. 362). Kenilworth borrowed their first consignment of 413

volumes from the Public Library in 1890, having paid a deposit of £60 (KPL. Minutes, 6 February 1890).

In the same year, the Fire Brigade Recreation Club was allowed the use of 20 sets of books, not to exceed 40 volumes, on payment of a subscription of £1 per month and a deposit of £5 payable in advance (KPL. Minutes, 7 August 1890).

During the following years, library privileges were extended to other establishments: a First Class subscription was granted to the nurses of St. Michael's Home and members of the YMCA were allowed to take out books on payment of five shillings (KPL. Minutes, 8 July 1897); the students of the School of Mines were allowed Third Class subscriptions to the library; Colonel Kekewich and his officers were granted First Class membership (KPL. Minutes, 19 October 1899); a box of books was sent to the Scottish Rifles Officers' mess (KPL. Minutes, 11 October 1900) and free privileges were extended to the Hospital and the Church Refuge (KPL. Minutes, 10 July 1902).

The Kimberley Public Library also advised and assisted neighbouring towns, starting "what must surely be one of the earliest rural library services in the country" (Kritzinger, 1948, p.97). The chairman of the Library Committee, Mr Justice Laurence, helped Barkly West to establish a library with an amount of £50 for which 250 volumes were purchased (KPL. Minutes, 7 November 1889).

In 1891 the Hope Town Reading Society and the Vryburg Library Society applied for books; the stipulated rates were either £30 a year with a deposit of £10 for 100 books or an annual payment of £20 and a deposit of £5 for the loan of 60 books (KPL. Minutes, 5 November 1891). Mr Joseph Wright of Warrenton applied for books on these terms and

the Kamfersdam Mining Company was allowed a special subscription of 60 volumes at £20 per annum with a deposit of £10 (KPL. Minutes, 9 November 1893 and 8 July 1897).

The service rendered by the Kimberley Public Library extended beyond the walls of the library. A system of branches and depots was started which was probably unique in South Africa at that time.

#### 8.4 Bookstock

In September 1887 the bookstock of the library totalled 5 022 volumes; by the end of 1902, this had increased to 26 551.

##### Statistical table

Year	Expend- iture	Bookstock	Circula- tion	Membership
1888	£407	7 425	5 660	310
1889	£542	8 272	12 781	387
1890	£1 066	11 453	12 348	369
1891	£1 087	14 365	20 306	301
1892	£402	15 539	18 724	265
1893	£232	16 678	16 296	232
1894	£303	17 394	18 288	240
1895	£598	18 886	20 193	272
1896	£371	19 876	27 006	283
1897	£387	20 688	31 730	307
1898	£301	21 922	33 202	327
1899	£254	22 729	33 100	331
1900	£424	23 843	26 264	325
1901	£468	24 858	32 688	350
1902	£599	26 551	40 129	528

The statistics of book purchases reveal that over the 15-year period 19 126 books were added to the stock; of these 1 850 were donated and 17 276 purchased; the proportion of non-fiction to fiction

was more or less 65% to 35%. According to the library's annual financial reports, an amount of £7 441 was expended on books during this period, denoting an average price of eight shillings per book. The proportion of stock in relation to users is excessively high.

Library membership showed very little fluctuation and a very gradual increase until the year 1902, when the reduced subscription rates resulted in a dramatic response from the public. The average annual circulation per subscriber apparently rose from 18 to 76, but this figure is misleading as the increased circulation of 1891 and subsequent years is clearly the result of the opening of the library depot at Kenilworth, while the recorded annual membership was solely that of the Kimberley Public Library.

Book donations totalled less than 2 000. These included H Credner's Geologie and C G Calwer's Kaferbuch presented by Dr E Holub, a file of old local newspapers from Mr A A Rothschild, a plan of the Diamond Fields, received from the London and South African Exploration Company, R Trimen's South African butterflies, E P Mathers' The Goldfields of South Africa, J W Matthews' Incwadi Yami, P Kolbe's The present state of South Africa, Army and Navy lists, a Souvenir of Grahamstown, the Racing Calendar presented by the Turf Club and back copies of London Times. A valuable gift, which was always considered "a unique feature of the library" was a large collection of French books received from The Compagnie Francaise (Dyer, 1903, p.50).

In 1890 the library started collecting material relating to South Africa. Mr C A Fairbridge of Cape Town purchased some books dating back to the last century and he was subsequently authorised to purchase any books which he "may consider valuable

or interesting" at future sales (KPL. Minutes, 6 November 1890). A start was made with the classification of the pamphlets in the library and Mr Laurence explained to the subscribers that pamphlets on the history of Griqualand West "might appear trivial to some but were always worth preservation in the library as a sort of archives of local history" (DFA, 20 February 1897).

A collection of photographs of Paardeberg, presented to the library by Mrs Judge in 1901, was the start of a valuable collection of Northern Cape material. Mr Dyer, the Librarian, encouraged the public to add to this collection by donating photographs and printed ephemera to the library for preservation (KPL. Report, 31 December 1901). Soon afterwards the original log-book, kept in the conning tower during the greater part of the Kimberley Siege, was given to the library.

During a thorough stocktaking soon after his appointment, the Librarian, Mr Bertram Dyer, weeded 584 worn books which, together with redundant magazines and newspapers, he distributed among the soldiers in the military camps, hospitals and blockhouses. He also had 400 books rebound and 40 valuable leather-bound books restored.

It was resolved to start adding musical works to the library collection by way of experiment in 1902; at this time, Mr H T Strugnell designed a bookplate for the library and presented the original drawing and line block to the library for reproduction.<sup>84</sup> For many years to come, all library material was furnished with the library's bookplate.

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84. Vide bookplate at the end of chapter.

#### 8.4 Conclusion

The library's progress and obvious success during the years after its inauguration was largely due to the unabated efforts on the part of the Library Committee, in particular, the chairman, Mr Justice Laurence in securing funding from the governing bodies. Income from subscriptions was insufficient to achieve the goals set for the library and to maintain a high standard of service.

The fortunes of the town and the library were interwoven, the former affecting the latter; the depressed state of the economy was directly responsible for the library's declining financial resources, but, with astute and careful management of the library's affairs by the Committee, the library not only survived but rose to great heights and, at the end of the period under review, had earned the respect of the larger libraries in South Africa.

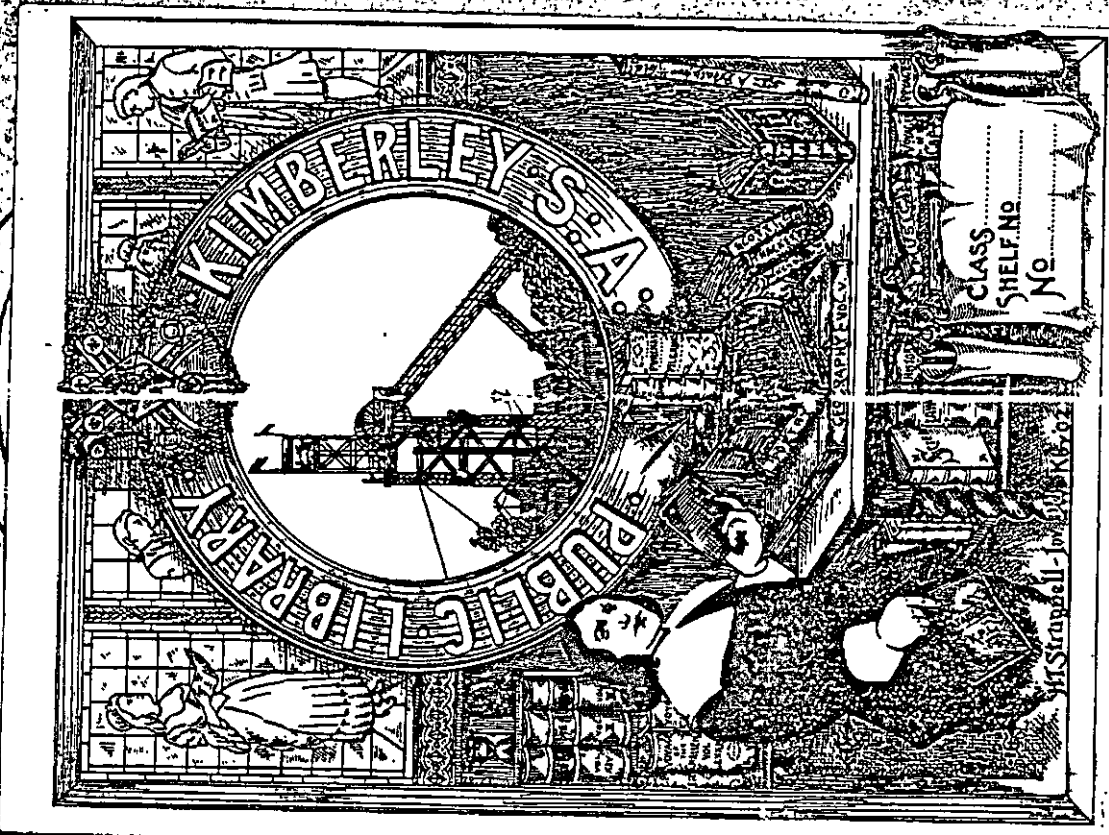
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KIMBERLEY

- 8 JUN 1951



THE  
CIRCULATING LIBRARY CO.  
GEO. H. COOK,  
MANAGER.  
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KIMBERLEY  
Public Library and Institute.  
Class *A*. Shelf *A. 27*

The history of a library book as revealed by library stamps and a bookplate.

CHAPTER 9POLICIES AND PEOPLE IN THE KIMBERLEY PUBLIC LIBRARY9.1 Library policies and librarians

As early as 1873, the editor of the Diamond News stated that a librarian's work entailed much more than the issuing of books and that he should have some knowledge of book contents.<sup>85</sup> It was a long time before this would materialise and before the word "Librarian" implied anyone but a male library curator.

When libraries first came into existence in Kimberley, a Librarian/Secretary was appointed to care for the books and to act as secretary to the governing body, such as the Library Committee or Board of Directors; the incumbents were: Mr John Rorke (1873 - 1874), Mr C Shaw (1874-ca.1876), H Stock (1881) and T G Heath (1882-1883). Mr Rorke was paid £240 per annum but subsequently the remuneration was increased to £400 a year.

The first Librarian, Mr S T Solomon, who was appointed when Mr Heath was Secretary, was allocated a salary of £300, indicating that this post was rated far below that of Secretary. The Library Committee, of which Mr Justice Laurence was a member, conveyed their lack of trust in the Librarian by the stringent set of rules drawn up by the Committee in 1883.<sup>86</sup>

The Librarian's main duties were to have the rooms, books and furniture dusted and to maintain order in

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85. Vide p.42.

86. Vide p.95.



the library. Soon after the opening of the Kimberley Public Library in 1887, a stocktaking revealed a loss of 200 books during the preceding two years and this resulted in a tightening of security measures to obviate future losses.

The Librarian was instructed :

to keep an accurate list of books issued and to check on their return;-

to keep all bookcases locked, allowing no one except members of the Committee access to the shelves "on any pretence whatever" without his or his assistant's supervision;

that either he or his assistant should be on duty in the Public Room at all times except when their "temporary absence was unavoidable";

to keep a list of subscribers who regularly failed to return books;

to enforce fines on overdue material and to place a list of members so fined before the Committee at their meetings.

to report to the Committee any subscribers who refused to pay fines;

to ensure that subscribers did not take out any books or periodicals if any fines were outstanding (KPL. Minutes, 1 September 1887).

The Librarian attended Library Committee meetings in an ex officio capacity but his role was insignificant. He had no autonomous decision-making powers and apparently no say in the ordering of books; it was the Chairman who prepared lists of suggested titles which he left with the Librarian for comment by Committee members.

The "Special Collection" could not to be taken out without special permission from the Committee (KPL. Minutes, 3 May 1887). The Librarian was expected, however, to urge non-subscribers of the library to become subscribers, and, by way of incentive, the Committee undertook to pay him a bonus of 10% on all subscriptions totalling more than £550 a year<sup>87</sup> (KPL. Minutes, 1 September 1887).

In 1888, soon after the annual stocktaking, Mr Solomon took ill. "The popular Librarian," noted the Daily Independent (27 September 1888), "will be compelled to undergo another painful operation." The chairman, Mr Justice Laurence, remarked in his speech at the Annual General Meeting in October 1888, that Mr Solomon had been ill and therefore "he has not been able to get about to canvas subscribers and collect subscriptions with his customary activity" (DFA, 15 October 1888). He added disparagingly, "I am not going to eulogise our Librarian as a perfect librarian; no one knows better than I nor has anyone a better opportunity of knowing his deficiencies in various respects, but undoubtedly he has done his best and deserves much credit for the energetic manner in which he has worked at stocktaking during a period when he should have been in repose..."

In the next year the Librarian often had to be directed by the Committee to "strictly embrace" previous rules and directives concerning the return of library material and was even admonished that he would "subject himself to the censure of the Committee" if he failed to carry out orders (KPL. Minutes, 6 June 1889).

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87. In the following year income from subscriptions was £1 012, which meant that the Librarian received a bonus of £46.

A list of the Librarian's duties was drawn up and he was instructed "to make an extract for his guidance of the various minutes which the Committee have passed from time to time concerning his duties and to closely adhere to same"(KPL. Minutes, Annexure A, 5 September 1989). The duties were listed as follows:

1. The Librarian is to give his whole attention to his duties.
  - a. He is allowed three hours a day, from 1 - 2, and 6 - 8 or any other hours which are more convenient to him;
  - b. He is allowed an evening off from time to time and then does not have to come back after 6 pm, but not more than three times in a fortnight.
2. When not engaged in the Committee room or in collecting subscriptions, the Librarian is expected to be at his desk and ready to attend to the requirements of the public;
3. All books returned must be carefully replaced by the Librarian or under his supervision;
4. Books are to be examined before replacing them to see if they are damaged in any way;
5. One day of the week should be set aside for repairing of books;
6. In dusty weather the doors and windows should be kept closed.

At the same time the Chairman of the Committee suggested that the Librarian continue with the Numerical Catalogue, which was being compiled for printing, stating that it was "merely mechanical work" which should be regarded as part of the

Librarian's duties.<sup>88</sup> Mr Solomon carried out stocktaking for the last time in October 1889 and then tendered his resignation (KPL. Minutes, 7 November 1889).

Mrs Grace Lord<sup>89</sup> applied for the post of Librarian and was appointed as from 1 December 1889 at a salary of £16 per month.<sup>90</sup> Mrs Lord started the practice of submitting a monthly report on all library activities at Committee meetings and she put forward several suggestions for streamlining and improving the library service; it was at her instigation that the Railways were approached for reduced tariffs on books and that a Suggestion Book was placed in the library.

In a letter to the Diamond Fields Advertiser (12 March 1890) she invited recommendations as to books to be purchased for the library. "It is," she stated, "only by the most careful supervision and the exercise of a rigid economy in all departments that it is possible to maintain a financial equilibrium."

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88. No credit was given to Mr Solomon for classifying nearly 4 500 books according to a scheme devised for the library. The Assistant Librarian, Mr H M Hole, B A, received an honorarium of £15 for completing the Numerical Catalogue (KPL. Minutes, 7 November 1889).

89. Grace Lord's husband, Mr W S Lord, Q C, M L A, had, during the year 1889, been appointed on the Library Committee but had soon afterwards passed away. Mrs Lord had always taken an active interest in the library. It was under her convenership that the great fund-raising bazaar had taken place in 1887.

90. The disparity between Mrs Lord's salary of £192 and Mr Solomon's salary of £300 testifies to the discrimination between men and women which applied at the time. In November 1890 her salary was raised to £250.

She soon won the confidence and respect of the Committee; in the absence of Mr Justice Laurence at the end of 1890, she drafted the Library Report for the year; she was also allowed to use her own discretion in replacing books requiring repair, but only those costing less than three shillings and sixpence.

The Diamond Fields Advertiser (10 October 1890) remarked that Mrs Lord was "most zealous in the performance of her routine of duty" and added, "Her labour is indeed a labour of love." A special vote of thanks to her was proposed at a number of Annual General Meetings.

In 1896 Mrs Lord took six months' leave and Miss A M Wilkes was appointed Acting Librarian at £12 per month. When Mrs Lord tendered her resignation in September 1897, Miss Wilkes was appointed in the position of Librarian at a salary of £15 per month, the Assistant Librarian to receive £10 per month. It was decided to continue with the present system of a commission on ordinary subscriptions, but that the Librarian would receive two-thirds and the Assistant Librarian one-third (KPL. Special Report, 8 November 1897).

Sadly, Miss Wilkes' bad health was further impaired by conditions suffered during the Siege of Kimberley and she had to be relieved of some of her duties. She was given six months' sick leave on full pay in 1899 and the Chairman undertook to procure the services of a qualified librarian while he was overseas.

Miss Mary Burton was appointed Acting Librarian on 1 January 1900 but resigned after six months; she and her assistant, Miss Roach, were commended for the "plucky way" in which they continued with their duties in the library throughout the Siege and the

shelling of Kimberley (KPL. Report, 31 December 1900).

Miss Wilkes resigned in August 1900 and, opportunely, the Committee received notification from Mr Justice Laurence that he had succeeded in locating a suitable librarian, his term of office to start on 1 August 1900.

Kimberley was the first South African town to import a true "library mechanic" (Kennedy, 1970, p11). According to his obituary (Dyer, 1909, p.24), Bertram L Dyer was born at Dumbleton in 1868, educated at Whitechapel Foundation School and King's College and proceeded to the War Office as a junior clerk. Later he became a student at Toynbee Hall, Whitechapel where he became an assistant in the library. In 1888 he entered the Kensington Public Library and in the following year was appointed Sub-librarian in charge of Browyston Branch until 1900.

He attended the Library Association's course in Subject Cataloguing and obtained highest marks; he was a foundation member of the Library Assistants' Association and founded and edited its journal, The Library Assistant; he was the Honorary Secretary of the Association from 1898 to 1900 (Kennedy, R F p.11).

Dyer was appointed Librarian at a salary of £250 per year, but this was increased to £300 in 1901 (KPL. Minutes, 1 November 1901). Mr S G Mattocks, of the Hampstead Public Library, was appointed Assistant Librarian at £10 per month and a concession was made that, should he remain in employ for two years and give satisfactory service, his travelling expenses of £30 would be refunded (KPL. Minutes, 14 November 1901). Unfortunately his term of office was cut short by his sudden death in the next year and the library defrayed the expenses of his illness and

funeral (KPL. Minutes, 13 March 1902). Mr J W Brown of Cardiff Libraries was appointed in his place.

Mr Dyer was presumably the first librarian in South Africa to advocate professionalism in librarianship; he saw librarianship as a permanent calling and not only as "a haven to all the failures of the professions" (Dyer, 1899, p.140). The hand of a professional librarian is clearly evident in his authoritative action of weeding redundant stock, restoring old and valuable leather-bound books, implementing a card-charging system for the library and classifying the library stock according to the Dewey Classification system.

Bertram Dyer, a prolific writer on many aspects of librarianship, was an open-minded and an astute person. He organised the first Library Conference in South Africa in 1904 in conjunction with a congress of the South African Association for the Advance of Science. Despite his call for library professionalism, Dyer was not prepared to support Mr Justice Laurence's proposal at the conference for the establishment of a library journal and a South African Library Association, stating that the time was not ripe.

He gave all library matters his profound consideration and his opinions were respected by his colleagues. When the Durban Public Library wrote to him enquiring whether the library was open to all races, Mr Dyer replied that the question had not yet arisen, but that a Mohammedan priest had formerly been a subscriber; he then pointed out that,

"the acceptance of Parliamentary and Municipal grants makes it impossible to refuse the advantages of the Public Room

to any section of the community" (KPL. Minutes, 14 November 1901):

He urged the abolition of the subscription system, maintaining that libraries should not have to be in a position of subservience to subscribers as regards choice of books for fear of losing revenue from grants calculated on the £ for £ system and thus depriving the "studious minority" of the reference material which they required (Dyer, 1904a, pp.20 - 21).

In his articles, he voiced the opinion that libraries should become "true intellectual workshops." He advocated the establishment of reading circles, stating that their formation was the only way in which "a number of people with similar tastes... should pursue the same course of reading and meet to discuss the results of reading" (Dyer 1903, p.35 and Dyer 1904c, p.595).

"He had a form of genius", wrote Mr F Rogers (Kimberley Star, 23 January, 1909), "which enables a man to get swiftly at the essential of a book."

He started a local Africana collection in earnest and made arrangements for "the careful preservation of all official and other publications relating to South Africa..." (Dyer, 1904b, p.342). Reputedly, he was the first person to use the word "Africana" in printed form (Dyer, 1902).

On the subject of Afrikaans material in the library he stated that Afrikaans was here to stay and that "the librarian should rather seek to preserve its every printed specimen, than to import...high Dutch which few can read" (Dyer, 1903, p.33).

The system of "travelling libraries," which is presently in operation under the Provincial Libraries' network, was propounded by Dyer long



before it came into operation in South Africa. He suggested "that the libraries of this country should be placed on a wider basis and that towns should help the less populated places " (Dyer, 1907, p.526).

Mr Dyer's untimely death in 1908 put paid to a very promising career and was a great loss to the library profession.<sup>91</sup>

## 9.2 Library policy as applied to subscribers

The Committee was very closely involved with the running of the library and maintained order and discipline by laying down strict rules to which the public had to adhere and which the Librarian had to enforce. The first code of rules drafted in 1884 stated that the library would be free to the public, but that the news room would only be open to subscribers. There were three classes of subscribers, the subscriptions varying from £4 per annum to £2 and the deposits from £3 to 10/-<sup>92</sup>; the number of books that could be borrowed were determined by the class of the subscription. Subscribers were accountable to the Library Committee for misdemeanour and could be "struck off" the list of subscribers as a punitive action.

On the positive side, the library was open from 10 am to 10 pm daily and on Sundays from 2 to 5pm.

As time passed, more rules were made. In 1887 a by-law was passed stating that owners of dogs found on library premises were liable to a fine of five shillings (KPL. Minutes, 1 December 1887); a notice

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91. Mr Dyer committed suicide in 1908, at the age of 40, when an audit of the library's bookkeeping system revealed embezzlement of library funds to the extent of £2 757.

92. Vide p.92.

requesting silence was put in the subscribers' room (KPL. Minutes, 2 April 1891); unpaid fines could be deducted from deposits (KPL. Minutes, 7 November 1889) and persons whose subscriptions were three months in arrears forfeited the privileges of library membership.

The strict enforcement of these measures could hardly have been conducive to the use of the library, and in 1894, when the number of subscribers reached the all-time low of 240, a Special Committee was appointed "to consider increasing the usefulness of the library to the general public." The idea put forward was intended to force the Borough Council to pay an annual grant of £250 and, in so doing, subsidise subscriptions of rate-payers. Section II, Rule 7 of the library rules was to read as follows :

"In any year in which the Kimberley Borough Council shall contribute a sum of not less than £250 to the funds of the library, all rate-payers shall be entitled to borrow books from the library without payment of any subscription fee, subject to such regulations as may from time to time be framed by the Committee."

It was further stated that borrowers making use of this measure, had to produce a certificate from the Town Clerk, vouching for the validity of their claim; in return borrowers' cards would be issued to the applicant, who would be entitled to take out one set of books which had been in the library for at least six months, on payment of ten shillings deposit. In the case of valuable items, it was left to the discretion of the Librarian to determine

a deposit commensurate with the value of the book.<sup>93</sup>  
(KPL. Minutes, 13 September 1894).

This move on the part of the Library Committee bore no fruit as the Borough Council could not, in the light of their financial problems, be induced to set aside more than £50 for library purposes.

New measures were continually being devised to encourage greater utilisation. A system was introduced by which subscribers were notified immediately when books reserved by them were available; longer library hours, including later closing on Sunday afternoons, were promised to patrons, subject to electric lights being installed and privileges were instituted allowing subscribers to take out more books at a time.

New rates were specified as follows :

First class subscribers paid £4 per annum and were entitled to borrow 4 sets of books at a time, instead of 3 sets;

Second class subscribers paid £3 per annum and could take out 3 sets of books at a time, instead of 2 sets;

Third class subscribers paid £2 per annum and could take out 2 sets of books at a time, instead of 1 set (KPL. Minutes, 25 June 1896).

A concession, which achieved considerable success was one which permitted subscriptions to be paid pro-rata (KPL. Minutes, 25 June 1896).

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93. By this time, Grace Lord had been the Librarian for some time and the Committee had full confidence in the decisions she took.

In 1902 the library rules were revised to cater for a wider range of user and a credo was formulated which stated that,

"the library shall be open to the public and any person conducting himself properly shall have the right of reading the newspapers and periodicals placed in the Public Hall, and of there reading any book not actually in use by subscribers."

Adjustments were made to boost circulation and the following rules applied:

1. Those paying £3 per annum, could take out five items and hold five admission tickets in the Subscribers' Rooms;  
Those paying £2 per annum, could borrow three items at a time and hold three admission tickets to the Subscribers' Rooms.  
Those paying £1 per annum, could borrow one item and hold one admission ticket to the Subscribers' Rooms
2. Admission tickets to the Subscribers' Rooms were not transferable and could only be used by the Subscriber's household. Any person using the Subscribers' Rooms could be called upon to produce his admission ticket, should the Librarian ask him to do so.
3. All subscriptions were payable annually, half-yearly or quarterly in advance. Life membership with full privileges could be obtained on payment of £25.
4. New subscribers had to make the following deposits: First class, £1; Second and Third class, 10/-. Deposits would be refunded upon application within 12 months from expiry date.

5. Visitors to Kimberley would be granted an admission ticket to the Subscribers' Rooms for fourteen days upon being introduced by a subscriber who had to enter the name and address of the visitor in a book.

For a monthly subscription of two shillings and sixpence and a deposit of 10/-, visitors were entitled to take out one book at a time and hold one admission ticket to the Subscribers' Rooms.

Owing to this reduction in subscription rates, membership increased by 50% and there was a large increase in revenue (KPL. Report, 31 December 1902).

### 9.3 Conclusion

The librarian of the 19th century was little more than a glorified caretaker with minimal authority and he operated under the strict control of the governing body, in this case, the Library Committee. A gradual change of attitude was brought about by people such as Grace Lord, who proved to the Committee that librarians had decision-making capabilities, and that the position of librarian was not necessarily restricted to male candidates.

Mr Dyer, the first trained librarian to be appointed in Kimberley, soon earned the respect of his colleagues in South Africa. His approach to librarianship was new and even revolutionary; he advocated professionalism in librarianship and did much for the status of the librarian. He devoted his attention to many library matters which are of topical interest even at the present time. He denounced the subscription system which, he maintained, was thwarting the goal of the library as information centre.

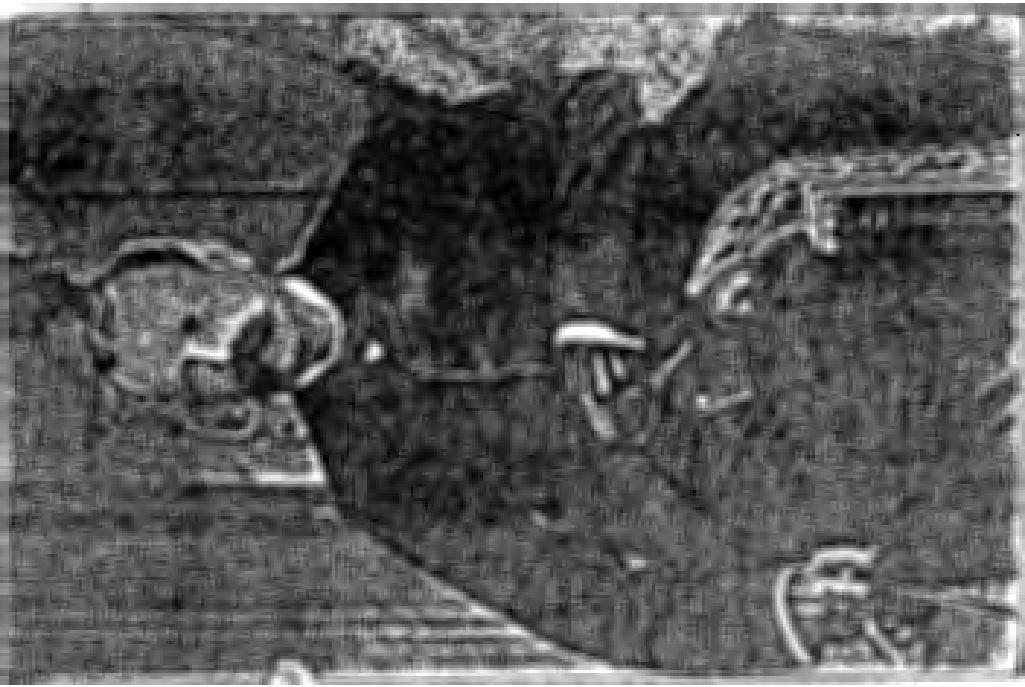
Before the arrival of Mr Dyer, the library was run by the Library Committee. They were of the opinion that strict discipline in the library would create an atmosphere of study and literary exclusiveness that would attract the genuine library user. Instead, the enforcement of rules and constant changes in subscription rates had the opposite effect on library utilisation. The ordinary worker felt ill at ease in the austere surroundings and came to regard the library as an institution for the intellectually élite and the financially privileged.

When the membership remained low, concessions were made with regard to subscription fees to place the library within the reach of the man-in-the-street and multiple copies of popular books were purchased in preference to works of a more serious nature.

It soon became obvious that the subscription system was impeding library growth and utilisation and negatively affecting the standard of the collection. Mr Dyer realised this and advocated a free Public Library system, financed by the Government.

The lowering of subscriptions to entice more subscribers, for the purpose of increasing revenue from subscriptions, and thus increasing the government grant, became a vicious circle.

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Solomon T Solomon, First Librarian  
of Kimberley Public Library



Bertram L Dyer  
1868 - 1908.

## CHAPTER 10

### NOTES ON PROMINENT KIMBERLEY MEN AND AN ASSESSMENT OF THEIR INVOLVEMENT WITH THE LIBRARY

#### 10.1 Members of the Library Committee

Management of the Public Library was vested in the Library Committee. Twelve members were elected at every Annual General Meeting of the Kimberley Public Library. From these, a Chairman and Treasurer were appointed and Sub-committees, consisting of the Book, the Garden, the Finance and the House Committees were nominated.

There is no doubt that it was regarded as an honour to serve on the Library Committee, which was held in high esteem by the community. The men who placed their services at the disposal of the Library Committee were prominent public-minded citizens, representing a cross-section of the professional community.

The legal profession was represented by men like Messrs Justice Jones, Justice P M Laurence and B T Knights; the medical profession, by Drs H A Wolf, G Watkins, F I Gardiner and L S Jameson and the clergy by Rev M Mendelssohn- "Only one clergyman...out of more than a dozen on the Diamond Fields," lamented the Diamond Fields Advertiser (10 October, 1891) on the occasion of a meeting of the Public Library. The man with the most authority was the Chairman of the Library Committee and, for almost 10 years after the founding of the Kimberley Public Library, this position was held by Mr Justice P M Laurence.



## 10.2 Justice Percival Maitland Laurence

Percival M Laurence was born in Lincolnshire in 1854; he was a brilliant student of law and literature; he came to South Africa for health reasons, practised as a barrister for one year and was appointed Judge of the High Court of Griqualand West in 1882 at the age of 28 and in the same year started serving on the Library Committee. In October 1883 he became Chairman of the Committee, a position which he held until 1900; he was appointed Judge President of the High Court of Griqualand West in 1888.

Mr Lawrence was an excellent public speaker and used the annual library meetings to air his views on literature, politics and any other subject to a usually appreciative and responsive audience. He was a well-read man with an excellent knowledge of books. He was, according to Kennedy (1977, p. 500), perhaps the greatest pioneer of libraries in South Africa and far in advance of his time in many respects. It was Justice Laurence (1904) who first put forward the suggestion of the establishment of an association of librarians and of a library journal "to bring librarians into closer contact with one another." He formulated the two-fold objective of the library as follows :

1. To provide for circulation of readable and popular literature;
2. To make the library a storehouse and repository of information on all subjects which a library should be able to give. (DI, 12 October 1888).

With these objectives in mind, he set about building up a comprehensive and balanced bookstock for the library. He travelled to London regularly, where he was given carte blanche to purchase books at his

own discretion. At the same time he endeavoured to document the material in such a way that it would be accessible to the layman.

He prepared a Catalogue of Juvenile Books and a Index of Periodical Literature, but, most importantly, he meticulously supervised the complete revision of the printed Reference Catalogue of all the works in the library (KPL. Report, September 1890). Earlier, in 1884, during his temporary absence, a catalogue was compiled of the nearly 300 books in the library but, according to Laurence (1891, p.xi), this was "a farrago of blunders" and needed to be completely revised.

He based his revised catalogue on those of the London and Malta Libraries; in the first section, all the works were arranged alphabetically under the author or the title, in the case of anonymous works, and he followed the cataloguing rules of Sir Anthony Panizzi;<sup>94</sup> this was followed by a Classified Catalogue which listed the 14 424 books according to subject under the broad classes denoted by letters of the alphabet from A (English fiction) to R (Reference).<sup>95</sup>

Laurence applied his prodigious knowledge of books to his own "information service" which he ran at the library from 3:30 to 4:30 pm on Saturdays, when he placed himself at the disposal of subscribers to answer questions and to make "the contents of the library more instructive and more accessible" (DFA, 15 October 1880).

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94. Anthony Panizzi (1797 -1879), an Italian by birth was the Assistant Librarian at the British Museum for some years. During this time he planned and began work on a catalogue of the library works.

95. Vide p. 110.

He maintained that books were tools and should be taken care of in the same way as a workman looks after his tools; he also propounded the theory that light reading should not necessarily be discouraged as it could lead to a "taste of substantial literature." The examples cited by him to substantiate this statement are indicative of the reading habits of the time. People who read Charles Read's The cloister and the hearth and Bulwer Lytton's Last days of Pompeii, he maintained, "will go on to read works of history relating to the same period." (DI, 12 October 1888).

Laurence (1893) was very much in favour of free libraries and he bewailed the fact that libraries in the Cape Colony were "not as at home, under direct municipal control and supported by special rates." He did not regard the subscription system as an ideal one and expressed the belief that "the true solution lay in the direction of the municipalisation of libraries" (Laurence, 1904). On more than one occasion he expressed the hope that Kimberley would be the first municipality, if not in South Africa, then in the Cape Colony, to develop a really free library.<sup>96</sup>

Mr Justice Laurence was instrumental in the launching the Kimberley Public Library building project. Most of the books bought for the library were either selected or personally vetted by him and the members of the Committee were prepared to rely on his expertise. For this reason, he was rarely

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96. The Legislative Council of the Cape of Good Hope passed a recommendation, no. 5 of 1892, stating that whenever a library was open, the public should be admitted free and allowed access to all works of reference and to all the books in the library. Access to newspapers and periodicals could be determined by the library. The libraries were, however, still dependent upon subscriptions for funding of books and magazines.

opposed and when, in 1892, there arose a disagreement with the Committee about the purchase of Von Moltke's Compendium of the Staff history of the Franco-German War, Laurence threatened to resign as chairman at the next general meeting because his opinion had been disregarded; he was re-elected unanimously, however. "This," wrote the editor of South Africa (21 May 1892) "is a little exhibition of petulance on the part of the judge, but...the subscribers to the Public Library are like sheep without a shepherd."

In December 1901 Laurence tendered his resignation because "he had been precluded from bringing forward suggestions which ...he had contemplated making" (KPL. Minutes, 12 December 1901). He explained that he, in his capacity as chairman, had been slighted; he was nevertheless prepared to continue serving on the Committee as an ordinary member until August 1905 when he was transferred to Cape Town to preside over the War Losses Commission.

His departure was a severe loss to the library and the Committee expressed their gratitude towards him by presenting him with a framed address and putting up a framed photograph of him in the library (KPL. Report, August 1905). He left South Africa in 1913 and died in England in 1930.

### 10.3 George H Goch

George Goch was born in Swellendam in 1850 and came to Kimberley in 1872 as a jeweller. He was interested in books and education and started a very successful Circulating Library in his Jeweller's shop in Dutoitspan Road in 1876 - "the first of its kind ever attempted in Kimberley" (Laurence, 1889); this collection formed the nucleus of the bookstock of the Kimberley Public Library.

Goch was Vice-president of the Kimberley Literary Institute until it packed up in 1878 and a member of the Library Committee from 1882 to 1888. He became involved in public life in 1878, when he was elected a Borough Councillor, a position which he held until 1885. In this capacity, he championed the cause of the library, endeavouring to secure greater financial aid for it.

In 1884 he became the second member of Parliament for Kimberley and again he took up the cudgels for the Kimberley Public Library, persuading Parliament to pay £150 for additional bricks required for the building of the library; he was also instrumental in the passing of the Kimberley Borough Council Constitution Bill, which conferred immeasurable benefits on the community (Goch, 1893, p.515).

In 1886 he left Kimberley for the gold fields, where he floated the Wemmer and George Goch Companies. He became Vice-Chairman of the Finance Committee of the Town Council of Johannesburg in 1903, and Mayor in 1904 - 1905, in which capacity he officiated at the opening of the Seymour Memorial Library in 1905 (Kennedy, 1970, p.419). He died in the Transvaal in 1918.

While he lived in Kimberley, he was committed to the cause of providing library facilities to the community, and Laurence (1889) rightly called him "The Father of Libraries in Griqualand West".

#### 10.4 J B Currey

J B Currey was born in England in 1829 and came to the Cape in 1850. After trying his hand at farming and mining, he entered the Civil Service in 1857 and became a précis writer in the Colonial Office. He lived in Kimberley for two years, holding the position of Secretary to the Government of

Griqualand West, but when Richard Southey was recalled, he was paid off and retired on pension to Cape Town.

In 1884 he returned to Kimberley as Manager of the London and South African Exploration Company, a position which he held for 15 years, until the Company was bought out by De Beers. He returned to Cape Town where he died in 1904.

Mr Currey was a wide reader and a great lover of books. When he returned to Kimberley in 1884, one of the first things he noted was the existence of a Public Library. By September he found himself on the Kimberley Library Committee which he served with dedication until 1895.

He came into close contact with the inhabitants of Beaconsfield, as this whole area fell under his jurisdiction. When there was a movement towards the establishment of a public library, Currey gave the project his full support and put the case for library accommodation very strongly to his Board of Directors in England. It was with his assistance that a building, which had been erected to house his Company, was made available for library purposes.

Despite the low rental which he negotiated for the library, he continually had to explain to his Board the reason for non-payment. By 1895, he had reduced the rental to £1 per month. The Beaconsfield Library Committee were greatly indebted to him and, in recognition of his assistance, made him the honorary President of the library in 1890.

Mr Currey gave donations to both the Kimberley Public Library and the Beaconsfield Library in his personal capacity as well as from the London and South African Exploration Company. The full extent of his generosity was not generally known.

His sojourn in Kimberley came to an abrupt and unexpected end when Rhodes bought out the London and South African Exploration Company in 1889.

#### 10.5 Mr Moses Cornwall

Mr Moses Cornwall arrived in Kimberley in 1870 and was an Assistant-Sheriff and Justice of Peace; he started serving on the Library Committee in October 1886, took over as Chairman of the Committee when Mr Justice Laurence left, and died in office in January 1906, after 20 years of library service.

Mr Cornwall took an active interest in public life, serving as Mayor of Kimberley in 1881, 1882 and 1898 and as Member of Parliament from 1884 to 1888. He was known to be "a man of sound judgement and common sense" (Cornwall, 1902, p.3).

#### 10.6 James Lawrence

Mr Lawrence was born in the Cape Colony in 1853. He ran a business in Kimberley. He was very civic-minded and was elected to the Town Council in 1882, serving as Mayor of Kimberley in 1889, 1892/3 and 1896 and as Member of Parliament in 1894 and 1898.

Despite his public commitments, Mr Lawrence served on the Library Committee for 10 years, from September 1891 to December 1901. He was known for his progressive outlook and for his talent as a fluent and persuasive public speaker. He was a Kimberley man "of whom the inhabitants may well be proud" (Lawrence, 1902, p.79).

#### 10.7 Cecil John Rhodes

Cecil John Rhodes was born in England in 1853 and arrived at New Rush in 1872. Through ambition and business acumen, he reached great heights, forming the De Beers Company and amalgamating the mines.

He was a single-minded person, working towards a goal he had set for himself and was not to be side-tracked by civic matters. In 1879 he stood for Town Council, but withdrew his name at the last moment as he was at this time preoccupied with the establishment of the De Beers Consolidated Mining Company and had also entered the field of politics. He became Member of Parliament for Barkly West in 1880 and Prime Minister of the Cape Colony in 1890, but resigned as a result of the Jameson raid, for which he was partly responsible. He was in Kimberley for the duration of the siege.

In May 1880 he attended a meeting at which Mr Rose-Innes, the Acting Administrator, presided and he put forward a motion that the Town Council should be induced to provide a room for library purposes in their proposed Town Hall; he was subsequently elected to serve on the Committee which was instructed to approach the Government for a yearly grant and a site for the library. It is not clear whether Rhodes did, in fact, act on this Committee; his name was not put forward as a member of the Provisional Board of Library Directors at a meeting held a month later. In 1883 he was again nominated to serve on the Library Committee but withdrew his name.

Mr Rhodes was very friendly with Mr Justice Laurence, Mr J B Currey, Dr L S Jameson and probably many other Library Committee men, all of whom were prominent figures in Kimberley. He was sympathetic to the library cause and made generous donations in his personal capacity as well as through the De Beers Company.<sup>97</sup> When approached by Mr Laurence for subsidisation of the building extension project,

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97. Vide p.112.



he acceded to the request by making funds available from compound funds.<sup>98</sup>

Rhodes was a First Class subscriber and life-member of the library. The loan register for 1888 indicates that he visited the library regularly while he was living in Kimberley and that he read mostly for relaxation.

When Cecil Rhodes passed away on 16 March 1902, the library felt that they had lost a very good and sympathetic friend, which indeed they had.

The following resolution was recorded at the time of his death :

"That the Committee of the Kimberley Public Library desire to place on record their deep sorrow at the death of the Rt Hon C J Rhodes, who, as chairman of the De Beers Mining Company and also in his private capacity, long took the liveliest interest in this Institution and contributed generously to its support (KPL. Minutes, 10 April 1902)."

Indirectly Rhodes played a significant role in the library history of Kimberley; his mining transactions brought about a stability in the economy of Kimberley which ensured the permanence and growth of the Kimberley Public Library. At the same time, it brought unemployment and poverty for many, causing the deterioration of the Beaconsfield Library, which had been instituted expressly to render a service to the miners.

Through his influence, De Beers took on the role of a fairy godmother towards the libraries of Kimberley, making regular annual grants to the

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98. Vide p.147.

Kimberley Public Library and later to the Beaconsfield Library.

#### 10.8 Barney Barnato

Barnett Isaacs was born in the Jewish quarter of London's East End in 1852 and came to Kimberley to seek his fortune in 1873. Barnato, as he came to be called, made his fortune out of diamonds; in 1881 he floated the Barnato Diamond Mining Company which amalgamated with De Beers in 1888 to form De Beers Consolidated Mines.

By the middle of the eighteen-nineties, he was one of the richest men in the world (Norwich, 1972, [p.17]). Bearing in mind that he was worth over £10 million pounds, his donation of £50 to the library in 1894 hardly attests to his generosity.

He had, according to Harington (1972, p.31), "an aversion to reading", hardly ever reading even a newspaper. However, this contention is inconsistent with the records of the Kimberley Public Library, which indicate that he was a First Class library subscriber in 1888 and that he took out 37 items in December 1888 and 30 in January 1889. Furthermore, he was a member of the Committee which founded the Johannesburg Public Library in 1889 (Kennedy, 1970, p.4) and in the same year, he interceded on behalf of the Kimberley Public Library for financial support in his capacity as Member of the Cape Legislative Assembly.

Barney Barnato served on the Kimberley Town Council from 1879 to 1880 and was a Member of Parliament from 1889 to his death in 1897. Taking into consideration the active role he played in the political and mining history of Kimberley, and his great interest in recreational activities such as

horse-racing and boxing, it is surprising that he found the time to visit the library at all.

#### 10.9 Leander Starr Jameson

L S Jameson was born in Scotland in 1853; he embarked on a career of medicine and arrived in Kimberley in 1878 where he practised as a doctor for some years. He met Cecil Rhodes and came under his influence to such an extent that he gave up his medical practice and devoted his energies to assist Rhodes in his bid to link Cape to Cairo by opening up the territory now known as Rhodesia.

In 1890 he was appointed Managing Director of Rhodes' British South African Charter Company. He became Administrator of Mashonaland in 1891 and took action against Lobengula, the King of the Matabele in 1893. Dr Jameson is remembered chiefly for his role in the abortive raid on Johannesburg in 1895, for which he served a sentence of 15 months' imprisonment in England, returning to South Africa during the Anglo-Boer War. He rendered his services as a doctor at the siege of Ladismith.

In 1900 he became member of Parliament, and, as leader of the Progressive party, became Prime Minister of the Cape Colony in 1902. He was very attached to Cecil Rhodes and was buried next to him on the Matoppos in 1917.

When "Dr Jim" lived and practised medicine in Kimberley, he served on the Library Committee for two years (1887 and 1888) and was a member of the sub-committee which was appointed to organise a bazaar for fund-raising purposes. In this capacity, he was seated on the platform with the other dignitaries at the inauguration ceremony of the Kimberley Public Library in 1887.

He personally donated £40 towards the Library Building Fund and in 1890 became a life member of the library on payment of £25. He was not a prolific reader but library records reveal an elevated taste in literature.

#### 10.10 Sidney S Mendelssohn

Sidney Mendelssohn, who is today best known for his South African Bibliography in two volumes, was the eldest son of Rev Meyer Mendelssohn, who came to Kimberley in 1878 and served on the Library Committee in 1884 and 1885. Sidney Mendelssohn was a diamond buyer and became the Director of the New Bultfontein Mine and later of the New Vaal Diamond and Exploration Company Limited, which was formed in 1902 and had its offices at Sydney-on-Vaal, a small town later named after him.<sup>99</sup>

Mendelssohn became interested in collecting Africana and was inspired by Mr P M Laurence to start compiling a catalogue of his collection.<sup>100</sup> He established a library at Sydney-on-Vaal in 1906, having collected funds for this purpose overseas (Bradlow, 1965, p.14) and he assisted the librarian, Mr A J Silverston, who was a cousin of his (Smit, 1968, p.529).

His Africana catalogue was published in 1910 and a copy was donated to the library. Mr Mendelssohn was never directly involved with the Kimberley Public Library, although he corresponded with both Mr Dyer and the next librarian, Mr John Ross. His contribution to the library was minimal. He gave a donation of two guineas towards the Extension Fund

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99. When Sydney-on-Vaal was named after Sidney Mendelssohn, the spelling was inadvertently changed.

100. This collection is at present housed in the Library of Parliament.

and left the library a legacy of £100 after his death in 1917. He passed on odd items to the library, such as photographic facsimiles of early printed notes relating to the Diamond Fields, but no substantiation of the contention that he gave his duplicates to the Kimberley Public Library could be traced.<sup>101</sup>

#### 10.11 Conclusion

The Public Library and its control was considered a prestigious activity and one within the scope of the more learned and respected gentlemen of the community.

Some of the most prominent men in Kimberley played a role in the development of the library and this is probably the reason why it became a well-known institution which could exercise an influence over governing bodies to achieve its goals. It could quite easily have faded into obscurity if it had not been for the strength of purpose and dedicated leadership of these contemporary Kimberley figures.<sup>102</sup>

The library's fine collection of books and valuable Africana items can be ascribed to the expertise of men like Mr Justice Laurence and Mr B L Dyer.

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101. Statements made by Bradlow (1965), Smit, D E (1968) and Musiker (1986).

102. It is interesting to note that Barnato was born in 1852, Rhodes, Lawrence and Jameson in 1853 and Laurence in 1854. At the time of the founding of the Kimberley libraries, these men were all in their thirties.



Percival Maitland Laurence  
1854 - 1930.



George H Goch  
1850 - 1918.



John Blades Currey  
1829 - 1904.

CHAPTER 11EVALUATION AND COMMENT

This study has traced the history of the Kimberley Public Library from the opening of the diamond diggings to the turn of the century; its gradual development has been examined within the context of the vacillating fortunes of a society, which has been viewed "not as a static organism but as an organism continually growing through dynamic changes" (Young, 1964, p.139). Perspective gained by the passage of time enables the researcher to discern a pattern in the seemingly disconnected occurrences and upheavals experienced by a new society trying to establish itself.

It becomes clear that Johnson (1965, p.405) was correct in stating that the fortunes of the library are intertwined with that of the community "each at one and the same time to a large extent cause and result of the other."

Historical data on their own mean nothing and should be interpreted if we are to learn from past experience.

Bearing this in mind, the sub-problems outlined in the first chapter may now be examined and the validity of the hypotheses put forward may be tested against the sequence of events recorded in the preceding chapters.

The first sub-problem dealt with the extent to which the socio-economic conditions on the diggings influenced the establishment and nature of the libraries which came into operation.

The preceding chapters have shown that there was indeed a correlation between the vicissitudes of the social, economic and political conditions experienced in Kimberley and the fluctuating fortunes of the public library. The hardships and difficult conditions experienced by the diggers formed the background against which libraries came into operation.

In the early stages of Kimberley, no specific desire for a public library was expressed. The circulating libraries of Hurley, Allen and Goch catered admirably for the transient life-style of the diggers, keeping them in touch with their places of origin by the provision of magazines and newspapers and providing light reading material for relaxation.

The Griqualand West Library was established when people started settling down and small schools were making their appearance, but the uncertainty about the future of the mines and the duration of diamond deposits was the indirect cause of the library's lack of progress and gradual decline.

When the restriction on the ownership of more than ten claims was lifted, mining companies were formed and listed on the stock market. Following suit, a Library Company was established and shares sold to the public. Kimberley experienced an economic boom which started in 1880 and lasted for two years. By 1882, however, "the entire sharebuying process was in reverse" (Roberts, 1976, p.198). Conditions deteriorated during the next couple of years; the economy suffered a severe depression, the miners organised a strike, there was a smallpox epidemic and, needless to say, the Library Company also landed in financial difficulties and had to be liquidated.

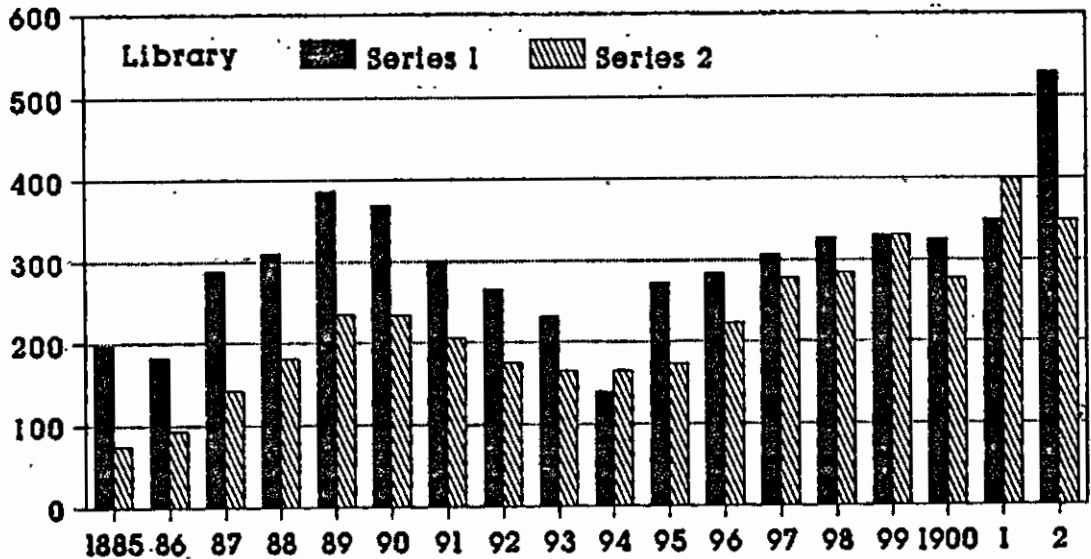


In 1885 the mining companies started uniting and the economy rallied. At the same time, a renewed effort was made to build a library and fund-raising started in earnest, the library materialising in 1887. Soon afterwards, the amalgamation of the large companies and the formation of De Beers Consolidated Mines took place...A building boom resulted and in 1890 no fewer than 144 buildings, including a fire station, were being erected. It was at this time, too, that the model village of Kenilworth was built by Rhodes. A new era of stability was ushered in and the Kimberley Public Library thrived.

The amalgamation of the mines also had negative effects; it heralded three years of depression caused by unemployment, a drop in the share market and the departure of many Kimberley residents for the newly opened gold fields in the Transvaal. The Beaconsfield Library and Institute, which had been established mainly to keep the young men on the mines constructively occupied during their leisure times, was very badly affected by the depression which lasted until after the Anglo-Boer War. By 1902, with peace restored, conditions improved considerably, economically as well as politically and library utilisation reached an all time high.

To sum up, Kimberley's economy in the early years showed a fluctuating tendency which was reflected in the fortunes of the library: there was a slump up to 1875, a recovery in 1876 and a boom in 1880; a slump in 1882, a recovery in 1885 and a boom in 1888; a decline over the next few years and a recovery in 1902.

The graph overleaf depicts library membership and library utilisation from 1885 to 1902.



Series 1 depicts the number of library subscribers and series 2 the average daily attendance. The graph reveals a pattern which is very similar to the economic fluctuations described above; it also shows a proportionately high library utilisation in comparison with the number of registered members.

It has been shown that the progress of the library was intertwined with the events experienced on the Diamond Fields and that each library which came into operation was very much a product of the times and influenced by the economic and political conditions.

On examining the social conditions prevailing on the Diamond Fields, it appears that when the diggers first brought their families to the diggings and started settling down, the first aspect which received attention was the formation of a Borough Council to provide basic services such as water, housing and sanitation. There already existed a great need for cultural and educational facilities but, while the future of the diamond mines was uncertain, nothing much was done in this direction. It was only when large mining companies took over the mines that a sense of security manifested itself and people started striving to improve the quality of life. Churches and schools were built and an

interest in theatre and intellectual pursuits evinced itself.

The time was now ripe for the resumption of the efforts of library protagonists to establish a Public Library; the infra-structure for this institution had been created and economic stability attained. When the library project was launched, the people of Kimberley gave it their whole-hearted support and made a concerted effort to raise the required amount. Despite the fact that library utilisation did not come up to expectations, the library not only survived but made significant progress.

The validity of the hypothesis that stability and favourable economic conditions are prerequisites for the establishment of a public library is substantiated by the history of the Kimberley Public Library seen within the context of a growing belief in the future of Kimberley and in the permanence of the diamond mines.

The second sub-problem was to evaluate the role of the library in the community life of Kimberley.

An hypothesis was formulated which stated that the library, as a result of a diversity of functions, fulfilled a vital need in the community life of Kimberley. According to the facts and opinions recounted in the preceding chapters, the conclusion arrived at is that the library played a very small role in the community life at the time; there is no conclusive evidence to support the statement that the library fulfilled a vital need in the lives of residents.

It was only when gambling was declared illegal in 1873 and people started looking elsewhere for entertainment that those who were concerned with the

intellectual and cultural upliftment of the mining community grasped the opportunity to expound on the virtues of a library or a literary institute where leisure time could be spent profitably. The need for 'a literary society and library,' (in that order), was often expressed but when the Society was launched, the Colonial Secretary, Mr J B Currey, named it the 'Kimberley Library and Institute', thus giving the library function greater prominence.

When the library came into operation, the intellectuals entertained high hopes for its success but it was obvious from the decline of the library when it was moved to new premises that its main attraction had lain in its close proximity to Dodds' Billiard Saloon and the communal use of the card room. People were in search of entertainment, which obviously the library did not provide.

Even when the Kimberley Public Library was in the process of being built, other societies, such as the Athenaeum, the Literary Society and Young Men's Improvement Societies, sprang up and, according to reports, the literary and musical programmes organised by these institutes, were well received. The record of early library history confirms Benade's allegation that the public library was never a popular service (1977, p.256).

Statistics reveal a very low membership in relation to the population of Kimberley. For 14 years it fluctuated between 232 and 387, only increasing by 147 in 1902 after a drastic reduction in subscription fees had been made. (See table overleaf).

Year	White Population	Subscribers	Percentage -
1891	12 658	301	2,3%
1900	13 500	325	2,4%
1902	13 556	528	3,9%

According to attendance records, many non-subscribers used the library's facilities, presumably to make use of the free reading room. Through the years various methods were employed to entice people to join the library as subscribers:

- Library hours were extended to accommodate the public;
- book stock was replenished with the latest titles from overseas at a rate of more than 1 000 a year;
- patrons were encouraged to make their own recommendations for purchases;
- books could be reserved and a new system was devised by which patrons were notified immediately when reserved books were available;
- subscribers were allowed to take out extra books should they wish to do so;
- and the chairman of the Library Committee made himself available on Saturday afternoons to find information for patrons and acquaint them with the library stock.

The reason for the low utilisation of library facilities is to be found in the general social structure of Kimberley; the population was predominantly working class, and factors such as background, standard of education, previous library

usage, employment situation, housing conditions and leisure activities, would have had a vital effect on readership patterns. In establishing a public library, no cognisance was taken of the clientele and their peculiar circumstances.

The champions of the library movement equated the cultural needs of the community with their own; there was no scientific basis for the assumption that a public library would fulfil so great a need that the average householder would willingly pay for the privilege of utilising it. It was not realised that the mere provision of a good selection of books would not necessarily instigate people to use the facilities either for recreation or for serious study, and that a process of enculturation was required to establish the reading habit.

It was claimed that free rate-supported libraries would attract greater support. There is no doubt that the subscription rates, which were high for that time, deterred people from joining the library; but the public also built up resistance to the library as a result of its forbidding image and atmosphere of exclusiveness. The Kimberley Public Library was the product of the intelligentsia and its select character was typical of the 'gentlemen's library' of the 19th century.

The plethora of rules and regulations and their strict enforcement, perceived by the Committee to be necessary for the smooth running of the library, made it a bureaucratic institution where the ordinary man did not feel welcome. If it had been less prescriptive and conservative and more of a community centre, more people would have been encouraged to join. For almost a century, librarians have tried to live down the image of austerity and severity created by the early public libraries, with minimal success.

It has been shown that Beaconsfield Library was the outcome, not of the expressed needs of the working class, but of the schemes of philanthropic idealists who were endeavouring to raise the moral standards of the young miners who roamed the streets in the evenings. They were more concerned with the provision of a facility than with the actual library stock. Had a prior survey of community needs been made, the design, nature and function of the Institute would probably have differed appreciably.

Even before the official inauguration of the library, mention was made of the apathy of the public. The membership of the library dropped year by year and the only successful attraction was the billiard table.

Both the Beaconsfield and the Kimberley libraries, like most educational institutions, originated for the purpose of assisting those who, in the eyes of those concerned about the living standards of the community, required upliftment and education; but it appears that a more active approach was required. This is the reason why other literary societies, such as Young men's Improvement Societies, with their own reading rooms, were far more popular and achieved better results than the libraries. Even after the establishment of the library, the question was asked, "Where are our Improvement Societies, such as debating and discussion groups?" (DFA, 8 February 1888) Obviously, informal education on an organised basis was a prerequisite for the provision of library books. The fact that subscriptions had to be paid for the dubious privilege of taking out library material, did not enhance the library's popularity.

The people themselves neither demanded a library, nor actively supported it; it was mainly the editors of local newspapers and a small band of idealistic

intellectuals who repeatedly referred to the lack of educational and library facilities on the Diamond Fields. The apathy of the man-in-the-street refutes the premise that the Public Library fulfilled a vital need in the community life of Kimberley.

The third sub-problem was to establish how libraries were financed and to what extent the governing bodies were responsible for the financing.

The hypothesis that libraries were unable to exist from funds generated by themselves and that financial support from the governing bodies is vital for the success of a library, has been covered in this study and has been shown to apply.

Subscription libraries which were financially dependent upon subscribers, made very little headway and never attained more than mediocrity. The library fathers found it difficult to reconcile the dual functions of the library, that of acquiring popular fiction and that of collecting and preserving reference material. They tried to do both with the limited resources at their disposal.

Revenue from subscriptions at the Kimberley Public Library averaged £765 a year and salaries amounted to £500 to £600 annually, leaving about £200 with which to cover expenses such as insurances, lighting, bookbinding, maintenance and the purchase of books. It stands to reason that, without grants from other sources, it would have been impossible to add to the collection.

The Chairman of the Kimberley Library Committee spent a large part of his time campaigning for more financial support from the authorities, and every means at his disposal was employed to extract promises for grants from them. He had the support of all the Members of the Legislative Assembly for



Kimberley in any legislation affecting the welfare of the library.

Kimberley was legally empowered to assist the library by means of grants and Mr Justice Laurence always hoped that Kimberley would be the first town to finance a free Public Library by means of a levy on rates. When the Library Committee tried to put a system of rate-supported membership into operation, however, the Borough Council was too impoverished to co-operate.

The Government gave the library a grant of £300 per annum for many years running. With these grants and with the generous assistance of De Beers, the library managed to purchase a very large stock of books, many of them forming the nucleus of the valuable Special Collection housed in the library to this day.

The library, it appears, is a service which can never be fully privatised. It is not popular enough to maintain itself on user fees alone.

The fourth sub-problem which received attention in this study was to identify the people who played a significant role in the development of the Kimberley Public Library.

The hypothesis that the library would never have achieved the success it did were it not for the efforts of certain protagonists of the library, was based on the assumption that it was a successful institution by the eighteen-nineties. That this was indeed the case, is confirmed by opinions expressed by the Johannesburg Library Committee of the time (Kennedy 1970, pp 9-10, 15, 28) and by the high regard in which the opinion of people like Mr Justice Laurence and Mr Dyer on library matters was held.

It has also been shown that prominent and learned citizens of Kimberley involved themselves with the library to the extent of pleading its cause in their Council chambers or in Parliament. The commitment and enthusiasm of these men who were involved in many other, possibly more important matters, gave the library a certain amount of prestige in the eyes of the community and engendered the respect and support of governing bodies and large mining companies. Rhodes's sympathy with the library cause resulted in munificent financial support from De Beers, and J B Currey's influence brought about accommodating exemptions from the London and South African Exploration Company for the Beaconsfield Library.

Mainly, however, the success of the Kimberley Public Library can be ascribed to the efforts of inspired, dedicated and enthusiastic men like G H Goch, P M Laurence and B L Dyer.

### Conclusion

By the turn of the century, Kimberley, a mining town with a population of predominantly working class, had managed to establish an excellent public library "entirely by the collective action of the citizens of Kimberley" themselves (Dyer, 1903, p.47). This in itself is quite remarkable when one takes into account that the Cape Government contributed lavishly towards the building of the South African Public Library and that priceless collections, such as that of Von Dessin, Sir George Grey and Dr L Pappé were donated to the library and formed the basis of this library's stock.

Furthermore, the South African and Grahamstown libraries became copyright libraries in 1873, which meant that they received all South African publications automatically. The Port Elizabeth

Public Library received bequests and donations from the Savage family. The Kimberley Library's sole benefactor was J MacFarlane who bequeathed £500 to the library. The strong collection was built up from scratch and the library itself was erected with funds collected through the efforts of the people of Kimberley.

Kimberley was the first town to be legally authorised, by the Kimberley Borough Amendment Act no 30 of 1884, to grant sums of money for the provision of library services. Two years before, in 1882, the Kimberley Borough Council had assumed civic responsibility towards the library by offering to buy the assets of the insolvent library company. After this, the Council made welcome, if inadequate, grants to both the Kimberley and Beaconsfield libraries annually.

The preceding chapters of this study have shown that the contribution of Kimberley to the development of librarianship in South Africa was considerable, a fact which is possibly not generally known and recognised. Kimberley is known for its large number of 'firsts', and, in the field of librarianship, Kimberley was also the first in many respects.

As early as January 1890, the Library Committee expressed the opinion that a South African Library Association should be formed and they authorised the Chairman to take preliminary steps to bring this about. Mr Laurence travelled to Cape Town to discuss the matter with the librarian of the South African Library, Mr F S Lewis. The latter stated in a letter dated 5 March 1890, that he would procure the rules of the English and American Library Association and that his Committee would then follow up the matter (Dyer, 1903, p.240).

Mr Dyer, the Librarian of the Kimberley Public Library, organised the first conference for librarians in South Africa in 1904; he advocated professionalism in librarianship and believed in free access to the library for everyone, regardless of colour, race or creed.

Mr Dyer advocated the abolition of the subscription system, which he considered to be discriminatory towards the poor and prejudicial to researchers and readers of serious literature as it had the effect of lowering the quality of the collection. It was the responsibility of the Government, he contended, to fund an educational institution such as the Public Library.

"The one and only expenditure of a Government which is returned an hundred-fold to the country governed," maintained Dyer (1903, p.30) "is its expenditure in educational work."

Kimberley was in the forefront as far as the cataloguing and classification of books was concerned. The library catalogue compiled by Mr Justice Laurence was an accurate reference tool that was consulted for many years, and, according to Dyer (1903, p. 21), with the exception of the South African Library, no attempt at scientific classification of books was made in any library in South Africa prior to the Kimberley Public Library. Dyer was one of the first librarians to implement the Dewey Decimal Classification System.

The Kimberley Public Library started collecting material pertaining to South Africa as early as 1889, when Mr Fairbridge was instructed to purchase material for Kimberley. Mr Justice Laurence advocated the collecting and preservation of pamphlets, photographs and ephemera of local

interest and Mr Dyer actively implemented the policy of building up a collection of local Africana.

The study has highlighted other contributions made by the Kimberley Public Library, such as obtaining exemption from municipal taxation for all libraries and negotiating third class rates for book railage.

The Kimberley Public Library was the first library to institute a Branch Library in the form of the Kenilworth Library, and the loan arrangement between the Kimberley and Beaconsfield libraries may be said to constitute the first inter-library loan system in South Africa.

To sum up, the problems experienced today are not unique; they are the same that our forebears had to contend with, except perhaps in the degree of complexity. Let us remember that "the past is the key to the present" (Young, 1964, p. 139) and let us go back to the basics and see today's problems in the perspective of past experience.

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**TABLE II.**  
**THE GROWTH OF THE KIMBERLEY PUBLIC LIBRARY.**

	1883	1884	1885	1886	1887	1888	1889	1890	1891	1892	1893	1894	1895	1896	1897	1898	1899	1900	1901	1902
No. of Subscribers ...	150	183	197	183	289	310	337	369	301	265	232	240	272	283	307	327	331	325	350	528
Amount of Subscriptions	£350	£472	£523	£502	£680	£830	£1,012	£1,145	£968	£853	£781	£787	£791	£768	£782	£805	£749	£711	£795	£882
Government Grant	£200	£200	£300	£300	£300	£300	£300	£600	£600	£300	£300	£350	£350	£350	£350	£350	£350	£350	£350	£400
Borough Council Grant ...	—	£25	£100	£100	£200	£100	£200	£200	£200	£100	£50	£50	£50	£50	£50	£50	£50	£50	£50	£100
No. of Books...	3,000	3,300	4,150	4,306	5,022	7,425	8,272	11,453	14,370	15,539	16,678	17,394	18,886	19,876	20,668	21,032	22,729	23,843	24,858	26,551
Annual Circulation	2,388	5,107	5,894	5,206	5,660	12,348	12,781	18,487	20,306	18,724	18,000	20,000	20,193	27,006	31,730	33,203	33,100	26,264	32,688	40,129
Average Daily Attendance	—	—	75	93	142	181	235	234	206	176	166	166	173	223	278	285	301	277	400	347



## DIE GESKIEDENIS VAN DIE

### KIMBERLEY OPENBARE BIBLIOTEEK. (Opsomming)

Die doel van hierdie verhandeling is om die ontstaan en ontwikkeling van die Kimberley Openbare Biblioteek na te gaan en vas te stel in hoe 'n mate politieke, ekonomiese en sosiale toestande die biblioteek geraak het, en om die persone wat 'n leidende rol gespeel het te identifiseer.

Met die ontdekking van diamante in 1871, was daar 'n groot toestroming van fortuinsoekers na New Rush, die delwersdorp in Noordkaapland. 'n Behoeftige aan onstpannings- en kulturele geriewe het ontstaan en in 1873 het 'n biblioteek tot stand gekom; dit het egter misluk as gevolg van onvoldoende finansiële ondersteuning.

In 1880 was daar 'n ekonomiese oplewing in die aandelemark van Kimberley. 'n Biblioteek-maatskappy is deur biblioteekkampvegters gestig en fondse is deur middel van aandele ingesamel. 'n Biblioteek is opgerig, maar voor dit betrek kon word, moes die maatskappy gelikwideer word.

Die Dorpsraad van die pasgeproklameerde dorp, Kimberley, het ingetree en die biblioteek gekoop vir gebruik as 'n stadsaal. Twee vertrekke is vir biblioteekdoeleindes ingeruim. Die lokaal was egter ondoeltreffend en die Biblioteekkomitee het, onder leiding van die Voorsitter, Regter P M Laurence, 'n fondsinsamelingsveldtog van stapel gestuur.

Grond is in Dutoitspanweg aangekoop en 'n biblioteekgebou is opgerig wat op 25 Julie 1887 in gebruik geneem is.

Kort hierna is daar ook op die buurdorp, Beaconsfield, 'n biblioteek tot stand gebring deur die bemiddeling van mnr J B Currey, die bestuurder van die London and South African Exploration Company, met die doel om konstruktiewe tydverdryf aan jongmense te verskaf. Die biblioteek, wat later 'n tak van die Kimberley Openbare Biblioteek sou word, het 'n sukkelbestaan gevoer weens ongunstige ekonomiese toestande.

Die verhandeling bevestig die hipotese dat stabiliteit 'n voorvereiste is vir die totstandkoming van 'n biblioteek in 'n spesifieke gemeenskap en dat die sukses van so 'n onderneming grotendeels afhang van finansiëring van plaaslike- of regeringsowerhede.

Die bevindings van ander ondersoeke dat die openbare biblioteek in sy ou gedaante nie 'n populêre instelling onder die algemene publiek was nie weens sy burokratiese inslag, word gestaaf.

Dit was deur die onvermoeide ywer en versienheid van veral begeesterde mense soos mnre P M Laurence en B L Dyer dat die Kimberley Openbare Biblioteek bekendheid verwerf het.

Op baie gebiede is ook 'n wesenlike bydrae tot die biblioteekwese van Suid-Afrika gemaak.

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