

L for Libraries

My first memory of visiting a library was when, at the age of about 5, I walked, with my friend who was also 5, across the town to the large Gothic building which housed Ashton's Central Library. There a stern looking lady checked our hands, none too clean, before giving us a pink card with instructions to take it home for our mothers to sign. My Mum was not pleased to hear that I had taken myself across several busy roads to get to the library but she did sign the membership card and I was off into a world of adventure. I loved choosing my own books from the children's room that smelled of lavender polish and leather spines. There was even an aquarium full of tropical fish. I was fascinated by the whole business of borrowing books. Handing your books to be stamped out along with your tickets which had a fold like small envelopes into which the cards from the books were inserted, before the date was stamped with a rubber stamp on the label so that you knew when to return the books. Then, on return, the library lady would riffle through trays of tickets and insert the cards into the books and then hand you your precious tickets. So I worked my way through 'Orlando, the marmalade cat', "Milly Molly Mandy", and "Little Grey Rabbit" then moved on to 'Secret Seven' and 'The Famous Five' via Noddy's Adventures in Toyland.

My early introduction into the world of books stood me in good stead. I have always loved reading and, at the Grammar School, we had library lessons with Miss Greenwood who taught us the main class divisions of Dewey Decimal System which we recited parrot-fashion..... 000 General Works, 100 Philosophy, 200 Religion and so on. Miss G read aloud from P.G. Wodehouse and Arthur Ransome. In English Lit lessons Mr Regan read to the class from 'The History of Mr Polly' and "Mystery in the Old Red Barn"

Eventually I had a long career in libraries, specialising in work with children. I was the one reading picture book stories to toddlers at the weekly 'Story Time' sessions, talking to groups of school children about their favourite books and introducing them to new authors and taking groups of adults on tours of the central library, explaining the intricacies of the Dewey Decimal System.
