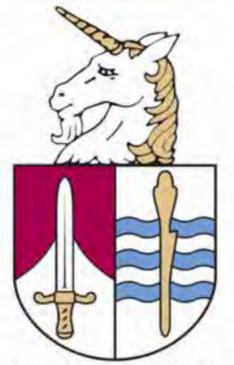


CAMBORNE LIBRARY

Public Engagement Event

History of The Library



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Camborne Town Council

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Camborne Library

Erected in 1894, opened in 1895, and gifted to the people of Camborne by philanthropist John Passmore Edwards, Camborne Free Library has been providing a vital educational and social resource for the local area for over 140 years.

The Public Libraries Act of 1850 gave local boroughs the power to establish free public libraries, but not until the 1880's and 1890's did a new pattern of public philanthropy emerge, providing motivation and a means for Local Authorities to adopt the Act. Some libraries were built in response to Queen Victoria's Golden Jubilee of 1887, with a further surge following the Libraries Act of 1892.

Designed by local Architect, Silvanus Trevail, perhaps the most prominent Cornish Architect of the 19th Century, the building was awarded Grade II Listed status in 2015.

Designed in a Free Jacobean style with an Arts and Crafts idiom, and built by John Symons & Sons of Blackwater. The building stands on the junction of 5 roads, known as The Cross, in a prominent position when approached from Camborne Railway Station to the south.

The site was previously occupied by a small row of 4 tenements, with leases purchased and a 999 year lease on nominal rent granted whilst the building was used for its original intent.

The building responds to the irregular shaped site with an asymmetrical building consisting of two long ranges set at right angles, with the stair block and entrance tower filling the remainder of the southern part of the site. The library is dressed in pink elvan stone, granite quoins and dressings in Bath stone, with roof originally in Delabole slate.

The building was largely altered in 1951, with some internal joinery features lost, but the majority of original detailing remains. Externally, the statue of Richard Trevithick was erected in 1928 and is also Listed Grade II. The low wall, ramps and steps with decorative metalwork panel were installed in the early 21st Century to improve accessibility to the building.



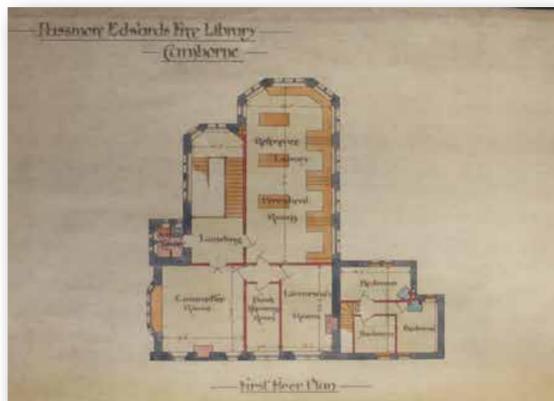
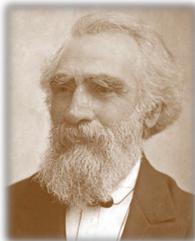
The Reading Room circa 1903 with the bust of Richard Trevithick to the right

About the Benefactor, John Passmore Edwards;

Born in Blackwater, the son of a carpenter, Passmore Edwards was a Victorian Journalist and noted philanthropist. He served as editor of the London Echo, for which he later sold his bulk of shares to focus his energies into his philanthropist pursuits.

As a lifelong champion of the working classes, 70 major buildings, including hospitals, libraries, schools and art galleries, were commissioned in the space of 14 years due to his bequests.

Further reading: John Passmore Edwards - www.passmoreedwards.org.uk



The Library, taken in 1906



About the Architect, Silvanus Trevail;

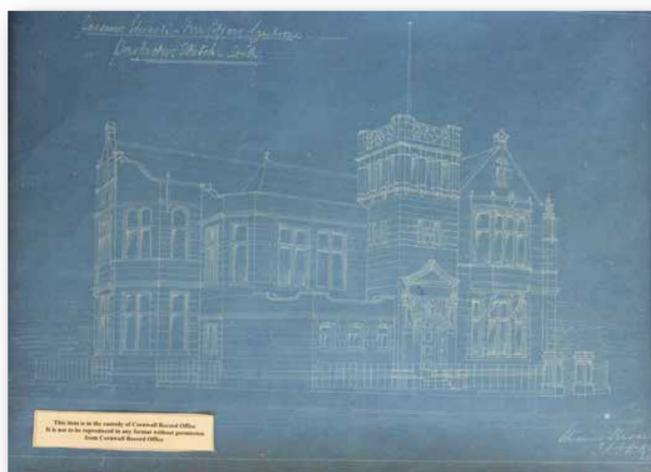
Born in Luxulyan in October 1851, he was training in London under Henry Garling FRIBA. Trevail returned to Cornwall in 1872 and designed the Elementary Board School at Mount Charles, St Austell, the first of 35 schools commissioned to him following the passing of the Education Act of 1870. Trevail became an influential figure in the County Council when established in 1888 as Chairman of the Sanitary Committee, involving many drainage schemes for Truro and Cornwall. He rose to become Mayor of Truro in 1894/5 and was also President of the architect's professional body at the time, the Society of Architects.

His first commission for Passmore Edwards was the Hayle Institute in 1893 and over the next 7 years he designed many of the Passmore Edwards buildings in Cornwall. In addition to his work with Passmore Edwards, he is remembered for many other prominent buildings, such as the Atlantic and Headland Hotels in Newquay.

Further reading: The Silvanus Trevail Society – www.luxsoft.demon.co.uk/sts/



The Library circa 1950 with the Trevithick Statue now in place



Interior photograph of the Library from around 1960



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