

Adare lets in more light, bookwise

By **NORMA PRENDIVILLE**

FOR a booklover, the new public library in Adare, which has just opened its doors for the first time, is a little bit of paradise on earth.

Or, indeed more accurately, 15,000 bits of paradise, all tidily sitting on shelves waiting to be borrowed and read.

And local people have responded with great enthusiasm and genuine pleasure to this latest addition to the town's facilities.

Indeed, such was the keenness of many members of the public to check out the new service for themselves that more than 40 people visited within the first hour or so of the doors opening.

Large, bright and with a great sense of space enhanced by the high, vaulted ceiling the new library in Adare gives the lie to the notion that libraries are dark, dreary places filled with dark, dreary books, places inimical to children and those who do not wish to whisper.

Adare, on the contrary, has dozens of windows, extensive, modern lighting, modern shelving, soft chairs and pale wooden tables. Anything dark or forbidding has been banished from here. And even the books, all 15,000 or more of them, are all brightly covered.

The vast majority of the bookstock - almost 90% of it - is new, according to county librarian, Damien Brady.

And he promises that the stock will rise to 20,000 volumes over the next period - as borrowers' choices fill out the shelves.

It is important that some scope is left for the public to fill out the stock, Damien explains.

"We take a lot of requests and in this way each library reflects its own area and fits into its own community," he says.

But already the library has particularly strong sections in cookery, gardening and art and the reference section has been particularly well-stocked with a facsimile copy of the Book of Kells taking pride of place.

An extremely important feature of the library, too, is its local history section, with its emphasis on local authors, local events and local places.

"Tied in as we are to the visitor centre, a big part of our work will be giving information to visitors and tourists about Limerick," Damien explains.

Leaflets with short histories of the area will be prepared and a copy of Griffiths valuation, taken in Adare in 1852, is expected to be much referred to as foreign visitors attempt to trace their roots.

The local history section is also expected to be much used by primary and second-level pupils doing various projects.

Another new service

which the library will provide is an information service as well as language learning tapes and taped books for the visually impaired, for which there is a growing demand.

Damien and the staff at Adare Library - branch librarian, Kitty Wilson, assistant librarian Margaret O'Reilly and assistant Mary Rosney - are all very keen to emphasise that the new library is very much a people's library and a public resource.

Developed in conjunction with Shannon Development, as part of a visitor/heritage centre, and built at a cost of over £1m with significant EC backing, the new library represents a considerable commitment by the County Council to the public library service.

"The library service is thriving in County Limerick," Damien explains, going on to point out that Adare is part of an overall plan to strengthen, develop and enhance the library service.

In the 70s, new libraries were built in Newcastle West and Kilmallock, he continues, in the '80's a new library was built in Foynes, and in the '90's, there is Adare.

The demand was, and is, there in Adare for the new library, Damien explains. Adare has grown considerably in the last ten years and there are three primary schools in the village alone.

A very significant section of the library has been given over to the children's library, with a lot of emphasis on providing suitable and exciting reference material.

And the library staff see their role as complimentary to, rather than in competition with, school libraries.

"It is a great opportunity for the children to see the library as part of their ordinary day," explains Mar-



Wayne McNamara, Adare, reading his "local" in the new library at Adare. (LL)

garet O'Reilly. What is of particular benefit to children, she feels, is that they learn to use a library and learn how to use reference and other information resources.

Visitors to the new library on the first day were

bowled over by the smashing new premises.

"Fabulous" and "fantastic" were some of the responses.

"We will have to get up earlier in the morning and go to bed later to keep up

with it," said one very happy borrower.

The new library will open five days a week, Tuesday to Saturday, from 10am to 5.30pm with lunch from 1-2pm. There will be late opening on Tuesday and Friday until 8.30pm.



Staff of the new Adare library: Mary Rosney, branch assistant; Margaret O'Reilly, assistant librarian; and Kitty Wilson, branch librarian. (LL)