

FRIENDS OF BURTON BRADSTOCK LIBRARY August 2011

In August of 2010, Dorset County Council announced that it would be required to make major savings in its budget as a result of central government economies. In December 2010 the Dorset Library Service announced that it would be required to save £800K and proposed to do this by leaving the 14 town libraries unchanged and stopping funding to the remaining 20 rural libraries by April 2012. These 20 rural libraries were to be offered the 'opportunity' to become 'community libraries'. The Library Service would provide them with some books and book shelves, and advice on how to run a local library, while the communities would be required to take over the buildings, their running costs and provide volunteers to run the service. Any new books would have to be provided by donations from the local communities. Those rural libraries not accepting this offer would be closed in April 2012 when their funding had stopped. This proposal was entirely contrary to the 1964 Libraries and Museums Act which requires DCC to provide a comprehensive as well as an efficient service.

In response to the Library Service proposal the 20 rural libraries combined together to form Ad Lib, an organisation to oppose these disproportionate measures. Ad Lib was able to show that the necessary savings could be achieved while still retaining the 34 libraries.

On March 23rd. 2011 the Library Service offer was rejected as totally unacceptable by the 20 rural libraries. On April 21st.2011 the offer was revised. The new offer was the current stock of books, an annual supply of new books, the use of the self service terminal, access to the Library Service central computer (for issue and return of books), provision of public computers for access to the Internet and 3 hours per week of library staff support. There was still a requirement to take over the building and its running costs, and to provide volunteers to run the service.

Subsequent developments were that when the Library Service did an Equality Impact assessment it had to renege 11 of the rural libraries from closure on grounds of deprivation or lack of public transport to the nearest town library. On July 21st. a Dorset County Council meeting had a choice between the Library Service proposal to close 9 rural libraries and the Ad Lib proposal to keep all 34 libraries open. They chose the Library Service proposal by 21 to 20 votes.

Burton Bradstock library is one of the 9 rural libraries threatened with closure. Fortunately due to the formation of the Friends of Burton Bradstock in 2007, we have the fund raising and the volunteers organised to enable us to stay open under the proposed terms, although we believe that there are aspects that need to be modified. In essence we will continue to provide the same service that we do now. We would welcome anyone living or staying in the Bride Valley to come to use the Burton Bradstock library and share this valuable resource with us. We have public access computers, and books ordered on-line can be delivered to the Burton Bradstock library for pick-up. Books to be returned to the library can be returned at Burton Bradstock, saving a trip into town.

We are open for 2 hours per day from Monday to Saturday, between 3 and 5 PM on Monday, Wednesday, Thursday and Friday, 10 to 12 AM on Tuesday and Saturday.

R.J Hynds – Chairman of the FBBL