

## **Cowbridge Library 1711 – 1848**

Initially established by the SPCK, as one of the four diocesan libraries in Wales. The moving spirit was Francis Wyndham of Dunraven and Clowerwall, Glos, who encouraged its siting in Cowbridge.

In 1711, the library was sent to Bristol (from London) by wagon, thence by sea to Cardiff or Aberthaw and wagon to Cowbridge. The books and presses were put up in Cowbridge church, probably in the vestry.

Three classes of persons could borrow books: (i) any clergyman or schoolmaster living within 10 miles of Cowbridge (by my reckoning excluding Llandaff, but probably using a flexible definition of 10 miles!) (ii) any Trustee (iii) anybody giving 10/- in cash or books. The library was to be open between 10am and noon on market day.

Hopkin James's *Old Cowbridge* gives a list of some of the books catalogued in 1763, but the main source of my information is an article by Revd EOT Lewis in the *Journal of the History Society of the Church in Wales*, which gives a fairly detailed consideration of the contents recorded in 1763. (Vol IV, 1954).

A later article by Lewis (Vol VII, 1957) describes the bookplate you copied for me, and relates this to a paper of Daniel Durel, HM of Cowbridge GS, preserved with the Clemenstone papers in NLW. Durel, who had been appointed keeper of the Diocesan library, stated that the Book Society was started in 1736, and Lewis presumed that it was reconstituted in 1739. Perhaps we can presume that the society had been somewhat moribund and then revived by Durel.

Durel's successor, Revd Thomas Williams, oversaw another attempt to add to the library and revive the Book Society, this time making the Grammar School the main beneficiary.

Another society, The Cowbridge Clerical Book Club, was formed in 1817; 'our' library continued till 1848, when the church space was needed for a vestry, and the books were removed, and stored in a disused building belonging to the Edmondes family; those in good condition were apparently taken to Ewenny Priory.

*Jeff Alden*