



■ Novel rest . . . visitors to the village library in Bampton can enjoy a cup of tea as they browse round an exhibition of paintings. As other libraries are counting the cost of cash cuts, Bampton has opened an extension. The Robert Besey Room was opened on Monday by Mr Tom Forrest, the Oxfordshire county librarian (above) helped by Mrs Jan Fretton, the librarian. It is hoped that the arts centre and tea room in the former Old Grammar School building will help offset some of the £16,000-a-year running costs

Picture: Jon Lewis

Library closures decision delayed

A DECISION on whether to close libraries in Oxfordshire has been put off until the New Year. Councillors hope the delay will give them more time to find alternative ways of saving nearly £800,000 on the libraries budget. Oxfordshire County Council's museums, arts, libraries and leisure committee voted to wait until its next meeting on

January 27 to finalise cuts to the library service. A period of public consultation — aimed at finding the least damaging ways of making savings — will then be complete. Mrs Brenda Churchill (Lib Dem), chairman of the MALL committee, said: "We are preparing ourselves for some very difficult decisions but it is not inevitable that

any libraries will close. "Some of the ideas from the public have made serious inroads into what we are being faced with. Someone might also have a brilliant idea which no-one has heard about." She added: "Various parishes have set up Friends organisations which could fund the running of their library for two years. By that

time we could be in a better position." Libraries serving less than 10,000 people or which are less than five miles from a larger library are under threat. Petitions to councillors included signatures from the users of Summertown, Headington and Temple Cowley libraries in Oxford and a 2,180-signature petition from Benson.

IN BRIEF

Art of survival: A tea room and art exhibition will be opened in Bampton Library to help keep it from being axed as Oxfordshire County Council struggles to get its spending down to approved levels. Library staff and the West Oxfordshire Arts Association have joined forces to launch what will be known as the Robert Vesey Room after the founder of the original Grammar School, now used to house the library, in 1635. A decision on the future of 30 libraries will be made on January 27.

Bampton

Library launches new tea service

Words and pictures by
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WHILE many branch libraries throughout Oxfordshire await anxiously the outcome of the city council discussions on their future, the branch at **Bampton** is looking positively to the future by launching a new service.

The library had a spare room used only for storage, its neighbour, West Oxfordshire Arts Association was short of exhibition space and visitors to the town often walk around vainly searching for somewhere to stop for a cup of tea.

So librarian Jan Fretten and WOAA administrator Sally Proctor put forward the idea of solving all three problems by turning the unused space into an exhibition area where library users and visitors to the exhibition could also enjoy a cup of tea.

The exhibition is named the Robert Vesey Room after the benefactor responsible for the building of the Old Grammar School in which the library is

housed. It is now owned by trustees who lease it to the county council.

The exhibition room and refreshment area will be open during library opening hours on Monday and Friday afternoons and evenings and Wednesday mornings and afternoons and there will be a changing programme of exhibitions.

The first three artists to put their work on display are painters Ariana Windle Clarke, Anthony Baines and Juliet Dyer, who exhibits clay models and sculptures.

The exhibition room was at one time itself used as the library which later moved into the larger area it now occupies at the back of the building.

The building's history goes back to the mid-17th century when Robert Vesey, who owned an estate in the nearby Hamlet of Chimney and was a wool merchant with a business in Burford, left in his will a sum of £300 for the building of a grammar school.



● Above: Oxfordshire's director of leisure and arts and city librarian Tom Forrest cut the ribbon across the doorway of the newly-named Robert Vesey Room at Bampton Library. The project has been planned by branch librarian Jan Fretten (left) and West Oxfordshire Arts Association administrator Sally Proctor (centre)

● Below: The first three artists to have their work on display in the exhibition room are Ariana Windle Clark, Juliet Dyer and Anthony Baines



● Left: Cathy Malcolm and Janet Glanvill discuss one of the sculptures by Juliet Dyer

● Below: The Robert Vesey Room will also provide refreshments. Rota organiser Kay Neave and WOAA chairman Ernest Rosengard enjoy a cup of tea

