

Downton cash helps keep village library open

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Robin Shuckburgh and Jane Wallis, from Bampton Library's support team, with parish councillor Joanna Downing at the library

DOWNTON Abbey has brought prestige, glamour and tourists to the village of Bampton – and has helped keep paid staff at the village's library. Production company Carnival – which has told villagers it will return next year for a sixth series – has given about £20,000 to Bampton Parish Council in return for filming scenes for the popular ITV period drama there.



Hugh Bonneville filming a scene from ITV's Downton Abbey in Bampton earlier this month

The council, in turn, has used some of it to fund half the £8,800 staffing costs the village must pay each year for Bampton Library.

The London-based company also hires the recreation ground for parking and has given £2,600 to [Oxfordshire County Council](#), which has spent it on library furniture and display equipment since filming began in 2010.

Parish council chairwoman Jacky Allinson said: “The money has enabled us to keep a professional library open. We could choose to use it for something else but once you lose it, it won’t come back. Everyone is very positive about having Downton here but it’s not going to go on forever.”

The production company shoots outdoor scenes in Bampton, including St Mary’s Church, the library and Churchgate House. It is usually in the village for up to five days each year, including for a Christmas special, giving £1,000 for each filming day. Funding was used in the first year for creating a post office in Bampton Town Hall.

Since the county council cut £2m from its libraries budget in 2011, the money has been given to the Bampton Library support team to pay half the staffing costs of a professional library manager and assistant manager. The county council still funds the rest of the service.

Support team member Jane Wallis said of the Downton Abbey money: “It makes up about 50 per cent of what we must raise each year to keep the library, and it’s helping the village in so many ways.”

Fellow member Robin Shuckburgh said villagers had been told by the production company they will be back to film next year. He said: “We’re very pleased to know it’s coming back but I suspect it may be the last.”

SCENE SETTERS

St Mary’s Church has been the setting for a number of weddings, funerals and christenings in the series. Bampton Library doubles as the entrance to the Downton Cottage Hospital. Churchgate House is used as the outside of Isobel Crawley’s house, with the interior scenes filmed at Hall Place near Beaconsfield in Buckinghamshire.

Church View has appeared regularly and includes two fictional pubs – The Grantham Arms and The Dog & Duck. Other filming spots in the county include: Cogges Manor Farm in Witney, which served as Yew Tree Farm in the drama. The Swan pub in Swinbrook, the setting for Lady Sybil’s elopement with the family chauffeur. The Old Forge at Shilton, which was turned into the Red Lion pub in series two.