

CHAPTER IVCHRISTCHURCH SUBURBAN LIBRARIES

On May 24, 1867 the residents of St. Albans and Knightstown met at the house of Mr. Tom Lewis to consider the formation of a Mutual Improvement Association. From this small beginning the Christchurch suburban library system developed.⁽¹⁾ Hailed with enthusiasm, the scheme made rapid progress and, less than a month later, the newly formed society received the title deed of section 311 on the map of the City Surveyor, as a gift from Mr. William Moor,⁽²⁾ to be used as a site for a Reading Room and Library. It should be pointed out at this stage that the library was not the only objective of the Association which aimed at the mutual improvement of its members by means of classes for special studies, lectures readings, and discussion. A comparison with the definition of a mechanics' institute, appearing earlier, will show very little difference.⁽³⁾ Like its counterpart in the City, it was intended to be essentially a working-men's organisation, the subscription being a half-crown per annum.⁽⁴⁾ When the Association was formally opened on October 28, 1867, Mr. Cutler declared that the Christchurch Mechanics' Institute had been created for and not by the working-men and in that fact he saw the cause of its failure.⁽⁵⁾ He felt certain

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1. Minutes of St. Albans Mutual Improvement Association. May 24, 1867. (at St. Albans Public Library)
 2. *ibid.*, June 17, 1867.
 3. *vide supra* Ch.1, p. 4.
 4. Minutes of St. Albans Mutual Improvement Association.
 5. L.T. October 29, 1867.