

A History of the Gatooma Library

# 100 YEARS



by PETER STERNBERG  
& Sheliegh Barton

Be different: buy direct  
from the author or  
[tslbooks.uk](http://tslbooks.uk)

## THE NEWTON STREET LIBRARY

Early in 1926, the government notified the library that it had decided to renew its previous offer regarding Stand 42 Newton Street, providing certain conditions were met. Amongst these conditions was the stipulation that the library committee appoint Joint-Trustees to the Board, and these two trustees were to be the Civil Commissioner (Mr Francis Joseph Clarke) and the Mayor of Gatooma, who happened at the time to be Mr George Septimus Fitt. The news caused a surge of optimism throughout the community, and the Gatooma Town Council decided to increase its annual grant to £31.10s.0d, with the proviso that the public reading room would stock the *Rhodesia Herald*, *Bulawayo Chronicle* and *Gatooma Mail* on a permanent basis.

Library Chairman, Dr Alan Clark, set about designing plans for the long awaited library building and in due course tenders were submitted from a number of local builders. A number of tenders were received, of which the highest sum quoted amounted to £936 and the lowest £750. It was agreed to go ahead with the construction of the building and a loan of £630 was obtained from the Gatooma Hospital Trustees in April 1926 at an interest rate of seven per cent, the capital to be repaid within 10 years from date of occupation. A separate library building account was established with the local branch of the Standard Bank. The contract to construct the actual building was awarded to Mr A. de B. Spurr.

It would appear that many of the materials used in the construction of the building were ordered by the library directly and supplied to the builder, as 30,000 bricks were ordered from Mr C. Crowther at a cost of £2.12s.6d per 1,000. Materials were ordered and tenders awarded to firms and individuals based almost exclusively in Gatooma:- Mr Marneweck supplied river sand, A. J. McIntosh & Co. tendered £16.15s.0d for gutters, down piping and flashing. Mr I. Rosenberg painted the library and supplied glazing for the sum of £30, and other firms and individuals including R. W. Taylor (an early pioneer), Johnson & Fletcher Ltd and Colin John Campbell