

Then and Now: Worle Libraries from 19th to 21st Centuries



Captain and Mrs. Battiscombe lived at Hillside House [pictured top left, now demolished], behind the Church on Church Road. They created the first known library in the village. From the **1880s until 1922** the large room over the coach house was fitted out as a free of charge 4,000 book library. A blazing fire was lit on Saturday evenings and the library was a popular venue for local people. The long drive, lined with tall trees, up to the house, caused ladies to hesitate at the gate and await the arrival of another reader before walking the rest of the way to Hillside to sit and read.

Worle Men's Village Club opened its doors in the **1890s** in premises at the top of The Scaurs, close to the Old King's Head. One of its features was a reading room which supplied local working men with a range of newspapers each day and a small collection of donated books. The papers were given by the Robins family who ran a shop at the top of Ten Acres, now Coronation Road. In 1904, Edward Hardwick of Springfield House, Spring Hill, donated a plot of land to the Club for new premises. The Club's minutes tell us that the reading room tradition was carried on when the new premises in Mendip Avenue [above centre] was built.

Late in the wonderful **1950s** Worle welcomed the arrival of the Mobile Library. There is little factual information about this service still available, but the large, articulated vehicle parked, twice a week, in Mendip Avenue and a small group of folk waited patiently for its arrival. The customers of this excellent service could request specific volumes, which the staff would produce without fail the following week.

The present site of Worle Branch Library was once land belonging to the Parker family. In **1946** it was compulsorily purchased for £430 to provide land for The Maltings Pre-fabricated houses to be built, to re-house people affected by World War 2 bombs.

In **1965** plans were announced to demolish and rehouse the families in The Maltings and *'to build 27 old people's flatlets, a branch library and six shops with flats over them.'* Mr Parker was aggrieved about the commercial premises, but was over-ruled, and in 1969 Worle's Branch Library was opened amid much local delight.

In **2016** it emerged that time was about to move on again. Our library left its site in The Maltings and in June 2017 a new, reduced version was moved to The Children's Centre in Mendip Avenue, next door to the Century Club.