

Then and Now: Church Road down the Years



The road we now know as Church Road has been variously named Bristol Road, Upper Bristol Road and Church Lane before Church Road came into being.

In the early days of the village of Worle this lane was the only way to reach the fishing village at Weston [super-Mare]. People travelling from Bristol, for business or pleasure used this route to travel by horse drawn vehicles to the growing seaside resort and the inhabitants of Weston came along this narrow lane to collect goods from Spinner's Stores – later Gunning's Stores - at the top of The Scores. [top left] It was only when the lower levels were drained that the Weston to Worle Turnpike Road could be built, in 1841, to join the east end of Locking Road to what is now Worle High Street.

Until the 1960s, Church Road remained a narrow lane, where only one vehicle could travel at a time. Despite new bungalows and houses being built in the 1930s, the road kept its stone walls, hedges and wild verges. [top centre] The beginning of new building on the south side of the road sparked a new phase in the life of this ancient thoroughfare. Walls and hedges were cleared and the road became twice its former width. Many front gardens were halved in size by compulsory purchase of land.

In 1966, the road near St Martin's Church and the school became the focus of attention. The pasture land on the north side of the road had been sold for development, and a major effort to 'modernise' the flow of traffic ensued. In the picture, top right, we can still see the banks at the bottom of Hawthorn Hill in the process of being removed. Oddly, 50 years on, this faster, wider road has had its day and new 'traffic calming' measures have narrowed it back to its former proportions. I wonder how many people are thinking, 'I told you so'?

