



Enfield Local Studies
Library and Archive

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**London Borough of Enfield
Local History Sheets.**

Public Libraries in Enfield

a history



Legislative Background

1850 Public Libraries Act - Gave local authorities the power to establish public libraries. Expenditure was limited to a rate of a halfpenny in the pound.

1855 Public Libraries Act - Expenditure limit raised to a rate of one penny in the pound.

1919 Public Libraries Act - County Councils (established 1889) given the power to establish public libraries. Abolition of rate limitations.

Edmonton

The Edmonton Local Board of Health adopted the Public Libraries Acts in 1891. The service commenced in 1893 using part of Edmonton Town Hall. The Central Library in Fore Street opened in 1897. Branch libraries were built at Houndsfield Road (1937), Weir Hall (1938) and Ridge Avenue (1963).

Enfield

The Enfield Local Board of Health adopted the Public Libraries Acts in 1892. A temporary library based in the Public Offices, Gentlemans Row opened in 1894. The Enfield Highway Library in Hertford Road opened in 1910. The Central Library in Cecil Road opened in 1912. Branch libraries were opened at Fourth Avenue, now called Agricola Place (1948), Kempe Road (1957), Ponders End (1962) and Enfield Road (1964).

Southgate

The Southgate Local Board of Health and its successor, the Southgate Urban

District Council, never adopted the Public Libraries Acts. In 1922 Middlesex County Council adopted the 1919 Public Libraries Act for those districts within the county that had not taken steps to provide their own library service. Southgate's library service started in 1925 with part-time libraries improvised on school premises. Staffing was mainly by volunteers. The first purpose-built branch libraries (in Green Road and Bowes Road) opened in 1939, followed by the Palmers Green Library in 1940. A branch library at Winchmore Hill opened in 1961.

London Borough of Enfield In 1965 the library services of Edmonton, Enfield and Southgate merged. A branch library in Southgate High Street opened in 1966, followed in 1976 by another at Ordnance Road to serve Enfield Wash. A new Weir Hall Library (combined with a theatre) opened in 1988 replacing the original building which had been demolished for road widening. The year 1991 saw the closure of Houndsfield Library and the former Edmonton Central Library and their replacement by a new library in the Edmonton Green shopping centre.

Individual Libraries

Angel Raynham

Opened in part of Angel Raynham School in 2003

Bowes Road

Opened in 1939. Part of a complex which included a swimming pool and a juvenile employment bureau.

Bullsmoor, Kempe Road

Opened in 1957. The complex included a community centre. Now used as the base for the travelling library and the home delivery service.

Bush Hill Park, Agricola Place

The building was originally the St Marks Church of England School. The building was acquired in 1938 by Enfield Urban District Council after the closure of the school. It opened as a branch library in 1948. Extended in 2010 and re-named **John Jackson Library** after a local councillor and former mayor.

Enfield Town Library, Church Street

Opened in 1912, replacing temporary quarters in the Public Offices, Gentlemans Row. (It was founded by a grant from the Carnegie Foundation). The site was acquired in 1902 with the intention of building a Town Hall complex of which the library would have formed just a small part. A gramophone record library (one of the first in the country) opened in 1950. Plans for enlargement were drawn up in 1955 to include a new children's library, an extended lending library, a new gramophone record library and extra office accommodation. The enlargement was completed in 1963. Moved to Thomas Hardy House, London Road in 2008 while the building was being renovated and a lift installed. Returned to present site in 2010 with the entrance now on Church Street instead of Cecil Road. The new design won **Best Built Project** for architects Shephard Epstein Hunter in 2014.

De Bohun, Green Road

Opened in 1939. The ground floor of the building was used as a clinic. Closed in 1993.

Edmonton Green, South Mall

Opened in 1991 in refurbished shop premises in the Edmonton Green shopping centre. Replaced the former Fore Street and Houndsfield Libraries.

Enfield Highway, Hertford Road

Built with the aid of a grant from the Carnegie Foundation and opened in 1910. An enlarged lending library was added at the rear of the building in 1938. The travelling library (started in 1947) was originally based here.

Enfield Island Village

Opened in 2009 on part of the former Royal Small Arms site.

Fore Street

The former Edmonton Central Library opened in 1897, replacing temporary accommodation at Edmonton Town Hall. Built with grant aid from the Passmore Edwards Foundation. The building was greatly enlarged in 1931 when a new lending library was added at the rear. Closed in 1991 on the opening of the Edmonton Green Library.

Fore Street (new)

Opened in former shop 109–111 Fore Street, N18 in 2008 after the closure of Weir Hall Library

Houndsfield

Opened in 1937, the ground floor was originally used as a feeding centre for undernourished children but is now used as the William Preye Day Centre. The library closed in 1991 on the opening of the Edmonton Green Library.

Merryhills, Enfield Road

Opened in 1964. The complex also included a clinic. Closed 2005 when library was relocated to Oakwood.

Millfield

Situated in the historic Millfield House. Opened in 2012

Oakwood, Bramley Road

Opened in 2006 in the parade of shops near Oakwood Station as a replacement for Merryhills

Ordnance Road

Opened in 1976. A substantial branch library serving the Enfield Wash area. Demolished in 2013 to make way for redevelopment.

Ordnance Unity Centre

Combined library, doctors, dentists and community space opened in December 2014 on the site of the old Ordnance Road Library

Palmers Green, Broomfield Lane

Opened in 1940 as part of the Southgate Town Hall complex. A large open-plan building. A separate music library was formed in 1975 utilising space formerly occupied by committee rooms. This became in turn the IT centre and then the children's library.

Ponders End, College Court

Opened in 1962, the complex originally included a rates office.

Ridge Avenue

Opened in 1963, replacing a temporary library in shop premises at Queen Anne's Place. The site was acquired in 1939 but construction was delayed by World War II and subsequent financial problems. A substantial branch library of striking design on a prominent site.

Southgate Circus

Planned by Middlesex County Libraries as long ago as 1947, when the site was earmarked. Construction began in 1964. Opened in 1966.

Weir Hall, Silver Street

The original building, opened in 1938, was a striking example of library architecture of the nineteen-thirties. It was demolished as a result of major roadworks at the A10/ North Circular Road intersection. A new building opened on a new site in 1988. The complex included the Millfield Theatre. Library closed in 2008.

Winchmore Hill, Green Lanes

Opened in 1961.