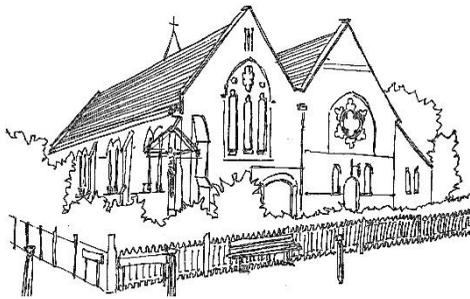
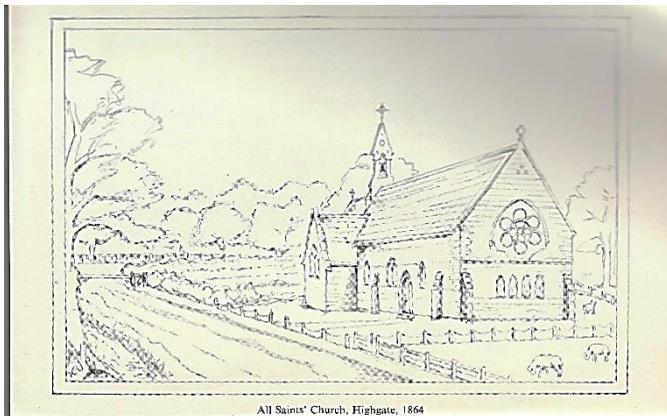


All Saints Highgate: a Short History



By Pamela Lighthill

Prebendary Dalton, the third vicar of St Michael's, realised that the northern and poorer end of his parish needed a mission church. For a while services were held in a rented room, but the foundation stone for a new church was laid in June 1863 in the presence of large crowds of people. The young architect was Arthur Blomfield, a son of the previous Bishop of London and Prebendary Dalton's brother-in-law. The church was built on the edge of woods, and a road was made linking the Archway Road with North Hill. The new church was shorter and narrower than the present-day one, with the door in the north wall of the nave. Whereas St Michael's had accommodation for 1,520 persons including 520 free seats, All Saints' was built for 300 persons and there would be no pew rents.



All Saints' was duly consecrated on Saturday 30th January 1864 by the Bishop of London, Dr Archibald Tait.

To begin with the church was extremely draughty, so a porch was built around the door in the north wall. Gas lighting was implemented and late in 1866 an organ was installed in a chamber built against the south wall of the chancel. The construction of the vault beneath the organ chamber revealed inadequate drainage to the south of the church. The problem was tackled, but has resurfaced in recent times. In 1865 the congregation of St Michael's paid for the installation of the East window, a memorial to Prebendary Dalton's two sons, who had tragically died, one at 17 years, the other aged 15. This window was to be destroyed by a bomb blast in 1940.

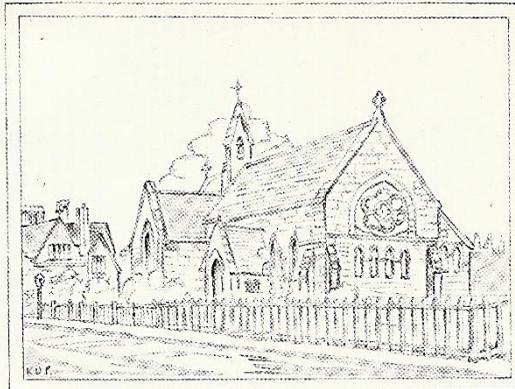
In July 1874 the church was closed for enlargement. Mr Blomfield made use of his "springing arches" in the south wall to add a south aisle, and the church was lengthened at the west end. Other repairs and alterations were also made. On All Saints' Eve the church was re-opened and the curate-in-charge, the Revd. Edgar Smith was instituted as the first vicar of a now separate parish. A parsonage house was built to the east of the church.

As for the congregation, many lived in overcrowded, dilapidated dwellings with leaky roofs and poor drainage. The early parish magazines list the frequent deaths of young children. The local population consisted mainly of cottagers, who depended on seasonal farm work for their living. Prebendary Dalton had bought the leasehold of a site between All Saints' Road (later Church Road) and North Hill. A corrugated iron room was erected as a Sunday school and a Mission House was built, providing a soup kitchen and convalescent nursing care for children from poor families.

With the advent of the railway and the opening of Highgate Station in 1867, the population was increasing to the south of All Saints' Church. In the years following 1882, much effort was diverted into the building of a further church 'to provide for the spiritual wants of the immense population growing up on the Archway Road' (in the words of the Revd. Edgar Smith). The first portion of the new church was consecrated in 1888. By 1895 the Church of St Augustine was almost completed and a Vicar-designate was instituted.

The priority given to the building of St Augustine's meant that by the 1890s All Saints was once more in need of many repairs. Shortage of funds and the

overwhelming necessity for a new boiler delayed the completion of the internal alterations. However, as a new century dawned, some at least of the necessary work had been accomplished, including the provision of a door at the west end. And in 1899 a brass eagle lectern, still in use, was given by a Mr Jarett as a thankoffering for survival in a train crash in Scotland! In 1905 the Vicar appealed for funds to help the unemployed. The soup kitchen was still providing large quantities of soup and bread during severe weather, although partakers were expected to pay one penny for a quart of soup. Meanwhile the health of the Vicar was failing and he died only a few months after his retirement in 1910.



All Saints' Church, Highgate, and Vicarage, circa 1890

The Revd Francis H.A. Hawkins was instituted as the second Vicar of All Saints in 1910. His first priority was to enlarge the church because of a growing population. A new north aisle and new vestries were built. Electric lighting was installed. The north porch, the original entrance to the church, was moved to the south-east corner, where it remains today as the entrance to the vestries. The stained glass windows of the north aisle with their fine depiction of stories from the Old and New Testaments have survived to the present day. May 11th 1912 was the day of the dedication of the new aisle and vestries by the Bishop of London. A day of perfect weather ended with a very large congregation being entertained in the vicarage garden by the Vicar and Mrs Hawkins.

1914 was a Jubilee year for All Saints, fifty years since the consecration in 1864. The Vicar suggested a special observation of the Patronal Festival, but in the event there were no celebrations, for August saw the beginning of the First World War. Four years of grief and hardship ensued. The interest of the congregation became focused on a war memorial. On All Souls' Day, 1919, the bronze memorial to almost 100 men was dedicated by the Bishop of Willesden, together with the Calvary in the church garden. We still gather around the war memorial on Remembrance Sunday to remember

the dead of our parish in World War I and all subsequent wars.

The church hall, still situated on Church Road/North Hill corner, had been enlarged at the end of 1910, partly to accommodate the children's convalescent home on the first floor, which subsequently paid an annual rent to the church of £22/10/-. Meanwhile the church organ, in use for over fifty years, was becoming very costly to maintain, but it was 1923 before funds became available to replace it. A Lewis organ was installed, and Mr Athol Imber, at his own expense, erected a stone chamber outside the church to house the motor.

In 1924 the Children's Convalescent Home closed and the premises were re-opened as a Child Welfare Clinic run by the Hornsey Borough Council who paid the church £90 a year in rent. In 1923 Francis Hawkins was made a Prebendary at St Paul's Cathedral. He finally retired in 1936 after faithfully serving the parish for 26 years. He was succeeded by the Reverend Frederick Murray Tapply, who is remembered for taking All Saints rather far up the candle in terms of churchmanship – and also for the fact that he could trace his ancestry back to Edward III!

Like his predecessor Fr Tapply had to take care of church and people during a time of war. Only a few

months after he and Mrs Tapply had moved into a restored vicarage, World War II broke out. All Saints suffered considerable damage. In December 1940, as previously mentioned, the East window was destroyed in a bomb blast. In May 1944 the furnace chimney fell through the roof of the organ chamber and in August of that year, two flying bombs caused huge damage, including the destruction of the stained glass memorial windows in the south aisle. Services were held in the hall, but by Easter 1945, the church was again in use. Tragically, in December 1945, after the war was over, there was a fire at All Saints. It started either in the organ chamber or in the furnace room underneath. In January 1946, Fr Tapply wrote in the parish magazine:

‘Our dear church is, with the exception of the north aisle and vestries, a blackened ruin and the organ, so lately restored, a heap of burnt rubble’.

For seven long years services took place in the blocked off north aisle. In 1949 work began on the roof and only in 1951 was the restoration of the interior begun. Meanwhile the congregation suffered from both overcrowding and lack of adequate heating. However, by the end of 1952 the work was almost completed and there was also a new east window. This is the one we see today, and depicts Our Risen Lord flanked by St

Michael and St George. The floor of the church was relaid with oak blocks, and the opportunity was taken to add a lavatory and wash basin. On 2nd February 1953 the restored church was re-hallowed by the Bishop of London. During the 1950s the lost windows of the south aisle were replaced by new ones, including the Waller memorial window high up in the south wall.

Fr Tapply retired in 1960, not long after the death of his wife and after 24 years at All Saints. The Revd Ernest Beale took care of the parish for a short while, and then in January 1961 the Revd John B. Roberts was instituted as Vicar. By this time the parish was much changed from its early days. The fields and cottages of the farm workers had gone, as had some Victorian and Georgian houses. Already there were blocks of flats and some of the Edwardian houses were being converted into flats. At Easter 1963 the Vicar moved into a new house, the present-day vicarage. The old vicarage had been condemned and the site sold to provide for Probation Offices, thus covering the cost of building the new one.

The centenary of the church was fast approaching. In 1962 Mrs Kathleen Ursula Platt had started writing up the history of All Saints in instalments for the magazine. One of the main priorities of the new vicar was the provision of a church hall on site, in order to foster

better fellowship and social activities. In January 1964 he wrote in the magazine:

‘We have the necessary shell in the north aisle of the church and an admirable architect ...’

On 30th January 1964 the Archdeacon of Hampstead, the Ven. G.D. Leonard (later consecrated Bishop of Willesden, then Truro and finally London) preached at a Solemn Evensong to mark the centenary of the “little church in the woods.” At this time he resided opposite the vicarage in Church Road and remarked in his sermon that in 1864 pigs had roamed where he now lived! He paid tribute to Mrs Platt for her work on the church history. This was printed as a booklet in August 1964. (I have based my own story of the first one hundred years on this, but have somewhat compressed her account. The subsequent paragraphs are mostly derived from parish magazines.)

The Revd John Roberts looked after a busy parish community. The uniformed organisations (Scouts, Guides, Cubs and Brownies) were still flourishing under the care of Mr and Mrs Parry, although Mrs Parry retired from running the Guides in December 1966. We hear much about bazaars and whist drives as well as Confirmations and Sunday School. During the 1960s

Sunday School was moved from Sunday afternoons to Sunday mornings to suit changing patterns of family life.

The bazaars and jumble sales, run by George Walker, Grace Imber and others, helped raise funds for the New Hall Fund. In June 1965 the old hall was taken over by the Diocesan Educational Authorities, and in later years passed out of Church ownership altogether. As it was clear that the new hall would not be able to accommodate all the paraphernalia hitherto stored in the old one, the decision was taken to build a garden shed. A concrete base was laid on the south side of the church and a cedar wood hut was made, which was then divided into two halves and used to store the paraphernalia of the young people's organisations plus the gardening tools.

At last in January 1966 the new hall was finished and in use. The former organ chamber was converted into the chapel on the south side, the organ was reallocated to the north side and the church redecorated. The hall was quickly declared to be a great asset to All Saints and has remained so ever since.

In October 1966 the Bowdens moved into the neighbourhood, the Revd John Bowden being the Editor of the Student Christian Movement Press. In 1967 John gave some talks on the new Communion service Series

2, as the Church of England gradually moved away from an exclusive use of the Book of Common Prayer. From September 1968 John was Honorary Assistant Curate at All Saints.

In 1968 the Vicar was urging his congregation to spend more time reading the Bible with the aid of B.R.F. notes. He also recommended John Bowden's book, 'What about the Old Testament?' At the beginning of the 1970s a postal strike and the ever mounting cost of printing led to the demise of the parish magazine. Instead the Revd John Roberts typed a duplicated news sheet 'with two fingers'. The morning congregation was holding up, but the numbers at Evensong had reached 'an all time low'. The Vicar thought that television was partly to blame. By the end of 1972 Evening Prayer on Sunday had been dropped. It was a different age and the early morning Communion services of Fr Tapply's time were also a thing of the past.

John Roberts retired in 1976. He was fondly remembered by parishioners for his hospitality and above all for the practical leadership he gave regarding the creation of a hall in the north aisle. He was succeeded by the Revd Melvyn Matthews, who came from a teaching post in Nairobi. During Melvyn's time at All Saints he enjoyed the support of both George

Walker and Grace Imber as Churchwardens, both of whom are fondly remembered by longstanding parishioners. Bazaars and jumble sales were enthusiastically organised. In Melvyn's time the decision was taken to have a nave altar on a raised dais, in addition to the high altar.

In 1979 Melvyn moved to the West Country and the Revd Robert Ellis succeeded him for a short while. In August 1982 the Revd David H. Hubbard was instituted as Vicar. He came from Christ Church Crouch End and was already familiar with All Saints from his time as Area Dean. David stayed almost 20 years. He is remembered with affection and gratitude both by parishioners and by people in the wider neighbourhood. Nonetheless these were testing times for the Church in general. David welcomed lively discussion about topical issues such as the ordination of women. He encouraged members of the congregation to take on tasks such as lesson-reading and leading intercessions, as well as the more practical work of church cleaning and looking after the church garden. David revived the church magazine with the help of a duplicating machine and some typing assistance from Vera Smith, now a member of the residential home in View Road. David took Communion services at the various Hill Homes, hosted a Bible Study group and helped Kevin Dodds run a successful youth

club. Guides and Brownies (especially the latter) were still flourishing and there were church parades at family services. The annual church bazaars continued, but whist drives fell out of favour. With David as Vicar, both Kevin Dodds and Kenneth Smith were licensed as Readers. David also gave encouragement to Howard Rogers, who became a Reader under his successor and then went on to be ordained.

In 2002 David retired from All Saints, though not from active ministry. For a few months the future of the parish looked uncertain, with serious roof repairs needed and questions being raised about the future direction of mission in Highgate. At this time All Saints was blessed with kind counsel and encouragement from both The Right Revd Peter Wheatley, Bishop of Edmonton and from The Revd Dr Jonathan Trigg, Area Dean of West Haringey. After some months of consultation it was decided that a Priest-in-Charge should be appointed to All Saints. With generous help from members of the congregation, including architectural advice from Francis Birch, the Diocese gave us the necessary financial backing to undertake the roof repairs.

In September 2002 the Revd Phillip Storr Venter joined us. For several years he had served as the Archbishop

of Canterbury's Apokrisiarius in Armenia and Georgia, as well as Anglican Chaplain and financial consultant. He had a very strong connection with the Armenian Church both in Yerevan and in London. Fr Phillip's churchmanship was rather higher than All Saints was used to. However, the link with the Orthodox Church and Fr Phillip's interest in the Middle East were very stimulating to the All Saints congregation. Fr Philip was both kind and hospitable and made many friends in Highgate. There was deep sadness when he was diagnosed with a brain tumour in 2008. He died on 29th December of that year. A few days' later parishioners were shocked to hear of the sudden death of the Reader, Kenneth Smith. It was a very sad time.

For many it was a relief to hear that, rather than having to get used to a totally new priest, All Saints was to come under the care of the Revd Jonathan Trigg, Vicar of St Michael's, as the new Priest-in-Charge. Although continuing as a separate parish, the church would be served by the same clergy team as St Michael's. The Assistant Curate, the Revd Bryce Wandrey, would live at the vicarage with his wife and young family. This move was to prove very helpful in bringing more families to All Saints. Meanwhile All Saints had acquired its first woman Reader in Pamela Lighthill and in due course the Revd Howard Rogers returned from Christ Church

Southgate to make up part of the clergy team for St Michael's and All Saints.

As our 150th anniversary begins we are in good heart, but not complacent. We know that, in the words of the Bishop of London, our task is to 'fan the rumour of God in this great world city'. We know that the Church is not essentially a building, but a community. We know we have much work to do.

Our history is a story of joy and of perseverance, but also of setbacks and some disasters. However it seems to me that the clergy and congregation of All Saints Highgate have showed a marked resilience over the years, and I hope that will continue into the future.

