



Reverend Collier's Unwanted Daughter

The Origin of All Saints'

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In 1961, the comedian and local resident Spike Milligan joined a campaign to save Brent Lodge, an imposing 19th century house in Nether Street, West Finchley, the former home of Francis Hamilton.

This merchant banker had been one of Finchley's prime benefactors and in 1891, it was Mrs Hamilton who presided over the laying of the memorial stone at a new church in Durham Road. If you pause as you enter the church and look at the base of the pillar to your left you will see her name inscribed.

His friend was also another local benefactor, the local MP Henry 'Inky' Stephens. He was known as 'Inky' because of his business making blue-black ink. It was this social circle that lay behind the decision to build a church tucked at the end of some side streets.

All Saints' was a daughter church of the nearby, Holy Trinity. The church was consecrated in 1892 but only in 1900 did it become truly independent when the Revd Arthur Armitstead became the first vicar; before that it had been a chapel of ease for Holy Trinity.

It had been built astride a parish boundary between Holy Trinity and St James, Muswell Hill and there are references in PCC minutes and in local histories to the church being a joint chapelry between the two parishes. And there were good reasons to expand; East Finchley was a place that had long been felt to be in dire need of some Christian guidance.



'We must build this year.'

Back in the 1890s, the original vicar of All Saints' Revd H N Collier, was concerned that East Finchley was becoming 'a receptacle for the poor' and all their associated problems.

Houses, he said, were being divided into lodgings into which were crammed 'struggling clerks...and artisans,' many in casual employment. He, himself, had experience of the poverty of London's real East End but he said when it came to 'profanity and rudeness' East Finchley could not be equalled.

However, Holy Trinity's Revd Collier was far from enthusiastic about this new church on the edge of his parish. He wrote to the Bishop in 1892:

'The vicar's original proposal to put up an Iron Church with a view to collect the congregation having been overruled by the conditions of some large donations.'

He had good reason to regret the building of All Saints'. His Sunday congregation of more than 600 (the afternoon service was always the best attended) had been almost halved by 1903. All Saints', even before the addition of the chancel in 1911 was attracting more than 500 sittings.

The Sunday school alone had 115 children. In the highly competitive Victorian religious marketplace All Saints' prospered at the expense of Holy Trinity.





