



Badminton!

All Saints' in the 1930s

The 1920s and 30s were the high-water mark of Anglo-Catholicism. There was perhaps something about it that suited the mood of time, when words fall short, ritual can offer a different route to comfort.

However, in East Finchley, the number of worshippers began to dip in the 1930s. What is surprising is that the PCC never seems to have discussed the annual fall. Perhaps that resignation by Mr James 'and others' in 1934 over the introduction of the Sanctus Gong was indicative of a wider concern about the church's liturgical direction. The age of the congregation may have also been a factor. The young families that had filled the pews in the years before the First World War were now grandparents.

There was also a wider malaise through the 1930s with a decline in church going. But the increasingly competitive social landscape also played a part. If All Saints' was going to keep up with its Protestant rivals it needed to be a social hub.

The answer was a new parish hall to replace the old wooden meeting room.

A new hall had been mooted in 1923. Two plans were considered.

The more modest of the options was chosen but there was considerable excitement that badminton could now be offered as well as a space for meetings and performances. It opened up a new future of youth clubs, drama and dances and many other ways of enticing the neighbourhood to enter the grounds of the church. It took a while for the council to approve the new construction but it went through without complaint, however, they did demand one thing, that it be fitted with asbestos. No one knew of its health hazards - only its fire-retardant properties. And there were going to be many fires in the years to come.

