

## CHAPTER 2 EARLY TWENTIETH CENTURY

The 'Iron Church' built in 1859 went by that name for a long time after its erection; indeed it never seemed to have an official name, always being referred to as 'Essington Church', 'The Iron Church at Essington' or 'Essington Mission Church'. Not until 1933 do we come across 'St. John's, Essington'.

The minutes of the 1908 Annual Meeting (the first written report of our Church's activities) are here reproduced - and very interesting they are if only because of the beautiful handwriting. One wonders if the old organ was ever traced; there is no mention of it in subsequent meetings!

From 1908 to 1915 the chairman of the Annual Meeting was Rev. J.R. Davies and from 1916 to 1919 the chairman was Rev. T.D. Lawton. As the vicars of Bushbury during these years were Rev. D. O'Connor and Rev. P. Illot, we must assume that the Revs. Davies and Lawton were Bushbury curates assigned to duties in Essington. Other curates whose names crop up during the 1920's were Rev. Stanton and Rev. Cawthorne. At the turn of the century there is reference both in Church correspondence and Parish Council Minutes to a Rev. Geo. Hemming who lived in 'Essington House, Essington' ( this is in Bognop Road, near the Fruit Farm ). In his time too, the Vicar of Bushbury was Rev. F. Aston, so we may assume that Rev. Hemming was also a Bushbury curate.

The Church accounts for those days make interesting reading. Income and expenditure were usually roughly in balance but the figures involved are an eye-opener! About 1910 income and expenditure were in the region of £120 (per year!), whilst by 1920 the figure had risen to about £250. It appears they were troubled by inflation in those days, too, though by 1940 the figures were still about £250.

About 1910 the 'School House Clock' was causing concern. It appears that the School House, adjacent to the old school (now demolished, but on the same site as the present school) had a public clock. It also had a small tower but whether this housed the clock, or the school bell, or both is unclear. In 1909 the Annual Meeting gave authority for the clock to be repaired at a cost not exceeding £2, and in the following year an estimate of 15 shillings (75p) per year for keeping the clock in repair was accepted. In 1911 the clock again provoked 'considerable discussion about re-gilding the fingers of the clock - to be done, provided the cost did not exceed £1'.

All seemed very much 'run of the mill' - apart from the death in 1917 of Mr. W. Simkin who had been churchwarden for 21 years - until about 1919 when a new Vicar of Bushbury, Rev. J.T. Crathorne, arrived on the scene.

At the first vestry meeting presided over by Rev. Crathorne, Mr. C. H. Moses remarked that "Church life in Essington was down to its lowest limit and wanted to rise again. Rev. Crathorne had come at the right time". Certainly Rev. Crathorne not only brought to the place a breath of fresh air - one gets the impression that he conjured up a positive gale!

In the course of subsequent pep talks, Rev. Crathorne announced that because of the "abnormal condition of

The annual meeting in connection with the Church was held in the Parochial School on July 4<sup>th</sup> 1908 at 7 p.m. There was a fair attendance, including the following:—The Rev. J. R. Davies, Mr J. C. Forrest, Messrs C. H. Moses, W. S. Smith, F. W. Son. Sheratt, J. Ridgway, Prester, Joseph Ridgway James Daniels & others.

On the proposition of Mr Wilson, seconded by Mr Moses, the Rev. J. R. Davies was voted to the Chair. The Chairman, after thanking the meeting for the honor of electing him as Chairman, opened the meeting with Prayer, and afterwards explained that no minutes Book of previous meetings could be found, though a careful search had been made. The object of the meeting was to receive the annual statement of receipts & expenditure in connection with the Church for the past year & elect Pro-Wardens for the ensuing year. Mr C. H. Moses presented the accounts, which had been duly audited.

Mr S. Wilson moved the adoption of the balance sheet, which was seconded by Mr Smith and carried unanimously. The Chairman stated that he had asked Mr C. H. Moses

to act as his Warden and that Mr Moses had very kindly consented to fill the office.

Mr Wilson proposed Mr W. S. Smith as people's Warden, this was seconded by Mr Moses and carried unanimously.

Mr Wilson inquired as to what had become of the organ which used to stand in the Church, no one being able to throw light upon the subject, it was proposed & seconded by Mr Wilson & Mr Smith respectively that inquiries be made. The Chairman undertook to write to his predecessor on the matter.

Mr Wilson resigned the position he had held for a number of years as Collector of the Pro Rents. The resignation was accepted, the Chairman remarking that it was his intention that in future the collection of Pro Rents should devolve on the Pro-Wardens.

The temporary appointment of Mr Daniels as Verger was confirmed by the meeting.

Mr Forrest proposed that the Wardens have power to erect a coal house on the ground where the coal was kept: and that the Squire be asked for permission to do so. The meeting unanimously

affairs" he intended keeping the reins of the whole parish in his own hands. He "looked forward to the time when Essington would be an independent parish and the coming of that time would depend a great deal on the manner in which they backed him in his efforts".

He appointed Rev. Thomas Stanton as curate to be responsible for Essington. This proved to be an inspired choice for in the next few years there was a re-surgence of activity and interest in the Church, culminating, of course, in the building of the present St. John's in 1933.

The first hint of a new church came in 1921 when Rev. Crathorne, after paying tribute to the work done by Rev. Stanton, said "there was some work he could not put onto the shoulders of other people - the very difficult and complicated business of the building of a New Church. The difficulties of negotiating for the purchase of 3.5 acres of land had caused him much trouble, work and anxiety. In addition to the purchase of a site for a church, he would like to secure the site of the present Church for a future Parish Hall."

We know now that Rev. Crathorne still had some years of "difficult negotiations" to contend with - in fact the purchase of the land on which the old Church stood was not accomplished for another 25 years - in 1946.

In the meantime, Rev. Crathorne's protege, Rev. Stanton, certainly appeared to liven things up. Easter Day communicants moved from 30 in 1920, to 71 in 1921 and 85 in 1922, whilst the whole year communicant numbers grew from 280 in 1920, to 561 in 1921 and 1016 in 1922. The number of services increased from 115 in 1920, to 185 in 1922 and in addition the Sunday School was thriving with 200 scholars and 10 teachers. Furthermore, there was a Band of Hope 80 strong, a Mothers' Meeting 40 strong and magazine circulation had increased to 200 per month.

During the 1920's therefore, a firm base had been established from which the work towards the new Church could proceed.

CHURCH ACCOUNTS - 1921

		<u>Expenses</u>		<u>Cr.</u>				<u>RECEIPTS</u>				
		<u>£</u>	<u>s</u>	<u>d</u>	<u>£</u>	<u>s</u>	<u>d</u>	<u>£</u>	<u>s</u>	<u>d</u>		
By Adverse Balance					5.	0.	0.	To Pew Rents		9.	10.	0.
" Cleaning Materials: oil etc.					16.	3.	4½	" Collection.	Church Expenses.	86.	18.	5½
" Organist's Salary					10.	8.	0.	" "	Ministerial Fund	53.	7.	4½
" Contributions Ministerial Fund					90.	0.	0.	" "	Sunday School	30.	10.	6.
" Coal					6.	2.	6.	" "	Day School	32.	4.	10.
" Insurance					2.	3.	5.	" "	Collection Choir Fund	9.	6.	7.
" Printing						8.	6.	" "	Free Gardners	2.	10.	3½
" Choir Outing					8.	1.	1.	" "	C.P.A.	7.	11.	11.
" Hire of Brakes. Confirmation.					4.	11.	0.	" "	Central Church Fund	5.	11.	0½
"								" "	Rev. T. Stanton	13.	4.	10.
"								" "	London Jews Society	7.	10.	0.
" Special Collections:-												
Central Church Fund		5.	11.	1.								
Rev. T. Stanton		13.	4.	10.								
Sunday Schools		30.	10.	6.								
Day Schools		32.	4.	10.								
Church Pastoral Aid		7.	11.	11.								
Free Gardners		2.	10.	3½								
London Jews Society		7.	10.	0.								
					99.	3.	5½					
" Balance					16.	4.	6.					
(Signed) C.H. Moses,					£258.	5.	10.					
Pro Varden.												

Examined and found correct,  
(Signed) John Kidgway.