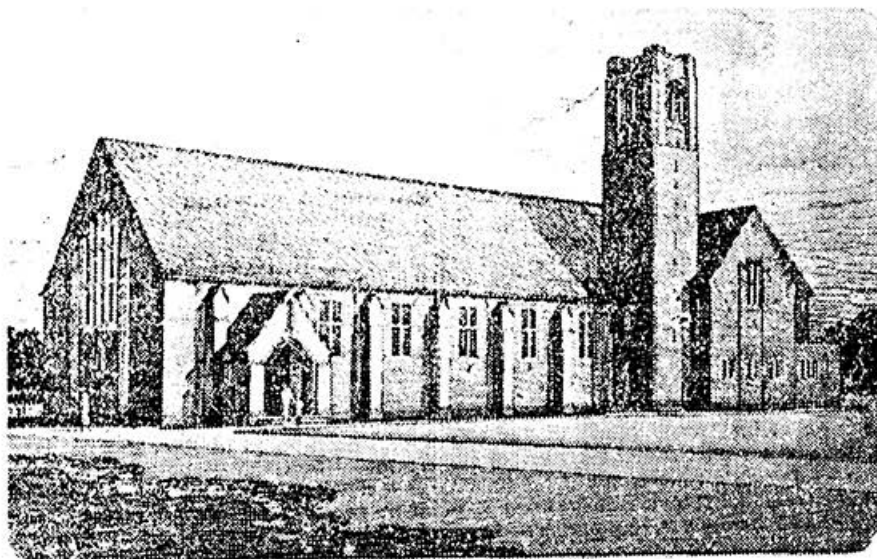


CHAPTER 3
FROM THE OLD TO THE NEW - THE 1930'S

The 1930's were exciting times for the Church people of Essington. For years there had been talk of building a new Church; of Essington becoming a self-contained parish independent of Bushbury; of Essington couples being able to marry without going out of the village for the ceremony.

The great time was now at hand. The village was about to reap the fruits of countless fund raising activities and house collections. The move from the old Church in Hobnock Road was about to happen.

The move would not take place without some regrets for the old Iron Church, despite its unattractive exterior, had a cosy and intimate heart and had been the scene of many wonderful gatherings. Among these were the Thursday evening choir practices with Miss Fanny Richards, when on dark cold winter nights the choristers would persuade her to carry on playing whilst they sat singing round the old coke stove. Incredibly there are still with us (1992) two of those choristers who moved from the Old Church to the new - Mrs. Naomi Asbury and Mrs. Mary Morris.



The foundation stone is to be laid to-morrow of a new church at Essington, which is part of the ecclesiastical parish of Bushbury. This is the architect's drawing of the building.

NEW CHURCH FOR ESSINGTON

Mind you in the new Church the ladies were not allowed to sit in the choir stalls! They had to sit in the organ gallery until the new organ arrived in 1950 and it wasn't until the late 1950's that they were allowed choir robes.



ESSINGTON NEW CHURCH.

9th May, 1930.

You are invited to attend a Meeting of the Subscribers on Thursday, 15th May, at 7-0 p.m., in the Church Schools, Essington.

Mr. E. S. Reynolds, of Messrs. Wood, Kendrick & Reynolds, Ecclesiastical Architects, will be present and will submit plans of proposed new Church.

The Venerable Hugh Bright, Archdeacon of Stafford, will be present.

J. T. CRATHORNE, *Vicar.*

CHAS. TUDOR, *pro warden.*

C. H. MOSES, *pro warden.*



The new Church, however, had all the mod. cons., not least central heating radiators to replace the old coke stoves and electric lights to replace the old oil lamps.

The day of the consecration was one to be remembered. The new building dominated the village like a cathedral as it stood majestically isolated in the fields, for in those days there were no buildings of any sort on that side of Wolverhampton Road. The Bishop of Lichfield arrived and changed in the shop opposite, now (1992) the chemists shop. The choir and visiting clergy robed in the two adjacent houses which were then newly built. What a great day!

Soon, however, the daily routine had to be re-established and adapted to the new surroundings. The new vicar, Rev. R.P. Cavendish (formerly a Curate at Bushbury) eventually moved into Lowerfield House and Mr.J. Eveson, who had been Lay Reader in charge, moved to Newtown.

The services followed the pattern of Matins and Evensong, for in those days the service of Holy Communion had not become 'popularised' as it is today, this service being held only at 8 a.m. each Sunday (and on Festivals) and once a month after Matins. This latter service, Matins, is a beautiful service whose recent demise has caused sadness to some.

The 'names' of the 1930's are many. Among them was Rev. R.P. Cavendish, a very gentle personality who in 1938 left for Clovelly in Devon; Mr.J.Eveson, the lay reader who later was ordained; Mr. Porter the organist until 1937 when he was succeeded by Mr. Pitchford; the wardens were Mr. Tudor, Mr. Moses and Mr. Brayne, whilst Mr. Matthews combined the duties of Sexton, Verger, Groundsman, Stoker and Gravedigger! It is said that he spent each Saturday afternoon raking the gravel in the Church drive to ensure a clean and level surface for Sunday!

And what of the old Church, now deserted? It took some time for it to be converted to a Church Hall for the Church Council were reluctant to spend money on adapting it until such time as a renewal of the lease could be negotiated. Once this had been achieved, the pews were removed, the chancel converted into a stage for drama productions and the vestry became a kitchen.

As well as a St. John's Church, we now had a St. John's Hall which served the community well for over 30 years.