



HISTORY

East Finchley's Religious Heritage

Part 2 – Baptists and Salvationists

By Ann Bronkhorst

East of the High Road two distinctive old church buildings have changed use in recent years: the Baptists' and the Salvationists' buildings in Creighton Avenue and Hertford Road. The two organisations are also linked by their earlier history.

Baptists on the move.

In 1889 the Baptists built a new chapel on the corner of Hertford Road and the High Road. Open fields lay to the north; Creighton Avenue did not exist until 1899. Their congregation rapidly outgrew the new chapel so in 1902 the Baptists built a larger church of flint, in a striking Gothic style, on the newly-made Creighton

Avenue. In the 1930s that church became their hall, with a new red-brick church next door.

About 14 years ago the 'Gothic' hall was sold for development as flats; with the proceeds an envelope of extra buildings was created around the church. Mr Webber, an Elder of the church, recalls that it was the height of the property



The former Salvationists' chapel Photo by Tony Roberts

boom so several developers were interested. A restrictive clause in the contract limited use of the building to living accommodation. The congregation supported the scheme; the church gained extra space and a unique Victorian building survived.

Salvationists on the move.

And the outgrown chapel in Hertford Road? The Baptists sold it to the Salvationists who ran a mission there for the next hundred years. Many local people remember the last Captains, Anna and Haris Giannaros, with affection. They organised religious and social activities ranging from Alpha courses to over-sixties lunch clubs (see *ARCHERS* for April 2000 and 2001). Anna says, "At least the building hasn't been knocked down and now it's a place for children."

The Nursery moves in.

That Victorian chapel has been transformed into Scribbles nursery, opening this spring. Sympathetically converted, it's now light-filled

and child-friendly. I was shown round recently by Mr J. Hallums, one of the owners, who is fascinated by the building's history. Much has been retained: the A-frame beams below the roof; gothic arches to doorways; sound timber in lengths unobtainable today; and London stock bricks which have all been re-used. Under the stage, however, lay a find that couldn't be re-used - the Baptists' massive walk-in font installed over a century ago.

Reminders of the past.

Happily the Baptists' and Salvationists' handsome buildings have not been demolished or masked by modern facades. Though used differently now they remind us of East Finchley's vigorous Nonconformist Christian past.

Ann will cover more church buildings in future issues. Holy Trinity, its church hall and Industrial School; the Congregational church; the Roman Catholic church and the convents; all have a story to tell.



The Baptists' Gothic Church (now flats) Photo by Tony Roberts

Looking Back...

In March 1973 the East Finchley Neighbourhood Association was one year old. The News Adviser (predecessor of *THE ARCHER*) reported EFNA's Birthday Dance, held at The Finchley Football Club, Summers Lane:

"The joint was jumping at our Birthday Dance, on Saturday 17th of March. 200 teenagers to pensioners, a cross-section of the community, appeared to be enjoying themselves immensely. A packed hall shook to Hard Rock, Olde Tyme Waltzes and Knees Up Mother Brown, amplified by the disco of Charles Wilkin. Miss Edith Gudgin at the cloakroom did fighting work absorbing an ever-mounting pile of coats that threatened to engulf her."

"Celebrating one year of EFNA, Chairman John Kendall cut a giant Birthday cake, supplied by Clark's Bakery of Market Place N.2., with a ceremonial sword. Harry Hooper and Bill Delamare, disguised as chefs, dispensed food, and towards eleven Harry attempted to quell the high spirits enough to present a pewter tankard to John Kendall in appreciation of his work as Chairman of this "lusty baby" Efn, and in particular his Herculean efforts during the Flyover campaign.

"In response, John Kendall said: "Never has a baby had so much influence" Looking forward to when it came of age, he said it would not just be the most influential baby in East Finchley, but perhaps the most influential of its kind in London and a model for all community associations.

"The Dance raised over £90 and we are thus able to buy the duplicator.

"The raffle, organized by the Fund Raising Group and drawn at the dance by the ample and delectable Sally Williams, made £51.65 - and this will help to pay for the Free Festival in June."

"Altogether, a happy and successful evening - we hopefully look for a repeat!"



The Baptists' current home Photo by Tony Roberts