



Drawing of Holy Trinity Church 1945 by Frank Buckworth By kind permission of Revd. Hill

East Finchley's religious heritage

Part 3 - Salvin's Legacy

By Ann Bronkhorst

In the 1840s East End – later East Finchley – had no truly local parish church. Poorer members of the Church of England walked on Sundays to Saint Mary's in Church End until an idealistic young architect, Anthony Salvin, came to their rescue.

“Drunkards abounded”

The Salvins were regular churchgoers – but could afford to keep a carriage. What about the villagers? They included, according to Salvin's daughter, “many sadly godless persons”. Methodist and Congregational chapels were within easy reach of penitent East Enders but the Established Church was not. Salvin, with other benefactors, raised funds to build Holy Trinity in 1846 on Bull Lane, now Church Lane, giving his architectural services free. The construction was a simple hall with a hammer-beam roof and a bell tower; later, aisles were added and stained-glass windows.

Industrial School

Salvin's next local project was a church school, one with a difference. In 1847 the first Industrial School in the country opened in East End Road near its junction with the High Road. Designed by Salvin, it was created in response to local concern about the lack of education for poor children. Boys were trained for ‘agricultural labour or handicraft’ and girls

for ‘domestic service’. There were lessons on gardening and ‘plain needlework’; scripture and catechism instruction were compulsory. Financially the school struggled, even after becoming an ordinary National School. In the 20th century it became Holy Trinity Primary School, C. of E. but within the state system, and in 1974 moved to its present premises. A campaign to secure Salvin's “rare and pretty piece of Victorian Gothic school architecture” as a Community Centre for East Finchley failed.

Bobath Centre

Since then the building has belonged to, firstly, Pardes House School and now the present owners, the Bobath Centre, a charity treating children with cerebral palsy. David Hanson, Premises Manager, said, “I love this building.” Internal conversions have not spoiled its charm. Rooms are small but light; hammer-beams and mellow old bricks have been retained. The school bell still hangs above the building and the ancient well still lies below it. Salvin would be pleased

that children's needs are still being met in the building he designed.

Shree Aden

The parishioners of Holy Trinity Church needed a hall as well as a school so in 1913 they built one, a surprisingly large building next to the church in Church Lane. By the 1970s it was under-used and run-down, as the vicar, the Revd Laurence Hill, explained, and the interior of the church itself needed attention. The solution was to construct spaces inside the church for non-liturgical uses and to sell the hall. In 1985 the hall was bought by a local Hindu community group. In the 1840s while Salvin was building the church and school, far away in Aden some Indians were establishing new lives. Later one of their descendants settled in Finchley, founding a mutually supportive community. Shree Aden members emphasise human service, for example help for the elderly and food distribution. Social activities with music and dance are organised, with a great festival in the autumn.

A child in Hawthorn Dene

By Daphne Chamberlain

One of the most famous buildings in Finchley is the house at the top of Strawberry Vale. Spike Milligan fought to preserve it, and Helen Fletcher has told *THE ARCHER* about her life there as a child in the 1920s.

She loved the garden. It had a big lawn, an enormous cherry tree with its trunk split in two, and a brook. Occasionally, water from Squires Lane pool emptied into this brook, and her brothers “rode the rapids” on planks. Sometimes, they crept through the containing pipe across the High Road.

She remembers violets, primroses, and a spring in a hazelnut copse. Her grandfather was a pioneer in developing blue polyanthus.

“Coming from the High Road and the Green Man – a little wooden inn run by Mr and Mrs Foster – there was Lincoln Cottage, then Jimmy Crouch's house, a stable, Hawthorn Dene, tennis courts, Strawberry Vale Farm, pastures, and a tiny bungalow.”

Safe as houses

Before the 1820s, Strawberry Vale was under water for most of the time. Earmarked as the reservoir to feed the new Grand Union Canal extension, and then rejected in favour of the Welsh Harp, it was bought by an East Finchley builder called James Frost. Frost, the inventor

of modern cement, eventually worked for the Franklin Institute in America. Hawthorn Dene was his show-house.

Its special features are its plastered tile ceilings, supported by fluted cast iron ribs, and stone stairs with fretworked iron banisters – all fire-resistant. When it became a Grade 2 listed building in 1969, it was said that “no other known examples have so far been found of this type of construction in so small a house”.

The Finchley Society, Spike Milligan, and GLC Councillor Jean Scott led the campaign for its listing. Otherwise it would have been demolished to make way for a slip-road to the North Circular Road.

As a child, Helen Fletcher was unaware of the uniqueness of her home, but remembers the large, square rooms, leading into each other so that each floor had a circular plan. Particularly significant to her was the front door. “It had no lock, just a big bar that would slot across. I was always pleased when Dad put the bar across – and we were safe inside.”



Spike Milligan points out the fire-resistant iron-ribbed ceiling
Photo courtesy of The Finchley Society Archives



The Black Bess – Can anyone supply details? Photo by courtesy of Barnet Local Studies and Archives

Remember Black Bess?

By Daphne Chamberlain

Looking at the number of eating-places in every shopping centre today, it's hard to realise that only 50 years ago most people ate out for a treat. Local restaurants and cafes were few and far between, which is probably why The Black Bess Temperance Hotel is still fondly remembered by the more senior East Finchley residents.

It stood at 170, High Road, on the corner of Hertford Road. The 1926 street directory lists its immediate neighbour as Finchley Motors, with East Finchley's department store, Bradshaw and Son, completing the block up to Bedford Road.

Its photo shows an impressively large building, big enough to hide Dick Turpin and his horse, though there seems to be no historical basis at all for that. In 1926 its proprietor was

Miss J. Wright. By 1938 it was run by Stephen Thomas-Dole. Can anyone identify the people in the photo, who are obviously from an earlier time than either of those, and who look very proprietorial?

Famous for its sausage sandwiches, it was apparently used by transport drivers on their way north, but there were also adjoining tea and children's rooms.

Can anyone tell us more?