

St James's church hall through the years



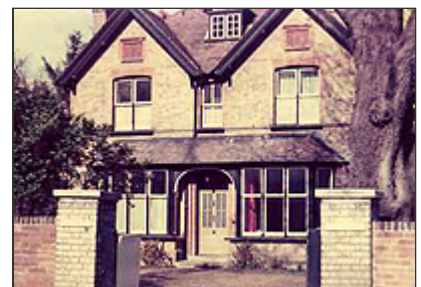
Mrs Fitz Wygram

In 1908 Mrs Fitz Wygram gave a small iron and wood building to make a church room, which was set up in the vicarage field. The room *"is very comfortable and found to be of great use"*. A parish room was considered during 1914, with the August edition of the magazine reporting *"The Vicar, Churchwardens and Sidesmen have recently had under consideration the question of providing a Parish Room, large enough for parochial meetings and gatherings of various kinds. Fortunately they have secured, at a reasonable price, a convenient site near the Schools, and have been consulting with those able to give expert advice as to probable style of building and cost etc. These matters are still being thought out, and a Meeting of Church people will be held early in the Autumn, when full details of any proposed scheme will be laid before them."* This meeting was postponed due to the outbreak of war. In 1918 *"as a measure of economy"* it was decided to discontinue the use of the mission room in Cross Street for parochial purposes, as it was felt that, until the new parish hall was built, the church room in St James's Road met all requirements.

At the Parochial Church Council Meeting in February 1929 an important and historic document was signed - the Deed conveying the sites of the old schools to the PCC. The relations of Revd Fitz Wygram, who originally owned the site and buildings, kindly gave them to the church. The girls' and infants' buildings were kept as they were for the holding of Sunday School, clubs, etc., letting a sufficient portion of it to bring in funds towards their maintenance and upkeep. It was hoped that the boys' school building would be turned into a hall *"worthy of the Parish"* for about £900. This building had been used for social functions and letting but over the years had fallen into a state of disrepair. The County Licensing Committee refused to license it unless drastic alterations were made, at considerable expense. Consequently, it was decided to remodel this old building to provide a parish hall. The pitched roof of the main hall was subsequently replaced by a flat one and a new ceiling and floor installed; the primitive lavatories at the rear were removed and an extension built on the front to form an entrance lobby and a gentlemen's cloakroom. The hall became *"a roomy, cosy hall, with every necessary convenience to make it a most desirable place for holding any public or private entertainment in"*. The December 1930 magazine reported that Revd Harvey was determined *"that it should not only be a hall in which dances, concerts and the like are held, but one in which lectures for young and old are provided, in fact it must stand for the improvement of the mind as well as the enjoyment of the body"*.

Its opening in 1932 was a great event in the history of the parish and was filled for the occasion which was performed by the Rt Hon Lord Daryngton, President of the Church Army. The Rural Dean said prayers, after which Revd Harvey explained how it had always been his wish to have a hall in the parish worthy of its name and thanked everyone involved. Mrs Terry, representing the District Council, said that the hall would be a great asset to the district. After the singing of the National Anthem, tea was served to all present and an inspection of the building was made. In the evening a Social and Dance was held for a full house.

At the Annual Church Meeting in 1954 the need for a new small hall was discussed and consequently Wayside, a large house in St James's Road, built in 1883 and originally called Armaside, was bought for £4175 the following year. It proved a sound investment and provided the church with meeting rooms. The April 1955 Spire reported: *"The Council have been mindful of the need, since the sale of the Club Rooms, for accommodation, preferably adjacent to the church, for parochial organisations. With this in view, the Council has, through the London Diocesan Fund, purchased the freehold property, Wayside, No.7. Saint James's Road, Hampton Hill, for parochial use in so far as the ground-floor rooms are concerned and by way of providing an*



Wayside

income, the letting of the upstairs rooms following their conversion into three flats (furnished). The land in School Road, which was purchased for a proposed new hall, is now for sale."

Wayside was first used in 1955 after the communion service which followed the confirmation, when many people were served breakfast in the house and garden. It provided the church with useful meeting rooms, for many years being the meeting place of the PCC, the Sunday Schools, the Young People's Fellowship and many other church-related groups such as the Mothers' Union, the Young Wives, the Tuesday Club, the Young Families Group, and the Wayside Monday Centre (a counselling service). Breakfasts after the Parish Communion were held there and, being so near the church, it was felt this was a much better idea than the small, but expensive, hall that was originally proposed.

The hall in School Road was leased to the trustees of the Scout Group for use as their headquarters, for a period of ten years in 1960. The Church Council remained the owner and the London Diocesan Fund the custodian trustee. The Council and the Scouts together funded the change of heating to oil, various electrical improvements, new doors and other improvements. All this transformed the hall from the rather dingy, neglected-looking place it was becoming to an attractive centre of social activity. In the 1970s the Church Council, in view of the increased availability of man-power and finance, decided to resume the management of the church hall from the scout group. Improvements to the heating and lighting were carried out together with a complete redecoration of the interior.



The Bishop and Revd Leathard



The foundation stone

During the 1980s the PCC decided it would be best to bring all the activities of the church under one roof and so commissioned some feasibility studies. After the 1987 Stewardship Renewal and Development Campaign, that year's Stewardship Review felt that money which could be realised by the sale of Wayside could be put to good use to finance modifications to the

church. The sale released capital which, combined with money from the earlier sale of the church hall, allowed a new church hall to be built next to the church, both for church and community use. The PCC commissioned its architect, John Deal, to draw up plans allowing for a wide range of uses: for formal meetings, social gatherings, children's parties, and support for functions held in the church including weddings and funerals. The plans were agreed, land was transferred and building started, including alterations to the vicarage and re-siting the garage and drive. The church notices board was re-located facing Park Road.

While the new hall was being built, a huge portakabin was hired to accommodate the Sunday School and to provide a toilet. Parish breakfast was served in the church, for which there was a sink unit and an urn in the northwest corner. The south porch entrance had to be closed off so the old west porch was used instead. To find a new home for the things stored there, new cupboards were built along the south aisle. The old heating system was cleverly joined up to the new boiler room in the hall, and the boiler, which had been under the south porch, was taken away. The church notice board was relocated facing Park Road.

A foundation stone was consecrated by the Bishop of London, David Hope, during the St James's Festival on the 4th July, 1993. The 'topping-out' ceremony took place in December of the same year, but it was still another eight months before the building was eventually completed. The hall was officially opened on the 4th September 1994 by a long-standing parishioner. It was very fitting that the last hymn in the service had been 'Onward, Christian Soldiers', which had been sung when the original small church was used for the first time. Included in the new building was a "very attractive porch joining the church and the hall, somewhat in the style of a Lych-gate, like a bridge between the spiritual and the secular, between the Church and the World". Twin boilers serving both the church and hall were installed but the original cast-iron pipework remained, largely unaltered.



Construction 1993



Topping Out
December 1993



Topping Out
December 1993



Topping Out
December 1993



From the church
into the hall



Opening - 4th September 1994



Opening - 4th September 1994



The finished church hall

A sunny winter's day saw the Bishop of London visit St James's on Sunday December 8th, 2013. The Rt Revd and Rt Hon Dr Richard Chartres, KCVO, was following in the footsteps of his predecessors Archibald Campbell Tait who, in December 11th 1863 came to consecrate the new church. Bishop Richard came to celebrate with us as we concluded our celebration of the church and parish's [150th Anniversary](#). After the service, the bishop renamed the church hall the 'Fitz Wygram Hall' together with the Mayor and two church members, one of 8 and one of 89! The occasion was a fitting way to crown the year's anniversary events. Find out more on the page [The 150th Anniversary Service](#).

The above information covers the period from when any records could be found until November 2016. This was when Revd Derek Winterburn became St James's tenth vicar and from this time onwards any new information can be found on the main site.