

**THE CHARLES LAMB HALL AND INSTITUTE
EDMONTON**

by

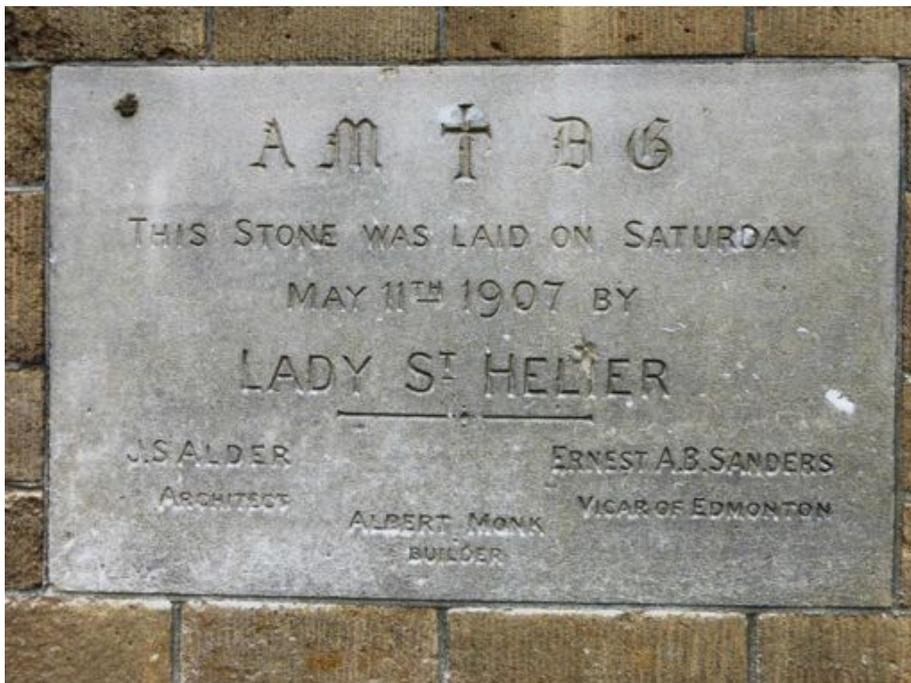
Tony Hunt



Introduction

Opposite All Saints' Parish Church on the north side of Church Street, Edmonton, at the corner of Church Lane, is the building erected in 1907-08 as the Charles Lamb Memorial Hall and Institute. Its Foundation Stone gives some basic information. Headed "AMDG" ("Ad Majorem Dei Gloria" – To the Greater Glory of God) it states that "This stone was laid on Saturday May 11th 1907 by Lady St Helier" and then names the people principally involved in the creation of the building: the architect – J. S. Alder; the Vicar of Edmonton – Ernest A. B. Sanders and the builder – Albert Monk.

Illustration No. 1 The Foundation Stone on the east wall of the Hall



To give an indication of the building's historic, architectural and social significance this report describes its genesis and then looks at how it was used in the century before its acquisition by the New Covenant Church. It answers the question of who were the persons named on the foundation stone with special attention to the architect. Starting with the site of the building, the Vicar and its funding, the report next outlines the career of its architect and how its design relates to his other work, followed by consideration of just what was built and how it has been regarded. Its local builder is introduced before descriptions of the laying of the foundation stone and the ceremonial opening of the Hall and Institute. Finally, there is a section on the ways the building has been used by the church and as a school, court offices, a wartime Food Office and, after it was sold by All Saints' Church, as the Tower Gym. The repairs soon to be carried out to the building by the New Covenant Church assisted by the Heritage Lottery Fund will provide it with the potential for a further century of service in the heart of Edmonton.

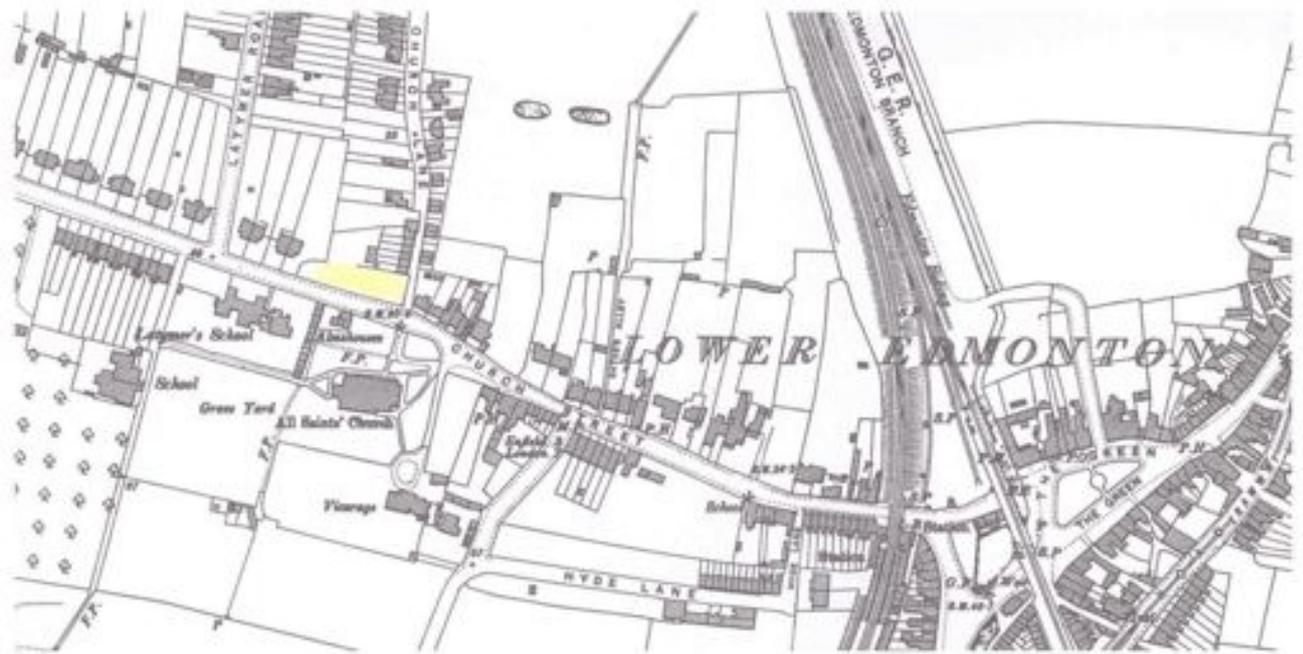
Note

One point that should be made at this stage is that sources show little consistency in naming the building. For convenience therefore, with the exception of quotations, when reference is made below to “the Hall”, the whole building is meant; whilst “the Church Hall” refers to that half of the building and “the Institute” to the other¹.

Edmonton

The ancient village of Lower Edmonton, around the Parish Church of All Saints’, was small in comparison with today’s suburb and separate from Upper Edmonton to the south which was the other main settlement in the parish. Westwards the village hardly extended beyond the corner of Church Street and Church Lane. Now all that survives in Church Street from before 1700 are the Parish Church and its churchyard whilst a handful of other buildings such as Charles Lamb’s Cottage and the former Charity School date from before 1800. Much was demolished or rebuilt during the 19th century and the Ordnance Survey map of 1894/96 shows the site on the western corner of Church Street and Church Lane (coloured yellow in the detail below), as vacant.

Illustration No.2 *Detail from Ordnance Survey Map 1894/96*



¹ *The Shorter Oxford Dictionary* (1977) includes the following definition of “Institute” – “4. A society or organization instituted to promote literature, science, art, education or the like; also, the building in which such work is carried on.” The intention in adopting the term must have been to indicate that the building’s purposes went beyond those of a church hall.

This had been the site of a group of rather pretty thatched and weather-boarded cottages which were demolished in 1888. These were depicted in a postcard².

Illustration No.3 The site before 1888



1. CHURCH STREET, THE SITE OF LAMBS INSTITUTE, c.1900

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Why the Hall was needed

Edmonton grew considerably in the latter part of the 19th century. A population of about 5,000 in 1801 doubled in the next 50 years but took only 20 years to double again. In the 1880s a population of 23,000 in Edmonton (which still included Southgate) rose to 36,000 across the two districts and in the 1890s to 47,000 in Edmonton alone. By 1911 it had almost reached 65,000. This growth had been stimulated by the arrival of a railway in 1849 with a station at Edmonton Green, a second more direct railway line in 1872 and trams along Fore Street and the Hertford Road from 1881. Cheap workmen's fares set off a building boom and a corresponding need for civic and social facilities³.

A corresponding need was perceived also for churches and church schools and much was done to meet the demand before 1900, when the Revd E. A. B. Sanders arrived as Vicar, with several new churches built to supplement the old parish church of All Saints in Church

² Though the card as reprinted in the 1970s is captioned: "1. Church Street, the site of Lambs Institute, c.1900", the Enfield Local Studies Library and Archive say this is incorrect as the original card in their collection has a hand-written note on the back "cottages on the site of the Lamb's Institute pulled down 1888".

³ Enfield Local Studies Library and Archive: *Area History No. 4, Lower Edmonton*.

Street. All Saints itself had been enlarged in 1889 with the addition of a south aisle and south-east chapel by W. Gilbee Scott.⁴

In 1906, when the Vicar of Edmonton, the Revd E. A. B. Sanders, applied to the Bishop of London's Fund⁵ for a grant towards the cost of the Hall, he said in support that the population of his parish was 33,701 in 5,650 inhabited homes⁶. In a letter to them dated 16 July the same year, Sanders had said that the purpose of the Hall and buildings to be erected on the site would be

“mainly Sunday School, Mission Services, Bible classes and all kind of directly spiritual work”.

The Vicar greatly expanded on this when the foundation stone was laid. In its account of that ceremony, the *Tottenham and Edmonton Herald* reported that he said that

“the purpose of the buildings was twofold, first to provide increased accommodation for the ever-growing needs of that most populous parish, and secondly to perpetuate the memory of one of those least known, and yet most brilliant, of English literary characters. During the past seven years the population of the district had been very considerably augmented, and it had been necessary to provide three permanent churches in the area of the old parish. In addition there had been a need for supplying extra day school accommodation which he was very thankful had been carried to an issue, and also accommodation for the increasing needs of the Sunday School and club life. Instead of the 500 children which the Sunday Schools numbered some years ago, (they) now contained between 1,300 and 1,400, and they had had to refuse over 150 admissions during the last six months because they had no place to put them in their various buildings. That hall therefore (had) become a necessity. The hall would, he hoped, be finished by the end of July, so that before next winter they would have accommodation for 400 more children in their Sunday Schools. Then there was all the club life of the parish. A number of young men, who had been housed in the most incommensurable of buildings for some time, at imminent danger of their heads through falling ceilings and tumbling walls, would find suitable accommodation in the Charles Lamb Institute”.⁷

⁴ *Buildings of England: London 4: North*. W. Gilbee Scott was an architect active in the Enfield/Edmonton area and should not be confused with any Gilbert Scott.

⁵ The Bishop of London's Fund was established in 1863 to make grants for the furtherance of missionary work in the Diocese of London including the building of schools, churches, parsonages and halls. Sanders' application form and all his correspondence with the Fund are on their file on All Saints Church Edmonton 1887-1911 which is at the London Metropolitan Archive (LMA) under ref. DL/A/K/09/10/012.

⁶ At the time of the 1901 Census the figures respectively were 46,899 and 7,816, but since then St Michael's and St Aldhelm's had become separate parishes.

⁷ *Tottenham and Edmonton Herald* 17 May 1907.

The Revd Ernest A. B. Sanders (1858 – 1917)⁸.

The author of "*Recollections of 1902*" (in the All Saints souvenir brochure "*A Celebration of 850 Years*", 1986) recalled that

"to us boys the Vicar, the Reverend Sanders, in his tall silk hat and frock coat on Sundays seemed a very awe-inspiring figure".

There is no doubt that he was a dynamic and energetic churchman and fund raiser. A quotation from the Church Monthly of October 1913, included in his obituary in the *Herald*, makes this very clear.

"Preb. Sanders will live in the story of the Diocese of London as one of its foremost builders, for in every parish in which he has served he has set himself the task of diligently attending to the fabrics. The Clergy House at Whitechapel, the commodious building of the Highgate School, the Mission of St. Mark's Dalston, and the really handsome Charles Lamb Memorial Hall at Edmonton, may be instanced as examples of Preb. Sanders' work as a builder. During his vicariate at Edmonton he has been responsible for the following works, the most part of the cost having been raised by his personal exertions: St. Alphege's temporary iron church, St. Michael's, St. Aldhelm's, St. Stephen's and St. Martin's, the Church Hall and Institute, the new boy's day National School for 350 boys, re-built the National Schools, and added 339 places for girls and infants; Church Hall and Mission in Tramway-avenue, St. Mathias' Mission Church, Victoria-road: Maldon-road iron mission room, and an additional class-room to the Parish Room."

The prime instigator of the hall, Ernest Arthur Blackwell Sanders, was the son of Frederick Sanders, a merchant of the City of London. After Highgate School and Worcester College, Oxford, he became curate at St. John's Holloway (1883), Vicar of All Saints', Holloway, Rector of Whitechapel (1891) and Vicar of St Mark's, Dalston (1896) before being appointed Vicar of Edmonton in 1900. Whilst remaining Vicar, he became also Rural Dean of Enfield in 1904 and a Prebendary of St. Paul's Cathedral in 1911. On his appointment in 1900 the *Herald* said

"He is in great requisition as a platform speaker, and may, in short, be described as a busy man. He is very moderate in his views, and we believe he will find a warm welcome in Edmonton."

This assessment was confirmed in his obituary that said:

"Both as a pulpiteer and a platform orator he could always rise equal to any occasion, and not only in command of language and power of utterance, but in foresight and shrewdness he was recognised as one of the ablest speakers in Edmonton. Broad-minded in his views, he worked in harmony with his Nonconformist brethren, and on more than one occasion spoke at meetings at the Baptist Church. To a man with so many-sided activities it was only natural that the

⁸ This section has been compiled mostly from the following sources: *Who was Who*; the Vicar's obituary and the account of his funeral in the *Tottenham and Edmonton Herald* on 28 September and 5 October 1917.

material, as well as the spiritual, needs of the poor in the parish claimed his ready sympathy, and his name was associated with every charitable institution.”

Sanders married Jane Biggs in 1882, when they were both 23, and they had a daughter. His recreation was walking (and in his younger days, athletics).

In 1903 Sanders was elected on to the Edmonton School Board, and in 1904 became an Edmonton District councillor. Subsequently as a candidate for the Ratepayers' and Traders' Defence Association, he was elected to represent Bury Street Ward on the Council and later Church Street Ward, becoming Chairman of the Council in 1909 for three years. He was also Treasurer of the charity that, in 1903, rebuilt the Almshouses next to the church and President of the Edmonton Literary Society.

Illustration No. 4 The Revd E. A. B. Sanders at a meeting of the Edmonton School Board (1901-04) (detail)



Commissioning and Paying for the Hall

The principal source of money was the Bishop of London's Fund. Sanders submitted his grant application to them on 1 November 1906 giving details of the site, the need for the building and the uses to which it would be put. Whilst the freehold site had been provided by the Ecclesiastical Commissioners, the building would, on completion, be vested in the Fund. The total cost of the building (referring to Phase 1) was estimated at £2,500 and whilst no appeal had yet been made, about £100 had been promised.

No information on the tendering process seems to have survived⁹. However, it was somewhat appropriate that the successful contractor should be Albert Monk who lived a stone's throw from the site and, taking a strong interest in local matters, served with Sanders on the School Board and as a District councillor, though he seems not to have been much involved with his parish church¹⁰.

In his speech at the laying of the foundation stone, the Vicar said that the Ecclesiastical Commissioners had made a gift of the site, the value of which was between £500 and £600. Otherwise the cost of the building was estimated at about £4,700 of which £1,700 had been promised "so that there is a considerable amount still to be raised"¹¹.

Evidently work proceeded at a cracking rate because on 10 August 1907, just 3 months after the foundation stone was laid, the architect and Sanders signed their Certificate No. 1 for the completion of two-thirds of the work and this was submitted to the Bishop of London's Fund to release £312.10s which was half of the £625 grant for the first phase of the work. Their Certificate No. 2 for completion of the work and the release of the rest of the grant was signed on 14 September 1907 a little over a month later. As will be described later, the Hall was in use at least as early as October 1907.

On 2 November 1907 Sanders was able to write and tell Mr Kirk of the Bishop of London's Fund that –

"The contract for the completion of the scheme for providing our new Church Hall and Institute has come to hand.

"The Hall towards which the Bishop of London's Fund voted a grant of £625 which has been paid is finished and in use. The addition of other rooms will greatly add to the usefulness of the building. The estimate for this addition and completion of the building is £2,537".

Sanders then asked him to put the application for a grant for the second part of the scheme before the Grant Committee.

⁹ There is nothing on the files of the LMA or at the Enfield Local Studies Library and Archive. The present Vicar of All Saints' has stated that no records at all have been retained by the parish.

¹⁰ There is more about Monk below.

¹¹ *Tottenham and Edmonton Herald*. 17 May 1907. On this occasion the Vicar must have been referring to the complete building.

The application was successful and again work must have rattled along quickly because Certificate No. 1 was issued on 16 May 1908 and Certificate No.2 on 10 July, securing payments for another £625.

The *Herald*¹² reported that at the opening ceremony on 2 June 1908, the Vicar said that the building had cost £5,400. Towards that he “had scraped together £2,900 of which £1,200 came from the Bishop of London’s Fund”. He hoped the bazaar would raise £350 for the fittings. In November there would be a Charles Lamb dinner at the Criterion Restaurant when it was hoped to raise £2,000 – Anthony Hope¹³ had promised to take the chair.

It was duly reported in *The Times* on 14 November 1908, under the heading “The Charles Lamb Memorial Banquet”, that

“The festival dinner in connexion with the Charles Lamb Memorial Hall and Institute, Edmonton, was held at the Criterion Restaurant on Thursday night, Mr Anthony Hope Hawkins presided”.

The guests included G. K. Chesterton as well as the Lord Mayor and Lady Mayoress of London. Mr R. W. Dibdin, speaking of the Hall,

“expressed the hope that in consequence of that night’s gathering, they would be enabled to clear away the debt of £2,000 which still hung over the building.”

Evidently the debt was not cleared. Fundraising is often much more difficult after the project has been completed and this seems to have been the case here because *The Gloucester Citizen* long after, on 6 September 1911, carried a rather curious report (presumably syndicated) which, after an introduction about Lamb, said

“Three years ago a committee was formed to draw up a scheme for a Charles Lamb Memorial Hall and Institute at Edmonton thanks to the urgent solicitations and appeals of those who desired him to be more fittingly remembered. A festival dinner was given with Mr Anthony Hope Hawkins in the chair and a vigorous campaign for funds was inaugurated. Lately, however, the scheme has tended to fall into abeyance perhaps owing to the fact that a large sum is still required. Now there has been a complete reawakening, and the committee are determined to spare no effort to collect the residue before the close of the year. It is possible that a bust of the essayist may be placed within the Memorial Hall.¹⁴”

Even as late as 11 October 1913 identical letters from Sanders appeared in publications as disparate as *The Spectator* and *The Yorkshire Post*. These said that

“About five years ago an influential Committee was formed for the purpose of inaugurating a memorial to Charles Lamb ... (to) take the form of a Public Hall and Institute in Edmonton, open to all. The estimated outlay was £7,500. Of this amount

¹² *Tottenham and Edmonton Herald* 5 June 1908.

¹³ Anthony Hope Hawkins, the author of “*The Prisoner of Zenda*” and other novels, wrote under the name Anthony Hope.

¹⁴ This appears never to have been done.

£5,000 upwards has been raised; the building has been erected, and is in full working order.

“May I appeal to your readers to contribute the balance of £2,000 still required to complete the scheme? I feel sure that many who cherish the writings of Charles Lamb will be ready to help in establishing this most fitting institution to his memory. Cheques and postal orders may be sent to me at my address, and will be duly acknowledged.-Yours, etc.”

It sounds as if Sanders was getting desperate. Interestingly these articles and letters emphasise the memorial aspect of the Hall and fail to make any mention of the religious element he emphasised before. Also his figure for the final cost has inflated by nearly 30% - had a loan been taken out adding interest to the shortfall? It is also revealing that Sanders said in February 1914 that

“He had been there for 14 years and when he came there were four families that gave the church £250 between them every year. They had all gone, or died, and he had nobody in their place, and it was exceedingly difficult to work a parish of that kind when there were no local resources at all.”¹⁵

John Samuel Alder (1847 – 1919)¹⁶

When the foundation stone of the Hall was laid, the *Herald* said

“The architect is Mr. J. S. Alder, from whose designs a number of churches have been erected in North London, one of which is the newly-consecrated edifice of St. Stephen’s, Bush Hill Park”.

This referred to the first phase of St Stephen’s built in 1906-07 consisting of the east end with most of the nave. The rest of the nave and the base of the tower were added in 1915, though the top of the tower and proposed spire were never built. The war memorial lychgate designed by Alder was added in 1920 after his death.

¹⁵ *Tottenham and Edmonton Herald*. 20 February 1914.

¹⁶ This section summarises part of my dissertation on Alder for the Architectural Association’s Graduate Diploma in Building Conservation (1993). Its starting point was Alder’s application (1916) to become a Fellow of the RIBA (the “Candidate’s Separate Statement” in the “Biog. File” in the RIBA Library) where he listed buildings he had designed. As this was at the end of his career when building had virtually stopped in the Great War, the list is almost complete and, apart from a couple of lapses of memory (e.g. one building appears twice and a nearby one not at all), accurate. It was not difficult with the aid of the *Buildings of England* and other sources to create a reliable list of his work. The RIBA application was also informative on his training. Sadly Alder’s personal and professional papers were destroyed after the death of his widow.

Illustration No.5 (left)

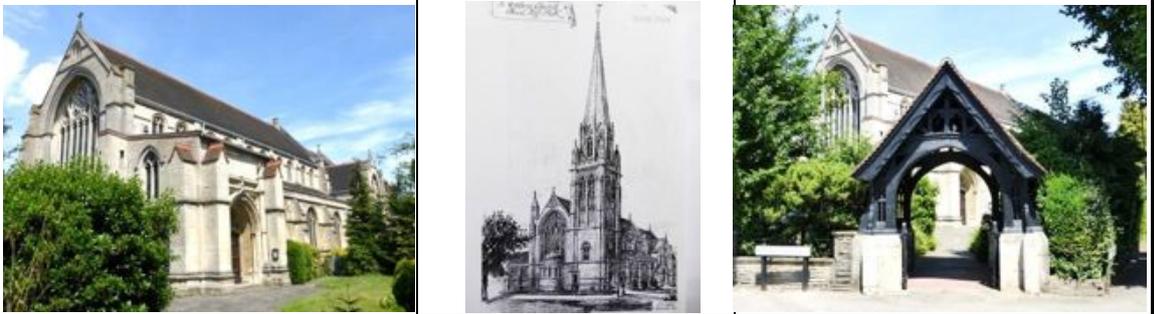
Illustration No.6 (centre)

Illustration No.7 (right)

St Stephen's as built

Alder's approved design for St Stephen's

War memorial lychgate at St Stephen's



Most of Alder's church work would have been obtained by recommendation but a formally run competition was held for St Stephen's. The assessor (W. D. Caroe) placed Alder's entry in third place but there was no obligation upon the parish to adopt the winning entry and instead they chose Alder's design. Alder considered that St Stephen's represented his work at its best and Sir John Betjeman later expressed a similar commendation¹⁷.

Alder had an earlier connection to Edmonton - before the Revd E. A. B. Sanders' time there. In 1894, he built a hall for St Mary's Edmonton but both church and hall have been demolished. Apart from the Charles Lamb Hall and Institute and St Stephen's, his other work there was a hall for St Michael's in the Hertford Road¹⁸ and a hall for St Peter's in Bounces Road.

Altogether Alder designed 27 halls and most of them follow a basic formula which he adapted according to requirements and budget. These were in brick with gabled ends but of varying size and sometimes with extra accommodation under the main hall. There is seldom much architectural "show" because they were often tucked in beside or behind the church they served and even when more prominently sited, they remain simple so as not to compete with the church. The hall built for St Peter's Edmonton (1908) is a well-preserved example of this basic pattern. Occasionally some elaboration was possible - the hall at St John's Palmers Green (1908) in Bourne Hill has a small tower with a chequerboard parapet echoing the parapets of the church.

¹⁷ "From Fields to Flats". Denis Hoy 1984 (Page 43).

¹⁸ Whilst the church has been converted to flats, the hall, which is almost unrecognisable after a period as a nightclub, has become the Inspirational Charismatic Church House of Prayer).

Illustration No. 8 (left)
Illustration No. 9 (right)

St Peter's Hall, Bounces Road, Edmonton
St John's Hall, Bourne Hill, Palmers Green



At Walham Green (Fulham Broadway) the former St John's Parish Hall (1911) is fitted neatly into a High Street.

The only hall other than the Charles Lamb Hall and Institute which Alder faced with stone is his other "institute", the Carlile Institute (1891) at Methley in Yorkshire which was a philanthropic gift to the town of a library with a lecture hall and classroom. It is stylistically similar but much less successful architecturally.

Illustration No. 10 (left)
Illustration No. 11 (right)

Former St John's Parish Hall, Walham Green.
The Carlile Institute, Methley, Yorkshire



Thus the Charles Lamb complex is unique among Alder's halls. Stone-faced and on an ambitious scale, it has a distinct and individual presence using its prominent site to make a positive and harmonious contribution to Church Street without competing architecturally with the church across the road. It is by far the best of his halls and the only one to have been listed.

Although Alder's name is not widely known and he is seldom mentioned in books on late gothic revival architecture, his work will be familiar to many in North London. He built, or at least started, 23 new churches, all but one in the Diocese of London (effectively corresponding to the old County of Middlesex), with two in the London Borough of Enfield and seven in the London Borough of Haringey, as well as new halls, vicarages and private houses and church repairs and restorations. One of his churches is particularly familiar to

North Londoners – St James', Muswell Hill, whose splendid tower and spire dominate the Broadway and are visible from much of London (church 1900-02, tower and spire 1910) and it was the success of this design that led to other commissions enabling Alder to produce his best work¹⁹.

Illustration No. 12 St James' Church, Muswell Hill



John Samuel Alder was born on 13 January 1847 at Birmingham, the son of Peter Alder (1821-1905), a carpenter, and Eliza, *nee* Pitt (1820-1891).

Peter Alder was the son of a baker in Kings Stanley in Gloucestershire who also was an elder of the Baptist Chapel there. As a carpenter with a wife and a child on the way Peter moved to Birmingham which was rapidly expanding and needed building tradesmen. However, after John Samuel's birth, the family moved to Worcestershire and by 1860 Peter had become established as a builder in West Malvern. John Samuel was apprenticed to his father and having passed through his workshops, acted as his Clerk of Works. Peter Alder moved back to Kings Stanley where in 1875 he carried out alterations and improvements to the Baptist Chapel for which he also prepared the plans and specifications.

This background must have given John Samuel a good grounding in building from trade skills to supervision and possibly some design input. In 1868 he was articled to George Cowley Haddon, an architect with a practice at Hereford and Great Malvern, "who not only gave him his articles but paid him a salary recognising the capability of his pupil". Haddon designed banks and other commercial establishments, cemeteries and a hospital as well as building and restoring churches. During Alder's time with him, Haddon's practice rebuilt the nave at Ewyas Harold Church (1868) and built a house at Malvern College (1871), Holy Trinity Church at Great Malvern, the clocktower at Knighton and Eignbrook Congregational Church in Hereford (1872) – just the sort of work that Alder would specialise in when he had his own practice.

¹⁹ *Building News* 7 November 1919.

Frederick Preedy (1820-1898) was a prolific architect and stained glass artist based first in Worcester and then in London. Alder became his Chief Assistant in 1872 working principally on new churches and restorations, domestic buildings etc. Preedy built at least 20 new churches, mostly in the West Midlands, of which 7 were built after Alder joined him. Since Preedy retired from ill-health soon after Alder left him in 1884, it is a reasonable assumption that Alder made major contributions to these.

In 1874 Alder joined the Architectural Association and in the same year went with them on a tour of the cathedrals and churches of northern France. He stated in 1916 that he “spent one month sketching etc. in Italy in 1876, and a fortnight in sketching etc. nearly every year since”.

In 1884 Alder married Kate Beatrice Bater and they had two sons and a daughter. For most of their married life they lived in North London – Wood Green, Muswell Hill and Highgate.

Alder assisted other architects before establishing his independent practice in 1887. On Preedy's retirement Alder carried on some of his work and got other commissions through Preedy's clients like the Skrine and Carlile families. Alder continued to work with partners and associates whose names are sometimes coupled with his, especially John Turrill who, with F. D. Danvers, continued Alder's practice after 1919, but Alder seems always to have been the principal designer.

Whilst Alder does not appear to have held any official appointment with the Diocese of London, and it was in any case the responsibility of parishes to appoint their own architects, he seems to have established by 1898 a reputation for being reliable and not too expensive. Indeed most of his church work was in growing working-class parishes where it was only possible to build if grants could be obtained from the Bishop of London's Fund and other bodies and these worked to a formula which specified a maximum cost related to the size of the congregation the church could hold (the “sittings”).

Stylistically Alder's work was much influenced by his continuing study of Gothic buildings at home and abroad (particularly in France). In his later, and best, churches he tended to favour the Decorated style of the 14th century in the nave which provided a strong vertical emphasis whilst the windows followed Perpendicular style precedents to admit more light. These churches often have excellent spatial qualities in the relationship of nave and aisles similar to the work of J. L. Pearson. There is little of the contemporary Arts and Crafts approach of Sedding or Caroe in which Gothic was developed in quirky new directions which may be one reason why Alder has been viewed as a rather old-fashioned architect instead of his buildings being appreciated as a sensitive re-interpretation of traditional Gothic forms. In his halls, with the need for unobstructed space, Gothic plays a smaller part though the wide windows, needed to provide as much light as possible, are given Perpendicular style detailing or, as at the Charles Lamb Hall and Institute, are square-headed Tudor collegiate in style, whilst the roof timbers have similar traditional features.

The Great War did not immediately bring church building to a stop. Contracts already under way were completed and indeed sometimes started as late as 1915. However, the shortage of labour and materials and the consequent increased costs gradually produced a halt. Although Alder exhibited for the first time at the Royal Academy Summer Exhibition in 1918 (showing photographs of interiors of three of his churches), his career did not resume

except for one commission completed in 1919 – the war memorial cross outside St Saviour Alexandra Park. His design for the war memorial lychgate at St Stephen's was built posthumously in 1920.

Alder fully completed only eleven of his twenty-three new churches. Three more were completed except for the planned tower and spire. The other nine, which were left either without a permanent chancel or without the west end of the nave and aisles, had temporary walls filling the gaps for many years, in one case till the 1960's²⁰. When these churches were eventually finished by other architects, it was usually in other styles and on a smaller scale. If these churches had been completed to their original designs including towers and spires, Alder's architecture would be more highly regarded.

Alder fell ill in the autumn of 1919 and, following an operation, died of peritonitis on 28 October, aged 72. He was buried at Carshalton, Surrey.

Illustration No. 13 *John Samuel Alder in a garden with his wife and their elder son and daughter (c1888)*²¹



²⁰ St Mary and All Saints Potters Bar where the west end of the nave was finished off in 1967 with a wall that is almost wholly clear glass.

²¹ The original photograph is in the possession of one of his descendants.

Alder had ascribed his “exceptionally good health” to the effort he put into supervising the work on his buildings. In proposing him for Fellowship of the RIBA in 1916, Maurice Adams said that he had known him since 1873 and knew him “to be a thoroughly capable and practical architect” and a client, the vicar of St Saviour Wood Green, said that he found him “a most kind, courteous and sympathetic adviser”.

Recent Descriptions of the Hall

The Buildings of England (‘Pevsner’)²² says –

“On the N side (of Church Street) the main focus is the CHARLES LAMB INSTITUTE, 1907-8 by *J. S. Alder*, a long stone range with Tudor detail, the hall alongside the road ending in a turret”

On 24 May 1973 the Hall was added – at Grade II - by the (then) Department of the Environment to the List of Buildings of Architectural or Historic Interest. Its description in the List is also brief (which was normal at that time) –

“1908 (Plaque in West bay). Stone faced building in collegiate Tudor style. Main East part of one storey, 6 bays divided by buttresses, with small angle tower and low spire. High pitched tiled roof and parapet. At left a narrow entrance link to one-bay dwelling section where roof comes down to eaves. Further 2-storey gabled left bay. Large stone mullioned and transomed windows, some canted bays. Back parts of brick in Arts and Craft style.”

The London Borough of Enfield had designated the Church Street, Edmonton Conservation Area, which included the Hall, on 28 August 1970. Their “Church Street, Edmonton and Fore Street, Edmonton Conservation Areas Character Appraisal” dated September 2009, emphasises the Hall’s townscape value –

“... the former Charles Lamb Institute of 1907-8 by J. S. Adler (sic) presents rich, limestone Tudor gothic elevations to the church and churchyard. It forms an important backdrop to views of the church from the south and its corner turret provides an eye-catcher in Church Street.”

The Building as Built and What Might Have Followed

The newspaper report in the *Herald*²³ of the laying of the foundation stone in May 1907 contains a description of the intended building so detailed that it must have been copied from information provided by the architect or his client. It did not of course preclude the possibility of post-contract changes.

“For the present, the scheme is not being carried out in its entirety. The part included in the contract now being executed by Mr. A. Monk is the church hall, with a

²² Cherry B & Pevsner N. *The Buildings of England, London 4: North* (Penguin, London 1998).

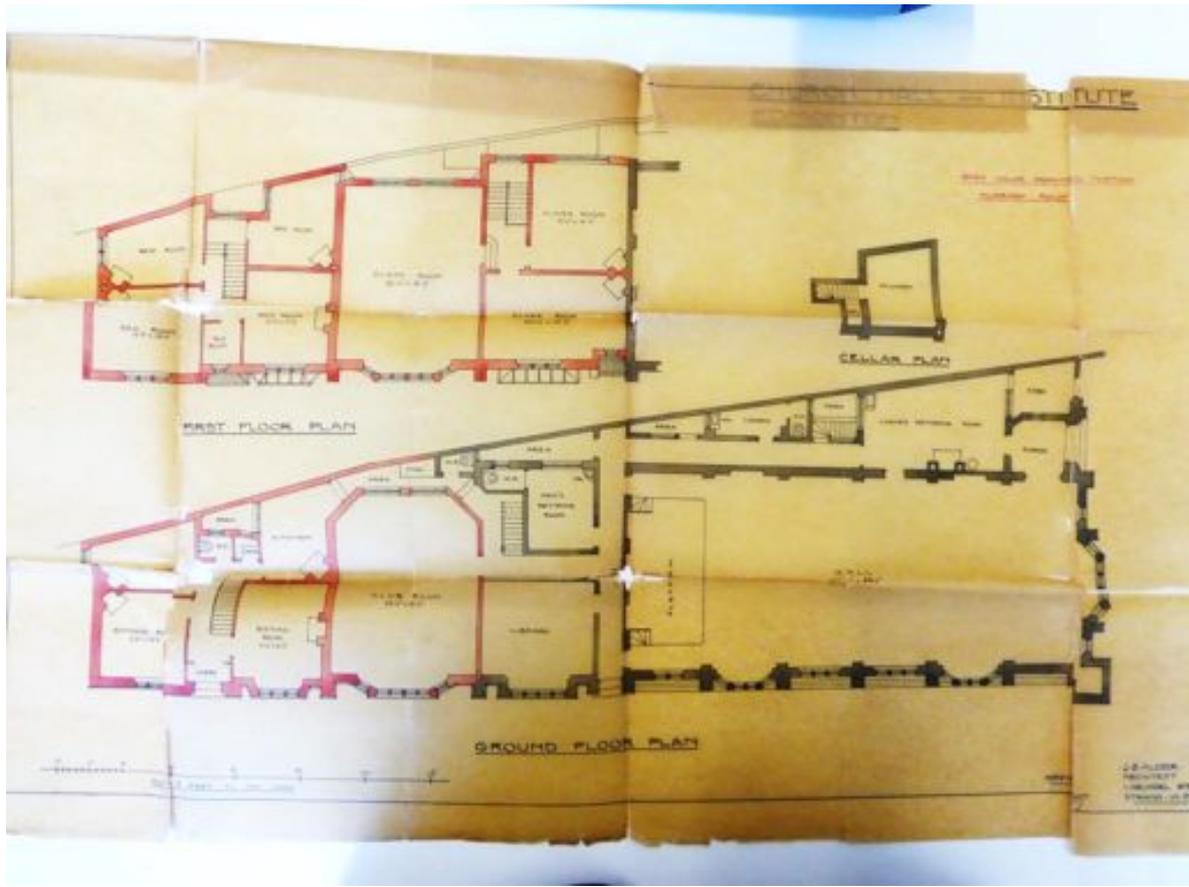
²³ *Tottenham and Edmonton Herald* 17 May 1907.

retiring room on the right of the entrance, which will be provided with domestic appliances, and two other apartments – a gentleman's retiring room and a library – at the western end, which will eventually form a portion of the Institute. The hall will be 72ft. in length by 32ft. in width, and will provide accommodation for 400 people. As planned the Institute will be of two storeys, and will contain class and club rooms, and also two small halls about 26ft. by 22ft. each, in one of which it is hoped to place two billiard tables. In a further extension there will be six fair sized rooms, which will be utilised for various parish purposes.

“In architectural style the structure will be Late Perpendicular, with its mullioned windows and other ornamental details. It will have a striking and attractive appearance, sufficient progress having already been made with it to afford an indication of this. The front is being faced with Stamford freestone, and the same material is being used for the windows and doorways, giving an added stateliness to the building. On the south side there are recessed windows which while providing increased internal space, afford interesting external features. A still larger and more elevated window at the east end has the same characteristic. The main entrance will be from Church-lane, the porch being a spacious one with stone jambs and moulded stone arches. All the doorways, it may be mentioned, will open outwards, in accordance with the County Council requirements. A small turret at the south-east corner will give prominence to the building from the approaches. The roof is to be covered with red rough-faced tiles, which will harmonise with the general appearance of the exterior of the premises”.

The building was indeed built in two phases with just a short pause between them. The file on the Bishop of London's Fund's grant contains Alder's plan dated November 1907 of the Hall with the built part in grey and Phase 2 in red. However, it is not accompanied by elevational drawings and there is a major difference between Phase 2 as shown in the plan and what was built.

Illustration No. 14 Plan of November 1907 showing completed and proposed works



Phase 1

The grey part of Alder's plan completely matches the description of the first phase in the newspaper report quoted above with the main hall occupying the east end of the building and a wedge-shaped retiring room for ladies to its north and the library on the main façade west of the hall with the men's retiring room behind it to the north.

Phase 2

The parts shown in red in Alder's plan include two class rooms added over the library and men's room and then two club rooms to the west, one over the other. So far this accords with the newspaper's description and represents the full extent of the building as executed (and as it is today). But there was clearly an intention to carry on beyond this.

What might Phase 3 have been?

Alder's plan above shows more in red as Phase 2 than was actually built. He shows further rooms to the west of the Institute laid out as domestic accommodation with its own front door and two sitting rooms, a living room and a kitchen on the ground floor and four bedrooms and a box room above them. However, no other reference to domestic accommodation has been found in any surviving contemporary documentation or in the Press. This domestic provision appears generous if intended for a caretaker and his family

so perhaps they had parish staff in mind (in 1907 the parish had four clergy as well as Sanders and four paid lay workers). On the other hand, there is the mysterious reference in the newspaper description to “a further extension (with) six fair sized rooms, which will be utilised for various parish purposes”, which also seems never to have surfaced again.

Given the problem that Sanders appears to have had in raising the balance of the cost of Phases 1 and 2 it is not surprising that no Phase 3 was built.

Another aspect of this mystery is the reference in the List description to a “dwelling section”. Certainly there is a rather domestic feel to the small doorway in the south side of the building which has the number “65” on the wall adjoining but there is nothing about the building in the 1911 Census or any domestic accommodation shown behind that door on Alder’s plan.

Albert Monk (1848 - 1911)²⁴

The builder and contractor for the hall, Albert James Monk, was an Edmonton man through and through. He was born in Edmonton in 1848 and baptised at All Saints Parish Church. His father Robert Carter Monk and his mother Mary lived in Fore Street and he started as a carpenter like his father. He married Elizabeth Jane Wright, who was also born in Edmonton (the daughter of a gardener in Bury Street), in 1866 when he was barely 18. They had seven children all born in Edmonton – the four sons followed their father into the building trade, three becoming carpenters and one as builder’s clerk. His premises too were local – in Hertford Road, Lower Edmonton.

Monk’s first large contract was for Eldon Road School for the local School Board in the early 1890s. His business grew “by leaps and bounds” and by 1911 his employees had been “numbered by the hundreds”. His obituary mentioned some of his “many important works in and around London” including an Infirmary for the City of London at Clapton, buildings at Hackney Infirmary and new churches at Streatham, Wood Green, Barnet, Edmonton and elsewhere.

Politically he was a Unionist and he was a trustee of the Conservative Club, which he built. For six years before April 1904 he was a local representative on Middlesex County Council. Formerly a member of the local School Board, he was an Edmonton District councillor from 1904 till his death. Freemasonry “appealed to him strongly, and he belonged to more than one lodge” as well as being actively and generously involved in Masonic charities.

In 1901 he and his family were living at New Street House, Edmonton but they moved to 21 Church Street, where having been in poor health for some years, Monk died on 12 October 1911. The house, on the north side of the street, still stands – one of an attached pair from the 18th century each with 3 bays and 3 storeys – it is the one on the left with a nice early

²⁴ This section has been compiled from the following sources: Census returns, Civil Registration records, Parish Registers, Probate registers and Electoral Registers, all on the *Ancestry* website; Kelly’s Enfield Edmonton and Winchmore Hill Directory 1907-08; and the obituary and other reports and tributes to Albert Monk published in the *Tottenham and Edmonton Herald* on 18 October, 20 October and 27 October 1911.

nineteenth century iron porch. Monk was buried in Edmonton Cemetery after a funeral service in All Saints Church conducted by the Revd E. A. B. Sanders. He left just over £49,000.

Illustration No. 15 Albert Monk (foreground) at a meeting of the Edmonton School Board (1901-04) (detail)



Monk's obituary in the *Herald* describes him as "a self-made man ...possessed of shrewdness and native ability ... of a charitable disposition, and open-handed, giving liberally in many directions. There was something of John Bull about him, for he spoke his mind freely, and could be very blunt in his remarks, but for all that he created few animosities, and had hosts of friends". However, Sanders' address at Monk's funeral made no reference to his ever having been actively involved with the parish church or, for that matter, in religious matters generally.

His widow and his son Harry, as his executors, continued the business under the name “Albert Monk”²⁵ and the firm built many public buildings in north London and beyond between the wars. His widow, who had continued to live at 21 Church Street, died in Brighton in 1932.

Monk carried out at least one other building designed by Alder - the hall at St John’s Palmers Green (Bourne Hill) in 1908 (*Illustration No. 9*) and tendered unsuccessfully for another the same year – when eight builders tendered for the contract for St Peter’s Hall at Edmonton (*Illustration No. 8*), Monk was the third lowest. Prior to these he executed at least one other of Sanders’ building projects - the Almshouses next to All Saints Church²⁶

Laying the Foundation Stone

As already mentioned, the inscription on the Foundation Stone says it was laid on 11 May 1907 by Lady St Helier.

Mary, Lady St Helier (1849-1931), philanthropist, was born Susan Mary Elizabeth Stewart-Mackenzie. After her first husband died she married Francis Jeune, a barrister from Jersey, who rose to become a senior judge. He was raised to the peerage in 1905 as Lord St Helier but died just two months later. Lady St Helier, who hosted legendary dinner parties and supported many charitable causes, was an alderman of the London County Council from 1910 to 1927 where she fought hard for the improvement of housing facilities in London. The extensive St Helier housing estate built in South London by the LCC was named after her. Her recreations were “bicycling, riding and skating”²⁷.

²⁵ Contract with Middlesex County Council dated 31 December 1911 for building of the Edmonton Technical Institute (LMA ref. MCC/CL/L/CON/02/01446). They went on to build schools, hospitals, court houses and public housing estates.

²⁶ These bear an inscription panel stating that the Trustees of the charity had totally demolished and rebuilt them in 1903 with the builder being Albert Monk whilst the Treasurer of the charity is named as Rev. Ernest A. B. Sanders.

²⁷ Wikipedia and National Portrait Gallery websites, the *Oxford Directory of National Biography* and *Who was Who?*

Illustration No.16

Lady St Helier (c1902-1910). (Sepia-toned platinotype by George Charles Beresford in the National Portrait Gallery²⁸.)



The *Herald* in a lengthy report²⁹ said that a large company attended the stone-laying ceremony and named several clergymen, councillors and other notables as well as the churchwardens and J. S. Alder and A. Monk. There was a short religious service and then the Vicar made the statement about the purposes of the building quoted above. He concluded by asking Lady St. Helier to lay the foundation stone. The *Herald* says-

“Her ladyship was handed a silver trowel by the Architect, and in seeing that the block of stone was well and truly laid, ‘to the glory of God and for the good of His church’, she displayed almost a mason’s skill.

“Col. Bowles proposed a vote of thanks to Lady St. Helier, whose presence would, he said, inspire them to make a true and great success of that project.

“Mr. Dobb, in seconding, observed that the manner in which her ladyship spread the mortar on the stone showed that it was not the first that she had laid³⁰”.

Although a postcard inscribed “No.1 Laying Foundation Stone of Church Hall 11.5.07” does not depict a ceremony, it clearly shows Church Lane and the building site with Albert Monk’s signboard. Everyone seems to be waiting for something so perhaps (as implied by the number) there was originally a set of postcards of the event with the actual ceremony on

²⁸ NPG x22328. The NPG has two other images of her dated respectively 1892 and 1914.

²⁹ *Tottenham and Edmonton Herald* 17 May 1907.

³⁰ Whilst this was obvious flattery, Henry W. Dobb would have known the truth of the matter as he was an architect who executed a number of local buildings including the rebuilt almshouses next to All Saints’ Church.

a later one³¹. The gentleman in academic dress has been tentatively identified as the Revd E. A. B. Sanders.

Illustration No.17 *“Laying Foundation Stone of Church Hall 11..5..07”*



The Opening Ceremony (and the Grand Fancy Bazaar)

No report of an opening ceremony after the completion of the first phase of work has been found³² but the Church Hall was up and running in good time for Christmas 1907. Events reported in the *Herald* as having taken place in the Church Hall include a Ruri-decanal Conference as well as a meeting of the All Saints Adult Temperance Society (with the “Black Cloak Concert Party” as a draw) at the end of October, an entertainment to raise funds for the Metropolitan Provident Association on 18 November, the annual entertainment presented by the Edmonton Parish Church Girls’ Club on 21 November, the annual winter concert in aid of the Sunday Schools on 10 December and on 14 December a sparsely attended concert by Mr Dudley Bishop’s Concert Party³³.

³¹ In the collection of the Enfield Local Studies Library and Archive who have kindly permitted it to be reproduced here on the understanding that any use of the image for commercial purposes requires the payment of a fee of £40. The same applies to *Illustration No. 1*. The cottages behind match those on that card.

³² Searches of *The Tottenham and Edmonton Herald* from August to December 1907 were abortive.

³³ *Tottenham and Edmonton Herald*, 25 October, 1, 22 and 29 November and 18 and 20 December 1907.

However, the final completion of the building required a splendid formal opening ceremony. This took place on Tuesday 2 June 1908 combined with a 'Grand Fancy Bazaar', spread over three days (2 - 4 June), which it was hoped would raise £350 to furnish the building³⁴. The programme for the event announced that it was hoped that the opening ceremony would be performed by Princess Louise Augusta of Schleswig-Holstein³⁵. If that would not be enough to make this a very grand bazaar indeed, there were to be further opening ceremonies with Lady Letchworth (accompanied by Sir Edward Letchworth) doing the honours on the second day and Sir Edmund Hay Currie on the third day.

Unfortunately, as the *Herald*³⁶ related on the following Friday, "owing to her many engagements (the Princess) was not able to attend". Lady St Helier was invited to return but in the event it was her daughter, the Viscountess Midleton, who performed the ceremony. The *Herald* said that

"Lady Midleton in rising to declare the Institute open, said it was very kind of them to have given her the opportunity of coming there, though in doing so she felt she was a great fraud for in the first place she ought to have been the Princess Louise Augusta and if not she then her mother, who would have been glad to come only that she had arranged a meeting at her home. They were often told now-a-days how children were always putting their parents' noses out of joint but she would be sorry to do that by her mother (Laughter). She was very pleased under the circumstances to take her place and to declare the Hall open.'

Lady Midleton (1876 -1966) was Lady St Helier's daughter, by her first husband. In 1903 as Madeleine Cecilia Carlile Stanley she became the second wife of the Rt Hon St John Brodick MP who had held Cabinet posts in the Conservative Government that fell in 1906 when he also lost his seat in the House of Commons. The next year he inherited the title of Viscount Midleton (in the Irish peerage). He was created Earl of Midleton in 1920 and died in 1942. The dowager Countess of Midleton died in 1966."³⁷

³⁴ The Edmonton Parish Magazine for March 1908 (in the LMA) which seems to be the only issue from before 1941 that has survived.

³⁵ Although she failed to show, the Princess deserves a footnote. Usually called Princess Marie Louise, she was born at Cumberland Lodge, Windsor in 1872 and given the names Franziska Josepha Louise Augusta Marie Christiana Helena. She was the younger child of Prince Christian of Schleswig-Holstein and his wife Princess Helena, the third daughter of Queen Victoria. After the annulment of her marriage to Prince Aribert of Anhalt, she returned to England and "devoted her life to furthering charitable causes and social services" becoming "a familiar figure at balls and bazaars.." She died in 1956. (*Oxford Dictionary of National Biography 2004*)

³⁶ *Tottenham and Edmonton Herald* 5 June 1908.

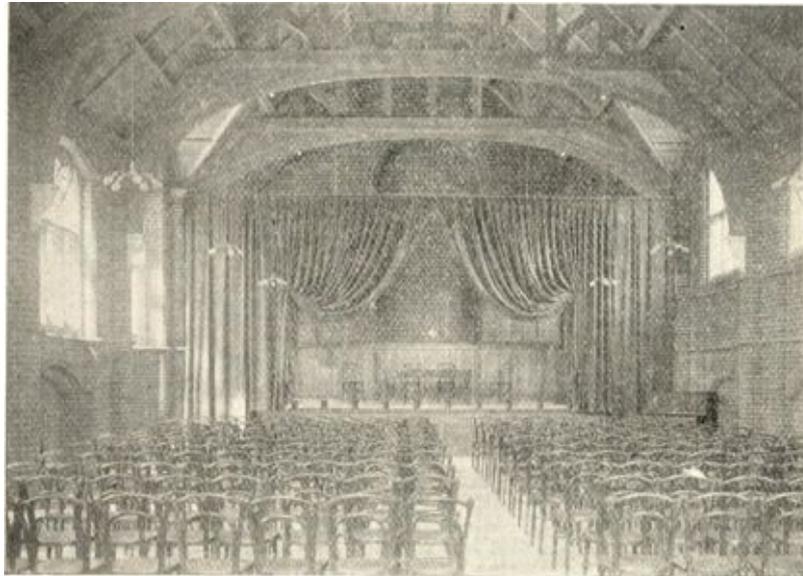
³⁷ The National Portrait Gallery has her photograph dated 1897 (NPG Ax41227) but the "web image of this is not currently available" (at July 2014).

Illustration No. 18 Cover of the programme for the "Grand Fancy Bazaar"



The ensuing bazaar was clearly quite an event – on the first two days admission cost 1 shilling between 3pm and 5pm and 6d from 5pm to 10pm whilst it was 6d all day on the last day. Alternatively there was a season ticket admitting three persons for 4 shillings or a single season ticket at 2 shillings. For this, as well as stalls selling goods, there was a Café Chantant, 'Living Waxworks', Half-hour Concerts, Palmistry, Dramatic Performances (by members of the Choral Society) and much else.

Illustration No. 19 Interior of the Church Hall in 1908 –
looking west.³⁸



Charles Lamb (1775-1834)

At the foundation stone laying ceremony, the Vicar was quoted³⁹ as saying that one purpose of the building was

“to perpetuate the memory of one of those least known, and yet most brilliant, of English literary characters”

going on to say that

“It is proposed to associate the Institute with the name of Charles Lamb, the essayist, who resided in the quaint little recessed cottage in Church-street, and who lies buried with his sister Mary in the grave-yard almost directly opposite the site of the new premises. It will be a fitting memorial to the gentle Elia, and a handsome addition to the public, or semi-public, buildings of the district.”

To try and understand why the building would be “a fitting memorial”, it is necessary to look briefly at the life and achievements of Charles Lamb.

Born in London in 1775, Charles Lamb was sent to school at Christ’s Hospital (just north of St Paul’s Cathedral) before joining the East India Company as a clerk in the accountant’s department in London – a post he held for 33 years. His sister Mary, who was ten years older than Charles, in 1796 in a fit of mania stabbed their mother to death when she sought to protect a girl-apprentice who had upset her daughter. The jury’s verdict of lunacy meant

³⁸ From the programme for the “Grand Opening Bazaar” in the Enfield Local Studies Library.

³⁹ *Tottenham and Edmonton Herald* !7 June 1907.

Mary was moved to an asylum but was allowed to return home on condition that a family member cared for her. Charles made the momentous decision to devote his life to his sister and they lived together till his death. Charles became well known in the London literary world as a poet, novelist, dramatist and critic and his friends included Keats, Coleridge and Hazlitt.

After Charles retired from the East India Company, he and Mary lived in Islington and then Enfield before moving to Edmonton in 1833 to live at Walden's Cottage in Church Street. He chose Edmonton because Mary had deteriorated and the Waldens had experience of dealing with such cases and indeed had looked after her before. Charles, who drank to excess, contracted erysipelas after grazing his face when he tripped whilst strolling in Fore Street and died at home on 27 December 1834. He was buried nearby in All Saints churchyard. Mary survived him by 13 years and was buried beside him in 1847. The grave is marked by a much later gravestone whilst Walden's Cottage, now known as Charles Lamb's Cottage, still stands nearby.

His fame endured mostly for his whimsical and elegiac essays published under the pseudonym "Elia". "Lamb's writings were held in highest esteem, probably, in the fifty years from about 1870 to 1920". Furthermore, "Victorian critics ... made of Lamb a figure exemplary for fine feeling in his writing and self-sacrifice in his life".⁴⁰

So, at the peak of his fame and seen perhaps as an appropriate model of Christian virtue, his name might have seemed not inappropriate for a Church of England foundation even though he appears to have had no particular association with the Church in general or Edmonton Parish Church in particular (in religion he tended towards Unitarianism). For that matter, he lived in Edmonton for less than two years yet, because the cottage had survived and his grave was there, Edmonton was something of a focus for Lamb enthusiasts⁴¹.

Whilst Lamb's name was acceptable to the Church, it may also have been seen as preferable to a name like, say, the "All Saints' Institute" which would have instantly identified the building's connection to the church and put off from using it members of the community who did not have an affinity to the Church of England.

One result of choosing Lamb's name was that Sanders was able to raise funds for the church hall by appealing to one constituency and for the Institute to a more secular one. As already mentioned in the section on fund-raising, Sanders mentioned in his address at the foundation stone ceremony (as reported by the *Herald*), that -

"There was an influential Committee being formed in London for the collection of funds for a Charles Lamb memorial, and he was glad to know that their efforts were being successfully prosecuted".

⁴⁰ The quotations are from the *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography*, 2004-2014, which is the source for most of this biographical note.

⁴¹ The connection is still maintained – in May/June 2014 a Lamb Festival was held at All Saints Church and a stone memorial bench has been installed opposite the church bearing a quotation stating that Lamb "Loved his brethren of mankind".

Then at the opening ceremony the Vicar, again as reported in the *Herald*, said that

“in November (1908) there would be a Charles Lamb dinner at the Criterion Restaurant when it was hoped to raise £2,000”.

For all these reasons, attaching Charles Lamb’s name to the building was an astute choice.

The Hall before the Great War

The Enfield Local Studies Library and Archive have programmes for two other events held at the hall before the Great War. On 17 and 18 November 1910 a Sale of Work in aid of Parochial Funds took place there with the Duchess of Lousada⁴² to perform the opening ceremony and realised a net profit of about £120⁴³. From 17 – 19 February 1914 the ‘Halle’ hosted ‘Ye Olde Edmonton Fayre’ to raise money for the local church schools and the church itself. The programme promised, in addition to stalls, orchestral music and ‘a World Renowned Ventriloquist’. According to the *Herald*

“The interior of the Hall was transformed into an old market place and the visitor was carried back to the sixteenth century ... Everywhere there was an old-fashioned atmosphere with thatched roofs, the old-fashioned attire of the ladies, and the peculiar dressing of the stalls, etc.”⁴⁴

Another entertainment on the first day was in the Billiard Room at 8.30pm –

“Two most interesting Competitions will be held, viz. - Ladies making Cigarettes: Gentlemen making Apple Dumplings. One of the most amusing things of the day. Don’t forget it! Admission 2d each.”

On the following day in the same place and at the same time the competitions were

“Nail Driving for Ladies: Washing for Gentlemen. Do not fail to witness these amusing and instructive events – you are sure to be interested and the price of admission is only 2d each.”

This must surely have been the last time that such competitions could be staged as the demands of the Great War would oblige so many of both sexes to become multi-skilled.

⁴² Sanders seems to have had a talent for finding titled ladies. Emily Florence Magee of New Orleans married Sir Eardley Eardley Bt who was later given an 18 months sentence for making a bigamous marriage to another lady. After his death she married a British army officer who inherited a Spanish dukedom in 1905. (*Debrett’s Peerage and Baronetage* 1910).

⁴³ *Tottenham and Edmonton Herald*, 25 November 1910.

⁴⁴ *Tottenham and Edmonton Herald*. 20 February 1914.

The Next One Hundred Years

Perhaps if more issues of the Parish Magazine had survived it would be possible to know what roles the Hall played during the Great War. The *Herald* has nothing in the early months of the War about any war-related activity there such as recruitment, training, fund-raising for the War or the care of refugees but there are reports of matches played by the Charles Lamb Institute cricket team. Similarly information about the Hall is more difficult to find after the Great War than before which reflects changes in society and the priorities of the editors of local newspapers. Crime and court reports continue to use up much newsprint but the more mundane goes unreported. Finding what information exists will soon become far easier when local newspapers have been fully digitised.

After the Great War, society changed in many ways. New forms of entertainment and communication and greater mobility resulted in people looking less to their local community for entertainment, instruction or amusement. A three day bazaar or “Fayre” with concerts and silly games would no longer be practical even if enough people could be found to organise it. Technological innovations such as radio and cinema created a society where activities at the Hall would be less attractive than staying in to listen to the wireless or going to the pictures and later in the century television and the mass ownership of motor-cars would complete this process.

The role of a church hall became increasingly restricted to being an adjunct to its church rather than being used as an asset for the wider community and in Edmonton it is clear also that from the Great War on the Institute had to help support the hall. Thus, whilst the building continued to be used for parish activities, outside organisations hired parts of the building – for example, from its foundation in 1921 until it moved to the nearby Angel Hotel in 1933, the Edmonton Lodge (4339) of Freemasons met in the Institute⁴⁵. Also from some time before January 1928 (and probably from 1926 or earlier) until 1939, the Institute was home to the Edmonton Preparatory School, though little information about the school is available beyond its Principal being a Miss A. S. Lewis⁴⁶.

The Institute’s cricket team has already been mentioned and that there was a Charles Lamb Institute Social and Athletic Club is shown by a notice in the *London Gazette* on 2 May 1941 that the Registrar of Friendly Societies on 25 April had cancelled its registration “on the ground that the society had ceased to exist”. This may have been in part a consequence of the Second World War during which the Hall was lost completely to the parish for many years, being restored to them long after hostilities had ceased.

⁴⁵ Lane’s *Masonic Records* available at www.hronline.ac.uk.

⁴⁶ Miss Lewis and the school with “Lamb Institute” as the address were mentioned in *The Guardian* on 22 January and 22 July 1928, 16 October 1932 and 15 January 1939 when she won prizes in the paper’s Acrostic competition. Kelly’s Directory for Middlesex 1926 gives the school’s address as “Church Street, Edmonton” without being more specific whilst other directories from the 1930s mention Miss Lewis as the Principal. On 28 May 1926 *The Times* noted that “Anonymous pupils of Edmonton Preparatory School” had subscribed 10s to the National Police Fund.

At the start of the War the Institute had a brief life as a County Court. In 1939 and 1940 both *The Times* and the *London Gazette* published legal notices announcing various public examinations for bankruptcy “In Edmonton County Court in Bankruptcy” at “the County Court Offices, Charles Lamb Institute, Church Street, Lower Edmonton, N9.” The earliest of these was set down for 25 October 1939 and the last for 2 August 1940.

However, the parish evidently continued to use parts of the building at least till early 1941 since the April 1941 issue of the *Edmonton Parish Magazine* refers to Sunday Schools still meeting there – Infants and Juniors in the Church Hall at 10am, Juniors in the Church Hall at 3pm, and during the week, the Mothers’ Meeting and the Girl Guides in the Bowerman Room (which was one of the larger rooms in the Institute). After that parish use of the building ceased altogether and by the June issue all these parish activities had been re-located.

Although the building had been taken over by the Government for use as a Food Office⁴⁷, the Parish Magazine made no reference to this throughout the War⁴⁸. However, *The Herald*⁴⁹ reported that on 13 April 1942 at the vestry meeting and annual parochial meeting

“A real spirit of optimism was introduced by Churchwarden Edmunds who, presenting the church hall accounts, declared that although the Lamb Institute was now being used for office purposes by a Ministry, the dancing licence for the hall had been renewed because, said Mr Edmunds, ‘We never know when the war will end’. Blitz damage at the Institute had cost £41.”

On 29 May 1942 a syndicated report appeared in the *Aberdeen Journal* (and, with less detail, in *The Times*)-

“1,100 Clothing Books Stolen. Over 1,100 clothing books containing nearly 70,000 of the new issue coupons have disappeared from a church hall used as a sub depot of Edmonton Food Office”,

but as there is no report of this in the local paper⁵⁰, it is not possible to be sure just which church hall this referred to.

⁴⁷ Attempts to find any records for the Edmonton Food Office at The National Archive at Kew failed. A note in their catalogue explains that “At the outbreak of the Second World War, local authorities were empowered to appoint Food Control Committees. Once appointed the Committees had no further connection with the local authority deriving all their powers from the Ministry of Food ... The Food Executive Officer was responsible for the administration of the local Food Office”. The file series MAF 67 deals with Food Control Committees but “The material selected for preservation is a small cross section of Food Control Committees throughout the country”. Sadly Edmonton was not among those selected (though Tottenham was).

⁴⁸ The Enfield Local Studies Centre and Archive has a bound volume containing the Magazine from January 1941 to December 1957 but there are some gaps in this run.

⁴⁹ *Tottenham and Edmonton Herald* 17 April 1942.

⁵⁰ At least not in the *Tottenham and Edmonton Herald* from 3 April to 8 May 1942 inclusive.

Rationing of some commodities continued till long after the War had ended and the Hall continued to be forbidden to the parish. By 1947 they were getting impatient. In the January 1948 issue of the Magazine the Vicar said of the recent Christmas Sale that "we all realised that it badly wanted the more spacious accommodation of Lamb's Institute for such an effort but as that is still denied to us, we made the best of the accommodation we had."

There was movement though as in March 1948 the Magazine said that "Your Hall Committee has been busy. Among other things they have now purchased tables and chairs in readiness for our return to Lamb's".

This turned to disappointment when in August the parishioners were told that though it had been hoped to get Lamb's Institute back in the early Autumn, this would now be delayed. The Food Office had been about to move into another of the parish's buildings, St George's Hall (in St George's Road) but the discovery of dry rot in the floor there meant the parish had to re-floor it first. This delay would mean waiting patiently "for the happy day to which we have looked forward for so many years".

The "Grand Re-Opening of Charles Lamb's Institute" took place on Saturday, 1st January 1949 "with Olde Tyme Dancing ... Music by the 'Paramount Orchestra'. Admission 2/6. Refreshments. Spot Prizes." The building had been redecorated during December and the Vicar wrote in the January Magazine that "There can be no doubt that the possession of such a splendid Hall will make a vast difference to our life. Looking back over the nine years I wonder how we have ever been able to keep any worthwhile organisation going with the scanty accommodation we have had". He looked forward to a great expansion of the parish's activities but warned that they would have to let out the Hall as much as possible to make it financially self-supporting. In March he wrote that "one side of our parish life, the social side, which has been cramped for many years, has been released from its fetters". In subsequent months the Magazine notes the building being used again by the Sunday School, the Mothers' Union and other church clubs and societies and by the parish's drama group (The Epic Players), and with bazaars, whist drives, choral concerts etc. in aid of church funds.

In due course some problems arose from a clash of interests. In July 1952 the Parish Magazine published a statement by the Halls Committee reacting to disappointment expressed by members of some church organisations that they had been unable to book the Hall because of an "outside let". It was explained that it was "impossible to pay our way and improve the comfort and amenities at the Hall without the income from the lettings to outside bodies. The Hall costs a great deal to run. Even without improvements, such as the new chairs, our normal bills amount to approximately £1,000 per year... (this was made up of) Licences and Borough Rates £62; Maintenance £186; Wages and National Health Insurance £286; Lighting and Heating £332; Insurance £33 and Miscellaneous expenditure £79 ... letting the upstairs rooms to the Ministry of Works (helps) but it is the outside lets that enable us to have the advantages of a church hall and to give our own organisations the privilege of holding their functions at a hiring fee which as often as not does not even cover the cost of heating and lighting for the evening".

It is interesting that in 1952 part of the building was again a Government office, though this time on a voluntary basis. Some idea of subsequent longer term uses of the Hall can be

gained from the Post Office Directory for London⁵¹. From the 1959 edition on, the Hall was shown as the address of the following;-

Burrige School of Dancing (1959 – 1974)
A Scott & Sons (London) Ltd, building contracts (1960 – 1962)
Edward Beck & Son Ltd, haulage contractors (1966 – 1970)
Gai Jay Nursery school (1970 – 1978)
Overham Ltd, sales promotion (1971 only)
Heanor Haulage Co. Ltd (1971 – 1973)
All Saints' Parish Office (1971 – 1983)
E Stringer, printer (1973 – 1979)
Melody School of Dancing (1976 – 1979)
Graydale nursery school (1979 – 1983)

Illustration No. 20 Interior of the Church Hall in 1974 -
looking east where there is now a gallery and glazed screen.



Sadly, we are told in “A Celebration of 850 Years” (1986) that during the 1970s

‘Lamb’s Hall ... needed a great deal of work done, the heating needed to be modernised, the stonework was deteriorating, and with the increase in traffic, crossing the road to and from the Church was getting more hazardous – even on a Sunday. Thus the decision was taken to sell Lamb’s Hall and build a new Hall on the site of the entrance to the old Vicarage. This hall designed by John Phillips ARIBA was opened in 1982’.

The building was advertised in 1981 in the *Estates Gazette* as

⁵¹ Extensive runs of street directories are rare but the Bishopsgate Institute has an excellent collection of the Post Office London Directory. Initially limited to the County of London, this extended its range to all London postal districts in 1956. The Hall appears in the 1956 – 1958 editions without reference to occupiers. With the 1984 Directory the Hall disappears as such to become No. 65 Church Street – Tower Gym and Health Club.

“Freehold, church hall with extensive premises ‘The Charles Lamb Institute’ ... planning consent for internal alterations to form offices, banquet and conference rooms”⁵².

In the event it was acquired by Mr Bill Luscombe who converted it into the Tower Gym and Health Club which he ran for 27 years with his son and daughter. The main hall was adapted as the men’s section with the women in the Institute. It was seen as a “family gym” and a community asset attracting locals, young and old, as well as users from further afield, including celebrities like the late Bob Hoskins. Despite the enthusiastic support of its clients, the Gym became uneconomic due to the cost of maintenance, problems with access and heating costs. The Tower Gym closed in 2009.⁵³

The building was then acquired by its present owners, the New Covenant Church, thus opening a new chapter in its story.

A Brief Chronology – Principal Events

1900	Revd E. A. B. Sanders appointed Vicar of Edmonton.
1907 (11 May)	Foundation stone laid.
(October?)	Phase 1 (Hall) opened.
1908 (2 June)	Complete building opened with a Grand Fancy Bazaar.
1941	Building taken over as a Food Office
1948	Building returned to parish
1970	Building included in a Conservation Area
1973	Building listed Grade II
1982	New church hall built. Lamb building sold as Tower Gym.
2009	Tower Gym closes.
	Building taken over the New Covenant Church.

Sources consulted

In addition to those already identified

The History of the Parish of Edmonton Fred Fisk 1914

Southgate and Edmonton Past Graham Dalling 1996 (Historical Publications)

⁵² This item was provided together with some other press extracts by Jon Bolter.

⁵³ *Enfield Independent* 23 January 2009.

Edmonton Past and Present George W. Sturges 1938

Old Edmonton Alfred J Palmer 1936

Illustrations

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Tony Hunt lives in North London and worked for English Heritage until he retired in 1999. He has the Architectural Association's Graduate Diploma in Building Conservation for which his dissertation was on the work of J. S. Alder.