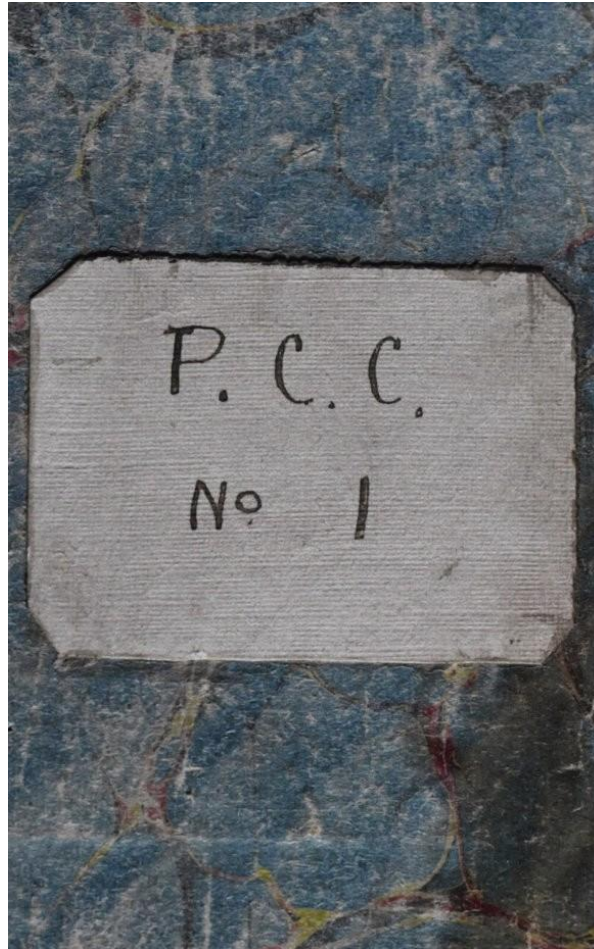


The War of Two Vicars

In 1919 All Saints' was obliged to indulge in a new democratic experiment, a parochial church council. There had, before that, been a committee but it was restricted to overseeing repairs and organising flower shows and fetes.

The Vicar, Fr Armitstead, explained that the PCC's job was to look after the upkeep of the building and the social activities. Religious matters remained the domain of the clergy. Not everyone agreed.

A few months later Fr Armitstead suffered a 'breakdown in health' and was encouraged to take some time off to recuperate. In his place came Revd H P Berkeley. He had been an army chaplain and proved to be very popular.



It was felt by some that he might 'take account' of the views of those in the congregation who were 'not in favour of the High Church school of thought.'

Within a few weeks the PCC was discussing, with a degree of enthusiasm rather than anguish, whether Fr Armitstead would ever be in a fit state to return to All Saints'.

It was suggested he ought to be found a less taxing church, somewhere far away. Insurrection was brewing. A letter was sent to the Bishop saying they did not want Fr Armitstead to return.

Fr Armitstead returned.

'...a crying scandal'

Fr Armitstead had expensive school fees to pay and he was not going to give up All Saints'. It was at this point that the careful handwriting of the PCC minutes begins to become rather excited. A meeting was held, there were reports about broken promises. A petition calling for Revd HP Berkeley to become the new priest was sent to the Bishop. The parish, it was said, was awash with 'misunderstandings and mis-statements' and there were repeated calls for 'peace.'

There is at this point a gap in the records, two pages have been removed from the book of minutes. It is clear there was anything but peace. Thankfully Fr Armitstead decided to calm things down with an article in the parish paper. However, accusing Revd Berkeley of lying was perhaps not the best strategy for a congregation that had for the most part sided with his rival. The records describe it as a 'horrible injury in print'.

The whole saga was described as a 'crying scandal' but Fr Armitstead would not be moved. Eventually, the PCC could do no more, those that remained on the committee 'welcomed' his return to health.

Then three months later he was gone and Fr East had arrived. Fr East had agreed to come to this parish, he said, because of the centrality of the 'Sung Eucharist.' Revd Berkeley is never mentioned again. Fr Armitstead took up a new living on the edge of the Yorkshire Dales.