



LONGFIELD HALL

SHOWCASING OUR HISTORY: LONGFIELD HALL

◇ BEFORE THE MINET ESTATE ◇

A dreary, dangerous, wicked kind of place

Longfield Hall opened in 1889 and has since been a central element of the Minet Conservation Area.

PICK-UP NOTES.

THERE is a territory flowing with liquid mud known to Camberwellians by the euphonious title of Myatt's Fields, where the parochial old broom, much less a new broom, is absolutely unknown. In daylight the neighbourhood is a particularly objectionable one—I can recall to mind when it had something of rurality about it—but in the evening the road (!) which dissects it consists of a series of pitfalls amid which the unwary traveller flounders in a manner positively dangerous to life and limb. This is bad enough, but the wayfarer at night-time has to run the gauntlet of another danger that he wots not of. The other evening a gentleman on business bent, in the innocence of his heart, imagined he would take a "short cut" from Camberwell all to Brixton by crossing Myatt's Fields. "Short cuts" are ordinarily downright frauds, but the Myatt's Fields "short cut" is what the Marchioness would describe as a positive "oner" in the way of frauds.

South London Press
16 February 1884

The Minet family purchased local land from the Knatchbull family in 1770. Before William Minet's development of the estate in the late 1800s, the area had a notoriously bad reputation. Previously the site of Joseph Myatt's market gardens, the neighbourhood was widely recognised as a place best avoided.

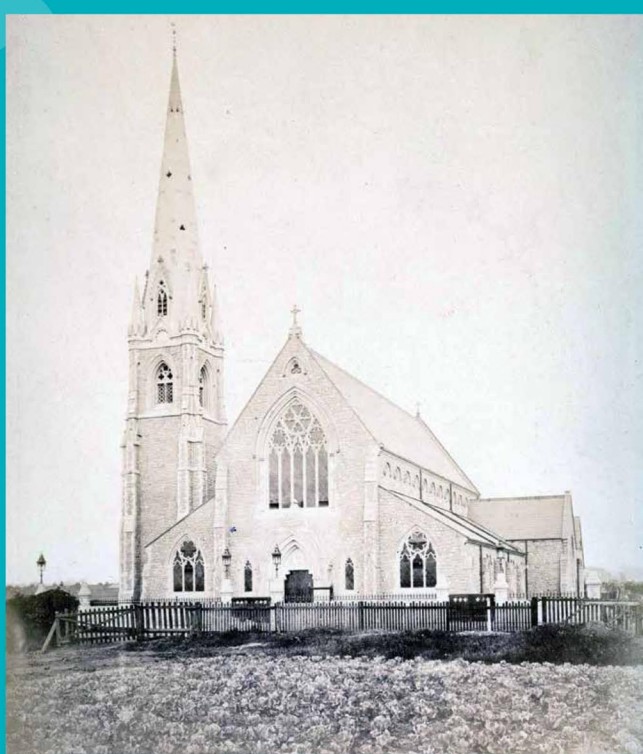
St James' church opened in 1870 and stood isolated in the 'particularly objectionable' neighbourhood of Myatt's Fields. By the 1890s the area had been developed by William Minet to include a harmonious mix of housing, schools, park, library and community hall.

ARRIVING "Myatt's Fields" is the new Free Library, which has also been built by the generous donor of the new park. The building may be, and doubtless is, commodious and convenient in its arrangements, but externally it is architecturally a little peculiar—just a little squat. But that is a small matter, for internally a large sum of money has been spent in decorations, and when once inside the building there is much to delight the eye. So far as one can estimate, the value of the land and buildings now given to the public cannot be put down at less than fifty thousand pounds. It seems but yesterday that "Myatt's Fields" was given over to strawberries, cabbages, and pads—a dreary, dangerous, wicked kind of place, to be avoided by all decent folk. When the freeholder gave the site for the church, and the necessary sum to build and endow it, people were amazed, for, when erected, the church stood alone without a neighbourhood. And now—how changed the scene! Brixton and Camberwell are indeed to be congratulated on the marvellous change wrought in the neighbourhood during the past few years, and at the good things recently provided.



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South London Press
13 April 1889



St James' church 1870