

Kings Bromley Historians Research Note

Electricity Comes to Kings Bromley in 1933

Extract From Parish News March 1933:

Poles and wires for the distribution of electric power to our houses are now up in the village and it can only be a few weeks before the line is put up from Alrewas and the current switched on. To help those who wish to know more about it the Institute arranged a meeting which took place on February 21st at which Mr. Morrison and Mr. Russell explained the nature and cost of the supply and their assisted wiring schemes.

Mains electricity had, as shown below, come to many parts of the country in the late 1800's, and even got to Lichfield in 1901.

1879	The Liverpool (Corporation) Electric Lighting Act 1879 (42 & 43 Vict. c. ccxiii) is the first electric lighting act to be enacted in the UK, giving the Liverpool Corporation powers to light streets by electricity.		
1882	The Electric Lighting Act 1882 (repealed 1989) allows the setting up of supply systems by persons, companies or local authorities. Local authorities had the right to take over the assets of companies in their area after 21 years, which discouraged enterprise. ^[6]		
	The Edison Electric Light Station opens as the world's first coal-fired power station at 57 Holborn Viaduct , London, producing 110 volt DC for street lighting. It ran at a loss and closed in 1886. ^[7]		
1888	The Electric Lighting Act 1888 (repealed 1989) amends the 1882 act, making the setting up of a supply company easier, and extending the reversion to local authority period to 42 years, with optional 10-year extensions. ^[6]		
1890	The Belfast Electric Lighting Order 1890 , confirmed by the Electric Lighting Orders Confirmation (No. 7) Act 1890 gives the County Borough of Belfast the authority to generate and sell electricity throughout the city.		
	The Electric Lighting (Scotland) Act 1890		
1891	London Electric Supply Corporation opens Deptford Power Station , the UK's first (single-phase) AC power system, designed by Sebastian Ziani de Ferranti .		
1901	xxxviii	Electric Lighting Orders Confirmation (No. 3) Act	Orders for Birstall, Cheshunt, Dorchester, Felling, Frome, Lichfield , Mitcham, New Hunstanton, Northfleet, Skipton

It is quite remarkable that Kings Bromley village did not get mains electricity until 1933. The manor had an electric turbine on the New Trent in 1875 which provided electricity for the sawmill and a pump which pumped water from a well into the water tower. This was mainly to provide water for fire hydrants. The Lord of the Manor, John Henry Bagot Lane, who had taken over in 1869, seemed to have a real fear of fire. In 1905 his son, John Henry Hervey Vincent Lane, upgraded the turbine so that it could also provide electric light for the manor; in order to have a constant supply he installed a shed full of accumulator batteries. Villagers used to walk down Manor Road and marvel at the sight of the Manor lit up like a Christmas tree.

Electric current may be paid for in either of these three ways:

- 1. Quarterly. 7d per unit for light, 2d per unit for heat*
- 2. Quarterly 7 ½% of the rateable value of the house plus 1d per unit, light or heat.
(For houses over £30 rateable value, 7 ½ % on £30 plus 5% on the remainder, plus 1d per unit or:*
- 3. Shilling in the slot, or penny in the slot meters, at 8d per unit*

A unit is the current required to supply:

<i>1000 watts</i>	<i>for</i>	<i>one hour</i>
<i>or 100 watts</i>	<i>for</i>	<i>10 hours</i>
<i>or 60 watts</i>	<i>for</i>	<i>16 hours</i>
<i>or 40 watts</i>	<i>for</i>	<i>25 hours</i>

A 40 watt lamp is enough for small rooms

The company will wire the house, with not less than 3 lights, not more than 8 and let you pay in either of these two ways:

- 1. By paying an extra 2d. Per unit until the amount is paid off*
- 2. Quarterly at the rate of 1d. per light per week, for 24 quarters (For 3 lights 3/3 per quarter, £3 18s. 0d. total*

The supply will be 230 volts A.C. 50 frequency

7d in 1933 would be worth £1.75 in today's money. So, lighting electricity would have been seven times more expensive in 1933 and heating electricity twice as expensive. Even so, given that people readily converted to electricity, it must have been cheaper than using paraffin lamps or candles. It is interesting that there was a distinction between lighting and heating electricity. This means that the company must have installed separate metering and wiring with sockets. How the company would have prevented users from plugging a lamp into a socket is unknown. Other electrical appliances, apart from vacuum cleaners, which were around in the 1930's were not yet available. Refrigerators only became generally affordable in the 1950s, as did twin tub washing machines. Telephones were available but did not require mains electricity.

Ivy and David Butcher visited Grace Lane, who had been brought up in the Manor, in 1980. This is part of a transcript of what she said in their interview:

The water, of course, came from the tower, so it dropped a long way and was very powerful. There was never a telephone, just the one in the estate office, never the house itself. Of course, it was the first place in the village to have electric lights. I remember the excitement over that. You hardly dared touch a switch, you were scared what would happen. It came from the mill itself, the generator. It was a huge great machine. Will Osborne charged it was in charge of it.

And before that, it was oil, paraffin lamps.

He was known as the Hall boy, the poor boy had to do a hundred paraffin lamps every day, fill them to the wick. That was his job.

Grace was born in 1904 and she remembers the coming of electricity and the previous oil lamps. The new generator was put in in 1905. For Grace to remember it, she must have been at least three, so it must have taken a while to put in the lights and cabling.

Telephone posts in Kings Bromley:

142 Forge Cottage with large cowl, 3 gates.
c 1908 (stamp)

J34



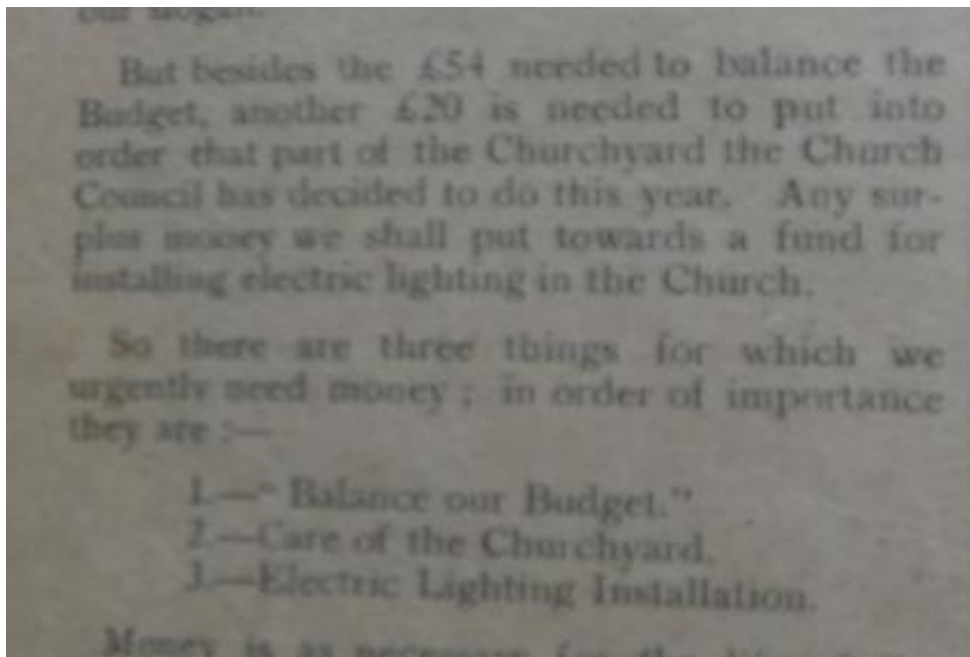
THE SINGALOW, KINGS BROMLEY.

M 50

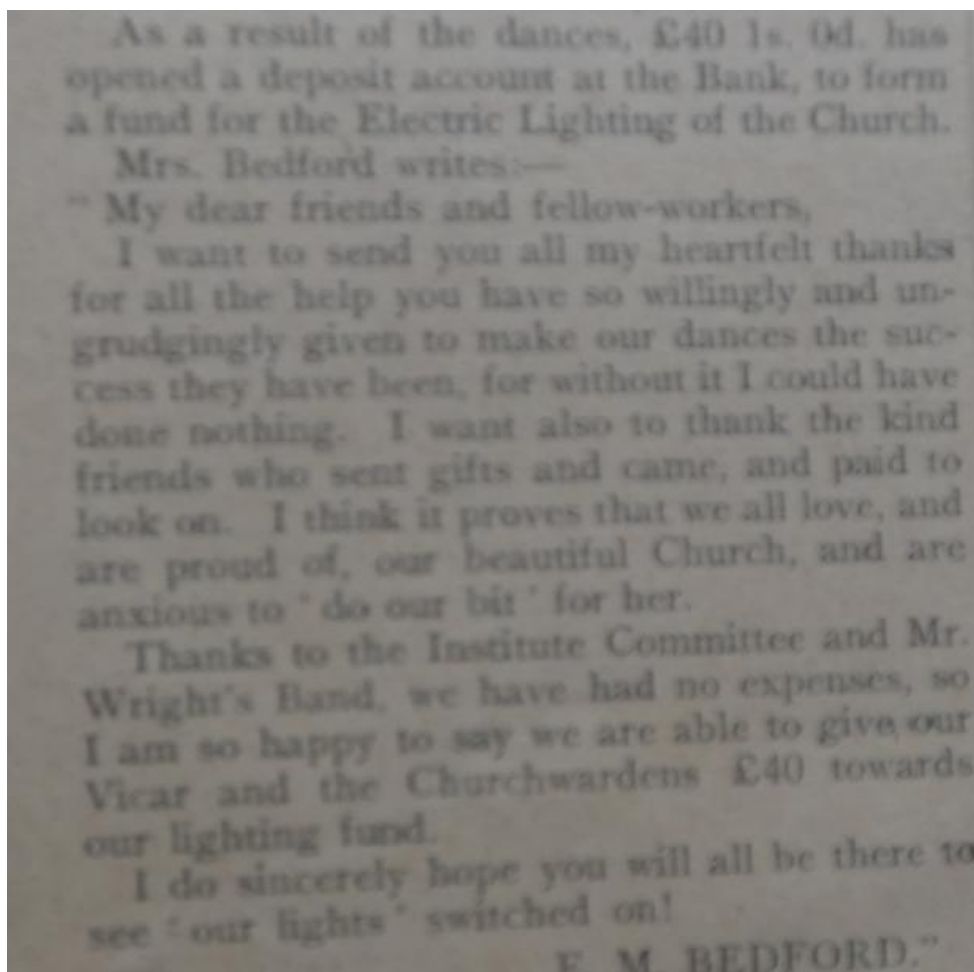


925. LICHFIELD Rd., from cross roads. Old cottages (left)
Royal Oak (right) c.1918 (S.B.)

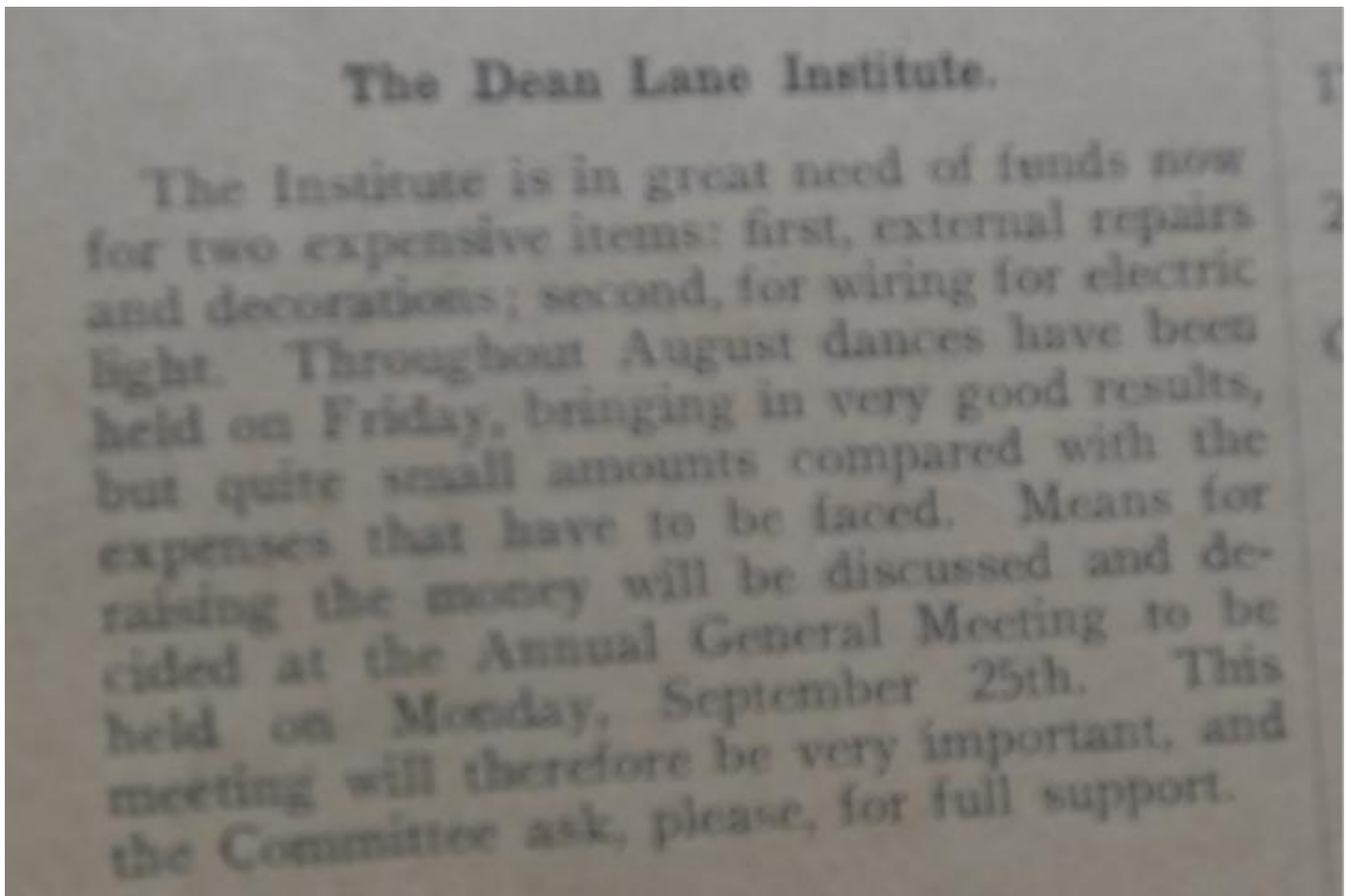
Extract From the 1933 Parish News:



It appears that while the rest of the village was going ahead with the installation of electric lights, the Church had other priorities. However as seen from this extract from July 1933 Parish News, help was at hand from a Mrs Bedford:



In September 1933 this appeared in the Parish News:



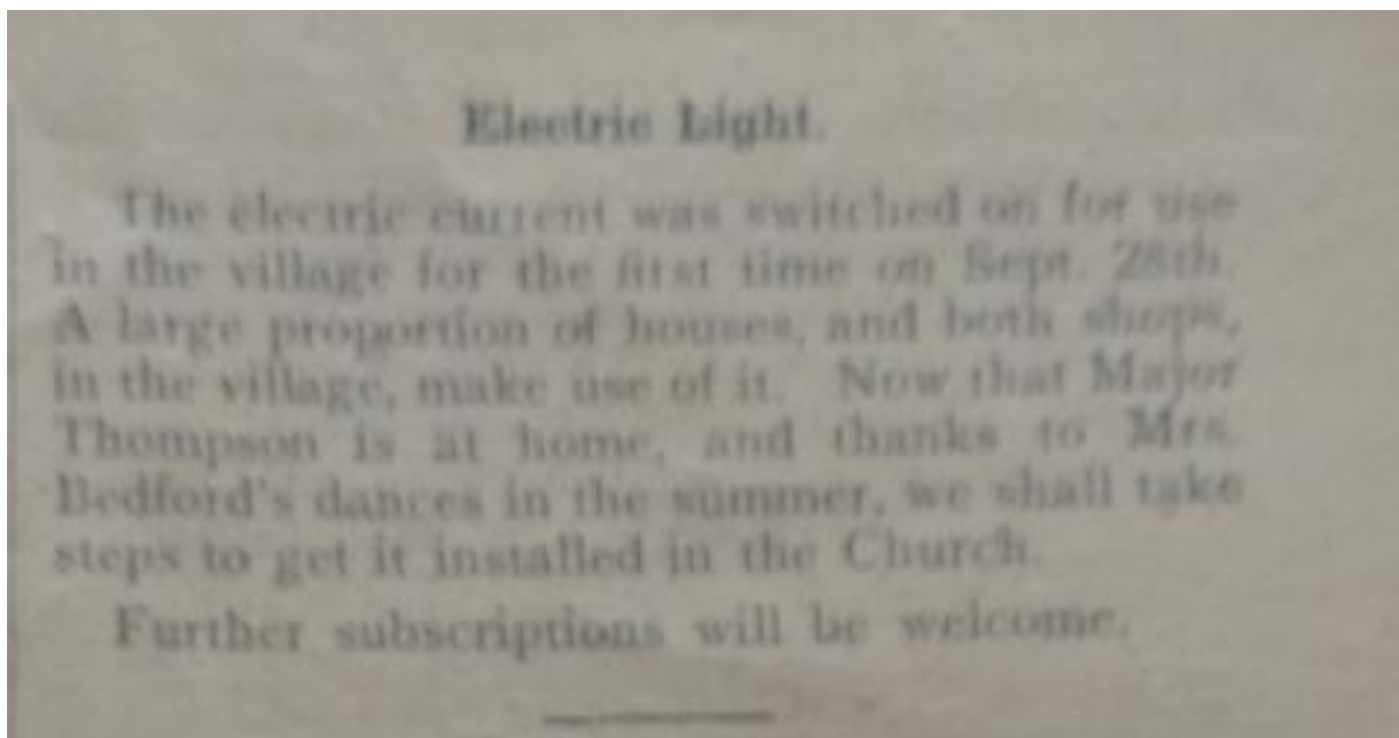
The fund raising must have been successful because in the October Parish News it was reported that contracts had been placed by the Dean Lane Institute for installation of electricity.

The Richard Crosse School was also quick off the mark in getting electricity. This is an extract from Kings Bromley Historians' publication '250 years of Kings Bromley Schools':

Mr J C Shannon [was Headmaster] from (1932 to 1939). Mr Shannon saw two significant improvements during his period at the School. Firstly an electricity supply was brought to the village in 1933 and the Schoolhouse was connected during that summer.

It was then agreed to wire the school itself and electric lighting was used in the School from October of that year. Secondly in 1937 the mains water supply was laid on to the School and Schoolhouse and connected to taps over basins in each of the three lobbies in the School. The toilets themselves were not connected at this time.

This highlights that, up to this time, not only was mains electricity not available in the village, but neither was mains water or sewage. Water was provided by means of pumps, there were outside earth closets.



These are pictures of the inside of Forge House, before electricity, with its paraffin lamps:





And the library of the Manor in 1910 with electric lamps hanging from the ceiling:

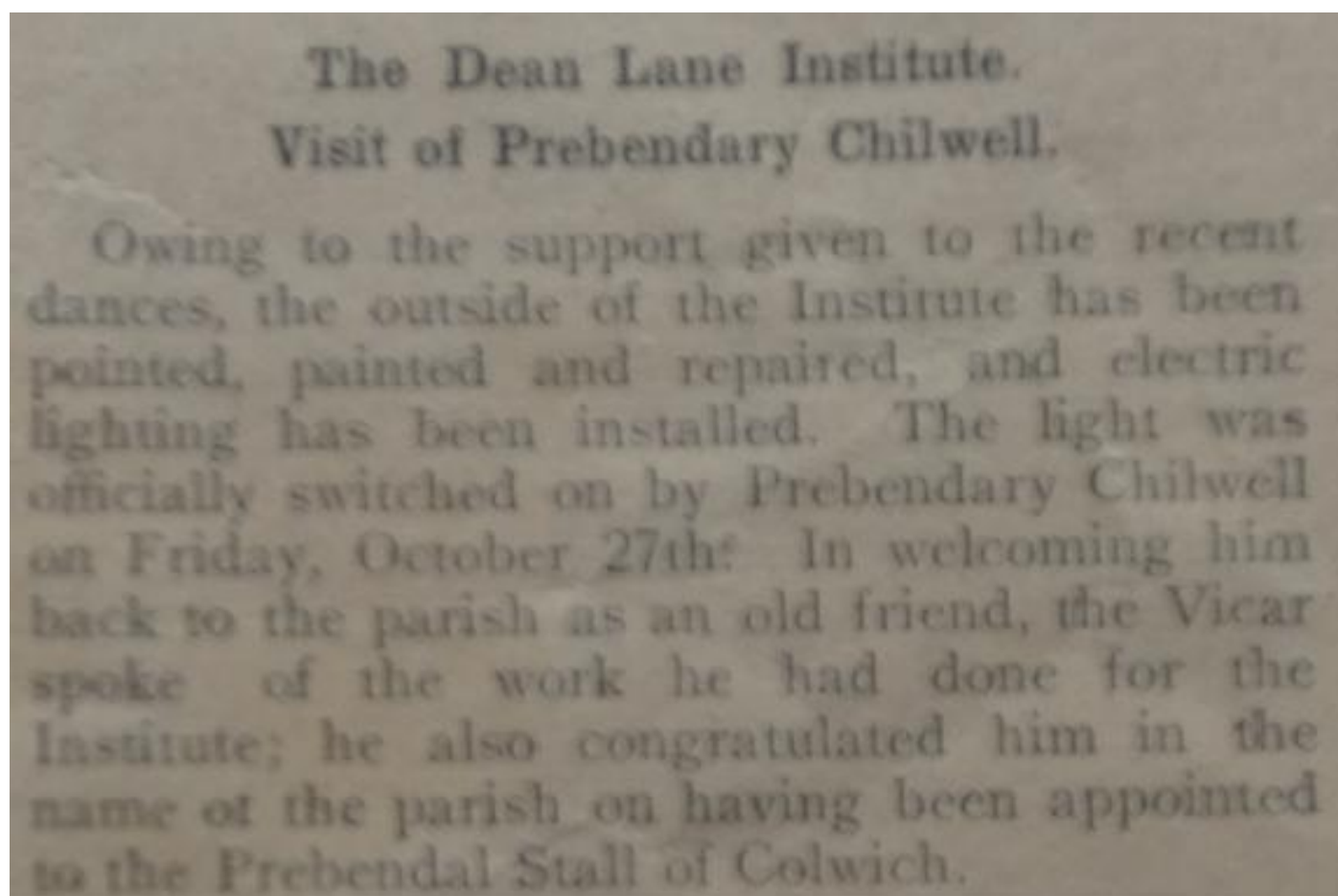


In the 1928 Winterton sale catalogue for the Manor there are several mentions of electrical appliances:

1011	20in. Chamber's iron safe
1012	Quantity of stable fittings
1013	Sundry harness
1014	Four electric radiators
1015—1021	Seven electric fans (var.)
1022	Six-tier paint cupboard and contents
1023	Saddle horse on iron frame

990	PLATFORM WEIGHING MACHINE by de Grave, Short & Co.
991	Electric vacuum cleaner

Extract from Parish News November 1933(continued) :



It is good to see that the Rev. Chilwell, who had been the force behind the building of the Dean Lane Institute (now the Village Hall) in 1914 and had left the village in 1928, was still regarded as ‘an old friend’ and was invited to officially switch the lights on.

However, as seen from these extracts from The Parish News in December 1933, fund raising continued:

The Dean Lane Institute.

The Institute will hold a Fur and Feather Whist Drive towards the end of the month, and ask for very generous support, please, to help meet the cost of outside decoration and electric light installation. If everyone who uses the Institute and appreciates these things will buy a ticket, then we shall be able to meet the cost of the work done.

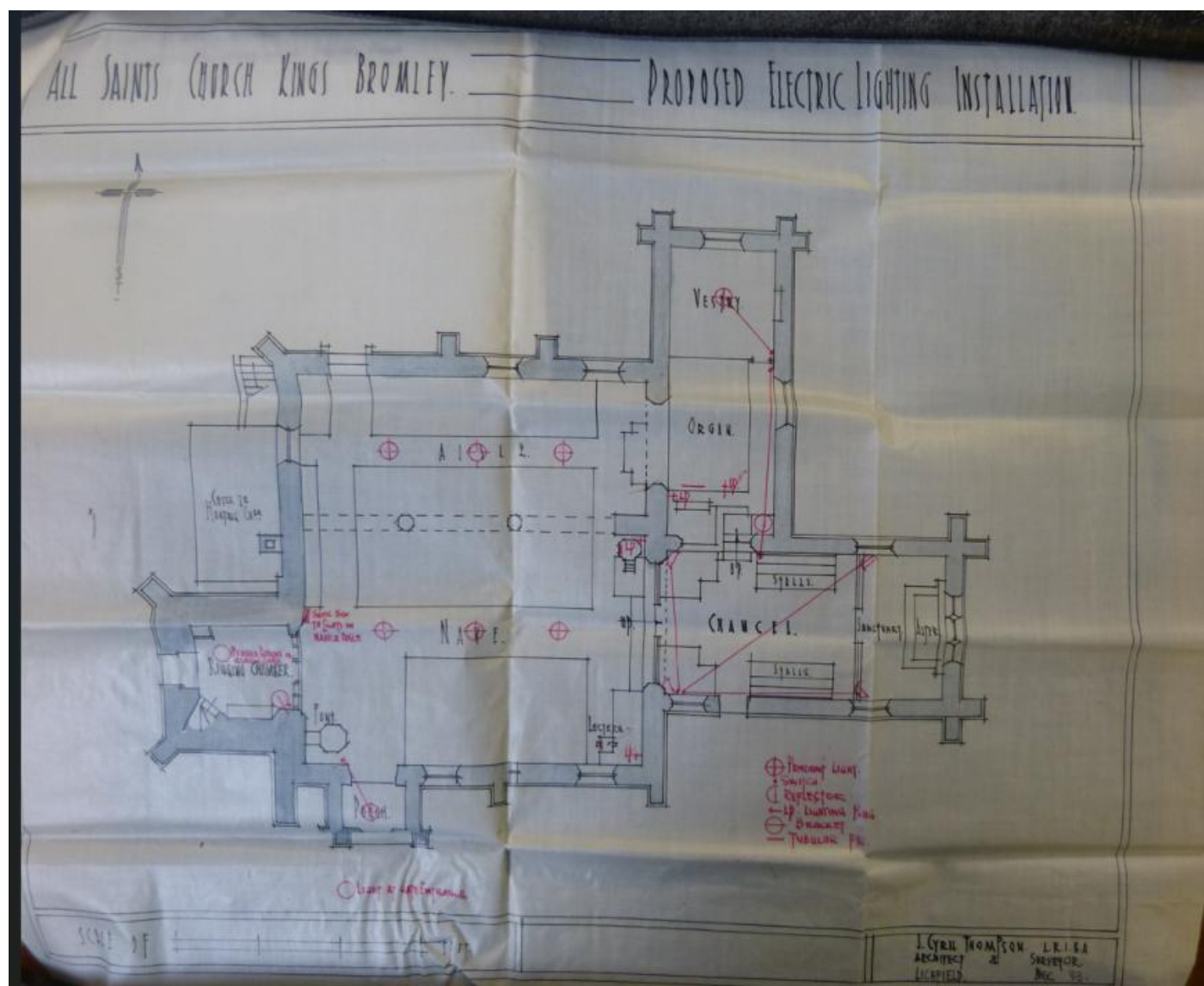
Also, in the December 1933 Parish News December, an entry showed that the Church had applied to the Diocese for a faculty for the installation of electric lights:

Electric Lighting in the Church.

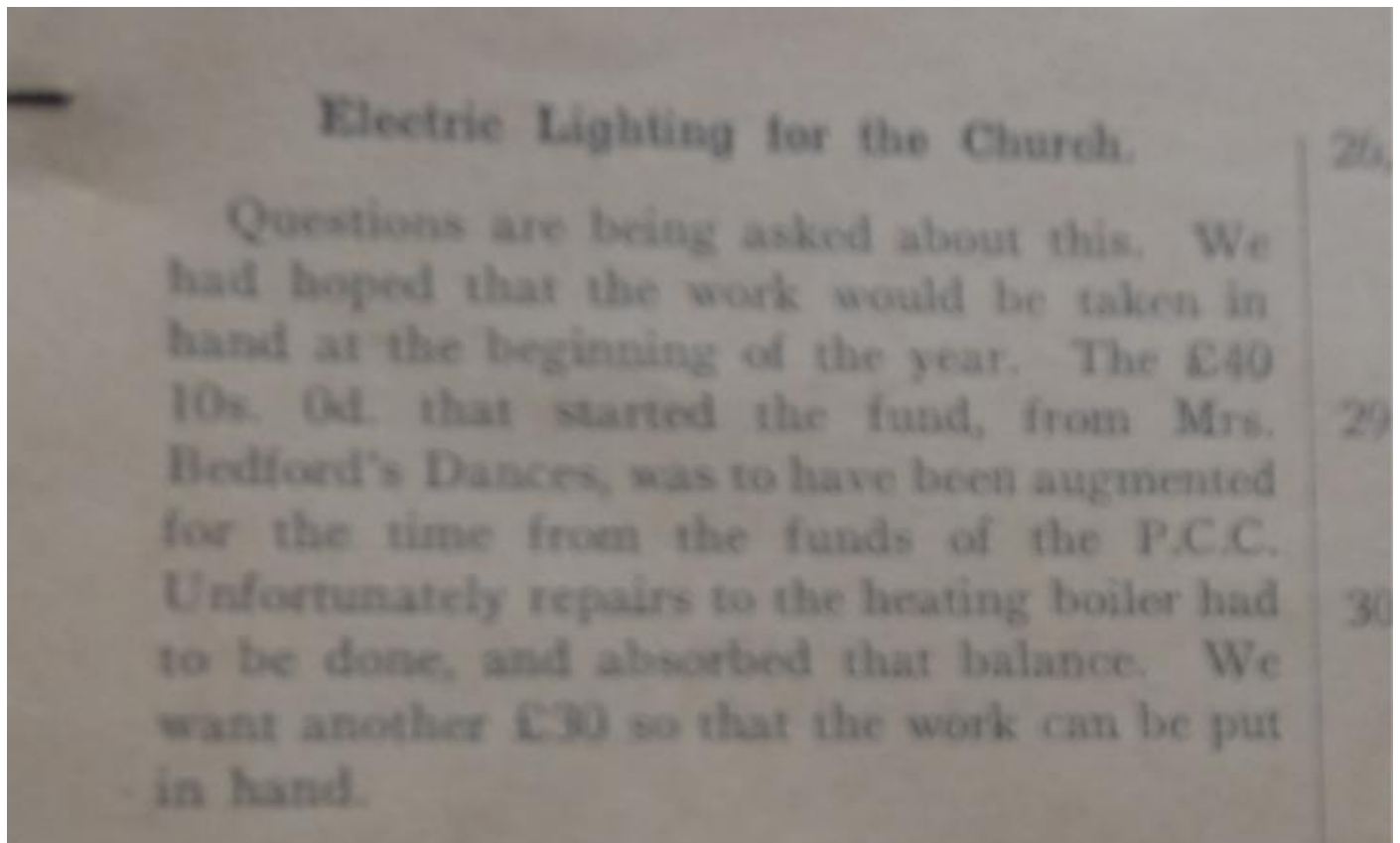
A meeting of the Parochial Church Council, held on November 27th, authorised the application for a faculty for lighting of the Church. The Vicar said the system they recommended was of six hanging lamps, three in the nave and three in the aisle, similar to those in the Cathedral; this system had the advantage of effectiveness, efficiency and economy together with a minimum of glare and dazzle. We hope the work will be put in hand early in the New Year.

This was the proposed scheme:

Location.	No. of Lighting Units.	Fittings.	Lamps. (Watts).
Porch.	1	Watertight Ftg.	60w.
ringing Chamber.	1	Bracket & Shade.	60w.
Nave.	6	Special Fitting.	100w.
Pulpit.	1	Pulpit Fitting.	25w.
Lectern.	1	" "	25w.
Organ.	1	Organ Fitting.	25w.
"	1	Pedal Fitting.	25w.
"	1	Inspection Ftg.	25w.
Chancel.	4	Reflectors.	100w.
Passage.	1	Bracket & Shade.	60w.
Vestry.	1	Shade.	60w.
Clock Chamber.	1	Bracket & Shade.	60w.
Gateway.	1	Watertight ftg.	60w.



However, all was not well as is seen from this extract from the Parish News from March 1934:



So, for the time being the Church had to make do with the old paraffin lamps:



However, finally in December 1934, the Parish News was able to declare:

ELECTRIC LIGHT.

The special fittings for the lamps in the body of the Church were finished at the beginning of November, and by means of strenuous work the contractor had the installation ready for the Sunday in the Octave of the Patronal Festival, November 4th. Prebendary Chilwell kindly came from Colwich to conduct Evensong and to preach, preceding the Service by a short Service of dedication. People groped their way to their seats by the glimmer of a few paraffin lamps, and then after a few words of invitation by Prebendary Chilwell, Mrs. Bedford threw in the main switch, flooding the Church with light in an instant.

On all sides one hears cordial appreciation of the new lighting, and congratulations are due to the designer and contractor.

Some of you will be interested to know that the six bronze lamps in the body of the church each contain a mirror glass reflector, approximately parabolic, and a 150 watt bulb. Each of the four glass reflectors in the chancel carries a 100 watt bulb.

The last of the money required for the installation has been given anonymously by a kind friend of the church.

Once again, the ex-minister, now Prebendary Chilwell, was invited to switch the lights on. The power of the Nave lights had been upgraded to 150 watts. We still do not know who the mystery benefactor was.

This George VI Coronation celebration photograph from Wednesday 12 May 1937 shows the art deco electric lamp which still stands by the war memorial:



Allan Howard, October 2026