



Fig. 3 The parish of Eton with St. Augustine, 1953



View from the Tower, c.1955

reached 500, and there was a long waiting list. It became one of the best-known youth ventures in the country, and had many imitators. Interest, both national and international, reached its peak in March 1962 when Princess Margaret and Lord Snowdon visited the Club, welcomed by several hundred teenagers, and were entertained by Cliff Richard and the Shadows. The 59 Club hit the headlines again two months later when its members chartered a 'Rock 'n' Roll' train to Clacton for their annual outing, and danced and 'twisted' all the way there and back. 1962 also saw the foundation of a new section of the Club, the Motorcycle Section. This, although the 59 Club itself is now history, is still in existence, settled in different headquarters at St. Augustine's, Haggerston.

The 59 Club was, in fact, more backward than forward looking. This statement would have come as a shock to those who heralded it in the years 1959-62 as an entirely new concept in church youth work. Certainly the 'no rules, no religion' image with which the press endowed it (and which was not altogether fair) made this club appear positively revolutionary. But the underlying concept of the Mission catering in a social way for large numbers of local young people, with royal visits and special outings as a kind of added extra, was as old as the Mission itself. It was the last venture of its kind at the Eton Mission. There was no longer the need to provide leisure activities at which people could, for an hour or two, forget their miserable home conditions. The old poverty had gone for good. Young people leaving school could earn relatively high wages, and did not feel the need for club facilities as their parents and grandparents had done. In 1917 the vicar, Ralph White, had declared that social clubs did not have the value they once had. His remark was far too premature. The Rev. Edwin Stark, a successor, could say much the same thing in 1966, when it certainly had become true.

However, much the social side dwindled, the spiritual work of the Mission went on, and until redevelopment the congregation continued to be large.