

# Cotham at 40

## Anniversary Special

Sept 2016



On September 11th, dozens of old and current members of Cotham Parish Church joined together to give thanks to God and to each other for all that this place and our shared life have offered across forty years of ministry.

There was a very strong feeling throughout the day's worship and time spent socialising, that we were with, and there on behalf of the many friends who have died, or who were unable to be with us. Photos and a slide show, letters and Nev's sermon all referenced the journey we continue to make. We have worshipped and eaten, laughed and cried together, and those experiences and memories have enabled each of us to face new challenges in our lives.

Whether you were there at its inception as a newly formed Anglican Parish, have been a one-time pilgrim with us, or are a current member, I hope you will enjoy these pictures and words.



the Sermon for Sunday Sept 11<sup>th</sup> 2016  
(edited by Nev)

40 years of Cotham Parish Church

At the start I could see at least six more suitable persons to preach: and that was just amongst the Ordained!

There are Three parts to this address - PAST: PRESENT: FUTURE?

**PAST:**

Firstly, Please let us give thanks:

- For Archdeacon Leslie Williams, who saw the potential of uniting the congregations of St. Mary's, Tyndall's Park with St. Saviour's, Woolcot Park in the former Highbury Chapel...
- For Canon Geoffrey Grant, a kind of Diocesan mid-wife, who patiently helped the two very different congregations to unite...
- For Dorothy Ridge, who visited, listened and helped many of the reluctant to join in...
- For Dr John Bishop, first Director of Music, whose great gifts gave such a clear focus to the worship, though not always easy to work with (pot/kettle?)

And also:

- To each other, especially those who, when you see them today, remind you of any act of kindness, insight, help they gave, and were not thanked at the time ...

Secondly: One outstanding regret in my eighteen years as your Vicar:

In 1987 you gave me a Sabbatical in South Africa, where I attended the Funeral of a Black activist (and I was warned, "If you've a choice between tear gas and Alsations, head straight for the dogs.") I therefore thought I'd learnt something about Priorities & Standing up to mis-placed authority, but when an animal welfare bomb exploded during a Cotham Parish Eucharist [*June 1990, editor*] and we were ordered to evacuate this building I cravenly capitulated and led us away from our obedience to our Lord's astonishing Command, "Do this in remembrance of me." Some of us would rightly have left; but some of us might have responded by saying that the risk of another bomb is as nothing in the Eternity of what we are about at this very moment.

**PRESENT:**

(I'd remind you that I'm cramming for my finals).

John Fenton, who led two quiet days here, often said that St. Mark's Gospel is written for the cowardly, the frightened, the needy, the threatened: "It really is the Gospel for us today!" For fifty years I've short changed congregations in my preaching on Mark: he's not in a hurry, but writes **urgently**. It never stuck me 'till I retired that every copy of the Bible was unique until the arrival of the Printing Press. In Retirement I've discovered Ched Meyers' challenging commentary: '*Binding the Strong Man*'. Mark's gospel tells us of the three emphases in Jesus' Ministry: 1) A passionate concern for 'the poor' (in the widest use of that description); 2) The building up of the Disciples into being Christians; 3) Passionate attacks upon any in authority who exploited or abused the Children of Israel (Old & New). There is far too much sentimentality in our thinking: the widow who put her two remaining coins into the Temple Treasury may have handed over all she had. More important or relevant is the fact that some Official demanded payment so that she could even enter the Temple Precincts in the first place.

**FUTURE:**

Sometimes it looks bloody bleak - ecologically, politically, economically and ecclesiastically (Is the Church of England sinking into a re-organisation that will leave its dotted remains merely a number of churches scattered in England?)

At the end of the BRI Inquiry into Paediatric Cardiac Surgery (which I attended in Retirement for my Cousin Mary and her husband Mike) I finally got to meet in London the mighty impressive,

brilliant listener Chairman, (now Sir) Ian Kennedy. After the launch of the Inquiry Team's findings I thanked him, but dared to suggest that he might conduct an Inquiry into the future of the Church of England. He became instantly stern, very serious. "I've never undertaken any inquiry into any organisation that I thought was dying on its feet."

I dare to hope my reply was given to me by the Holy Spirit: "You may be right - but the Christian Church anywhere has Resurrection in its blood stream, and in its DNA. If you do get the Invitation, accept it, because you might well be the very person who discovers the first green shoots of the new Resurrection." After a pause he promised he'd remember.

So, we celebrate: we give thanks - at this wonderful Gift, here, now. Any normal Leader, knowing what He knew of his Chosen, knowing that **all** were about to betray, deny, run away would surely have had a last meal alone with his remarkable mother, and told the failing Twelve, "See you after sundown in Gethsemane (see St. John's Gospel.) You all know where it is."

*Rev Canon Neville Boundy*



Music, fizz and canapés before lunch

Dear all

It is really hard to put into words memories of Cotham. Along with St Paul's, Cotham remains a very special church for us. It was where I cut my teeth in ministry, it was where Jacky and I lived together as a married couple for the first time, it was a time of joy and energy that carries us still in difficult times.

I remember a good deal of laughter. There was the time, early in my curacy, that Paul (the vicar) decided to rig up internet for the church office and cut through the phone line, triggering an alarm that never seemed to stop. (I awarded him the Order of the Cut Wire for that!). During my first funeral, unbeknown to me, a mouse decided to make an appearance as I gave the address. It stopped, looked round and then decided the sermon was not up to scratch and left. I also remember Eddie Hughes' April Fool, when he put a Welsh Bible out for Morning Prayer.

I remember Cotham as a place that taught me a great deal. All of my firsts in ministry happened at Cotham or at St Paul's. I made lots of mistakes, which were all graciously dealt with. I was deeply formed by praying each morning in the chancel, with the story of the Good Samaritan surrounding the space for prayer. I learned the difference between good ideas and reality. But more importantly I learned how to put good ideas into practice, and how to have more good ideas! During my time at Cotham, I saw the demise of Resonance and the rise of Foundation. Both taught me a lot about new forms of community and worship. I also learned to insist that we downed tools and went to the Highbury Vaults for last orders.

Other memories include working with the youth group, and taking them to Viney Hill in the Forest of Dean. Specifically, I remember tying Caroline Roberts to a fence so she could anchor adults on the end of a rope without being lifted six feet into the air; confiscating contraband from Jeremy Dyson and Jonathan Roberts; and being the only one that had to go to casualty after the young people made rafts.

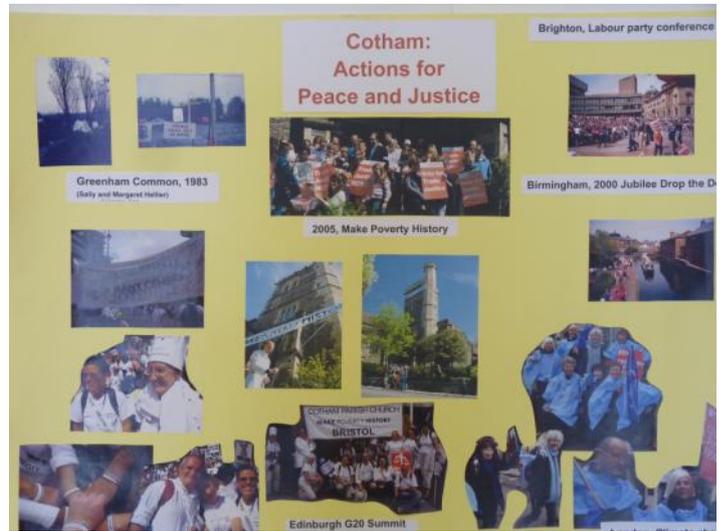
Jacky and I both remember having a bookbinder in our basement, the theatre school productions, Make Poverty History banners and rallies (and trying to get a phone call into a Sunday morning service). Jacky says that Cotham was an easy place to learn to be a vicar's wife while still being herself. For that she is very grateful to Cotham and especially to Sharon Roberts who modelled that so well. It was an important lesson for other places that had different expectations. But above all were the people, with whom we laughed, talked, ate and drank, prayed, learned, worked, cried and so much more. We have many lasting friendships, and are grateful for them all. One person looms very large in my memory. It's not Paul Roberts, who was my vicar and Training Incumbent. It is Pat. Pat, when I knew her, was sinking into Alzheimer's. Her fixed, circular walks always included the church, where she was cared for, given a cuppa and, on occasion, detained until her carers caught up with her. But I came to see that Pat had a hugely important ministry to us all. She gave us a place to exercise our care, and she recalled us time and again to the truths of the Gospel. I remember vividly Pat's ability to stop arguments in the Bible study group by simply reading out the text. If argument persisted, she'd simply read it louder. Pat reminded us of our dependence on God, and brought us sharply into God's presence.

We are very sorry not to be with you for the celebrations. Cotham retains a special place in our hearts. Thanks be to God for forty years of service and witness. May God bless you all as you move into the future.

Much love to everyone

*Simon and Jacky (Taylor)*





All my very best wishes to everyone at Cotham on this momentous occasion. I am so sorry I can't be with you but I want to say thanks again to everyone who remembers me for making me so welcome.

Looking forward to the Golden Jubilee and beyond!

*Bernard Silverman*

I shall be sorry to miss the Cotham celebration. I'm sure it will be a very happy occasion and I shall be with you all in spirit.

Love and best wishes to all at Cotham,

*Dick Clements*

I know I wasn't involved in Cotham right at the beginning but I do find it somewhat surprising that it is 40 years since the amalgamation.

I can't believe that it is 30 years since you were rehearsing Daddy and others for the 10 year birthday party

If I remember rightly Daddy gave his party pieces – The Gas Man cometh and Mud Mud by Flanders and Swann. He may have given us London Omnibus too - I don't quite remember now.

Do give our best wishes to all those who are able to be there.

*Rachel Tuke (née Shephard-Walwyn)*

Dear Cotham Parish Church Community, Congratulations on your 40th Anniversary! God has been faithful to you and I pray that that you will enjoy this celebration together. I really enjoyed the small involvement I had with you whilst I was at St Matthews and as Area Dean. I pray that you will find continue to seek God's direction for you and follow it for many years to come and that you will be blessed by God's presence and work in, and through you.

Give thanks for the past, enjoy the present moment and look to the future with hope in Christ.

Yours in Him

*Mat Ineson*

Dear Richard and everyone at Cotham,

40 years of Cotham, still the best Church we've ever attended, and honestly spoilt the rest for us! The best and friendliest congregation and the most inclusive church we've ever managed to find, and we live in London now (but still not found as good a church here).

We miss you all!

God bless and keep up the wonderful joy that is Cotham Parish Church!

Lots of love,

**Gaynor & Tati**    xxxx



I do hope the celebrations go well, and I send greetings to any of the folk who may remember me.

*Revd Jeanette Gosney*

*Jeanette now works as Parish Development Officer for the Diocese of St. Albans*

## From dark to light

Who is this at the dead of night  
Carrying the cross from dark to light?  
Sneaking in through twice locked doors  
To raise that crucifix once more  
High above the Highbury altar  
With steady steps that did not falter  
Their purpose clear, a fait accompli,  
A Christ above for all to see  
That some would have left behind  
Out of sight and out of mind  
In St. Mary's, Woodland Road  
For years its holy-smoked abode.  
The rescuers they numbered two  
Geoff and Bob the stealthy crew  
Two stalwarts of the Cof E  
Both keen to do things properly  
And so for forty years that cross  
Has been up there looking down at us  
The progeny of reluctant union  
Now a church of full inclusion

written by David C Johnson ©August 2016



**And finally...**

St Mary's - it was High Church,  
Bells and smells and smoke;  
halfway up the candle,  
ritual was no joke.

Chandos Road was Broad  
Church:

Jumble sales and teas;  
Good old faithful members,  
Praying on their knees.

**Onward Cotham liberals.  
We will hoot for peace.  
From inclusive welcome  
we will never cease.**

Geoffrey forged the marriage,  
Two made into one.  
This was thought would better  
make the Kingdom come.  
Nev the Rev came later,  
full of life and verve,  
wearing rainbow jumpers -  
God, he's got a nerve.

**Onward Cotham liberals.  
We will hoot for peace.  
From inclusive welcome  
we will never cease.**

Paul excelled at I.T.  
Got us all wired up.  
Set alarm bells ringing when  
the wrong wire was cut.  
In Transforming Communities  
Everyone took part.  
Groups were meeting here and  
there,  
no-one must lose heart.

**Onward Cotham liberals.  
We will hoot for peace.  
From inclusive welcome  
we will never cease.**

Richard Holroyd led us in song.  
He explained that 'hoot for peace' reminded us of  
Lois Atherden, who died this summer and for many  
years was a daily witness for Peace in the city centre.



*L-R: Chorus leader, Paul Roberts—Cotham's vicar No 3, Julie Nicholson, Richard Holroyd*

Now I find it's my turn.  
I will take my part.  
Moving chairs and tables  
I've turned into an art.  
Will we get new heating/?  
Will the roof fall in?  
A good hope for the future  
despite the state we're in.

**Onward Cotham liberals.  
We will hoot for peace.  
From inclusive welcome  
we will never cease.**



We aspire to cherish all, regardless of marital and social status, sexual orientation or level of church commitment  
[www.cotham.bristol.anglican.org](http://www.cotham.bristol.anglican.org)

Thank you to Sue Hawkins and Diana Hilton for taking photos during the day; to Nev who edited and typed up his sermon notes; to David for his poem, and Richard for the song.  
*Sally Seaman, editor*