



THE INDEPENDENT

MILL ROAD NEWS

N°21 Dec 2018

Meeting Places and Beliefs

Three people from Mill Road Bridges Committee were recently invited to look around the almost complete Mosque in Romsey Town. Regrettably I could not partake but when Richard Wood's account of his visit and photographs arrived in my Inbox I was overwhelmed by the building's beauty. It was only when I ventured into St Barnabas that I realised that some of the outstanding design priorities evident in the mosque were also evident in the refurbished St Barnabas. I arranged an interview with Helen Jackson, one of St Barnabas' Church Wardens, to ask her about the architect's design brief.



Photo: by John Caldwell

Letting the light in.

Helen's first comment was that the St Barnabas' community had been lucky in so far as their Victorian Church built in 1869 for railway workers was relatively undistinguished. I am not sure that I agree with her on that but what is outstanding about the building's new personality, is the quantity of white daylight which

The Editors Welcome the Festivities

Our Winter Fair marks the beginning of winter, the build-up to Christmas and the transition to the New Year. A fun part of our fair is the hospitality of our 'faith communities' who welcome visitors into their gathering places. As the 21st Century progresses we are becoming more and more familiar with 'like-minded groups' forming and debating online. Ideas are shaped and thoughts are shared by people who may never meet each other face to face and do not really know each other fully. It's therefore good to remind ourselves that many belief groups still actually meet in buildings made of bricks and mortar, or marble and glass, where they talk and listen to each other rather than simply typing at one another and then clicking into the ether.

In this issue we will look at some of those buildings and their art. Survey the new Religious Studies curriculum in Cambridgeshire's school. Look at community work undertaken by faith-organisations and humanitarians. Enjoy a few surprising historical facts and, in our Dates for Your Diary, outline 2019's most important festivals across our communities.

Mill Road News is not associated with any religious group and is a not-for-profit community group whose aim is to serve the Mill Road Community. Our Committee is staffed by volunteers.

Charlotte de Blois and John Caldwell.



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Photo: by John Caldwell

streams in from side windows, whilst the interior retains a friendly hush not generally associated with Petersfield's stretch of Mill Road. At certain times of year, on certain days, clear natural light is punctuated with colour as rays of sun penetrate the remaining Victorian stained glass windows. This seems like a good fusion of old and new.

David Parr, ecclesiastic painter

I asked Helen about the decorative areas in the church which were, for a time, thought to have been painted by David Parr, a Mill Roader from the late 19th Century and early 20th Century, whose life was devoted to creating decorative patterns in churches during working hours and also his own home in Gwydir Street when he was off duty. Helen apologised for not knowing more about the true origins of the painted decoration. She was however able to tell me quite a bit about the restoration and rebuilding of the church. "To a certain extent the building designed itself", she said.

The project was led by a practice of church architects called Archangel; cleaning of structural pillars revealed beautiful purple colouring and this was retained and then referenced in other parts of church. Peter Higginson a local carpenter was tasked to design and construct structures for the altar and the result is an interesting 3-legged object symbolising the Trinity.

Food or Organ Music?

I asked whether the pre-restored church had possessed an organ and the answer was "yes". Helen sounded sad. "The instrument was in very poor repair and needed a large amount of money spending on it" as singing and guitar accompaniments is now popular ways of creating music at St Barnabas and weighing up limitations and priorities, the team decided to remove the organ to release space for a substantial kitchen.

Our visits to the mosque, St Philips and St Barnabas confirm that the preparation of food and the provision of cheap and wholesome food for

the community has become an important part of the way faith groups interact with the wider community. This was not part of church-going in my experience as a small child some decades ago. Could these concerns be a feature which Anglicanism is absorbing from Islam and Judaism?

Shared Origins

Apart from light and food, there was another feature of St Barnabas makeover that reminded me of the mosque. I told Helen about the mosque's community garden which will separate the prayer hall from the road, just as the garden at St Barnabas separates the atrium and nave from a narrow and busy crossroads. Her answer was simple and her tone joyful "Nice, she said – I think if we all go back far enough – we will find that our inspiration has come from the same place".

Charlotte de Blois Mill Road Resident.

A note from the History Society. Did you know that St Barnabas Church (consecrated in 1869) was conceived as a mission church for the rapidly growing Mill Road district. The Cambridge Chronicle of June 1869 commented 'The Mill road district is at present a kind of suburb to Cambridge, containing some 600-700 persons, and it is rapidly increasing.....' Its first vicar, Rev. C.C. Butler formerly curate of St Andrew the Less, trained as a medical missionary, but was persuaded to concentrate on the 'very poor and populous' parish of St Barnabas.

Caro Wilson.

Architecture and Worship

On 17 September 2018 two Mill Road Bridges committee members (and one ex-member) were honoured to have a guided tour of the nearly-completed Cambridge Mosque in Romsey Town. We were welcomed by Dr Tim Winter, Chair of The Cambridge Mosque Trust and Stephen Rodgers who manages construction at the site.

The structure was designed by the late David Marks, who, along with Julia Barfield, conceived and designed the London Eye to celebrate the turn of the millennium. This building too, is in tune with its place and time and the result is an outstanding gem for Cambridge.

A stunning aspect at ground level, is the structural supporting timbers at each side of the main entrance. These timbers deliberately and effectively, evoke trees in a forest. They look onto gardens which the whole community, Muslim and non-Muslim will be

welcome to enjoy and there will be a community meeting-room (to the west) and a café (to the east).

Natural daylight floods the main prayer hall through the 'forest canopy'. This is in tune with the desire to create a world-class eco-mosque of which Cambridge can be justifiably proud.

"Whilst female and male worshippers pray separately, in practice the degree of separation in different traditions has considerable variation" Dr Winter explained. "Some sisters do not want to be on view to the brothers whilst praying, others wish to be in the sisters' own area but feel no need to



Photo: by Richard Wood



Photo: by Richard Wood

be obscured". There will be a women's gallery in the main prayer hall and, if bounded by an opaque immovable wall, a permanent physical separation would be imposed. This would neither take account of variations in different Islamic traditions, nor of potential future variations in the ratio of women to men worshipping at any one time.

The solution is simple and clever, There is to be an intricately-carved, moveable wooden screen which will delicately taper from a height of 2 metres at one side of the hall to a height of a few centimetres at some point across the prayer-hall. "Thus any sister, from any



Photo: by Richard Wood

tradition should be able to find a prayer-space with which she is comfortable".

Internal details include octagonal windows, high in the wall, and the arched windows in the dome will have an extra layer of coloured glass panes arranged into Islamic geometric patterns.

The external design is magnificent and possibly once Mill Road's traffic problem is solved, Cambridge City sightseeing tours might like to run via Mill Road as the dome, clad in gold-effect copper-anodised zinc, would look spectacular from an open-top tourist bus.

The less visible parts of the roof are to be eco-friendly bearing sustainable energy equipment – photovoltaic arrays and air-source heat-pumps – together with rainwater harvesting apparatus.

Dr Winter gave us a technical explanation here; whilst ground-sourced heat-pumps have some advantages over air-source – particularly at low air-temperatures – the large underground car-park and the height of the water-table on the site ruled this option out.

One can see how the sustainable energy installations will go a long way towards fulfilling the Trust's plan to create Europe's first eco-mosque. "Reflecting Islam's contribution to contemporary debates over sustainability, the mosque will incorporate significant design features which will minimise carbon emission and emphasise the role of faith in promoting responsible management of the earth's resources".

The edges of the roof will be finished

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Photo: by Richard Wood

The entrance to the underground car-park with space for approximately 80 cars

with crenelated stones cut in an English quarry but fitted by an Irish company and the international sourcing of materials will include marble flooring from Spain, and oak panelling from Northern Ireland, whilst service access grilles will be comprised of wooden decorative panels from Switzerland.

Exterior walls will be finished off with tile cladding evoking Cambridge's Victorian bricks – whites with red detail – and alternating red and white brick with stone elements of Islamic calligraphy-reminiscent of the Mosque at Cordoba.

Site Manager Stephen Rodgers remarked that a number of Belfast construction workers are about to become leading experts on Islamic calligraphy. He probably wasn't joking as any tiling errors would need to be dismantled and re-clad!

If you are impatient to see the wonders of the new Cambridge Mosque take a look at the Cambridge Mosque Trust's photographic gallery.

Note : The Cambridge Mosque Trust will not follow or expect adherence to any particular school of Islam and will welcome worshippers from every part of the Muslim family, of both genders. (A mission statement can be found at cambridgemosquetrust.org)

Richard Wood Petersfield Resident.

Mill Road's Zeitgeist

We live in interesting times. Science and technology, like never before, are providing us with wondrous abilities to share knowledge and connect but is this, paradoxically, having an adverse effect on community spirit? Some would say that the smart phone alone has had a massive anti-social impact on society and you only have to go into the cafés of Mill Rd to see many customers singularly absorbed in their cyber-worlds to wonder whether we are actually conversing with each other less these days. We understand science

to be built on the testable, repeatable proof of the physical realm, often interpreted as the continual discovery of truth, but is there still a place for truth of a more metaphysical nature? There are many places of 'faith' worship on and around Mill Rd with a total number of regular attendees of many thousands which proves that belief in the divine is still alive and kicking. Non-theist may wonder how theists collaborate with other secular organisations to help improve life on and around Mill Rd?

John Caldwell

Vice Chair of Mill Road Bridges

The Romsey Spirit

Although Cambridge is one of the most prosperous cities in the country, it also has one of the greatest disparities between rich and poor and more than ever needs institutions and mechanisms that help bind community.

I went in search of those mechanisms. My first stop was Stuart The Vicar of St Philips.

Stuart writes: Since arriving in Romsey I have been privileged to have worked with the church leaders of St Martin's, Mill Road Baptist, Seventh day Adventist, also Thirst and C3, on shared events (non-Christians may not know that these groups straddle a wide array of Protestant theologies). This year we had a community picnic on Romsey Recreation Ground, and we hope to do this again in 2019.

Sacred buildings are important

St Philip's Church spent £1.5m to create a modern Centre for the community to use. Central to this has been the much appreciated Cornerstone Café; some say it provides the best meals on Mill Road. It is a

challenge to keep the ship afloat but our wonderful staff and volunteers are supported from centre income and the giving of church members, who seek to serve the Romsey community in peace, compassion and love.



Photo: by John Caldwell

The people of the 'book' get together

Last year we enjoyed 'get togethers' with local Muslims. A number of local Christians attended an Iftar at the Islamic Centre on Sturton Street while St Philip's hosted a Harvest Supper for 35 Muslims and 45 local Christians of

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all ages. We learned more about each other including our similarities and differences.

Hope Cambridge

My compassionate work starts with Hope Cambridge - which I chair - a network for around 100 leaders of Cambridge churches and Christian based local social projects. While we have different ways of worship and traditions; we seek to serve the city and meet to pray and express our unity in Jesus. A number of social

community projects have emerged in recent years such as:- Street Pastors; the Churches Homeless Project which provides beds for street people over the colder months, a food bank and money advice.

Romsey Mill

Over 35 years ago Romsey Churches founded Romsey Mill to meet the needs of local youth; now it works beyond Cambridge while still seeking to support young people who struggle with education and the challenges that

life brings. Similarly we support the development of 'Thirst' at St Philip's school formed to help struggling families.

St Philips Primary School

St Philip's Primary (C of E) school - the hidden gem of Romsey - has served many thousands of Romsey families over the years, providing a good well rounded education and a place for community support. It has been well served by many St Philip's church members and those from other Cambridge churches who give their time and skills as governors and perform other voluntary roles. Our churches run day care centres and friendship groups for the elderly, children and vulnerable: St Martins Day Care centre, St Philip's Craft café, Tots Time, Friday Friends and the Phil's People groups are open to all.

The Alpha Course

Like St Barnabas we run the Alpha Course to provide a space for anyone to come and ask questions about life and discover more about Jesus. This runs each autumn and has been much appreciated. All are invited to enjoy a meal, chat, video presentation and discussion.

Rev. Stewart Taylor
Vicar of St Philips



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Religious Education in Cambridgeshire

What is Religious Education?

RE is a compulsory subject but unlike all other statutory subjects, there is no nationally laid down syllabus. Each Local Authority has its own syllabus and asks its Standing Advisory Council on Religious Education (SACRE) to form a committee, at least every 5 years, to review and amend it.

A SACRE is an independent body created under the Education Acts and funded by the local authority. It considers and advises on the provision of religious education in the Local Authority's area and is empowered by it to review the local syllabus for Religious Education.

It is made up of representatives of the Local Authority, the Church of England, Association of Teachers and representatives of other faith or other Christian groups and in some places other interested non-religious groups. In Cambridgeshire Humanists are included.

Who decides what?

Each SACRE has a wide brief which includes collective worship, monitoring RE teaching, recommending speakers and places of worship to visit, designing supplementary teaching materials, contributing to

teacher training and teachers' in-service training, and fostering interfaith and community links. Sadly, but understandably, most SACREs do not manage all these tasks. They have little funding, meet only three or four times a year and therefore must rely heavily on the local authority's Religious Education Advisor and volunteers.

Cambridgeshire, Northamptonshire, Peterborough and Rutland share an Advisor. To make the best of scarce financial resources and limited personnel, the SACREs joined together for the recent revision of the Religious Education syllabus. The main aim of the new syllabus, which began to be taught this term, is to develop religious literacy. It is comprehensive yet short, flexible and not prescriptive yet meets the requirements of legislation and both supports and promotes the vital role of Religious Education in schools.

Diversity and Inclusivity

Although the law requires that Christianity be the predominant religion taught in schools; to reflect the diversity of modern Cambridgeshire each of the major faiths and humanism are included.

The syllabus and supporting material are published on-line. You can read it all for yourself if you search for 'Cambridgeshire SACRE' and then follow the links.

Julia Ewans

Chair of our local SACRE.

Doctors surgery was the birthplace of radical thought.

Not all belief groups revere a creator. The more earthly concerns of politics sometimes bring people together to create strong beliefs and Mill Road has a surprising monument to two powerful twentieth century movements. Did you know that 25 Mill Road, now the home of the Petersfield Surgery, was set up as a surgery by Upendra Dutt, who first travelled to Britain from India about 1875 as a Gilchrist Scholar to read medicine. He and his family lived in the house and during the 1890's he and his politically active wife, Anna Palme held meetings of the Majlis Society whose members included Subhas Chanda Bose and Jawaharal

Nehru, both important figures of Indian Nationalism. His sons, Clemens Palme Dutt and Rajani Palme Dutt were founder members of the British Communist Party, as well as of the Indian Nationalist Movement, both, it is believed, inspired by their father's experiences as a doctor in a very poor working-class area.

Caro Wilson

Mill Road History Society.

The Salvation Army

The Salvation Army has a strong presence on Mill Road with a community centre and a charity shop on the street itself and a church tucked away at the top of Tenison Road. This evangelical branch of Christian Protestantism was formed by a Methodist preacher William Booth in 1865 in the East End of London which,



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Communication makes Community.

at the time, was an area inhabited by deprived factory workers. Now the army provides general support for homeless people with alcohol and drugs problems as its mission is "to meet human needs in His name without discrimination". It also runs a family tracing service. Most people associate the Salvation Army with brass bands and the talent and inclination to play brass instruments seems to run strong through some Salvationist families.

Charlotte de Blois
Mill Road Resident

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Mawson Hall

In his article on his visit to the mosque Richard Wood has mentioned the Grand Mosque in Cordova and those of us who have been lucky enough to visit it will know that it is now a church. Buildings often change ownership and identity. Did you know that before it became Mill Road's Mosque in 1982, Mawson Hall in Mawson Road was first a Gospel Hall, then a meeting room for the Plymouth Brethren, and then a social centre for the Co-operative Society. In order to buy it the Cambridge Muslim Welfare Society had to fight off a proposal from the Royal Naval Association to use it as Social Club. ('The Cambridge Mosque and Muslim Community' Timothy Insoll. Cambridge Antiquarian Society. Vol XC published 2001)

Caro Wilson Mill Road History Society

Dear Editor

There are doubts about the impact of a religious building on the scale of the new Mosque, as there were with the building of the nearby C3 church. We must hope they are wrong. But what I do think is that the Mosque is going to be the best bit of architecture on Mill Road, and I am glad that Tim Winter and others listened to EMRAG, residents and the Council Design Brief, and set the building back from the road. This will make a huge difference. Very soon it may well achieve the status that the Catholic Church now enjoys, the best bit of architecture on Hills Road – imagine Cambridge without that spire. With my historian's hat on, some of the present day objections are reminiscent of those directed towards the Catholic Church over hundred years ago.

Allan Brigham Town not Gown

Mill Road Bridge Closure

Govia Thameslink Railway and Network Rail held a public meeting at the Double Tree by Hilton Hotel, Granta Place, Cambridge on 1st November. There was a presentation about the proposed plans to close Mill Rd Bridge to all traffic including pedestrians and cyclists for 8 weeks from 13th May next year. The meeting was well attended and many suggestions were made by traders, councillors and local residents about how the impact could be lessened by constructing a temporary bridge, working a 7-day week instead of a 5 day-week, longer daily working hours and moving the dates to span the less busy summer months of July and August. Videos of the full presentation and comments after the meeting can be seen on the Mill Rd TV Youtube channel or Facebook page. If you would like to comment go to www.thameslinkprogramme.co.uk

From the Archives! how the Bridge was kept open in the 1980's



Photo: 191-jh-bridge-work courtesy of Mill Road History Society

This photo shows that when the 1980's bridge was built, one lane of the road was always kept open AND there was a separate pedestrian/cycle bridge.



Photo: b-mill-k80-19809 courtesy of Mill Road History Society

Work has started on rebuilding the railway bridge at Mill Road Cambridge, an accident black spot. The new bridge is being built alongside the existing one and then will be slotted into the place of the old bridge once that has been moved. The change over should take place in November and British Rail hopes there will be minimal traffic disruption. The new bridge will be higher than the present one so there will be space for the overhead electricity wires forming part of the electrification of the main line. (CEN 28 May 1980)

Dear Editor,

It must be overwhelming for the Mill Road traders to hear that they are going to have to inform all their suppliers of new delivery routes during the 8 week period when the Mill Road Bridge is closed. I do sincerely hope that this will prove to be a nuisance with benefits. We also hope that Govia is sensitive to the needs of the traders when choosing the period for closure and by providing a full-time person to guide delivery lorries along unfamiliar routes.

Madeleine Loewe Resident

Dates for your Diary

24 November: Manuela Huber will be exhibiting at the Makers Gallery Hope Street.

27 November: Mill Road Bridge Closure Exhibition at the Earl of Beaconsfield

Mill Road Winter Fair 1 December

11 December: Romsey Hub over 65s Group, Ross Street Community Centre, 1.30 – 3.30pm.

16 December: St Barnabas Community Carols, 4.00 – 5.00 pm.

8 January 2019 7.30-9pm Talk Representing Cambridge

"I have always felt Cambridge is a very special city and it is important to ensure the views and interests of Cambridge people are well represented. But what does that mean in practice and how does it translate into action in Parliament?" Anne Campbell, MP for Cambridge from 1992-2005, will talk about how she managed some important issues.
Ross Street Community Centre

12 February 2019 7-9pm Workshop Who Lived Here?

A beginners workshop on finding who lived in the houses on Mill Road.

Booking required; this workshop is limited to 10 places.

The Bath House

12 March 2019 7.30-9pm Talk Ginger Beer and Silicon Chips

Joe McIntyre presents a curious tale of the building in Willis Road that has housed entrepreneurs, mineral water, typewriters, home computers, revolutionary heating systems, unique personal transport and... even more computers.

Ross Street Community Centre

31 December 2018, 1 January, 7 and 22 April 2019 at 11am.

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