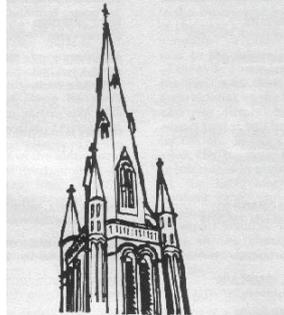


The Spire



Winter 2016



What has happened about the Parish Hall?

There has been a lot of concern in the congregation about what has been happening to the Parish Hall, or Cornerstone. I think most have been dimly aware that we have been trying to sell it, but the Church Council and I have been constrained in what we can say about it until now.

The reason for this is that we had to be very conscious of commercial considerations. A word too soon, and we could jeopardise the negotiations that were going on regarding the sale. In fact, the deal only came to be finalised on the day before Christmas Eve three weeks ago. That was when the deal was signed, and the money raised from the sale was deposited into our bank.

So, who did we sell it to? The purchaser was Wandsworth Borough Council. We wanted a responsible public body to sell it to, if we could possibly manage it. We were delighted when the Council made us an offer. What body could be more public and accountable, than our own Borough Council? Inevitably there was a bit of to-ing and fro-ing in the negotiations, but both they and us were pleased with the deal.

So, what is the Council going to do with the Hall?

The most immediate use will be as a 'decant facility' for the coming regeneration of the Alton estate. It is very useful for councils if they are undertaking regeneration schemes for them to have a space where they put to one side, in the locality, valuable items which otherwise might get damaged. The contents of the sport and fitness centre would be an example, as would be the books and computers in the library.

But then I have been asked, 'What happens after the regeneration, though - they'll just move in and turn it into flats then.' This would be very difficult, though. First of all, they would have to abide by their own planning laws. To go against these is immensely time consuming and fairly expensive. Secondly, the way we negotiated the deal, if the council were to build flats there, after all, they would have to pay us a penalty charge of somewhere around 25% - 30% of the value of the hall. Local Authorities don't have a great of money to spare to chuck around at speculative building schemes. (Even at Nine Elms and Battersea Power Station, Wandsworth's flagship development, there is no council money being invested.)

So, how much did we raise from the sale? The answer: £2,010,000 – just over two million pounds. Some people were surprised that we got so much. Others (as usual) said, 'You ought to have got a lot more than that.' Here I have to point out that this is Roehampton, not Putney nor Wimbledon. Exactly the same hall with its facilities in Putney or Wimbledon might have raised £2 ½ million or even £3 million, but we can't be sure. We have to remember that those are two very different economic environments from Roehampton.

But at the end of the day price is determined by the balance of supply and demand in the locality. Our excellent surveyor, Rick Vause, publicised the proposed sale all around the area. There were no clues as to any kind of asking price – the sort of thing you see in Estate Agents' windows such as 'in the region of..' or 'minimum of...' So each company or organisation made its bid blindly, as it were.

The bids varied quite considerably, and were from a diverse range of businesses – the inevitable children's

nurseries, builders, community organisations and local government institutions. But it was not solely amount of money being offered that we had to consider. Two further issues came to the fore: firstly, was the organisation that was making the bid financially secure – not just to be able to pay us, but whether it had a long term future, and it had real financial expertise at the helm.

Secondly, we had to have regard to the use that was to be made of the hall. We did not want it to be turned into flats. We did not want it to host inappropriate activities – one bid came from the British School of Erotic Dancing (not its real name, but close). Whilst this brought a smile to our lips, we disregarded it straight away.

So what are we going to do with the money?

This is the most important question, and it has taken a long time to construct an answer. We have been in long negotiations with the Charity Commission on how we can be true to the trust deeds of the Parish Hall at its foundation in 1911, and the revised deed of 1964 which clarified one or two matters. As far as we were concerned the 1911 deed stated firmly that the Hall was for the good of the people of Roehampton, and for the maintenance of the Established religion. We worked very hard to keep this principal at the heart of our vision.

For example, the Countess of Leven and Melville, the benefactress of the Hall, seemed to have a thing about Roman Catholics. They were not to hold any events in the Hall, and they were to have no official position in its governance. We had to do a bit of cherry-picking to exclude this sort of ‘infelicity’.

The scheme we have agreed with the Charity Commission is for the proceeds of the Hall to be put into three distinct pots of money.

The first of these goes under the title of 'Debt Clearance'. This is the smallest pot and was the money that the Hall owed to the parish church, and the debts accrued to the parish church because it was spending huge amounts of money to ensure that the Hall was keeping within the law (insurance and health and safety, utility standing charges, etc.) Out of this pot were paid things like outstanding architect's fees, debts to individuals, the Diocese and companies that we just had to leave hanging in the air. This was the most galling aspect of our having to take responsibility for the Hall – telling someone that we simply did not have the money, and that they would have to wait.

The second pot is to do with spending money on vital aspects of the church building which we were not able to spend because such a large percentage of our income on the Parish Hall. We need thorough revision of our lighting and sound arrangements. We badly need a disabled toilet and a new gas boiler. In addition we need to draw up a proper development plan, drawing all these issues together and then turning towards mission and our role in the community. And these days all this implies modern technology pointing to our need for a coherent IT strategy – trying to use everything we have got in order to reach as many as possible.

Our third pot of money is the largest part of our profits – over 75%, and this is called the 'Permanent Endowment', The Permanent Endowment cannot be touched by us, unless we apply again to the Charity Commission. This would be a mammoth exercise, and not something that we would do lightly. What we are able to do, is to draw on the interest it accrues. From that interest we will be able to use a little for the church, but the

majority of the interest will go to help individuals and organisations in the parish as they seek to make a difference here. We could make grants to disabled people who have needs that can't be met through statutory provision. We could help pay for a bus to help the isolated elderly or disabled to go shopping. We could work with schools to help them make more use of the Common and the Park. Through use of these funds we hope to make a considerable difference to the lives of the ordinary people of Roehampton.

In reporting all this to you, I need to thank one person who has been at the centre of our negotiations, and without whom, we would not only be where we are now, but we would be in a very difficult situation: Mrs Carol Campbell. None of us on the Church Council has anything like her knowledge, skill, quick-wittedness and all-round competence. Thank you, Carol.

Jim McKinney

THE PAPAL ENCYCLICAL 2015 **by Roz Solanke**

I was introduced to the Papal Encyclical through a weekly meeting of Putney churchgoers called "Theology in the Pub". There is a different speaker each week covering a wide range of topics from Regeneration Schemes, CS Lewis on Bereavement, the workings of the Bishop's Synod, to the Papal Encyclical; with the wheels of discussion being well oiled by the Landlord's best beer at the Bricklayers Arms.

Although I am not always in full agreement with Roman Catholic Theology I cannot deny my admiration for the present Pope, Francis. The main thrust of his

encyclical letter is a cry for respect and hence conservation of God's beautiful Creation and a strong reminder that our Dominion of the earth comes with the conditional clause of Care. (We were asked to till the earth not strip it.)

This also puts me in mind of the equally abusive misinterpretation by some branches of Islam of The Caliphate, and of the old Church's misinterpretation of The Holy Roman Empire. In both cases these ideas were originally intended to create caring societies under God's governance viz: a community, an empire like a kingdom of God on earth. Herein lies one of the tragedies of Holy Writ: it has been manipulated to mean what persons in authority want it to mean for the furtherance of personal power (although the Pope has more politely and generously used "misunderstood " Holy Writ). As in Islam the Pope also includes the care of human beings along with the rest of Creation as part of our responsibility of care, with particular reference to the vulnerable and poor. I was also impressed with his constant Biblical references, particularly those from our Hebrew heritage, to which both Christianity and Islam are indebted and of which they claim to be equal partakers.

So as not to prejudice you with my own understanding of the Papal Encyclical I will happily lend you a spare copy. However if you feel the need to scribble all over it (as I have already done) you can order a copy from Waterstones - 48 hr delivery and less than £5! (you won't need to spend 5p on a plastic bag as it is small enough to go into a large pocket or your bag/back pack) and anyway you're trying to save the world! I am hoping that some of you will be interested enough to

join me in a discussion group and draw up our own ideas as to how we as a Parish can get involved in loving our God - Given world and saving it from further rape – e.g. less use of cars - more use of legs, less meaty meals - more veggy meals and when the children's dog dies replace it with a hamster (much smaller carbon foot print) and a wonderful opportunity for children to learn the meaning of Responsibility & Care.

PS one of my favourite quotes is from p15.para:19, where Pope Francis suggests we should "... turn what is happening to the world into our own personal suffering and thus discover what Each of Us can Do about it " (my capitals)

LAUDATO S I ' - Encyclical Letter of Pope Francis ISBN 978-1-78469-070-0

H/W: As a retired school teacher I can't resist setting an "empathy homework " just to get you into the mood : go round the house and collect all your empty plastic bottles. Fill them all with water. Use only that water to get you through the day -cooking, cleaning, washing and drinking. During the day keep a journal of how you managed. At the end of the day evaluate your experience and write down what you have learnt. Send your comments to the vicar to be published in the next issue of The Spire, our Parish magazine. (Like all good homeworks this will also prepare you for my next article which explains how I learnt about the sanctity of water as a child in Khartoum)

..... Rosamunde

Contrasting Celebrations

Within an Anglican Church in this area, there is a large room dedicated to Oliver Cromwell, our only military dictator, under whose rule, the Church of England was persecuted and driven underground. He arranged the judicial murder of the then Supreme Governor, Charles I, later officially honoured as a Martyr by our Church.

Putney's eminent historian, Dorian Gerhold published 'The Putney Debates 1647' when these meetings (which excluded Royalists) were being fully commemorated in St Mary's Church in 2007. Despite this they have been again publicised in 2015, just as we re celebrating the uniquely long and happy reign of our present Supreme Governor, descended from Charles I's sister Elizabeth 'Queen of Hearts'.

Mr Gerhold's invaluable book is not now readily available, and some of his findings may be being ignored, such as

- i) In October 1647 a free election with a wide franchise would very probably have led to a royalist parliament (pages 39 and 64)
- ii) The famous day 29th October 1647 when the franchise was debated and Thomas Rainborough alluded to the 'poorest he' is the reason Debates are still commemorated. But the discussion took place in Mr Chamberlain's house in Putney High Street, NOT in St Mary's Church.
- iii) Rainborough's presence seems to have been accidental: He came to Putney to protest because he was not allowed to be an army captain and a vice admiral in the Navy at the same time. Pursuing his quarrel at the same time, he was one of the three main reasons for the eventual failure of unity in the Putney Debates. (pages 24 and 27)

Over forty years after these Roundhead debates on government ended inconclusively, the Glorious Revolution truly began the development of our parliamentary democracy and constitutional monarchy with Charles I's grandchildren William and Mary as joint sovereigns.

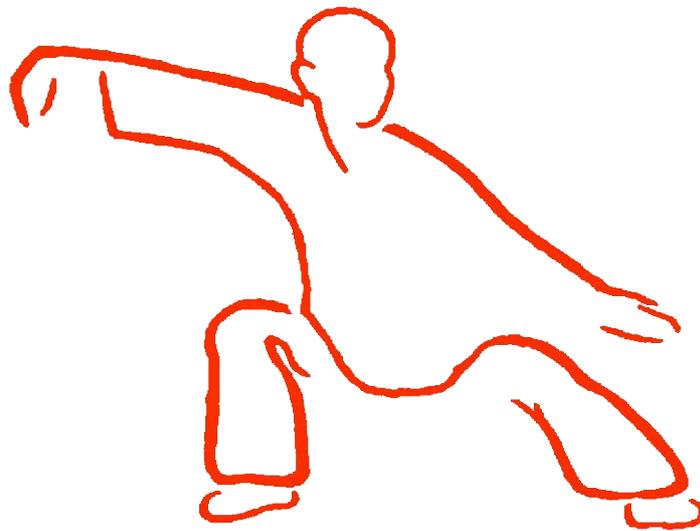
Jennifer Miller

TAI CHI- For Health

For the Over 55's

Tai Chi is a great form of gentle exercise and can prevent and ease many of the ills of aging. You can get started even if you are not in the best of health and it can even be done from a chair!

This could be the perfect activity for you for the rest of your life!



Every Tuesday for 6 weeks

£2.50 per session

starting on 26th January

11.00m – noon

Stay for a cup of tea and a chat afterwards!

**At Minstead Gardens Methodist Church, Portswood
Place, Roehampton.**

Community Development Wandsworth Sheltered Housing Working Together with the
60+ Cafe

What the Vicar gets up to (12)

One of the perennial questions a Vicar is asked, is 'What do you actually do? The answer is many things. Sometimes I have to represent the Parish, and say what I think would be best for it in the future.

A passion of mine at the moment is the future Regeneration of Roehampton. Part of that Regeneration is due to take place where Roehampton Lane meets Danebury Avenue. This is where Allbrook House and the Library are. There is an attempt to forestall the regeneration by having these two buildings listed – not allowing any new developments on that site. This week I wrote the following letter to Historic England, asking them not to list the buildings. Here it is.

Objections to the Listing of Allbrook House, Roehampton, and Roehampton Library

I am a great admirer of the listed buildings on the Alton estate and in the rest of Roehampton. Mr Horrocks rightly points out the wealth of architectural interest that we have here in Roehampton, ranging from Mount Clare (Grade I listed) through Holy Trinity Parish Church (Grade II*) and the Kings Head Pub (Grade II*) to the modernist designs of the Le Corbusier –inspired blocks on Highcliffe Drive (Grade II*), the fully-recessed balcony blocks of Tunworth Crescent and Tangley Grove (Grade II*) and the semi-recessed balcony blocks (point blocks) of Wanborough Drive and Fontley Way (Grade II). This is a heritage of which we can be proud.

Unfortunately, in the middle of Roehampton, at the gateway to the Alton Estate, at the junction of Roehampton Lane and Danebury Avenue, we have the hideous and jarring juxtaposition of the mammoth Allbrook House looming over Roehampton Library. Allbrook House does not seem to 'float

above' the Library as Mr Horrocks puts it, rather it looks like an enormous boot in the process of crushing some kind of rodent. The Library is squashed down low in the middle and bulges up at each end.

The area between the two buildings is unsightly and unpleasant. Hidden away from the road, it is a place of scattered syringe needles and other unmentionables. It is not a place where you would want to walk after dark, and yet you have to go along its entire length if you're walking past the car park, and you want to get to the ramp for access to Allbrook House. (Unless of course, you use the bizarre spiral staircase, which is cramped, and where you can't see who is at either end.)

Disabled access to Allbrook House from Danebury Avenue means you have either to go the route I have just described, or, after negotiating the steps in front of the Library, you then have to then double back on yourself, past the front of the Library, and then go round the corner to the ramp. On the other hand you could go up to the corner of Danebury Avenue and Roehampton Lane and come down the path through the Green. The third possibility is to use the ramp from Roehampton Lane down to the base of Allbrook House if you are in a wheel chair and prefer a more thrilling option. Whichever way you use to get to the right level, it still means that you have to walk or wheelchair across the wide and exposed paved area around the bottom of the block. Again, this is not a pleasant place to be at night.

I am sorry to go into such detail in pointing out the difficulties of access for both abled and disabled people, but one has to 'get up close and personal' to realise the consequences of placing these two buildings in an area where the ground level rises and falls dramatically over the space of a few yards. The simple fact is that this area needs smaller attractive buildings

which can cope with varying levels, rather than plonking such a massive and ungainly edifice, at right angles to both its access roads. The whole area around it is an extraordinary waste of space: there is the paved area, the curved access road from the car park, the car park itself, and the Green. All, with the exception of the Green, are uniformly hideous and depressing. The poor Green, however, is all too often used as a dog's toilet, and any beauty it has, is immediately terminated by the great slabs of concrete which face the Library and Allbrook House.

However, it is not simply the localised positioning of Allbrook House next to the Library that is the problem. More importantly, Allbrook House disturbs the vista down Danebury Avenue and the rest of the Alton Estate. It hangs like a gloomy curtain blocking the line of sight from the centre of Roehampton towards Roehampton Gate, but also, from the other side, up Danebury Avenue towards Wimbledon Common. Wherever you are, your view is intruded upon by this vision out of George Orwell's '1984'. It is almost as if the LCC did not want people to see into the Alton estate, as if it was ashamed of it.

Coming from the A3 along Roehampton Lane, Allbrook House masks the whole estate behind it, and from the opposite direction, it is such a 'sore thumb' that one misses the buildings around it. It draws the eye to itself and imprints itself as the icon of Roehampton – sometimes with tragic consequences. It has to be acknowledged that Allbrook House has become a draw for those who seek to end their lives. Three of the most recent suicides had no connections with the area, coming several miles just to use these buildings which caught their eye for the worst reasons.

In his paper Mr Horrocks talks about renovating and refurbishing both the Library and Allbrook House. He forgets

that both were refurbished six years ago. They looked fine for a while, but since then they have reverted back to being eye sores. They are old, they are out of date; they are in the wrong place and listing has been withheld for a very good reason.

Finally, there is an opportunity cost to listing the Library. In the forthcoming Regeneration of Roehampton, the community has been promised a Community Arts Hub. This will contain a brand new library building with designated study areas and meeting rooms for groups and for one-to-one engagement. If the Library is forced to remain in its outmoded and old fashioned building, then the Community Arts Hub will be stillborn, detracting greatly from the future benefit of the people of Roehampton.



The centre of the proposed regeneration:
Allbrook House and the Library on the left

MEMBER OF PARLIAMENT:

Justine Greening MP
020 8946 4575.

Surgeries:

First Friday each month at
Roehampton Library:
3.30pm - 4.30pm; and at the
new Putney Library. 5.30pm -
6.30pm. On Third Saturday of
the month at Southfields
Library: 9.00am - 10.00am

LOCAL GOVERNMENT

Roehampton Ward Councillors
Cllrs Peter Carpenter, Sue
McKinney and Jeremy
Ambache.

Surgeries: 2nd & 4th Saturdays
from 11.00am - 12.00noon at
Roehampton Library
Contact Number:
020 8944 0378.

West Putney Ward Councillors
Cllrs Lewer, Jane Cooper and
Stephanie Sutters

Surgeries: 3rd Tuesdays from
10.30am - 11.30am at Putney
Library
Contact Number: 020 8944
0378

SCHOOLS

Nursery

Alton Children's Centre
Ellisfield Drive

Alton Community

Playschool

'One O'clock Club'

Fontley Way

Telephone 020 8780 2008

Eastwood Nursery School

168 Roehampton Lane

020 8788 3976

Primary

Roehampton Church

School and Nursery

Head - Mr Richard Woodfin

020 8788 8650

Heathmere Primary School

020 8788 9057

The Alton Primary School

020 8876 8482

Sacred Heart School and

Nursery (RC)

020 8876 7074

ST JOSEPH'S CHURCH

020 8788 5012

Fr David Gummett