

GRAHAM DOUGLAS FOULIS BROWN – A PERSONAL MEMORY

It is a great privilege to be asked to pay tribute to Graham and to share some personal memories with you. Forgive me if some of this might sound a bit light hearted – but I don't think Graham would mind!

The Revd Graham Foulis Brown inherited me as his PCC secretary when he arrived in the Parish of Kidmore End in September, 1990. I had met briefly with him and Flossie before his appointment as Vicar, when a small group of us entertained them at the home of the Head Teacher at Kidmore End School. I felt they were a breath of fresh air – a young couple with two small children who were moving from Bicester. At that first meeting, there was evidence of two strong people and both with a sense of humour. It boded well.

Graham was born in Renfrewshire on September 4th 1950 and he never lost his pride at being a Scot. He could turn on the Scottish accent very quickly and could mimic most Scottish dialects. Coming from Scotland too, enabled me to understand some of the things he said and referred to; his opening to phone calls often began with “You'll have haud yur tea...?” – which really meant “Have you finished eating”! He invested in a dress kilt in the Douglas tartan and liked nothing more than to wear the full highland dress, complete with sporran and Skean Dhu. He wore this at Ellie and Ben's wedding.

How many of you remember Magnus – that talented Labrador who used to write for the Parish Magazine, the Lamb and Flag, when his master was off playing at being S(c)illy? Of course Graham wasn't playing – he was acting as a locum priest on the Isles of Scilly, which he loved to visit each year, leaving Magnus to hold the fort in Kidmore End – and writing the Vicar's letter for him in his absence....

Traditionally, the Vicar of a Church School is appointed as the Chair of Governors and within a short time, Graham took over that position. He worked tirelessly as Chair and thanks to his amazing knowledge and wisdom, he supported the school through some very difficult times. He worked with three Heads, two interim Heads, then with Janet Maul and latterly with the present Head Teacher, Linda Hull. Everyone in turn expressed their appreciation of his support and involvement with the school community. On the occasion of staff birthdays, it was traditional for each birthday person to provide a cake to share with the staff. Graham used to pop in at break times – how did he know when cake was to be offered? - and he always said that KES had the only staffroom he knew of, that had a set of cake forks in regular use! In many ways, Graham was a house husband and on one occasion, one of the staff came into the Staffroom, complaining that young Rupert, who was in Year 3 at the time, had fidgeted continually all morning. On being questioned as to what was wrong, Rupert said plaintively, “Daddy sewed up my trousers this morning – and he's left the needle in them.....!” On another occasion the same young chap appeared in school, soaking wet. On hearing this, one of the staff said, “You would have thought that with a father like his, he would have taught Rupert to walk on water...!” I'm not sure that Graham ever actually managed to perform miracles!

Graham was involved in many outside organisations. He was a member of the Coopers' Company, to whom he was their chaplain; he was a magistrate for many years, serving on the bench of the Oxfordshire Youth Court, and he was chaplain to a local Lodge of the Masons. I believe he was also Chaplain to the local St John's Ambulance Brigade. As well as eventually running two parishes in the newly formed Benefice, he was made a Canon of Christchurch Cathedral – all of which took up a great deal of time and yet he always had time for people who needed his help and support. I have many

personal memories of his kindness and his wisdom. If anyone ever needed to know something, the response would be “Ask Graham! He will know!!” - and he always did. PCC meetings could, at times be challenging and Graham could be irascible – he also talked a great deal! – but these moments never lasted long. He was always the first to say thank you for efforts put into special services, concerts, etc, thus valuing contributions made by members of his flock.

Forgive me if I read part of an article that appeared in the Peppard News when Graham retired, five years ago. It said:

“ Graham is a very capable parish priest and is known as a man you can depend on. He likes to get to the crux of a matter and we have benefited from his sure grasp of many church issues and diocesan intricacies. At heart a traditionalist, Graham has been a reassuring presence for those caught up in the personal highs and lows of weddings and funerals and Remembrance Days and other formal occasions. His love of tradition and understanding of ceremony can be seen in his long devotion to the Coopers’ Company. He is a good preacher (perhaps because he enjoys preaching). His sermons convey a clear message, are original, thoughtful, wide ranging, with a dash of humour at the right time. Graham has taken particular care to involve the children in church services and is an unwavering supporter of the music in the church. Graham will be greatly missed. It is a blessing to have a rector with so clear a dedication to the priesthood, secure as other faithful priests in their ‘reasonable, quiet, unpretentious, sober faith in God’. We are very grateful for all Graham has contributed as Rector of Peppard .”

The article ends with a memory of the hilarious occasion at a Harvest Lunch when Barry Olsen, Graham and Hugh Warwick, suitably costumed, appeared on stage as The Three Ladies of the Church. It brought the house down!

Despite the ending of their formal union, Graham and Flossie remained real friends, sharing many happy family occasions together with Ellie and Rupert and their wider family. He was extremely proud of his two adored children and loved to tell his friends of their many achievements. Graham quietly experienced many health issues and during most of those, Flossie was there to support and look after him. During his final illness, Flossie was there once again and it must have been a great comfort to him that she, Ellie and Roo were with him when he died peacefully in the Royal Berkshire Hospital, on June 26th 2020.

I know the thoughts of all of us are with you, Floss, Ellie, Ben and Roo and our love goes out to you all.

Rest in peace, Graham – a dear friend and priest to many.