



Dear Friends

Welcome to the Christmas 2020 edition of Newsletter at the end of the strangest and, in many ways, saddest year in living memory. As we opened last June's Newsletter, on behalf of the committee we sincerely hope and pray that you, your families and all your loved ones are managing to come through as well as possible both personally and professionally.

The pandemic restrictions have sadly, of course, totally curtailed our planned activities, which we would normally report and celebrate in this year-end Newsletter. But overleaf we will update you on what the committee and the church have been able to do. We also thought it will be of interest to read a little more of the life and times of Thomas Gambier Parry, of course the founder of Holy Innocents. We perhaps know much about his most famous son, Sir Hubert Parry, and Thomas' career in art; but maybe less so about Thomas' stewardship of local life in and around the city of Gloucester.

Now on behalf of our committee I wish you all a very Merry Christmas and a Happy New Year. We also send grateful thanks on behalf of our organisation, and the church in Highnam as a whole, for continuing to support all we do. With very best wishes from us all.

Graham Rosam
Hon Secretary



THOMAS GAMBIER PARRY

Thomas' magnificent legacy to us of the Church of the Holy Innocents has, rightly, been a strong focus for everything connected with the village of Highnam, alongside of course neighbouring Highnam Court. Both of these outstanding edifices have been hugely and widely celebrated down the years. The Committee of the Friends hoped it would now be of interest, and will hopefully open up an additional line of community outreach, to look more broadly at Thomas' life and expansive philanthropic activities. So, through a series of short articles in our Newsletters, we can capture this snapshot view, first setting the scene nevertheless through his arrival in Highnam.

Born Thomas Parry in 1816 in Banstead, Surrey, his parents Richard (a director of the East India Company) and Mary had died by his 5th birthday. Brought up by his maternal aunts and uncles, the Gambiers, he was called Tom Gambier and, in gratitude, adopted the name Thomas Gambier Parry in early manhood. His education at Eton and Trinity College Cambridge sparked his fascination, and already recognised ability, with watercolour painting. He was also influenced by the High Church Movement, helping to form The Ecclesiological Society to promote the study and restoration of medieval religious buildings.

On inheriting great wealth at his coming of age, in 1836 Thomas bought the Highnam Court Estate, consisting of the 17th century house, woodlands, river wharf, mill and 100 acres of farmland. In 1839 he and Isabella married; they travelled extensively in Europe collecting many fine-art paintings, ivories, sculptures and glass. They had six children, of whom only Hubert survived into adulthood. Tragedy struck in 1848 when Isabella succumbed to TB.

Isabella and Thomas had often taken long walks across the Court parkland that he was laying out with many fine and rare trees. They discussed the future needs of their community and estate, noting the 'great disadvantage' in terms of churchgoing and schooling from the size of their home parish of Churcham, which then also encompassed the hamlets of Over and Linton – a scattered population of 'some 300 souls'. It was Isabella's idea that a village church might be beneficial. Less than seven months after losing Isabella, Thomas resolved to do something in her memory and wrote to the Bishop of

Gloucester & Bristol seeking approval to build and endow Highnam Church, a school, a rectory, lay out the churchyard and, in years to come, 'erect a small almshouse nearby'. Bishop Monk replied in the affirmative just four days later. By 1851 Holy Innocents was ready to be consecrated.

In following articles we will learn more about Thomas' philanthropic works in founding schools/colleges in Highnam and Gloucester, archaeology, and holding public appointments such as magistrate and High Sheriff.

[selected material courtesy of **Michael Trott**, whose book *Hubert Parry: a Life in Photographs* is available priced £30 from www.brewinbooks.com]

A NOTE FROM OUR VICAR

Dear Friends of Highnam Church,

The Covid 19 pandemic has had a huge impact on the life of our church. It is the first time in history that churches have been closed for public worship and in Highnam we also lost the opportunity for concerts, our History festival, and to welcome our usual high numbers of visitors. Despite the strangeness of social distancing and face masks it was very good to return to services in church in September and October, and now in December again. The church has of course suffered significant financial shortfall through this time with the loss of income from tourists and events.

However we have been encouraged by the way the church community has remained healthy and united through our much appreciated online services, and that our Children and Families worker, Owen, has been able to continue his valuable work.

This will be my last contribution to the newsletter, as I will be retiring in January. It has been a great privilege to serve the churches of this Benefice for the past 5 years, where I have been made so welcome. I would like to thank all of you as the Friends of Highnam Church, and particularly the members of the committee, for your committed support of the church, and wish you every success as you continue to promote and expand the work of this important organisation.

Revd Helen Sammon

We wish Helen and Alastair every happiness in their retirement, with grateful thanks for all they have done for our church and village community.

COMMITTEE NEWS

- We would like to record here many thanks to members who supported conduct the essential 2020 AGM business via email last June/July.
- Final completion of refurbishment of the exterior rainwater management systems and the plasterwork damage above the font was followed by successful plaster repair and re-painting of the related fresco stencil.
- In feedback from the church AGM we noted that consideration is ongoing to refurbish the dell pathway from Newent road to the church gate, and for a proposed memorial garden in the southern churchyard. Of course the church still has much work to be done, such as a major lighting refurbishment scheme, which will clearly require significant funding.
- We are taking the lead for the PCC's projects committee on finding a suitable Welcome & Display stand for the entrance to the church by undertaking market research for designs and costings. To which we will contribute the donations made in memory of Roger Hanbury.
- Current funds stand at just over £17,000 including a very generous anonymous donation of £500.

FORTHCOMING PLANNED ACTIVITIES

- We aim to reinstate the visits to the All Saints and St Christopher's churches in Cheltenham, hopefully next Spring or early Summer
- We are also looking into the possibility of bringing everyone 'together' on Zoom with a lecture/presentation maybe as a prelude to a further outing

SUBSCRIPTIONS 2020

We are very grateful to those members who pay subscriptions/donations by annual bankers order. However we are sorry not to have seen everyone during the year to be able to take other subscriptions in person. If you would still like to make a payment, by cheque or cash, please do so, or by bankers order to: Friends of Highnam Church, a/c no. 72163127, sort code 60-09-02, adding your name as reference. Thank you

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