

The Venerable Frank Towndrow R.I.P.

News came arrived in May of the death of former rector, Frank Towndrow. Father Towndrow was rector of Greenford Magna from 1953-1962 and had the difficult task of following Fr. Donald Harris who made such a permanent impact on the parish with the building of the New Church.

Fr. Towndrow was born in 1911 and so reached the grand old age of 95. He was married and had one daughter.

He graduated from King's College, Cambridge in 1933 and went to study for the priesthood at the College of the Resurrection in Mirfield, Yorkshire. He was ordained priest in Chelmsford Cathedral in 1935 and served his title as Curate of Chingford where he served until 1940. Between 1940 and 1947 he was Chaplain to the RAF Volunteer Reserve.

He held four posts in quite quick succession before coming to Greenford. After this he was Vicar of Haddon, Rector of Holdenby, and Vicar of Ravensthorpe. Between 1964 and 1967 he was elected by the Deanery clergy to be their representative in the synod as it now is, but then it was called a Proctor in Convocation of the Peterborough Diocese.

In 1967 he became a Canon Residentiary of Peterborough and at times Chancellor and Librarian of the Cathedral. From 1967-1977 he doubled up duties as Archdeacon of Oakham. He was appointed an Examining Chaplain to the Bishop of Peterborough from 1967-1981 and became Archdeacon Emeritus in 1977. Between 1975 and 1981 he was also appointed as a Chaplain to Her Majesty the Queen.



The parish archive contains few photographs of Fr. Towndrow but there are a selection of press photographs of him engaged in what appears to be a re-creation of Greenford in what the local newspaper called "Saxon" times, with the blessing and distributing of hay. Here you see him in the Churchyard with the New Church in the background, with donkeys and an effort to recreate the rural idyll that was once the country village of Greenford!

The following account of Fr. Towndrow appeared in a Perth parish magazine:

The Venerable Frank Noel Towndrow
Residentiary Canon, Peterborough Cathedral
Archdeacon Emeritus, Chaplain to the Queen
25th December 1911 - 7th April 2007

Mark was born in the shadow of Tower Bridge on Christmas day 1911 so in a way it is very fitting that he died at Easter. One of four children from a humble background, Mark was 11 when he was turned down for Christ's Hospital, a Bluecoat school, for medical reasons - they didn't think he would live all that long! His education resulted in a degree in history from Kings College, Cambridge and after Theological College and ordination he joined the RAF as a chaplain. He served mainly in the Middle East and particularly Iran. The forces did leave two legacies with him in that he gained the name Mark (having a Frank on the staff already, he became Frank 'mark' two) and more importantly he met his wife there.

After leaving the RAF he went into parish ministry. He spent time in Grangemouth, Scotland and Lincolnshire before being called to a large parish in the London area where he served a group of three churches. In 1961 he was called to the Peterborough Diocese where he ran one of the first group ministries of three parishes in Northamptonshire. From here he moved to Peterborough Cathedral as a Canon Residentiary. He became heavily involved in the development of Peterborough New Town as Chairman of the Development Committee. Subsequently he became Archdeacon of Oakham, which position he held until his retirement to Lincolnshire. Sadly within a year of retirement his wife was killed in a car crash.

Over three years ago he came to Perth to be nearer his daughter Gill, son-in-law Dave and grandchildren Mandy and Richard and settled into his new home at RIO, an Abbeyfield House. He was happy there and was very appreciative of the care he received. He also became very much a part of St. John's Episcopalian church and it is a privilege to have shared the last few years of his life. Mark was a gentleman in every sense of the word. He loved books and came out with snippets of poetry for every occasion. Mark liked cricket, was passionate about rugby and enjoyed the odd glass of wine!

His Church and his faith were an integral part of his life. He had no fear of death and welcomed it as age took its toll. The passage from John 6 v 40, read at his funeral, would be a reality for him and he knew that he could hold on to the truth of Jesus' words:

*"And this is the will of him that sent me, that every one that seeth the Son,
and believeth on him, may have everlasting life:.
and I will raise him up at the last day"*

As you can see from the above CVs, Fr. Towndrow was a very experienced priest, a man with intellectual gifts and a man trusted by the Church to offer sound and good advice.

As I write, the only former rector still around to tell the tale now is Malcolm Smart!

Neil Richardson