

# realisingfaith

## What's the story...

People like to listen to stories. And to tell them. Stories connect people. We make sense of life by sharing stories with each other.

It is good to reflect upon our own story, on the story we are telling with our lives - where we've come from, the different characters we've played, the way the plot has progressed, how the story-line has twisted and turned.

It is also good to recognise that we play a part in other stories, as our personal-life-stories entwine with those of other people. Stories weave individuals and their families into wider communities of time and place.

I have recently been reading about and reflecting on Romsey Mill's story. Thanks to the efforts of Malcolm Wylie, Romsey Mill's chair of trustees, who has been collecting together news articles from different local-to-Cambridge publications such as *Across the City* and *The Martin*, I have been able to look back over more than 30 years of Romsey Mill's unfolding story. A number of things have struck me:

The motivation behind establishing a youth and community centre, going as far back as 1976, was to reach those who are hard-to-reach or "unattached" (as a June '76 edition of *The Martin* church magazine describes them) and demonstrate a "practical concern for young people". This is an enduring motivation for Romsey Mill's work today.

A challenge, given out by Revd Peter Phenna, urging the church to put love and compassion into practice was a catalyst for Romsey Mill coming into being. The need to show that faith works is still an imperative – faith by itself, if it is not accompanied by action, is as dead now as ever it was.

The active leadership and participation of local people in the work of Romsey Mill was at the heart of the original story-line and that theme is as strong 30 years later.

It was originally envisaged that Romsey Mill would be a place of belonging. In the first ever edition of *Mill News*, which appeared as an insert in *Across the City* magazine in December 1979, Mike Gale wrote:

*"In the early part of the [1800s], certainly before 1825, there were no buildings, only fields, on either side of the road that led out from Parkers Piece to the village of Cherry Hinton. That is, until you got to a small-holding called Covent Garden - and there stood a mill. It has long since gone but it was from this mill that the Mill Road got its name and today the streets called Covent Garden and Mill Street indicate the site of the old mill a little more closely.*

*We thought it would be good to put a mill back into Mill Road... The original mill would have been a place where people gathered not only to have their corn ground but to chat together. We hope that the new mill will also be a place to meet sociably."*

Romsey Mill Centre continues to be a place where people gather 'sociably', a place to belong. Whilst a considerable amount of Romsey Mill's work with children, young people and families happens out of various different buildings across Cambridge city and beyond (as well on the streets through detached work) the need for people to have a sense of belonging is no less.

My reading about and reflecting on Romsey Mill's past and the early chapters of our story has served to highlight the connection there is between then and now. It is important that there is this continuity with the past. We are part of the same story but recognise that the plot has moved forward and we are now participating in telling a later part of the Romsey Mill story.

You will read in the latest edition of *Mill News* that we are looking for stories of people who have benefited from opportunities created with Romsey Mill over our first 30 years. Whether you are currently involved or participated in an earlier part of Romsey Mill's story we would love to hear from participants and supporters past and present.

In recent years a lot has been written by theologians and academics about narrative theology. The word theology comes from two Greek words: "*theos*", meaning "God", and "*logos*", meaning "word". So theology is words about God.

The exciting truth is that when we put to words what we believe about God, we discover that he has been writing a story of hope and redemption for all the world. His story is a movement from creation to new creation, and he has given us a role to play in that story, in the restoration of our relationships with God, each other, ourselves, and creation.

Tom Wright, the bishop of Durham, has written the following about God's story:

*"...though the scene is set, the plot well developed, and the ending planned and in sight, there is still some way to go and we are invited to become living, participating, intelligent and decision-making characters within the story as it moves towards its destination."*

This really is a grand epic, the greatest story ever told, and we all have our part to play.

Neil Perry, CEO  
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