



## CAMBOURNE

### **Rev. Pauline Scott tells her story about living on a large new housing development in the early days, and about the growth of Church and Community in this place**

It was in the late 1980s that church leaders became involved in discussions about helping to create the new community of Cambourne, a few miles east of Cambridge. Large developments take a long time at the planning stage and the first homes in Cambourne were built in late 1999.

The Church started welcoming new residents very early on through the part-time ministry of Rev. Dr. Carrie Pemberton, wife of the Team Rector of the Papworth Team Ministry (the Team of 13 village churches that surround Cambourne). The new church became known as CTC, Churches Together in Cambourne, and was a 4-way partnership between the Church of England, the Methodists, the URC and the Baptists. The Roman Catholics were also involved in using the same meeting places. Church planting is popular today, with a group of people being sent out from a church elsewhere to plant a new church in a new community, but CTC was a church seed – with a Minister provided but the church growing solely from Cambourne residents.



The first full time residential Minister, Rev. Peter Wood, a URC Minister, was appointed in early 2001. The wider church (all four denominations in the partnership) generously supported the post for many years, allowing this new Church to grow and establish itself before it needed to start paying into central funds. A house was provided for the Minister by the Church of England, which was an important contribution. The waiting room of the doctor's surgery (now the dentist's) became the first meeting place.

In July 2001 my family and I moved to Cambourne, and I was appointed as an unpaid Assistant Minister to Cambourne and the surrounding Papworth Team Ministry in December 2001. That first Christmas, Peter fell ill with malaria, and I ended up running the services. But services in a new church like Cambourne are very different. We had no tradition to fall back on – 'This is what we do' – so on the Sunday before Christmas I did an informal Nativity with the children we had – the eldest just eight. They enjoyed it and it became a tradition – growing year by year

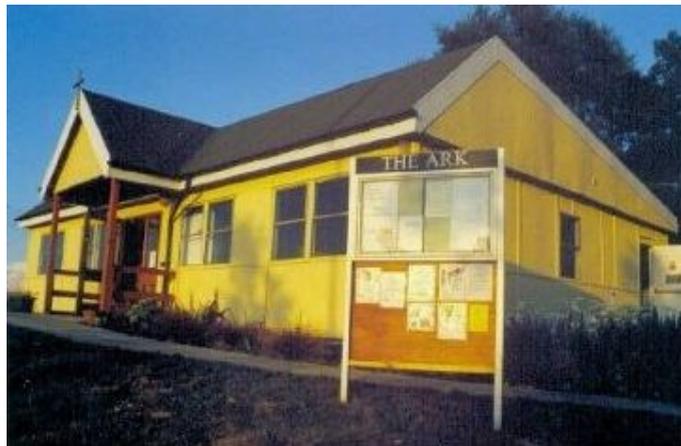
into a production followed by a congregation Christmas party. The 'tradition' was still going strong years after I left!

By mid-2001 there were a few hundred houses built in Great Cambourne, the first of the three villages that now make up Cambourne. Upper and Lower Cambourne were to follow. The early residents saw themselves very much as pioneers – we were there 'BM' – 'Before Morrisons' (the supermarket that was eventually built) and it was a time when building community was very important. There was a sense too that it was our job to build it – not have it simply provided for us. It was our community.



From the beginning it was felt that meeting together on a Sunday was important. Coming to Cambourne meant a move for people, many had moved some distance from family and friends, so meeting together was important. This was true for the Church but also the wider community. The links between Church and community were strong from the beginning, and both Peter and I were involved in community leaders' meetings that helped develop Cambourne in the early years.

The doctor's waiting room was not an ideal place to meet and there was also a need for a place for the community to meet. So the Church bought an old school portacabin. It was in a rather used condition, but the community rallied round to decorate and repair it. On Palm Sunday 2002 it became the first community centre for Cambourne.



The Ark quickly became a home to a wide variety of community groups – there were 28 user groups at its peak. On Sundays, one room was used for the main services and the other for the children's groups – now led by a team of helpers. And there were lots of children! Young families are over-represented in new communities and Cambourne was a young community. Work with the children, and later with teenagers, was vital.

The main worship room at the Ark became crowded on a Sunday and we decided to split into two morning services. Worship had been contemporary to this point, using the liturgy from our four different traditions loosely. We had hoped for musicians to join us but that had to wait – CDs led our singing for a number of years and we managed. This sense of being pioneers meant things didn't need to be perfect and that helped us grow in many different ways. Originally the services were split with the same service repeated, but it gradually became clear that a difference was emerging between the two congregations – those who liked traditional hymns and those who preferred modern music – and that changed. The different denominations worshipping together brought no issues.

As well as community groups and Sunday Services, the Church ran groups that met in the Ark. A Carers and Toddlers group started very early on. The Church also ran an after-school club in the primary school once a week, and then followed up with summer holiday clubs – these became so popular we needed to repeat the week to include everybody. We also started a Youth Group – Xtreme. There were home groups too – groups exploring what Christianity was about, and a 3Cs group for the more senior members of the community (Coffee, Chat and Company).

There were, of course, limits to what the Ark could be used for! With so many younger people in Cambourne there was a need for weddings. We had an agreement that we could use any of the Parish Church buildings in the surrounding villages, and that worked well. Funerals, thankfully, were rarer because it was such a young community. Baptisms we held in the Ark!



The first primary school opened in Cambourne right at the beginning, which was really helpful for the first children who were able to go to school in their own community from the start. However the primary school building was never seen as a wider community resource, although it was used for that at times – for example, Church Carol Services and Nativity productions.

The number of children in Cambourne was growing rapidly and planning for a second school began. It was suggested that the second primary school could be a church school. We were very excited by this opportunity as, in a young community like Cambourne, it was an ideal way for the Church to serve its community. At the end of 2004 after consultation and a public meeting we were given the go ahead to open the school. It had been due to open in September 2006, but the numbers of children grew faster than expected and we had just 9 months to open the school in September 2005 – but we did it!



The Vine Inter-Church Primary School (Anglican & Methodist) opened in September 2005 with Debbie Higham as its first Head Teacher. Originally with around 60 pupils, it now has around 420. From the beginning, its admissions policy was the same as any community school and that was seen as very important – it was for the community and served the community. It worked closely with the Church and had an open and welcoming ethos (something the church mirrored), and there was a special community building as part of the campus that could be used by the school and also by community groups – even during the day.



In that same year the church started using the Hub Community Centre on Sundays. We had an agreement from the beginning that we could have that Sunday morning booking even though it was a popular time. This gave room to grow and we kept on growing. Other ways of serving the community also developed, including parenting classes. These really met a need – many young parents felt isolated and struggled.

In October 2005 I moved on to become a Team Vicar in the Ely Team Ministry and then in 2009 moved to become a Team Rector east of Colchester in Chelmsford Diocese. Peter Wood stayed at Cambourne until 2013. Matthew Trick was appointed full time minister in January 2014.

The Hub Community Centre offered space to grow it was always a temporary position. The initial planning, when setting up the community, had given the church some land on which to build. It was a long journey designing what to build and raising the necessary funds, but eventually the new church building was completed in November 2009 and it serves the community in a variety of ways. In addition to the religious services, it is a popular space that is let out for community and church functions alike.

The design was clever because it enabled the main hall, office, café and welcoming foyer to be built first, and left space for side extensions to be built later if needed. Ten years after the building opened, work on an extension is due to start soon. The church now has a large and flourishing congregation, a children and family worker, a youth worker and a parish nurse, all employed by the church, and its building and ministry continue to be an important focus in the heart of the community.

