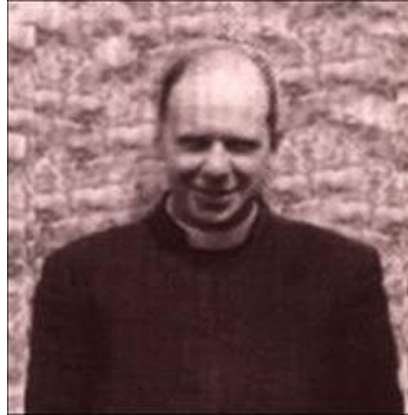


Canon Francis Dobson



1909 - 1991

from... the Brentwood News in 2009

This year marks the centenary of the birth of **Canon Francis Dobson**, a much loved priest of the Diocese. He was born at **Hall Farm, Goldhanger**, Maldon on 4 June 1909, although his family later moved to Great Whitmans Farm, Purleigh. His father's family was originally Lancashire Catholic, while his mother was a convert, received into the Church at Maldon in 1906 by the then Parish Priest, the celebrated liturgical scholar, Dr Adrian Fortescue.

Francis Dobson was educated at the Ursuline Preparatory School, Brentwood, and the Salesian School, Farnborough. Fr John Petit, Parish Priest of Maldon (and later Bishop of Menevia), recommended him as a student for the priesthood and in 1924 Bishop Doubleday sent him to Ushaw College, Durham. Writing to Bishop Doubleday, just before Francis Dobson's ordination at Maldon on 24 July 1932, the President, Monsignor Brown, recommended him with these words: "He is a good young man and I feel sure he will make you a good priest; he has always been a most satisfactory student. I wish I could send you a dozen like him." After a short supply at Southend-on-Sea he was appointed as assistant priest at Colchester. In 1938 he was appointed Parish Priest of Stock and part-time Secretary to Bishop Doubleday, also assisting Canon Wilson in the Finance Office at Bishop's House, Brentwood.

During the Second World War he served as an A.R.P. warden in Stock. In 1951 Bishop Beck entrusted him with the task of establishing the Brentwood Diocesan Travelling Mission. In his black Austin motor car Fr Dobson visited those parts of rural Essex most distant from a Catholic church and celebrated Mass in a variety of halls, private homes and even public houses. He then served as Parish Priest of Warley (1956-1958), Shoeburyness (1958-1965), Westcliff-on-Sea (1965-1972) - during which time (1966) he was appointed a Canon of Brentwood - and Kelvedon (1972-1986), where he built a chapel-of-ease at Tiptree.

A true son of Essex, he always served in the Essex rather than the London part of the diocese, and he was greatly attached to the Catholic heritage of his native county, publishing short studies of the history of two of the parishes he served (Westcliff-on-Sea and Kelvedon). He also collected material on the history of his own family, was a keen gardener, and loved to acquire all the latest gadgets. In 1986 he retired to the Convent of the Little Company of Mary at Westcliff-on-Sea, and thereafter moved to nearby Nazareth House where he died on 12 January 1991. He is buried in the Catholic Cemetery at Stock.

From... 1914 Kelly's Directory for Goldhanger

George Dobson and John Dobson, farmers, Street farm. (Church street was previously called "The Street", Hall farm has had many previous names)

At the outbreak of WW1 George Dobson was also tenant farmer of Gardeners Farm on the Maldon Road, which was used as the Goldhanger flight Station during WW-1.

This picture could be either the young Francis Dobson who would have been seven years old in 1916, or his brother Joseph...



The picture would have been taken between 1916 and 1919

from... <http://www.stock.org.uk/history/twentieth-century.htm>

In 1938 Father Davidson was succeeded by **Father Francis Dobson**....

One night a badly damaged Lancaster came down near Fristling Hall. All the crew but the rear gunner had got out safely. **Father Dobson** went to the crashed aircraft and gave the last rites to the dead man. Some time later he had to go to a meeting with some other priests, where he met a priest from Lancashire in whose parish was the fiancée of the young man who had died in bomber.

from... *The Catholic Herald* of June 1951

FIFTH MISSIONER TAKES THE ROAD

Brentwood now has travelling priest

By **ANDREW BOYLE**

FR. Francis Dobson, 42-year-old parish priest of Our Lady of Mount Carmel's, Stock, Essex, has been appointed by Bishop Beck to take charge of Brentwood's first Travelling Mission.

It is the fifth diocesan enterprise of its kind designed for the rural areas of England and Wales, where Catholics are few and scattered.

Northampton, Menevia, Southwark and Nottingham dioceses have already "broken ground" with their own Travelling Missions, bringing the Mass and the sacraments to isolated Catholics in a dozen Southern counties.

An Essex man born and bred, Fr. Dobson—who as a boy used to go five miles by pony and trap to church—is regarded as the ideal choice for the heavy uphill work of penetrating outlying districts of his home county, with little beyond a Morris 8, high hope, and a knowledge of the countryside to sustain him.

Said Bishop Beck this week, announcing his decision to send him: "I am confident that parish priests in the rural part of the diocese will welcome the service of the Travelling Missioner and do all in their power to help him in his work."

With a total Catholic population of 82,260, Brentwood covers a section of the Greater London area, a sprawling country district, and a

stretch of the East Coast north of the Thames, which includes several holiday resorts.

LAITY CAN HELP

I have not yet mapped out a plan of campaign," Fr. Dobson told me this week, "but my general aim will be to visit places off the beaten track, which contain about 1,000 people.

"Such villages usually have a few Catholics, and the first job will be to locate them.

"Then I shall have to find a suitable centre for saying Mass, and here the laity can help enormously by suggesting or even providing suitable buildings.

"The main area for action will be north of the railway linking London to Chelmsford."

Fr. Dobson believes that the work will flourish partly through the co-operation of local Catholics, partly through trial-and-error experience.

"A trailer chapel would eliminate a lot of trouble and hard work, but then a trailer would need a bigger car and a large sum of money to

car and a large sum of money to then a trailer would need a bigger car and a large sum of money to then a trailer would need a bigger car and a large sum of money to buy it," he said. "We must go quietly at first. I have a portable altar stone, but I still lack vestments."

FOR HARVESTERS

Apart from Essex villagers, there are groups of foreign workers and seasonal harvest labourers to be considered as well. And, in time, Brentwood's first Travelling Missioner hopes to acquire a magnetic-tape-recorder.

This will, in his opinion, enable people to "catch some of the devotional atmosphere of the Mass in centres where there is not even an organ," by hearing hymns and prayers as they should be sung and said.

Fr. Dobson begins his new undertaking this Sunday, celebrating two Masses "somewhere in Essex."

from... <http://englishmartyrswithholyltrinity.org.uk/parishhistory.html>

The English Martyrs Catholic Church, Danbury

...before 1961 the only provision of Mass had come from the Diocesan Travelling Mission under the care of **Canon Francis Dobson**. The Canon was familiar with the area as his grandfather farmed near Purleigh Village. The nearest church had been in Chelmsford and it was said that travelling by horse and cart, his beard froze on Danbury heights!

The Goldhanger British Legion Hut built after WW2 in Fish St. was used for a period the 1950s for monthly Catholic services. It was almost certainly Father Dodson who took these services as part of his Travelling Mission.

from... <http://stefangillies.wordpress.com/the-altar-at-kelvedon>

A booklet entitled: "St Mary Immaculate and the Holy Archangels - Parish History", by **Canon Francis Dobson** 1910-1991...

THE MILLENNIUM

Since Canon Dobson prepared this booklet for the parish centenary in 1975, and the reprinting in 1991 to mark the centenary of Kelvedon church, a number of significant changes have taken place. At the time of the centenary of the parish Canon Dobson had been studying various options for re-ordering the sanctuary so as to facilitate the celebration of Mass facing the people. His initial wish had been to dismantle the altar and store it for future use in the new church at Tiptree but the commissioning of a new stone altar was prohibitively expensive, and so at the end of 1974 he took the decision to move the existing altar forwards. Because of the confined space and to preserve the sight-lines it was necessary to reduce the size of the altar from five arcades to four, and also to remove the altar rails and screening to either side of the sanctuary area.

from... Essex Recusant, Volume 17, Essex Recusant Society., 1975

A booklet entitled: "One Hundred Years at Kelvedon", by **Canon Francis Dobson**

from... <http://www.stjosephshutton.org/pdf/stjoseph060113.pdf>

Parish of St. Joseph the Worker, Hutton, Essex - "We pray for those whose anniversaries occur at this time especially... Canon Francis Dobson 1991"

from... <http://www.ingatestoneparish.org/html/anniversaries.html>

This Weeks Anniversaries: Sunday 12th ... Canon Francis Dobson

from... www.holyfamily-church.co.uk/download/.../BaptofTheLord120114.pdf

newsletter for the Holy Family, Benfleet: "please pray for the departed whose anniversaries occur in January... Canon Francis Dobson"

While based at Kelvedon, Fr Dodson was largely responsible for the creation of the Tiptree Chapel of Ease now known as the St John Houghton Chapel...



the chapel was a self-build project by a large group of parishioners and was opened in 1980

<http://archive.catholicherald.co.uk/article/6th-august-1982/8/news-in-brief>

The Catholic Herald, 6th August 1982...

Canon Francis Dobson has been presented with a free trip to Rome in celebration of his golden jubilee year by his parishioners at Kelvedon, Essex.

Also while at Kelvedon, Fr Dodson told this story to a visiting Goldhanger resident...

His parents told him that they went on their honeymoon from Hall Farm in a pony and trap. Several days later on their return to the village, they found the road back to the farm alarmingly blocked by a large crowd on villagers. On approaching, they discovered that it was a "welcome home" party.