

Jacqui and Shaun Potter

“Never, ever go out with a Police Officer,” said Fred, an older policeman at Kennington Police Station when Jacqui first started working there as a civil staff member. Jacqui married one.

Jacqui was born in Stockwell in 1960 and her younger brother was born four and a half years later. She lived at the Oval until she was two, and then moved where her father’s job took the family – firstly to Willesden, then to Basingstoke and then, when she was 14, back to Brixton, where she lived on the notorious Stockwell Park Estate. It was the time of the Brixton riots and Jacqui remembers



the streets running with rioters, police with dustbin lids used as shields, helicopters overhead, and people only going outside for school or work.

Jacqui did not much like either her primary or secondary school, which is ironic considering that she eventually became a teacher in all but name and loved her job. On leaving school, Jacqui got a job at Kennington Police Station as a civil staff member, firstly in the Process section, then as the Courts Officer. She was at Wells Street Court when the IRA bomb went off in Oxford Street. Jacqui met her



Jacqui and Shaun's Wedding Day 1983

husband Shaun at Kennington where he was serving as a Police Officer. When their first child, Christopher, was born, Jacqui left work and looked after him and then their next child, Emma, until she was 7

years old. For a year or so, Jacqui became a midday supervisor at Cuddington School, and then went on to Riverview School as a teaching assistant.

After a few years as a TA, an opportunity arose to do a teaching course at the Helen Arkell Dyslexia Centre, which is part of Farnham College. This was an intensive one year course, which she

completed whilst still working at Riverview, and it made her invaluable in helping the many children at the school suffering from dyslexia. Jacqui, as a high level teaching assistant, was then able to take classes, prepare and teach RE and Music, and do anything that the teachers would do. She particularly enjoyed helping the music teacher with the choir, and eventually took it over when the teacher moved on, introducing a more modern repertoire and growing the numbers. When Jacqui finally left, there were three choirs - a junior choir, a Key Stage 1 choir and the Riverview Singers, an elite group.

Shaun was born in 1957 in Dorking Hospital, the second of four boys. At first the family lived in the Surrey Hills, and then, when Shaun was five, the family moved to Compton where Shaun lived until he joined the Police. Shaun attended the local village school, a Church school, where he sang in the choir, and then went on to Park Barns

Secondary School. His best friend, Derek, was one of nine and he spent a lot of time with Derek's family.

After A' levels, Shaun was unsure what to do – whether to join the Marines, the Police or the Army. Whilst waiting, he had several jobs, among them being a foundry man, and working on a building site. He initially applied to Surrey Police, but they would not take him until he was 19, whereas the Metropolitan Police accepted him at 18 ½, so he joined the Met and became a Police Officer at Kennington Police Station.

Shaun was one of the Police Officers helping to control the Brixton riots, and was also often drafted in to Central London to help with terrorist incidents or other civil unrest. Two of his friends in the Police were killed – one stabbed in Lower Marsh, and one blown up by the IRA outside Harrods. After 20 years at Kennington, Shaun was

moved to Wallington, which he found very different. There were fewer officers and less backup.

From Wallington, Shaun went to Epsom where he was on the Borough Intelligence unit as a Field Intelligence Officer, but when Epsom Police Station was taken over by Surrey Police, the unit (and Shaun) moved to Sutton. After more than 31 years of service in the Police, Shaun was ready to retire.

In retirement, Shaun started helping older members of the congregation with their gardens. He enjoyed cutting the grass, tidying the gardens and generally making them presentable. News of his gardening ability spread by word of mouth and his business grew rapidly. At one time, Shaun was doing 30 gardens and it was a full-time job. He has cut back now, but he still has around 13 gardens that he tends.

Jacqui first came across St. Mary's when she came to the Young Wives group, which met in the old Large Hall, with a crèche in the old Small Hall. However, the group folded after a couple of years. Later on, when her children were in Beavers and Brownies, she used to come to Parade services.

When her daughter Emma was about 9, she asked



Jacqui and Emma, St Mary's Carol Service 2018

if she could join the Church choir as her friend Rachel was a member. When Jacqui brought her to choir practice, she would wait outside until it was over. Robert Leach, who was the

choirmaster at the time, invited Jacqui to join the choir too, which she did and found she enjoyed. Jacqui then attended an Alpha Course being run

by the Rev. Bryan Owen and she and Shaun were both confirmed during the same year in 1998. Jacqui now helps run the junior community choir, as well as being a Server and a Chalice Assistant.

Shaun works tirelessly behind the scenes for St. Mary's. He single-handedly cuts the hedge twice

a year (which used to be done by a team of people), as well as tending the Church gardens, looking after the grounds, painting the signs, fixing anything that is broken, and also seeing that all is in working order.



The St Mary's gardening team 2001
Jim Whiteley, Joe Roberts and Shaun

Both Jacqui and Shaun are members of the PCC and their contributions to the life of the Church are invaluable.