



Centenary Edition 9 of 10 Toc H—1990-1999



From the cover of Point 3 October 1995

A Challenge for Myself

I sit alone and frightened
Confusion in my mind
Not knowing how to handle
The feelings that I'd find
And in my insecurity
Waves breaking through the tide
I tried to hibernate away
And lock the pain inside

And then I saw a Project
I'd want so much to do
But could I overcome this fear
Of breaking shyness through
A challenge to raise money
A challenge to promote
And more than that,
to save this mind
Which will not keep afloat

A droplet in the ocean
Of something that had meaning
A reason to continue
Behind the painful screening
From port to port along the coast
The art of selfless giving
A Toc H strength which
offered hope
Behind this task of living

*Verses taken from a poem from one
of the volunteers on this project*

FRIENDSHIP SERVICE FAIRMINDEDNESS WITNESS

**By Toc H MEMBERS (Past and Present)
for Toc H members (Present AND FUTURE)**

IN TOUCH

EDITORIAL TEAM

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EDITORIAL

In this issue of In Touch we explore changes and developments in the 1990's as usual Jo has brought together a wide-ranging overview of activities thought the decade. An important element of these years is that they represent a period of change as the Movement moved away from some traditional activities an important issue was one that resonates today in that membership was declining in particular amongst young people.

Proposals for changing the structure of membership laid the foundations for the future which in part recognised that some members would not belong to branches though they would be involved in Toc H activities.



Charity No 211042
SC045491

The Christian foundations were also questioned by some people and the sterile argument about what constitutes a Christian seems to have created a debate between those who held a conservative perspective on what it means to be a Christian and those who recognised that partnering those of other or of no faith is more important than designating a specific and narrow belief.

The issues of the financial shortfall is another continuing issue during these years, properties were sold with the income it would seem being used for general funds and not being set aside to allow the capital to generate an income to fund new and existing work. A perpetual problem for many charities and one that I hope Toc H today cannot be accused of.

The financial difficulties led to redundancies which are always a difficult step for any organisation with employees. All of this following a strategic plan for the five years 1986-1991.

In retrospect we can see as might be expected the 1990's was setting the scene for the new century when across society there were expectations of exciting times ahead which might mean changes in the way that Toc H developed new work, which in any case would be following the models for projects which are described in the centenary issues of In Touch.

One of the important contributions over the 100 years is the way that projects have come into being and developed an independent life which is encapsulated in the Blood Transfusion Service which grew out of an initiative led by Toc H members.

It is important to take account of the energy put into environmental projects which are described in these pages. In the 1990's the environment was not as big an issue as it is today, in many ways the members were ahead of their time and wherever possible we should look to build on their vision and activities.

The 1990's can be seen to be the beginning of the changes that would follow in the years that followed after 2000. The realisation that the membership was ageing and the importance of working in a society that was changing. In many ways what was taken for granted in the first 80 years had to be re-evaluated and where necessary it was necessary to develop new ideas and working methods.

In the pages that follow we are given insights that require reflection and consideration to assist in asking what is the future for Toc H. We learn from our past most effectively when we use the lessons to plan for the future.

In the coming months this is an exercise the Board will undertake and as always, I ask readers to share any ideas they might have for how we move forward, as a partnership of individuals and branches.

Suggestions to tmd@toch.org.uk

Terry Drummond

Toc H

Wessex Branch



Peter Gill:

One Man and his Piano

'Summer Boogie and Swing'



**An Awareness and
Fundraising
performance in aid of
the Toc H 'Let the Music
play' project**

**At Murrens,
Old Reading Road,
Crowmarsh Gifford,
OX10 8EN**

Sunday 4th July at 7.30 pm

Admission free

but please register attendance at tochwessex2016@gmail.com



**Friendship : Service :
Fair Mindedness : Reconciliation**

The Movement of Toc H 1990 - 1999

1990 marked 75 years since the establishment of Talbot House, which became the impetus for the formation of Toc H, a milestone that was commemorated by a new logo which was available on a wide range of merchandise and was featured at celebratory events across the country.

There was, as ever, the constant need to increase the membership, improve finances and manage properties, but also a continuing concern about the public perception of Toc H.

This manifested itself in a debate about the religious element of the Movement, and was highlighted by the National Chairman in January 1990, who said that "if Toc H was a 'Christian' organisation as demonstrated by celebratory Church Services and the presence of a Chaplaincy team, should that mean exclusivity,

thus excluding others of no or different faith"? This discussion continued all year with correspondents' views covering the whole spectrum of opinion, from the fundamental view stating that:

"It is the power of God, seen in the revelation of himself in Christ which is the motivating force of Toc H".

To the contrasting view that:

"He only wants members of Toc H if they are convinced Christians. I want all sorts of people in Toc H. I'd have him, I think it's a shame he wouldn't have me".

In an interesting parallel, Toc H began to contribute to the growing ecumenical movement by publishing articles exploring world faiths to encourage understanding and tolerance.

The Five year plan (1986-1991) which had aimed to increase membership figures by a major investment in projects came to an end with the disappointing result that membership had dropped by 2238. In addition, the only increase in members was in the over 65 year olds.



These figures highlighted a source of contention (which has been aired before) as to whether the many projects that were undertaken, encouraged new members or not.

There was never any doubt about the value of the project work but the question seemed to be, was the central premise of the project programme that it worked within the Movement, or alongside it? Which led on to the question of how many members had joined Toc H after participating in a project



20th Annual Project S.E. Region

and indeed, how many existing members had volunteered to take part in a project outside their normal Toc H activities.

At the end of 1991 after much discussion it was decided to continue the investment in projects, but at the same time try to make them more focussed on the branches. There would also be more follow up for the volunteers in an effort to encourage them to remain within the Movement.

There was a growing awareness of how serious the financial shortfall within Toc H had become. Several properties that were no longer required had been sold, but fund raising targets were not being achieved. In March 1998, eight staff were made redundant including the National Chaplain, the Head of Development, the National Events Co-ordinator and the Communications Officer, followed by 7 more in 1999. Despite these measures another £200,000 would have to be found and it was hoped that more Charity shops, staffed by members would open, to contribute to the shortfall. The Director appealed to the members to emphasise how serious the situation was saying,

“We are fighting for the very soul of our Movement and all that Toc H stands for. It is too good to lose, too good to throw away, and fight for it we will – with your help”.

Membership

During the decade there were various changes to the membership structure starting in 1992 with a new initiative for older members in the form of a Retirement Challenge for over the 55s. This was run on similar lines to the Winant Clayton volunteer scheme, started by Tubby many years ago and encouraged people to travel to the US to get involved in a worthwhile project, whilst experiencing a different culture.

Following the decision of the Central Council a system of central registration for all members was initiated in 1997, so, it was explained, 'there was no formal need to have District branches, although existing ones could continue and the new ones set up'.

In 1998, a new Guest membership was introduced which would be offered free to everyone over 16 who took part in a Toc H activity. This would include a Welcome pack, Point 3 magazine, information on events and considered to be a chance to promote Toc H ideals. A Children's membership was also introduced for 8-15 year olds who were taking part in activities with their parents.

The move to include more children was in a response to the realisation that as members married and had a family they often felt unable to continue their membership, a contributing factor to the ageing membership (an issue that in fact Tubby had mentioned many years before).

It was always heartening though to see old and young working together, here in Long Eaton branch.



The oldest member and youngest helper sort out raffle tickets.

Having said that, there were still some very active young peoples' groups (Tags) throughout the country, (notably BOG in Birmingham, Badtag in Barton, Montag in Monmouth) who continued to do amazing work.

Doug Geater Childs

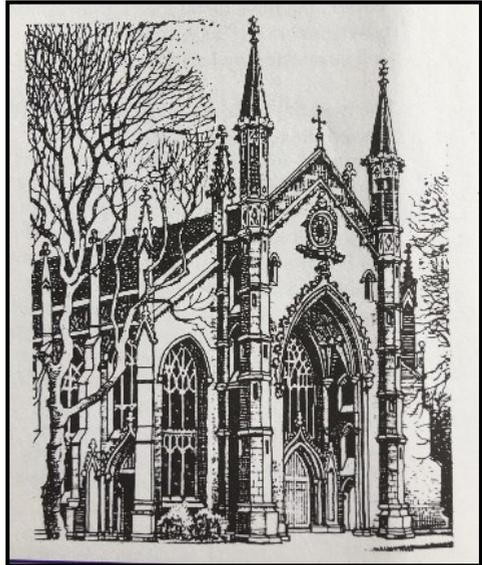


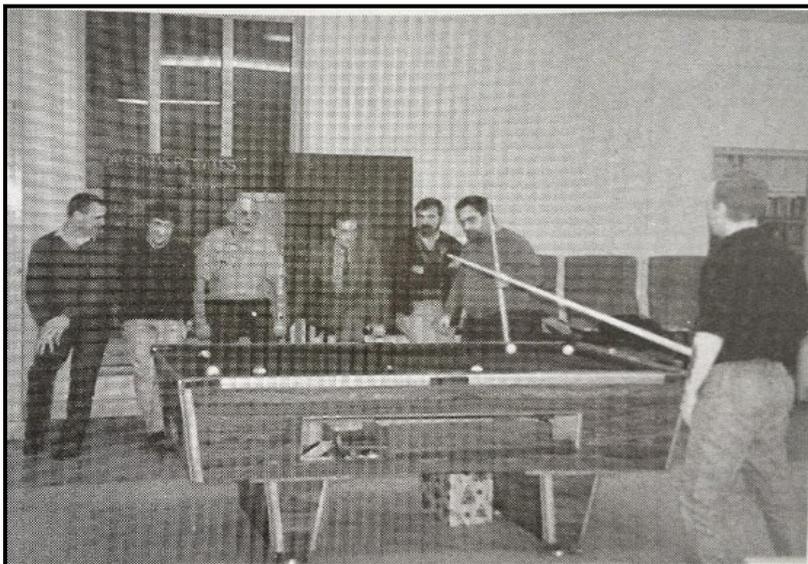
In November 1990 the members were introduced to Doug, who tells the story himself, about how he first got involved with Toc H at the age of 17 when he took part in a project in the Lake District. A couple of years later he again volunteered on 'Holidays at Home' in Balsall Heath for two years where he met Hilary, and the rest, as they say is history!

Subsequently, Doug became District Chairman of the Birmingham area and talked enthusiastically about visiting local branches who were involved in all the usual Toc H activities that included recording and distributing the talking newspaper for the blind, hospital and hospice

visiting, and involvement with a local Friendship Circle in Selly Oak. He also explained about BOG or Birmingham Outward Group that consisted of about 40 young people, (8 of which were members) who, for some time have been meeting regularly in fellowship and doing a great deal of valuable work in the local community.

In 1993, Doug Geater-Childs told the story of the work with the homeless people of Birmingham, which started 20 years before when a young staff member, working in her own time managed a soup kitchen in the City Centre. (Avid readers may recognise the description from the 1970s edition!). This initiative challenged the opinion of the local authority, who had maintained that Birmingham did not have a homeless problem and, as a direct result 'The



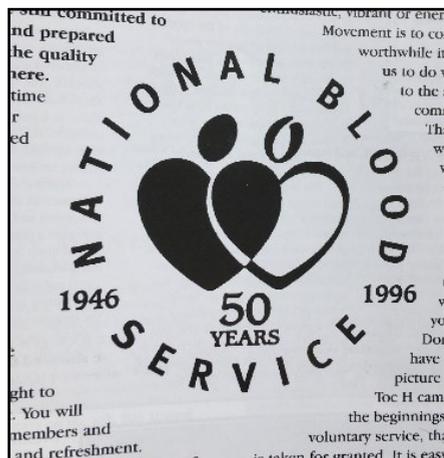


Birmingham Committee for Night Shelters' was formed, with the first shelter set up in the crypt of St. Chad's Roman Catholic Cathedral. As demand increased, the Shelter utilised several other buildings loaned from Birmingham City Council before settling in a deconsecrated church building that became known as The Trinity Centre.

Over time the centre was converted into a 105 bed centre and was managed by other agencies but Toc H continued to support it with donations of cash and goods and a presence on the Board of Governors. Another in the long line of successful initiatives that Toc H began, that were handed over to others to continue.

Innovation

Over the years Toc H has often begun innovative schemes that have gone on to be absorbed into everyday life and it is interesting to see how some schemes continue to evolve. As already documented in the 1980s, Toc H had been involved in promoting the blood transfusion scheme since its inception in the 1930s and as scientific research moved on, Toc H again began to champion the new research into blood platelet donation urging all members to take part.



Then, in 1996 they helped celebrate the 50th anniversary of the Blood Transfusion service,

Toc H members decided to hold a National *Blood Donor Day*, which involved branches setting up stalls all over the country to recruit donors, while also promoting the wider work of the Movement. This was a huge nationwide project that involved five months of planning during which, many more stories of pioneering blood donation emerged, which I wished I had known for the previous article!



Broadway Branch stall with (left) Tommy Trinder, former Warden of Dor Knap

The final round-up revealed that the event had involved '84 units of Toc H, 525 members and helpers and 66 events,' 5,509 names were passed on to the National Blood Transfusion Service and 1,552 people registered an interest in Toc H. The event received extensive newspaper and radio coverage and was considered a complete success on so many levels, summed up by the Point Three headline

"Toc H Tapped into a Very Rich Vein"

Care for the Environment

Another strand that also had its origins in the 1930s when members carried out pioneering work on the footpaths of the Peak district that led to the creation of the National Parks, was the care for the environment.

In the 1990s, this manifested itself in several large environmental projects that were set to transform some quite large outdoor spaces.

South Staffordshire and Wulfrun district (driven by **Walsall** branch) decided that they had to 'build bravely' or disappear so decided to embark on an ambitious 5 year environmental project that was well outside their financial and manpower resources. The project focused on Cannock Chase, a local Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty, which was visited by thousands of people every year. The nature of the terrain made it virtually impossible for disabled people to visit, so it was decided to create a series of trails for people with special needs, especially the blind and those with impaired mobility. This involved 2 years of consultation with other agencies, followed by a series of 'Awareness Days' that were held in Wolverhampton, Cannock and

Rugeley to galvanise support in the form of volunteers and finance. The hugely ambitious project went from strength to strength due to brilliant organisation and major commitment from both the organisers and volunteers. TV coverage has encouraged many volunteers including a project manager and architect who gave their services for free. Cash donations ranged from a few pounds to thousands and sponsorship from the Countryside Commission and BT, the latter providing £16,500 for the construction of a water feature.



Simon Walding (architect) and Chris Williams proudly watch the first fruits of many months' careful planning!

These were so successful that the work soon began and within months it was taking shape. The size of the project required that ongoing publicity maintained funds and new volunteers, but the ultimate result benefited both the visitor and Toc H which gained many new members from a wide variety of backgrounds.

By 1999 the project was finished and the benefits for local people

and visitors, many of whom had special needs were immense. The car park, trails and sensory centre were all named after Toc H and the wildlife pond was well established. The majority of the work was done by volunteers and paid for from a variety of sources, resulting in a great sense of achievement for those involved.

Brixworth Country Park

In 1995 a similar scheme began in Northamptonshire, when a Toc H member and Northamptonshire County Councillor decided to celebrate the Movement's 80th anniversary by transforming the local Brixworth Country Park. This collaborative project with the local council, Anglican Water,

Conservation charities and The National Lottery Millennium Fund which provided a £376,000 grant, involved creating a wildlife pond, a maze, orchard, wildflower meadow, bird hides, trails made out of recycled materials and a sensory garden, all of which will be fully accessible for the disabled. In addition, there would be a cycle track, cycle hire centre and the existing Visitor Centre will be extended. This was expected to take 5 years to be opened to commemorate the Millennium, but was in fact, largely completed by 1998 and was considered to be a tremendous success.



Dry stone walling in Snowdonia

Smaller but equally valuable schemes began across the country. A Friendship Circle in **Penhros**, north Wales, became a fully constituted Toc H Circle Branch then developed a smaller local nature reserve in the same way. **Kempston** branch in North Bedfordshire was involved in a scheme to plant a new forest which included building bridges and laying footpaths.

Hazel Grove branch in Stockport decided to adopt a mile long section of a road. What began as a twice weekly litter pick evolved into a re-cycling scheme, new road signs being erected and clearer cleaner pavements as local residents were persuaded into cutting their hedges back,

making them safer for walkers, horse-riders and cyclists.

Also in the early 1990s a partnership began between Toc H and the National Trust known as NATTOCS which resulted in a pooling of ideas and expertise. The National Trust had base camps, resources, and skills in conservation work while Toc H projects could introduce people from all backgrounds, many of whom may have had different degrees of disability to work together. Projects took place in Hertfordshire, Yorkshire, Devon and Powys and while there were some teething problems they were judged to be a great success.

Re-cycling

Over the decades Toc H had always been good at collecting and re-using on a national basis that had perhaps maintained a sense of continuity and group effort. Amongst the first was the collection of used razor blades that was hugely successful, (although the thought of hundreds of razor blades being sent in the post is not something that would be encouraged nowadays!), followed by used stamps, a cause that was championed in 1998 by Tony Cook, the Secretary for the S.E. Region and 'Official National Stamp Man of Toc H'. He constantly looked for more suppliers and appealed to companies as well as individuals to keep sending them in.



Many branches, notably **St. Helier** on Jersey, also collected used

spectacles that were sent overseas. The Chairman of **Zimbabwe** branch explained that when the spectacles arrive they were sorted and then sent to Surgeons who travelled around the country in a converted railway carriage treating people with cataracts and other conditions free of charge.

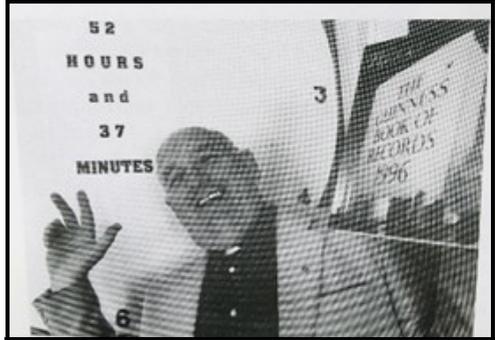
In 1998 it was also decided to collect Teddies to send to children in hospital in third world countries such as Bosnia and Zimbabwe. Doctors in hospitals there felt the children with a Teddy to cuddle got well quicker and they were allowed to take them home, so a constant supply was required. Toc H members in Zimbabwe themselves knitted 655 for the children's wards in Harare Central Hospital and the pattern was made available to members in the UK to follow suit. Demonstrating great innovation, a branch in **Dudley** who were already sending electrical equipment to a Harare school, sent 52 teddies as packing material!

Comedy moment

In June 1993, the Slessor Visitor Centre was opened on the site of the former bath house in the grounds of Talbot House in Poperinge. It was however, rather larger than expected due to the fact that the plans had been drawn up in England in feet and inches and built by a local builder in metres and centimetres! By the end of a very convivial opening day, it was agreed that the larger facility would be an asset to the town rather than a White Elephant!

Eccentricity

It is rumoured that Toc H Chaplains had a reputation for talking... but in 1998 Rev. Clive Southerton, Chaplain to Prestatyn branch preached for 53 hours and 37 minutes thereby qualifying for an entry in the Guinness book of Records! He raised over £50,000 for St. Asaph Hospice despite having to have emergency dental treatment during the talk.



Record breaking Chaplain

1995 Ferry Challenge

To mark the Toc H 80th birthday in 1995, all the usual birthday celebrations, such as tea parties, re-dedication services, concerts, church services etc. took place, however, one member Jim Simpson, decided to take a journey from Southampton to Hull by a circuitous

route. He planned to see how many crossings of the English Channel and North Sea he could make in a week to publicise the work of Toc H and raise some money. Branches along the south and east coast offered accommodation and arranged other events to coincide with the trip. Jim crisscrossed the channel on a variety of ferry lines often with only seconds to spare, while giving endless interviews and talking to everyone he met about Toc H. While the journey was a one man trip, Jim was joined by volunteers from England, Belgium, Scotland and Italy who took part in pre-arranged activities along the way that included some restoration on an historic building, boat trips for elderly people, re-painting a Charity Shop, gardening, renovating a Sea Cadets



people, re-painting a Charity Shop, gardening, renovating a Sea Cadets

hut and finally moving a piano! The trip, which included 14 sea crossings covering 1150 nautical miles, galvanised public support with features in local newspapers, radio and television, publicised Toc H in 22 towns along the way and raised lots of money.

Jim and the team finished at St. Mary's Church Hall, Barton-on-Humber, where our own Paul Dimoline welcomed them back with a celebratory evening.

Responding to World events

The fall of the Berlin Wall

The Berlin Wall fell in November 1989, an event that was televised and reported all over the world, but few perhaps realised it was witnessed by Toc H personnel. Tony Caldwell, a Field Officer in BAOR, was visiting the Toc H centre in Spandau and he and his wife and two colleagues, David Woodall and Geoff Mephram went for a meal in East Berlin. They went via Checkpoint Charlie, into East Berlin, knowing that they had to return by midnight. In his words:

"When we arrived back, after an excellent meal, we were amazed to see hundreds of people and dozens of cars at the border, We were informed by a BBC radio reporter that the East Germans were about to open the border crossings with West Berlin. On the stroke of midnight the crossing was opened and we travelled with the first East Germans who were given their 'freedom'. For the next two or three hours we were part of the exciting occasion and I persuaded the French, German, American and British border guards to sign a document to say that we were there at the time". (The historian in me would like to see that)! Subsequently, in June 1990, the closure of Checkpoint Charlie was marked in this image of the Toc H canteen vehicle. The caption sums it up....

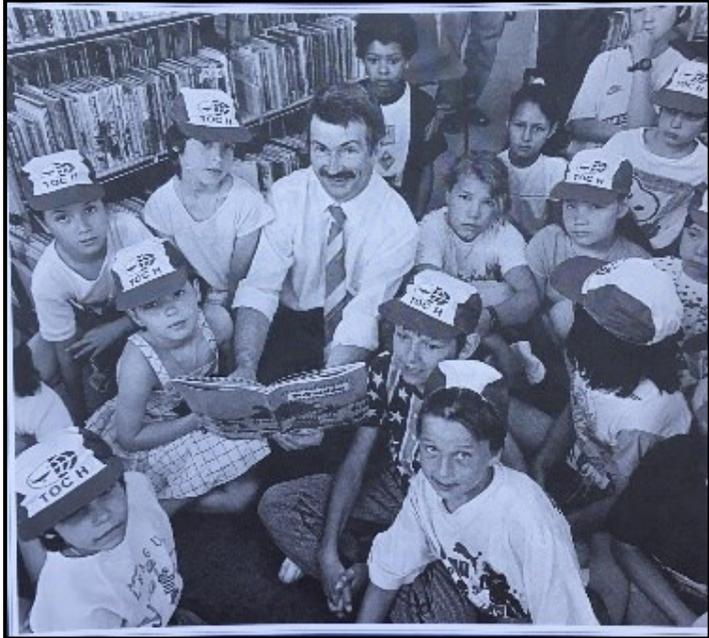


On the last day before the closure of Checkpoint Charlie the last military policeman buys the last cup of tea from the Toc H canteen vehicle on its last visit!

Closer to home branches responded locally, as people, either on a group or individual basis decided to make the UK their home. Between 1975 and 1995 approximately 800,000 Vietnamese people migrated to other countries and a relatively small but significant number came to the UK. Toc H branches arranged afternoon teas for the children resulting in members learning about the difficulties of settling into another culture, while the children learned something of British life.

Elsewhere, **Malvern** branch entertained some Russian children with a variety of activities that included a library visit where the librarian read Babouska in Russian and English.

Tower Hamlets worked with Asian migrants, **Wendover** charity shop raised over £1000 for



Kosovan refugees and then entertained nine children from the Chernobyl fallout zone. Two branches in **Clywd** sponsored a young Rwandan refugee while he studied in this country.

On the domestic front all the usual branch traditional work and projects continued, with many social problems being addressed through Friendship Circles and Cameo (Come and meet each other) groups.

Fellowship

Fellowship within Toc H had always taken many forms, the many sporting events of the earlier days, the film nights, Mill Hill's music evenings and Rushden's singing but there were also many weekend or day visits available for members to participate in art, music, poetry, birdwatching to name a few. These residential trips took place initially at Dor Knap before moving to Cuddeston House or Alison House and were open to members, their partners and others who were introduced to Toc H for the first time.

Work overseas

At the very heart of the Movement that was to become Toc H, was the ethos that Allied troops of all nations were welcome at Talbot House in Belgium. After the end of the 1st World War, these early international links helped to spread the concept of Toc H across the world and gradually branches were established in every continent. Sometimes the branch activities mirrored those carried out in the UK, but in many cases, work developed into major projects addressing third world problems such as Leprosy, T.B., social deprivation, blindness and racial tension etc. The number of overseas branches reached a peak in the 1940s, before slowly decreasing. Some of the work has already been documented over the decades but this is a brief round-up of work in the 1990s.

It seemed like 1925 was a pivotal year as Toc H was established in the following countries; this also illustrates the longevity of the Movement's service overseas.

India

Toc H India, has undergone some constitutional changes over the years, but retained the Toc H ethos that encompassed the Christian character of the movement.



The General Assembly of India Council Meeting in front of the Health and Welfare building, Panikampatti.

In the 1990s many branches were closing but Madras branch was still supporting the project at **Panikampatti** where there was a very successful crèche and nursery school, in addition to the further support given to the poorer inhabitants of the area.



Toc H creche Panikampatti children and staff, December 1991

There were also other branches at **Punalor** in Kerala and **Tripunithura** where they were supporting a Residential Public School. Work also continues at **Trivandrum** where, like in all the branches they have ambitious plans and great need but limited funds.

In 1996, the Toc H Indoor Stadium was opened in **Cochin** on the Toc H School premises.

South Africa

The first branch in South Africa began when Bert Oldfield, who had known Tubby at Talbot House, bought a cheap little bedside oil lamp with an open flame from the village store near St. Matthew's Anglican Mission in the village of **Keiskama Hoek**. 67 years later there were 21 branches and 9 General Member's branches across seven Provinces. Work included child care, provision for the elderly, work with the disabled etc. all with the constant pressure of



Toc H Indoor stadium-cum-auditorium with a seating capacity of about 2,500 persons, built on the Toc H school premises

extreme poverty and racial tension. The renowned Don Mackenzie TB settlement continued, and care was extended to the ante natal needs of the mothers in the area. A national project, 'The Etheredge Centre', named after Dr Dennis Etheredge a former President of Toc H is situated in the grounds of the world's deepest gold mine, was a facility that offered short breaks and some vocational training to all. It aimed to be *'a place of meeting and understanding for both black and white'*.

After neighbouring Zimbabwe gained independence in 1980, quite a few 'exiles' moved from **Bulawayo** branch to start a new branch in **Pietermaritzburg** in South Africa.

Across the world there were often Lone members carrying on the spirit of Toc H by themselves.

Notably, Dick Carter who worked in Eshowe a remote part of rural Kwa-Zulu, South Africa, showing educational, health, hygiene and Christian films that included a film called Jesus translated into Zulu. He used a portable 35mm film projector, screen and electric generator supplied by Toc H.

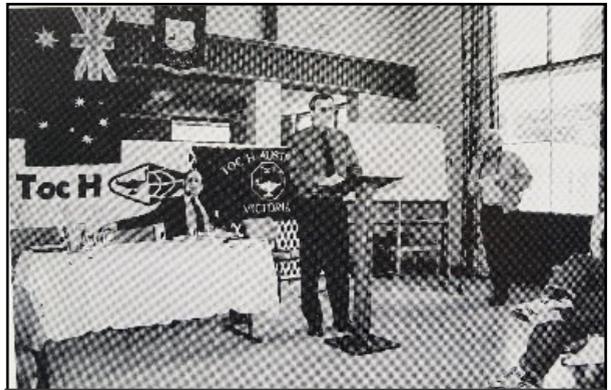
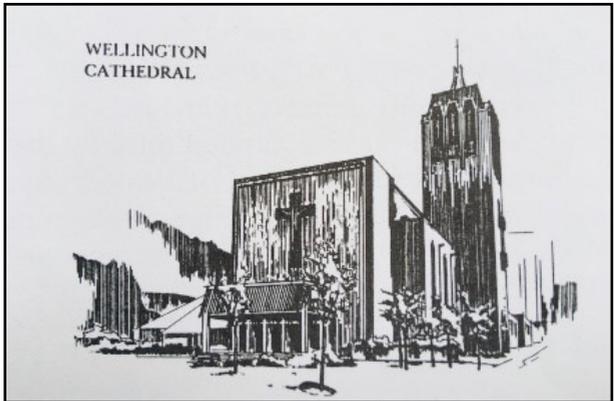
New Zealand

During its heyday, New Zealand branches had been responsible for Prisoners' Aid, encouraging Blood donation, Leprosy Relief, Emergency Flashing lights to name a few but in 1992, branches were decreasing and membership ageing. However, those that were left were enthusiastically working with several good causes. Wellington Cathedral had been a focus for worship, the starting point for the World Chain of Light and became the resting point for a Toc H lamp.

As a popular holiday destination members from **Wellington, Dunedin** and **Nelson** branches were often called upon to offer hospitality to visitors from Great Britain. One member from **Wellington** deserves a mention having knitted over 1000 knee blankets for hospital patients!

Australia

In Australia in 1992, there were 23 branches and groups with a membership of 430 with other General Members who supported activities and performed personal service. In addition to the usual activities they organised Youth Leadership Training Courses for which there is a great demand because of their



Julian Ranson (seated) and Michael Thomas (Australian Treasurer)

Christian basis, and residential camps for the disabled and disadvantaged. **Queensland** still ran their holiday house on Bribie Island.

Zimbabwe (formally Rhodesia)

Toc H also began in 1925 and maintained a presence after Independence in 1980. By 1994 there were only five remaining branches, three of which comprised mainly of senior citizens. There were 2 community hostels in **Harare** run on similar lines to a Mark, that were able to accommodate up to 50 residents each. The Residents were predominantly African while Toc H members were mainly ex-pats. An Overseas Development Grant enabled a Toc H worker to broaden their activities and North Wales and North West Region sponsored a minibus there that enabled much more flexibility.



Residents from the Harare Children's home

In 1998, an orphanage at Vimbaynesu was denied state assistance because its facilities were inadequate. The Harare Action Group formed a Board of Trustees, appealed to local dignitaries and together with the Lions raised \$100,000 to upgrade the site.

Amongst the countries where Toc H was established later was:

Nigeria

In 1932, Tubby had begun a long standing campaign to treat Leprosy across the world and in 1991 in Nigeria, Toc H still maintained that link at the Zaria Leprosy Training Centre.

Bangladesh

In the late 1980s and 1990s amazing results were achieved by Peter East who started the **Khasdobir Youth Action Group**. On a budget of just £18,000 per annum, he managed to:



Sewing Centre girls with the banner they prepared for the Toc H Khasdobir Friendship Day

- initiate 8 schools 'under the sky' to prepare children for primary school,
- buy school books for 100 school students and 3 college students
- 5 literacy groups for adults
- Start a workshop for adults to learn how to make clothes with the help of an additional loan
- helped the above to sell their clothes
- Initiate savings groups
- Introduced backyard chicken farming
- Sent money to frail elderly widows
- Emergency help for sickness and funeral costs
- Expansion of health education for women.



Members of KYAG taking emergency supplies to families marooned by floods at Shimultola, Companigang 22 June 1983



Children in the school 'under the sun'

In addition, he also managed to help the women grow in confidence and self-esteem. On his retirement, 200 women came to his farewell, 'none were veiled, not one stood submissively staring at their feet and each one came up and shook him by the hand', a scenario that would have been unimaginable in the past.

A local man then took over the projects which continued to run with the support of Toc H and the British Overseas Development Fund. On a return visit in 1996 by Peter East and Ken and Barbara Prideaux-Brune, they reported that unfortunately all work by the Action Group had had to be suspended due to the political situation in the country. Happily, a year later, the political situation had stabilised and the Khasdobir Action Group resumed its valuable work.



Harun Ahmed, co-founder with Peter East of the Khasdobir Youth Action Group

Germany

After the closure of the renowned refreshment facilities when Checkpoint Charlie closed in 1990, representation continued in Germany with groups in **Munster, Berlin, Herford and Paderborn, Heidelberg** and **Albania** in the early 1990s.



Herford Bookshop

There were also plans to establish a new Services shop and reinforce ties with Talbot House.

However, in May 1997, the decision was made to end Toc H's work with the Services in Germany. After 50 years working with British Forces stationed there, providing both emotional and practical support to soldiers and their families, this marked the end of a memorable and significant part of Toc H work overseas. The decision was in part a practical one, as numbers of British troops were being sent on peace keeping work elsewhere, and partly financial, as a large deficit had arisen. (Subsequently, an investigation revealed the cause of this and steps were taken to recover the money).

Belgium

Talbot House remained a place of pilgrimage for many and regularly held workshops, conferences and residential courses relating to international co-operation and peace studies.

France

Toc H in **Paris** did exist before the 2nd World War and its lamp was hidden during the occupation, but the current branch started in 1946, so celebrated its 50th Anniversary in 1996. It was perhaps unusual in that its main aim was the 'welfare of old and lonely British people' and to this end they visited the sick and housebound and provided monthly tea parties, Christmas parties and the occasional day out to those living in the area.

Thomas the Tank Engine

As a child, Wilbert Awdry had lived close to the famous Box Tunnel in Wiltshire and listened to the trains hooting at night time and decided then that each train had a definite personality as they puffed and panted along, " I can't do it, I can't do it", then "Yes you can, yes you can"

His association with Toc H began when he was initiated into the **Jerusalem** branch in 1934 aged 22. Two years later he returned to England and was ordained as a priest in **Odiham**, Hampshire where he started a new Toc H branch. At the outbreak of the 2nd

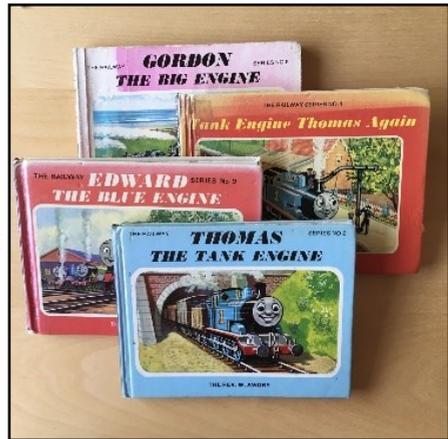
World War he declared himself a Pacifist (his brother had been killed in the 1st World War) and he moved to Birmingham to become curate at **Kings Norton** Parish Church where he joined the local branch. He and his family, including his son Christopher, lived near the local railway and this re-awakened his love of trains. When Christopher was ill with measles he made up stories about trains to amuse him and Thomas the Tank Engine was born.

In 1946 he left Birmingham, moving on to Cambridgeshire where he made contact with **Huntingdon** branch and then started a new branch at neighbouring **St. Ives**, before becoming a Padre at **Wisbech** and **Stroud** and then a general member. He continued to write until 1972 and was awarded the M.B.E in 1996.

Many generations loved his stories in which his engines assumed human emotions as they went about their daily work and all issues that arose were always resolved in a straightforward honest manner. At the end of the day all the engines regardless of size, colour, steam or diesel returned to the engine shed, respectful of each other's differences. An analogy perhaps of the Toc H ideals he was so used to?

1999

So as the years go by in the 1990s, Toc H, the UK and the World wait as the new Millennium approaches..... as the new dawn breaks in Wellington and Melbourne, followed by Khasdobir and Panikampatti, Harare, Ethembeni, Poperinge and London, everyone holds their collective breath and looks forward with hope....



My children's much loved collection

Josephine Adams

We will remember them !

Leo Coley



Age shall not weary them

Possible Tree Project at Wessex Toc H

We have been thinking about trees in Crowmarsh! The starting up of a branch in the village was heavily hindered by the virus and we thought a reasonably simple idea would be to give out saplings to interested villagers in the name of environmental and social friendliness. Hopefully people will share the progress of their trees on social media and it will raise awareness of Toc H.

However, this has not proved to be so simple! We are in contact with the Parish Council and Woodland Trust and hope to involve the local school. Negotiations are ongoing but we will get there, and perhaps be part of the Queen's Jubilees tree planting project. Watch this space!

In our recent trustees meeting it was suggested that all the branches might want to plant at least one tree as part of the Queen's Jubilee Project. Given our links to the Queen as our patron, this would be appropriate, also generating interest in our local areas.

Linda Parker

Response on Food Banks etc.

We are pleased to be able to report that the responses received from members has meant that we have been able to fund local initiatives in England, Scotland and Wales that are working with those who have been hit hard by the Covid restrictions.

In many cases this has helped those who are using food banks etc and has been greatly appreciated.

I am sure that those from the old Women's Association will be delighted that funds given were available from the money handed on from the Allison House committee following its sale.

Toc H Tales Blackpool re-visited

Recently I introduced you to Samuel Brentnall, one of the founders of Blackpool branch in 1927, who thought "Toc H was "not so much a society, more a way of living".

When the branch began Samuel, the Secretary was known as 'Blinks' because of his glasses. Everyone, he explained had a nickname. The other original member was 'Midge' while others included, 'Chips', 'Splinters', 'Rope', 'Nifty' and 'Smiler'.



'Blinks'

They met first in a room in Church Street, before moving in December 1931 to a derelict stable in Back High Street with a broken front door and only an open fire for warmth. The thick black smoke from the fire plus the smell of the horses that had been stabled there for generations did not make for a very conducive environment for meetings.

Their first lamp was donated by 'Bunny' in memory of his brother, who was killed at Ypres while serving with the Canadian Army. At a ceremony at the Albert Hall, the lamp was dedicated and then lit by the Duke of Windsor, then the Prince of Wales.

After installation of a huge boiler in their premises they began to cook 300 meals a day for the destitute in the town. The members who had in the War, done hours of 'spud bashing' found themselves once again preparing thousands of potatoes and other vegetables. Reaction to their efforts were mixed however, as they earned praise from the Prince of Wales and M.P.s but criticism from the Town

Council who maintained that there were “no poor people in Black-pool”. Subsequently, ‘Binks’ maintained, they used the Toc H model to create their own Social Service Department.

Their next act of service was an innovative idea to help the hundreds of people that were flooding to the town on cheap day trips to see the illuminations. They realised that having seen the lights they had nowhere to go and no money to spend, so they borrowed a church school room and dispensed free tea and sandwiches. They went on to the Promenade to promote the facility and invite people along, before unwittingly realising that their invitation to young ladies in particular could be misconstrued!

Over the years they ran camping holidays near the beach for boys from all over the country, some of whom had never seen the sea, provided a library service at the local hospital, visited disabled war veterans and delivered toys at Christmas, all ably assisted by an active woman’s section.

When the 2nd World War broke out the branch established a Services Club in the town complete with a chapel, recreation and reading rooms, kitchen and canteen. They served tea, buns, cakes, sandwiches and ‘pop’ all costing a penny. Thousands of servicemen from all over the world passed through, many leaving their thanks and tributes in three visitors’ books. One grateful airman wrote

*"Many are the happy hours
I have whiled away
Spent at the old Toc H
When I have spent my pay".*

After 30 years, ‘Binks’ handed over the Secretary’s job to a younger person but remained a member saying

"Toc H was born out of the comradeship and will to help each other which existed among Servicemen. Those qualities will remain today. I shall be in Toc H as long as I live".

Jo Adams

In Touch can be provided to you through the post or as a PDF - please let the Office know if you would prefer your copy as a PDF and we will arrange this for you!
Please request the PDF through the office at **info@toch.org.uk**

NATIONAL PRAYER CYCLE

(This can be used weekly or monthly)

Friendship – to love widely

In Toc H's Second Century we continue to pray for its growth and development.

We pray that the 4 points of compass will continue to help Toc H work for a better society.

Service – to build bravely

We pray for the appointment of the General Secretary and that the right person will apply.

We pray for the Board selecting this appointment.

Fair-mindedness – to think fairly

With the virus in Britain and world-wide we continue to think of all medical staff and others tending those affected by it.

We pray that the vaccine may give new hope to everyone and especially those isolating or alone.

Witness – to witness humbly

We think of all branches and lone members in Britain and overseas, and particularly for all who are unwell or housebound. We continue to pray for new opportunities of service in our communities.



*Prepared by Canon William Bestelink
May 2021*

MISSION STATEMENT

The aims of Toc H are defined by the four points of the compass, first defined in 1920:

Toc H is committed to building a fairer society by working with communities to promote friendship and service, confront prejudice and practice reconciliation.

Friendship:	To love widely
Service:	To build bravely
Fairmindedness:	To think fairly
Witness:	To witness humbly