

*A written copy of a verbal tribute to Daphne Capps, delivered upon
her retirement as Chairman of Millingtons Hospital.*

*At St George's Church, Frankwell, Shrewsbury, on 21st September
2025.*

Forty years as a trustee, and thirty years as our chairman. Now, Daphne, that's something to celebrate.

I'm going to begin with a riddle. What is it that those who give a lot also often take? It will be the last word I speak – but can you guess it before I get there? I'll give you another clue – sometimes people are ready for it- so keep your ears open.

And now for a digression, a quick question: if I asked you about a famous Chairman of Manchester United or Nottingham Forest, for example, what would you say? You wouldn't know. Nobody knows the Chairman. But the manager, that's different; everybody knows the manager – the gentlemanly Matt Busby or sharp-nosed Brian Clough, maybe. But nobody knows the Chairman.

Except at Millington's. Everybody knows the Chairman because, in many respects, the Chairman has also been the Manager and the Captain. Directing play both on and off the field, as it were – in the boardroom and on site, in our cottages and apartments, and especially in the gardens -taking on as many roles as there are positions on the pitch. Daphne Capps has become synonymous with Millington's. She is everywhere. And is known by everybody. And vice versa – the Chairman knows everybody, too.

And this is one of the unique aspects of Daphne's thirty-year Chairmanship: the time she has spent with our hospitallers and residents - you. As she slips down her driveway, crosses The Mount, and passes through the broad gate made by the even broader Dr Robert Darwin when he was Chairman, she has been with you almost daily, and thinks of all those conversations. Valuable and valued conversations. Daphne has brought her wisdom, experience, and judgment to each of these moments, sharing in your ups and downs, joys and struggles, and offering great support and comfort. She thus has a deep understanding and knowledge of the people who live here. She has been by your side. She has been by our side.

And of course, she brings that very personal knowledge of people and how Millington really works to make things function and to the work of the trustees. Many institutions, it seems to me, can make decisions to serve themselves, but because Daphne understands that people matter and knows you—the people who matter—we have always strived to make decisions in the best interests of the residents. She has made us better trustees.

There has been a unique formula for this.

I recall a colleague and friend in Thailand, Dr Chai Anan, the Chairman of a Trust in Bangkok. Very high-powered – shrewd and intelligent. He'd open the Board Meetings, do a lot of clicking on his mobile, and an hour or two later, close the meetings. This could not be Daphne – she doesn't have a mobile – but like Chai-Anan, she had one, with minimal fuss, and that's part of her genius: facilitating discussions, getting her own way, and making everyone feel they had made all the right decisions. She always managed this with a wry sense of humour and a gleam in her eye.

And make no mistake. For thirty years, the right decisions have been made. Millington's has been very well chaired. And Millington's thrives.

Daphne would say, of course, that it's been a team effort and to a certain extent it has, but over her thirty years, our chairman has seen off, run through, kept going – in some cases stayed awake – a healthy number of trustees, clerks and wardens.

Daphne may want to remember some of them, if not all. The clerks: the gentle and gentlemanly Dennis More, the Dickensian and well-informed John Rouse, Keith— the solar-panel Fernside, on-the-ball Gavin Hogg, and now the inimitable Garry Dean. And the trustees - among them, John Riddell, Bob Toon, both highly valued as they were, as well as more recent additions, Ian Gillogaley, Martin Thorpe, and many more. But only four wardens: Pat Kenyon, Wendy, Graham, and, of course, the indispensable Maria.

A good team effort, maybe. But there's only one Chairman.

And, of course, it didn't all begin here.

It began 80 years ago - can you imagine? In Morecambe, Daphne is a good Lancastrian. I suspect she still retains some of the resilience of her sea-faring relatives and certainly her upbringing at Sunday School and Morecambe Church. No doubt then, as now, Daphne, as bright as a button, did not finish her Sixth Form at Morecambe Grammar because she told her parents she was going to start training as a nurse. Was there a hint of independence – or even stubbornness – at such a young age? Surely not. But I suspect Daphne has — with great courtesy, of course - always known her own mind, and spoken it.

With that decision, the die was cast. Daphne loved nursing; she loved her speciality in paediatrics, and it is hardly surprising that she finished top of her cohort a year earlier than the others, earning the silver medal as an SRN and RSCN. I believe that Daphne worked very hard for that, not simply for the work itself, nor driven by ambition or the desire for success, but to demonstrate to the hospital that she was ready. Not unsurprisingly, therefore, within two years she was Ward Sister at the Children's Hospital in Birmingham.

I imagine that it takes a great deal of courage to be the Sister of a Children's Ward. While there must have been moments of fun and laughter, joy and relief, I expect Daphne had to manage difficult times for her children and share heartbreaking news with their parents—

trusted and truthful personal engagement—conversations, ladies and gentlemen. Confidence, courage, wisdom, patience and kindness are required here. And I suspect that these qualities, which of course she brought to Millington's, were moulded in Morecambe but fired, like clay, in Birmingham.

Daphne moved to Shrewsbury when she married Peter, he had moved to Birmingham Childrens Hospital as their first senior registrar. He became the second consultant paediatrician in Shrewsbury, covering Shropshire and Mid Wales one year later, a position he loved. They had two sons, Martin and Matthew, and a busy family life that included gardening and managing an extensive cellar. In 1985, forty years ago, Daphne became a trustee at Millington's, and ten years later Bob Toon asked her to become its first Lady Chairman, which she accepted in September. In November, Matthew died. Consequently, her term of office, which she has carried out with great distinction and devotion, coincides with a significant, often almost unbearable, family burden.

But how typical that in these years – or for donkey's years, as Daphne puts it - she has been Church Warden at St George's, and with all her knowledge of children and their parents, of family, has made such a happy and loving contribution to their Little Dragons. And how fitting that she should bring all the wealth of her experience to the not-so-little-dragons at Millington's.

A portrait's depth often lies in its background, in the context. For Daphne, this includes the Morecombe years, her time at the Church, nursing, receiving the Silver Medal, her role as Ward Sister, and her life with Peter and their sons. And on this occasion at St George's, the Christian context holds particular significance.

Daphne read the Parable of the Talents from Matthew's Gospel - in many ways an uncomfortable but inspiring message, as Tim has told us. But at its simplest and most genuine, it is clear that the talents given by the master are gifts from God. It is also clear that while one servant was not, two of them were prepared – there it is again, that key word – two were prepared, and they took responsibility for the gifts entrusted to them.

And I believe this is the message, the true value, if you like, of Daphne's Chairmanship. Bob Toon knew she was prepared, and she took on the responsibility: for the residents, the Board – she took responsibility for Millington's. With the benevolent face of James Millington's portrait gazing down upon her, she accepted the duty of continuing what he had started. Daphne loves that portrait and that kind gaze, and I know that Daphne loves Millington's, and we love you, too, Daphne.

So today at St George's, we thank God for Daphne's gifts - a bright-eyed sense of fun, courage, wisdom, human sympathy, and understanding. And for all those conversations.

And especially today, we thank Daphne – and this really is the last word – we thank Daphne for taking responsibility.

Robin Case

21.09.2025