

The Virger

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Festival Edition 2007



Supplement
Souvenir

THE NATIONAL CHAIRMAN'S SPEECH during the GUILD'S CRUISE on the RIVER THAMES

Our *Constitution* gives as one of our main *raison d'être* the provision and encouragement of fellowship amongst vergers. What better way to put that fellowship into practice than by sharing a meal together. As we read the gospels we find examples of Jesus offering to share a meal with others and, cleverly, adding "why don't we go to your place?"

Cleverly, the Central Council invited itself to London for the 75th Anniversary celebrations, and the London and Southwark Branch have stepped up to the crease, dealt with all the various googlies that came their way and brought together this marvelous celebration for us.

The Branch has done a huge amount of work to get us all together; the unforgettable PowerPoint presentation at Conference, Tom Cameron (L&S Area Leader) has persuaded churches and incumbents to let us look around their buildings and negotiated with the Dean and Chapter of St Paul's for our use of the cathedral; Denise Mead (L&S Branch Secretary) has coped admirably with mountains of administration and far too many phone-calls; Stephen Haude (L&S Branch Chairman) provided some excellent brochures, tickets and other useful information, fixed some excellent weather, but was not able to negotiate an end to the Tube strike until the second day of the Festival! (Never mind the financial capital of Britain being crippled by the strike – how were we vergers supposed to get around to the various Festival events? In the end, resourceful as ever, solutions were found.) Finances were organized, Tom managed to source some very generous sponsorship – our sincere thanks to them all – welcome packs were assembled, and thousands of things that only those who have had to arrange such events will even begin to comprehend were all carefully put into place.



So we're here, we've read the book, we've bought the T-shirt, and all that remains to do is to enjoy the celebrations, and to cut this amazing cake. It is baked by none other than Tom Cameron (who in a previous life was a professional baker) and decorated by none other than Stephen Haude (previously a professional confectioner extraordinaire). I'd like to think that the cake is not only decorated to represent the Guild, but could be seen as a metaphor for the Guild ... all good cakes need a recipe, so here is one for vergers:

*Take a verger, add some self-confidence, a tablespoon of concern, a spoonful of respect, add some experience, a dash of imagination, stir-in some care and kindness, vigorously blend with thoughtfulness and team-spirit, mix with friendship and serve with a warm smile to all around.**

That's what we are here to do as the Guild.

So - Eat, Rejoice and be Merry – for tomorrow we have to go to church!

Chris Crooks.

* With thanks to Rosemary Simmons, Canterbury Cathedral Centre

Founded 1932.
Presidents: The Archbishops
of Canterbury and York

[http://societies.anglican.org/
guild-of-vergers/](http://societies.anglican.org/guild-of-vergers/)

From my Diary

Tuesday 4th September 2007

In the company of a friend, I travelled from Reading to London and eventually arrived at our hotel in Great Queen's Street. This allowed us to wander around the nearby Covent Garden and also to visit the Masonic Museum, before making our way to Westminster Pier where we met with fellow vergers, friends and honoured guests from around the country and the USA. We boarded our pleasure boat for a return trip to Greenwich. The evening was warm and balmy so the welcoming glass of champagne was much appreciated. We witnessed many of the London sights on our journey and the reflection of the many and varied lights on the River Thames was magical. A barbeque meal was provided with the finale being the cutting of the special anniversary cake, prepared by Tom Cameron and iced by Stephen Haude – both renowned for their baking and confectionary skills. (See front cover of Guild 2008 calendar (see shop advert) for a picture of the cake before it was devoured!) Despite travel facility limitations, everyone was able to return to their respective places of repose.

Wednesday 5th September 2007

Around 9.30am I arrived at St Martin at Ludgate to register for the day's activities, receiving a bag of goodies and supporting literature, and depositing robes for use later in the day. I had selected the coach tour to the East End, which left from outside

St Paul's. Our tour visited a number of Anglican churches, with varied make-up and interior but all fulfilling the needs of this diverse area. Lunch was taken at the Blind Beggar Pub, notorious for its connection with the underworld, especially the Kray Brothers. On our return to St Paul's, high tea was available, then back to St Martin's to robe in readiness for the procession from there back to St Paul's, for the special Eucharist service. What an atmosphere – the music, the excited hum of vergers and friends marvelling at the sheer splendour of this place, and especially under the Dome – well enhanced by the sun streaming through and glinting on the gold and multitude of other colours reflecting from the mosaics.

After the service, we remained in our places for a presentation to take place then assembled on the steps at the west entrance where photos were taken by vergers, friends and curious passers by. The day finished with a champagne reception in the Crypt and time to say goodbye to friends – new and old – and hoping to meet at next year's conference.

I feel privileged to have been part of this magnificent celebration – thank you to everyone who made, for me, a time that was truly enjoyable and one that I shall always remember and cherish.

Jean Ebdon, St Michael's, Tilehurst
Oxford Branch

From the Other Side of the Pond



What a beautifully planned, marvellously two-day celebration: Even the tube strike could not dampen the festivities, and I was lucky enough to make friends with Tina from Yeovil whilst walking from Waterloo to Westminster.

The cruise on the Thames was such fun – it's amazing that people go sailing in small boats on such a busy waterway. The lights of London after dark were wonderful, it was a great pleasure to see old friends again, and Tom baked the best fruit cake, EVER. (Is the secret the amount of booze that goes over it afterwards?)

No matter where one is on the high-low scale as an Anglican, the East End churches would meet one's needs. We saw a wider range of architecture and liturgy than one could imagine – an extremely high Anglo-Catholic church with a wrought iron fence that protects the altar; an affluent one with a "boat"

gallery that hangs over the nave; a poor one with a multi-cultural ministry that could not image installing an elevator; and another that is very traditional and made me think of the interiors in country churches, very modern to very old fashioned – the variety was fantastic.

The memory of 180 vergers processing up the sidewalk from St Martin/Ludgate to St Paul's will be with me forever – how glorious it was!

Congratulations to Tom and Denise for organising such a splendid celebration – and my heartfelt thanks that I was able to attend. As we say over here, "Been there, done that, got the t-shirt."

Bidwell Drake
St James the Apostle, Conroe, Texas

‘Thanks’

On behalf of our new Life Member, Tom Cobley, and the Liverpool Branch, can I thank you most sincerely for your “behind the scenes” deliberations to ensure that Tom got his reward in such a wonderful setting under the great dome of St Paul’s.

He is immensely proud of his accolade, and his relatives were equally proud to be present on such a wonderful occasion.

The Festival was excellent throughout and the London Branch are to be congratulated for their many months of hard work coming to fruition.

Once again, many thanks from me and the Branch.

Yours in Christ.

Howard Llewellyn, Branch Secretary
Liverpool Branch

My letter of thanks to the London & Southwark Branch summed it up – many thanks to you all from the Manchester & Blackburn Branch for the excellent 75th Anniversary Festival which was attended by 11 of our members who all enjoyed two days of celebration. (Being a “clever branch” we were all “parked” at Mary Summer House and The Civil Service Club so tubes were not needed.)

The cruise on Tuesday evening was a lovely choice of venue for us all to enjoy good company, good food and drink, and good fellowship in an informal setting. And the “Two Hidden Talents” – Tom Cameron and Stephen Haude – deserve a special thanks for the celebration cake. Some of us enjoyed the East End coach tour and were given much cause for discussion with visits to five very different churches.

The Festival Eucharist at St Paul’s Cathedral was a wonderful service of celebration for the Guild’s 75 years. Thanks to all the clergy and choir for this. The presentation to Tom Cobley (Liverpool Branch) of Life Membership of the Guild for his 50 years as a verger was good for our branch too as we often join this branch for meetings.

A photo was taken of Stephen Haude doing his balancing act as he took one of us on the west door steps. We apologise to the Bishop for the extra photo call and chatter which caused him to be locked out of the cathedral afterwards! We escorted him to the Crypt for champagne to pacify him!

Again, many thanks to London & Southwark Branch for a wonderful 75th anniversary. Thank you also for the anniversary banner, designed by James Armstrong, which led us all up Ludgate Hill to St Paul’s.

Yours in fellowship.

Anne Woodward, Branch Correspondent
Manchester & Blackburn Branch

Vergers’ Guild celebrates

CHURCH VERGERS are no longer *Dad’s Army* characters, but are involved in crucial work to reach people on the margins of society, the Archbishops of Canterbury and York told vergers earlier this month, writes Bill Bowder.

Dr Williams and Dr Sentamu, who are joint presidents of the Guild, sent a message to the vergers as they celebrated their Guild’s 75th anni-

versary at St Paul’s Cathedral. They were “almost as much a part of the Great British Collective Unconscious as vicars. From Dickens’s *Edwin Drood* through to *Dad’s Army* and *The Vicar of Dibley*, they have been there. But now the stereotypes do not reflect the reality.”

The best were creative, pastoral servants to the life of the churches they cared for. They were involved in some of the most crucial work of the Church: “its reaching out and welcoming of those on its margins”.

At the service, the Bishop of Woolwich, the Rt Revd Christopher Chessun, “reminisced fondly about the hospitality he had received in the vergers’ vestry when he was a minor canon at St Paul’s”.

Altogether, about 160 vergers from all over the country processed from St Martin’s-within-Ludgate to St Paul’s for a festal eucharist. The festival concluded with a champagne reception in the crypt.

The Guild has 800 members from across the Anglican Communion.

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A message from the Archbishops of Canterbury and York, Presidents of the Guild

Vergers are almost as much a part of the Great British Collective Unconscious as vicars. From Dickens’ *Edwin Drood* through to *Dad’s Army* and *The Vicar of Dibley*, they have been there.

But now the stereotypes do not reflect the reality. There have been many changes in the role of a verger over three quarters of a century. The best vergers are creative, pastoral servants to the life of the churches they have cared for. More than ever these days, the job is one in which vergers are going to be involved in some of the most crucial work of the church – its reaching out to and welcoming of those on its margins. It is going to require huge gifts of stamina, imagination and spiritual steadiness.

We join with you in this celebration in offering heartfelt thanks to God that the Church of England is fortunate to have so many men and women gifted in these ways and who give themselves in such a dedicated way to this ministry, and we wish the Guild every blessing and prosperity in the years ahead.

Rowan Cantaur Sentamu Ebor

(As appearing in the Festival Order of Service)

