

The Virger

Autumn 2015
Issue 288



*~CEGV~
The Conference Group Photo
Monday the 10th of August 2015*



www.cofegv.org.uk

The Official Magazine of the Church of England Guild of Vergers





Welcome to the Autumn 2015 edition of *The Virger*. If you would like to include Branch news, articles, adverts, photos, book reviews or any other information you feel our readers would find of interest please send them to the Communications Officer by the Deadline Date below.

PLEASE NOTE THAT ANY ARTICLES ETC... SUBMITTED AFTER THE DEADLINE MAY BE HELD OVER UNTIL THE NEXT EDITION TO AVOID DELAYS IN PRODUCTION!

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NATIONAL CHAIRMAN'S LETTER



During our Training Conference, which was again held in West Malvern, we enjoyed marvellous food, great views and fine weather, we also got down to some work besides splashing about in the pool. We elected and appointed various people to roles within the Guild. Thank you to those who have now become officers for being willing to take on these positions and to those who have served the Guild in the past. The Training team led by John Shearer did a cracking job again, with thought provoking and informative lecturers, helpful workshops, sublime worship and some quirky entertainment. I cannot wait until next year. A very big thank you to all who participated in any way.

It is always great to welcome new members to the Training Conference, whether they are fresh in their vocation as Vergers or time served and have just not had the time or energy to be with us before. We aim to lay on something for all, so do not be put off in attending however long you can stay. I promise you, you will always learn something you did not know before. There will, I am sure, be some more information contained within these next few pages and perhaps a photograph or two.

"Festival Lite" in June at Berwick, Bamburgh and Alnwick was very well received and a lot of fun. It was good to spend some time with other members of the Guild as we became pilgrims to these wonderful towns and churches in Northumberland and explored that part of the world.

Our Canterbury Festival is in late September where we will be entertained by the London, Southwark & Chelmsford Branch at Temple Church, London, and where we will learn more about Magna Carta. This should be a good do. The Branch were extolling the benefits of the event to the members at Conference.

I hope you have been fortified by some time out to "chillax" which seems to have been the in word at Conference this year.

James Armstrong



FESTIVAL LITE



"Festival Lite", the York Province Festival, was held on Monday 1st and Tuesday 2nd June starting at Holy Trinity Church, Berwick upon Tweed, just before we met officially. The Vicar and the congregation took pity on us due to the weather and served us with tea, scones and cake in the Parish Hall, which was very welcome because of the stiff breeze and slight dampness. We then had a short talk about the development of the church, which is the only one to be built during the Commonwealth period, then we swelled the ranks for Evening Prayer with the addition of a couple of hymns. A bracing walk around the Elizabethan walls was endured by some before we went off to our various digs in the town.

Next morning our coach picked us up and took us out of Berwick over one of the four bridges that traverse the Tweed. After a smooth journey admiring the sea and the countryside, we spotted Bamburgh Castle sitting atop its rocky crag. After a short wander into the RNLI museum to learn more about Grace Darling and her heroic rescue of survivors from the wreck of the Forfarshire, we regrouped around the Shrine of Saint Aiden which is in the chancel of the Parish Church for midday prayers. A slow walk through the charming village brought us to our coach which was parked in the shadow of the Castle, then we were off again. This time we headed inland to Alnwick, which we entered twice, for the views of yet again a splendid Castle and town, but the driver was really showing us where the Parish Church was so that we knew where we were to head for after we were let loose for the afternoon.



Our next item on the itinerary was to attend Evensong at Saint Michael's Church before boarding our coach for the return trip back up the A1 to Berwick. My Mum and Dad were on hand to whisk away those who needed to catch a train close to our scheduled arrival time into Berwick, just in case we were delayed. Most of the members present stayed on for another night and returned home the next day, I hope having enjoyed an adventure in search of Saints, Heroines and Wizards.

My hope with this Festival was to show we could try doing something different and push our imaginations as to what a Branch could offer in the way of hosting one of our Guild Festivals. I think we achieved this and that with a little planning a trip to a Parish Church or Churches can

be just as rewarding as visiting a Cathedral, and does not have to cost much money. So as they say the rest is up to you....

James Armstrong

Photographs: Outside Bamburgh Parish Church; Grace Darling's Memorial; gathering for prayer around Saint Aidan's Shrine.



NATIONAL CHAPLAIN'S LETTER



Dear Friends,

I am writing this following a very successful Conference at West Malvern. We worshipped together, learnt together and had a great deal of fun, including some members dressing up as characters in the film of the 'Wizard of Oz'! Now we begin preparation for next year!

One of my high moments was to present to two of our vergers with the Diploma that comes at the end of the Training Course. Both had worked hard and had grown in confidence and in faith as they tackled each of the Units.

The serious part of the Conference is always the growth in individuals as they gain confidence in learning to do things they have never done before – be it taking the role of Thurifer, or learning to fold the Altar Linen correctly, or learning to lead a procession. Growth as individuals is the task of us all because it increases our understanding of ourselves and the God-given talents that we have. I believe that learning is a spiritual dimension of our lives and I would urge those who are not on the Training Course to consider whether this might be something that they could undertake during the next year. Each new thing we learn makes us a more rounded person!

I hope some of you are enjoying well deserved holidays and are having the opportunity to rest, refresh and relax with family or friends or even on your own where you can enjoy peace and quiet! I am looking forward to re-visiting South Africa in October to look at gardens and nature reserves but before that there seems to be lots of work to get through. There is also time to do some homework and make notes of the things we hope we might see.

I look forward to seeing many of you in London for the Cantuar Festival and to receiving invitations to visit you in your Branches as and when the opportunity arises: I maintain my motto that I will 'go anywhere, anytime' [unless of course I am in South Africa!!]

With every blessing and my love

Canon Maureen



BUSY DAYS AT WARFIELD



I did get reasonable notice that we would be having some Baptisms at the 11 a.m. service on the 25th January. Then it was confirmed that they would be "full immersion" Baptisms, and therefore outdoor.

Getting the floor insulation down and the "8x4" wooden sheets to support the Baptistry structure was the first part of the job. Time and busyness constraints meant this had to be done on Thursday: air temperature about 3 degrees Celcius.

Then the Baptistry itself: a nine-sided structure that could double as a birthing pool (or a hot-tub?). Lots of lifting, and I was very glad of my power-screwdriver. There were 45 50mm long securing bolts to put in.

Fitting the pool liner (blue rubber/plastic thing) calls for skills akin to octopus wrestling. Eventually, with help of our Youth Pastor and some buckets of hot water, we had it stretched around the Baptistry frame.



Water would have to be added, but timing was fairly critical. Filling it on Thursday would mean that it could freeze, and thawing one and a half cubic metres (1.5 tonnes) of water would call for a lot of heat: also, we have a children's group in the Churchyard on Fridays, and some kids can be mischievous... So fill day has to be as late as possible.

Now the heating time has to be considered: the heater has a power of 4.8 KW, and a temperature target of 35 degC. How long that will take to warm 1500 litres of water through 30 degrees Celcius? I got the answer to be 13 hours. So Saturday afternoon would be a good time to start heating it. But first, how long would it take to fill? Measuring the flow rate from the Churchyard tap gave one litre every five seconds: so fill time would be about two hours.

I set up the float valve before our Saturday morning event, after coning off elsewhere to allow tree surgeons to work safely. Happily, the fill time calculation was reasonably accurate, and the heater was able to go in and be turned on during Saturday afternoon. The thermal insulation went on, followed by tarpaulins to deter inquisitive visitors.

Sunday morning – time to take off the covers and make ready at about 11:45 – water temperature 34.7 degrees – very nice: steaming gently. Remove circulation pump and heater and stow them securely. Out comes the Vicar and assistant, and the candidates, and it's interesting to see their faces change as they enter the water and realise it's warm. And the service was successful: two candidates – an eight year old and his mum, both happily (no – joyfully!) Baptised.

Monday: empty by syphon, rather than pump, so as not to overwhelm the local drains. Clean out, disassemble, and put away. Assembly time is about five solid hours, disassembly about four hours.

How long does it take others to prepare for a baptism?

Dennis Wildman
Oxford Branch



The more often we gather at this stunning Conference Centre, set below the Malvern Hills, the more relaxed and enjoyable is the whole experience of so many special individuals coming together as a united community to worship God, learn from each other, enjoy mealtimes and laugh together. In other words love and support each other away from the many varied, hectic and demanding aspects of our own Parish and Cathedral lives.



This was once again the case when from Sunday 9th August until Thursday afternoon on the 13th a large number of male and female vergers (plus one guide dog) gathered together at the Elim Conference Centre. On the first full day it is the AGM which dominates the morning followed by a lively Q & A session between the National Officers and general members. It quickly becomes very obvious that many members give a huge amount of their own time into both running the Guild and preparing such events as this Training Conference.

The list of such committed vergers is too long to state here but let me at least name a few: John Shearer, Training Officer, who is instrumental in putting Training Conferences together along with the hard work of Margaret Burston, Conference Secretary. James Armstrong, National Chairman, Stephen Stokes, General Secretary who spends days typing and printing all the one off orders of service, Marek Barden, Communications Officer, who you will all know because he produces the Magazine amongst other tasks and most importantly Canon Maureen, National Chaplain, who is a star in so many ways; this includes her lecturing, preaching and praying almost non-stop! Maureen still finds hours to listen, chat and laugh. I hope others will forgive me if I have missed other crucial vergers off this list but as we all know all members are important to the Guild and their local Churches.

The theme this year was 'Handling History' of which all became clear as we progressed through the days ahead. The theme became the guiding principle throughout the group meetings, lectures and sermons. From an early Church Christianity lecture entitled 'Aspects of the Early Church' by Canon Maureen on Monday afternoon, to Father Tom who led a most moving service entitled 'Stations of the Cross – History and Practise', on the Tuesday morning. He led a large group around the extended undulating gardens of the Conference Centre, stopping for each Station which included prayers, reading passages from the Bible, short homilies and singing various Good Friday hymns. On that Tuesday afternoon we had the excellent gifts of the Reverend Dr Andrew Macintosh of Saint John's College, Cambridge, who lectured on 'Biblical Translations'. There was both humour and serious revelations in his lecture which was later followed up within his sermon at Choral Evensong. Wednesday morning saw the inclusion of our annual Guild Requiem in which all who have passed from this earth linked with the Guild are remembered. Later practical workshops were held when members could improve their skills in such areas as: Intercessions, Reading, Serving & Verging within our own Churches. Although it was taken seriously it was a delight to behold members practising the correct use of a smoking thurible. Thank goodness this was held outdoors as some of the swingers were definitely over-swinging and how they loved being swingers of thuribles. Later on Wednesday Canon Maureen surpassed herself with a lecture entitled 'Isaiah in an Hour', which further improved our understanding of those parts of the Old Testament surrounding and including Isaiah.

For the benefit of those who are unable to attend Conference, the days are structured to encompass as many formal and informal meetings, plus loads of opportunities to relax, chat and enjoy the excellent panoramic views over the Malvern countryside, (also loads of coffee, tea and cakes are always available!) Most important are our gatherings both within the nearby Church of Saint James for formal and wonderful acts of worship and praise and less formal acts of prayer within the Conference Centre, such as Midday Prayers or Compline. I must add that we also have the benefit of our own first class organist, Phillip Ypres-Smith, who has been accompanying our services for many years.

What are we about as we continue to gather both at National Conferences and the bi-annual Provincial Festivals, plus our own individual Branch get-togethers? It is mutual support. It is sharing skills and new forms of technology, such as ipads, emails, texting and the better use of computers to aid our busy lives. It is new members being helped, trained and guided by the more experienced vergers. It is the feeling that we are not alone as many may feel they are within Churches spread around the land. It is companionship, networking, fellowship and support. It is that we are brothers and sisters serving and praising God for the betterment of those we serve within our own communities and ourselves. Spread the word and join us at our meetings and Annual Conference. This year's was so special, so much fun and laughter, so much support. Great!

Philip Dunne ~ Conference Correspondent



FORDWICH VISIT

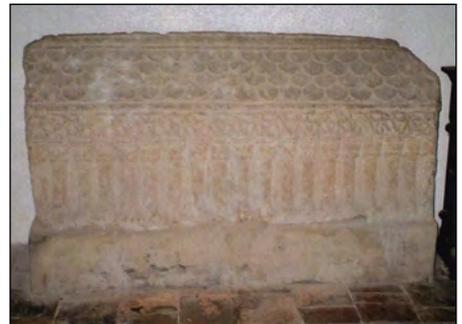
On Friday 22nd May, a bright but breezy day, 22 members of the Canterbury with Rochester Branch assembled in the car park of the George and Dragon where we were met by Philip and Elizabeth Lewis, our guides for the day. They started by taking us on a lovely walk around the town, the smallest in Britain, described in the Domesday Book as 'A small Burgh or Borough, with a Mayor and twelve Jurats, together with other Officers'.

We passed a fine Tudor house, built on the site of the house of John Maynard, the first Mayor of Fordwich in 1292. Fordwich was incorporated with the Cinque Port of Sandwich until 1886 when the river had silted up so much it could no longer take cargo boats and trustees took over and became responsible for the town property. It still pays its Ship Money each year at a ceremony in Sandwich Guild Hall of forty old pence. It finally ceased to be a port in 1830 when a railway was built linking Fordwich with the harbour at Whitstable. The loss of income was replaced by the town building a bridge over the river, tolls were charged at one penny for a cart and two pence for a wagon. The toll notice still hangs in the Town Hall.

We were shown inside the Town Hall and saw the Court Room. Underneath the Court Room is the Jail which was last used in 1855 when three men from Canterbury were caught poaching Trout. They were all sentenced to fourteen days in Jail and their fishing nets were publicly burned in the square in front of the Town Hall. In the Court Room is a Ducking Stool in which a scolding woman or gossip was ducked in the river and above the Jury Room is a room where soaking wet spluttering women were put after their ducking. The Mayor was the Chief Magistrate and sat at the table in the centre seat with Jurors on either side and behind his seat are the painted Arms of Charles II, given in 1660 at the Restoration of the Monarchy. The Drums, used to call the townspeople to a Proclamation or give warning of any danger, hang on the main crossbeam. The town accounts and all the charters are kept in a beautiful eight hundred year old chest with three different locks, the keys of which are kept by three different people, thus ensuring that all three were present whenever the chest was opened and guarding against fraud. The Town Hall is still used by the present Town Council and is believed to be the oldest and smallest still in use.



We were then taken to Saint Mary's Church, where a friend of the Reverend Peter Cornish who was unable to take our service due to a wedding in Sturry, Jenny MacPherson, led us in a lovely, simple act of worship. Chris Crooks played the organ for us. Following the service we then went to the George and Dragon for a very well cooked lunch. It was really enjoyable to be able to wander round and talk to one another.



This was the first of our yearly get-togethers in the summer months, in daylight and decent weather. Thanks go to Chris and Janet for organising this event.

CHARTWELL VISIT



On Monday 22nd June members of the Branch visited Chartwell, the former home of Sir Winston Churchill, which is now run by the National Trust. It was a cool day and there was a bit of a problem as so many people were there and there was only a certain amount of time to visit the house, also, due to filming for a programme commemorating the fiftieth anniversary of his death which is to be transmitted sometime near Christmas this year, all the signposts had been taken down which meant some people got lost.

The house is a rather squiggly affair and I can see why it annoyed Lady Churchill so much. But the place is full of his beautiful paintings and one room is now dedicated to his insignia and medals, and another room is dedicated to his uniforms. The kitchen is lovely. I was thrilled to find a huge black range, not

unlike the one I left when I left home - ours used to have cold lamb in it to warm up at all times of the day and night. I loved the dining room with its huge windows and glass door looking out to the beautiful garden, beloved by both Sir Winston and Lady Churchill, and a lovely cottage garden created by Lady Churchill.

Word has it that paint dropped on the carpet on more than one occasion was the reason a studio was eventually built next to the cottage occupied by the chauffeur, and here I was thrilled to see so many beautiful paintings. In passing I was disappointed that there were no postcards of the paintings for sale, yet other artists paintings were available as notecards. We all had coffee and buns. The scones were delicious. At lunch I had coq au vin, which was very well cooked, but the pepper pot had been spilt and it smothered the taste of both the chicken and the wine and made me very thirsty.

It was a lovely day, enjoyed by everyone. Those of us with gammy legs had to be very careful outside in the garden. The building is high up and the gardens are on a large steep slope, so great care was needed to negotiate them all. But they are a beautiful sight from every angle, quite lovely. Thanks go to all who organised the day.

Cherry Johnstone ~ Branch Correspondent



By the time I am able to put pen to paper our Annual Training Conference will have taken place and much of what could be written will also be within the Conference Report therefore this missive will be limited in words but expanded by photographs. A picture tells a thousand tales - so it is written. The group photograph is of many from the branch who attended conference.

We boast Canon Maureen within our branch but have to admit that the National Training Officer, John Shearer, is only present because someone needed to wield a Virge to keep us in order!

We also have an excellent picture of our Area Leader,



Margaret Burston, who is also the Conference Secretary, along with her newly inducted Assistant Verger, David Anwyl-Hughes, who has quickly expanded his skills to include assisting Margaret at the Training Conference. Welcome David, an excellent addition to the team.

Early June saw a number from our branch join the trek to Berwick upon Tweed for what was an excellent two days of exploring as pilgrims along the beautiful Northumberland coast. In fact the most we achieved was a determination to return at our own leisure and explore in more detail this ancient, holy and magnificent coastline. Thank you to James and John for your inspirational idea for a Provincial Festival.

Not long afterwards our group spent an afternoon at Mucknell Abbey, which is near Worcester. This is an Anglican Benedictine community set within farmland.



This expanding group of Monks and Nuns have converted a former barn and the outbuildings into a lively but devout Benedictine Monastery. We attended the Nones Service and were then given a detailed tour by the Father Abbot. Mucknell Abbey is an extremely popular place for a retreat, not only for the Bishop but laity and for the many aspiring noviciates.

During July a trip to Great Witley Church took place. This stunning Baroque jewel is within the grounds of Witley Court, former home of the Earls of Dudley, which was devastatingly burnt down many years ago, but the great fountain has now been restored and occasionally allowed to burst into the sky to everyone's delight.

During the late summer and autumn a number of the members hope to visit Malvern Priory, attend the Canterbury Province Festival at the Temple Church, London, and visit Kilpeck Church in Herefordshire and Tewksbury Abbey in Gloucestershire. This only remains for a venue to be found for our Christmas dinner and the Gloucester, Hereford and Worcester Branch will have enjoyed an excellent year of fellowship, support and fun.

Philip Dunne ~ Branch Correspondent

IMPORTANT NOTICE

**PLEASE NOTE THAT THE GENERAL SECRETARY HAS MOVED HOUSE. HIS NEW ADDRESS IS:
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CONFERENCE PHOTO ALBUM





Monday 15th - Thursday 18th August 2016

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Please submit your booking form by Friday 24th June 2016
Earlybird Booking Deadline: Wednesday 30th December 2015

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ATTENDANCE: FULL-TIME OR PART-TIME (*PLEASE TICK THE BOXES YOU WILL BE ATTENDING*)

SUNDAY			DINNER
MONDAY	BREAKFAST	LUNCH	DINNER
TUESDAY	BREAKFAST	LUNCH	DINNER
WEDNESDAY	BREAKFAST	LUNCH	DINNER
THURSDAY	BREAKFAST	LUNCH	

COST FOR THE WEEK

SINGLE OCCUPANCY ROOM *EARLY BIRD PRICE IF BOOKED BEFORE 30/12/2015*

Sunday – Thursday inclusive £316.00 **£300.00**

Monday – Thursday inclusive £237.00 **£228.00**

SHARED DOUBLE ROOM

Sunday – Thursday inclusive £280.00 per person **£264.00**

Monday – Thursday inclusive £210.00 per person **£200.00**

ONE DAY OVERNIGHT CHARGE

The cost of one overnight delegate is £79.00 in a single room, this also includes all meals

(Breakfast, Lunch & Dinner)

DAY RATE (No Accommodation): £28.00 plus £8.00 for the evening meal

DEPOSIT OF £35.00 TO BE SENT WITH THE BOOKING FORM, OR PAYMENT IN FULL

Cheques payable to “**CEGV Conference Account**”

MEDICAL INFORMATION:

Do you suffer from anything we need to be aware of: **YES/NO** *(If Yes, please list below)*

ARE YOU ON ANY MEDICATION?: YES/NO

ALLERGIES: Do you have any allergies we need to be aware of: **YES/NO** *(If Yes, please list below)*

SPECIAL DIETARY REQUIREMENTS: YES/NO *(If Yes, please list below)*

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HOW DO I GET THERE?

While the Elim Conference Centre is nestled in the heart of the Malvern Hills, the M5 provides quick and easy road access when travelling south from Birmingham or North from Cardiff and Bristol.

The Centre is just two and a quarter hours from London by car, and is linked to both Birmingham and London Paddington stations by a frequent and fast rail service. The nearest airport is Birmingham International, just one hour away.

BY ROAD: The main entrance to Elim Conference Centre is located on Croft Bank. There is a car park outside the main entrance. Croft Bank is accessed from West Malvern Road (B4232). Further parking is available - follow the signs for Elim International Centre when you arrive at Croft Bank.

FOR SAT NAV: WR14 4DF

BY RAIL: The nearest stations are Great Malvern and Malvern Link.

DRAFT OUTLINE PROGRAMME FOR THE WEEK

'ART IN CHURCH'

Sunday 14th August		
	18:30	Dinner
	19:15	Central Council Meeting
Monday 15th August		
	07:45	Morning Prayer – Church
	08:30	Breakfast
	09:30	Registration
	11:00	The Annual General Meeting
	12:30	Lunch
	13:30 – 14:30	<i>Session to be arranged</i>
	16:00	Rehearsal for the Opening Eucharist
	17:00	Opening Solemn Eucharist and Guild Congregation – Church
	18:30	Dinner followed by Social Evening
Tuesday 16th August		
	07:00	Morning Prayer – Church
	07:30	The Eucharist – Church
	08:30	Breakfast
	10:00 – 11:45	<i>Session to be arranged</i>
	12:00	Angelus & Midday Prayers – in the Centre – followed by Lunch
	14:00 – 16:00	<i>Session to be arranged with Guest Preacher?</i>
	17.15	Choral Evensong and Sermon – Guest Preacher
	18:30	Dinner
	19:00	Free Time, Swimming and/or Prayer Walk
	21:00	Compline
Wednesday 17th August		
	07:00	Morning Prayer – Church
	07:30	The Guild Requiem – Church
	08:30	Breakfast
	10:00 – 12:00	<i>Session to be arranged</i>
	12:00	Angelus & Midday Prayers – in the Centre – followed by Lunch
	14:00 – 16:00	<i>Session to be arranged</i>
	17:00	Committee Meetings followed by Dinner
	18:30	Dinner
	20:45	Compline
Thursday 18th August		
	08:00	Morning Prayer – Church
	08:30	Breakfast
	09.30	Final get together
	10:00	Rehearsal for Closing Eucharist
	11:00	Closing Solemn Eucharist – Church followed by Lunch
	12:45	Lunch and Departure

We encourage all delegates to attend the services to experience new traditions and customs and participate fully. Towels are provided in your rooms, but should you wish to use the heated outdoor pool, please bring your costume and your own towel.

PLEASE NOTE: ALCOHOL IS NOT PERMITTED AT THE ELIM CONFERENCE CENTRE!



CONFERENCE PHOTO ALBUM CONTINUED



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<https://www.facebook.com/CofEGV>



IPSWICH BRANCH NEWS



I start this report off with an apology to members of the Ipswich Branch, I forgot the last report from us for the Verger Magazine (*just slipped my memory!*), so this will be two reports in one go



On a lovely sunny Wednesday, (11th March), Ipswich Branch members met at the Church of Saint Peter & Saint Paul, Old Felixstowe, for our first Branch meeting of the year. We received a warm welcome from Peggy & Bernard Seeley (Vergers) and started off the proceedings with a 'Fish & Chip' lunch and to quote my favourite saying "a very generous helping which could have fed 'a family of four' for a fortnight". Well and truly full afterwards, the cup of tea to wash it all down was very welcome. On a personal note I went to play Carpet Bowls after the meeting, bending down was a bit of a struggle as was getting up again.

As the Branch in general has had a very quiet time since our last meeting (October '14) the ensuing meeting was very swiftly dealt with. We next meet up in July for our Annual AGM/BBQ.

Another hot and sunny day, Friday 3rd July, members met at the home of Dick & Val Jeffery for the Annual AGM/BBQ. There was a very good turnout of members.

The Election of Branch Officers were as follows: Ian Cobb (Chair), Pam Cobb (Secretary), Jean Cobb (Area Leader), and Dick Jeffery (Treasurer), were all duly elected for the forthcoming year – can you spot the odd one out here?

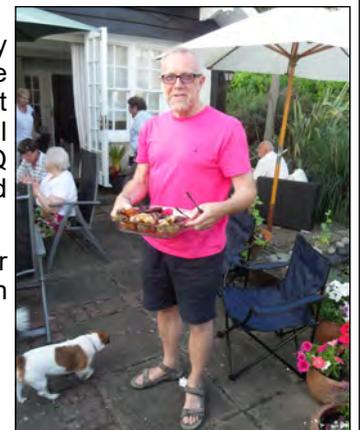


The meeting was quite swift, as previously said, as the Branch has been very quiet. But the question was raised that it was felt as a Branch we do not seem to do much on a purely 'social' level. The outcome was positive and members went away charged with enthusiasm and looking at ideas for social outings. In fact several suggestions have already come back which is very encouraging. We are all looking forward to the first of many to come.



We are very lucky in East Anglia, we live in a lovely part of the country with super villages and their Churches (as no doubt is every other Verger and where they live).

Our meeting finished with a short service led by our Chaplains: Reverends Alan & Catherine Forsdike to celebrate the feast day of Saint Thomas, a lovely end to our meeting. We all then went into the garden for the BBQ (everything cooked to perfection by Reverend Alan).



Time spent catching up and relaxing, what better way to spend a lovely English summer evening, seagulls circling overhead looking for that dropped crumb of bread or even chicken leg! Enjoy the summer.

Our next Branch meeting is on Monday 26th October at Bury.

Jean Cobb
Branch Correspondent/Area Leader ~ East Anglia



THE DIPLOMA COURSE



The Central Council of the Guild, at the recommendation of General Synod, formulated a course to cover the work and ministry of the Verger. The course is formulated in four units set in two stages:

The first stage is the **Foundation** Unit, which comprises of sixteen assignments, covering preparation for worship, care of the building, record-keeping, and archives, care of the churchyard, and caring for the people of God.

The second stage comprises of the other three units:

The Verger as **Pastor** covers the individual's personal development, their relationship with the people and God, care for others, and for Church resources.

The Verger as **Historian** covers the history of church building, architecture, and the history of worship, including the Book of Common Prayer, and the Bible.

The Verger as **Administrator** covers communication, forms and registers, and the structures of the Church.

Students who complete the course successfully receive a diploma, an academic hood, and the right to use the post-nominal letters '**Dip.GV**'.

If you are interested in learning more about the Course, please contact the **Training Registrar: Susan Ansell** or the **Training Officer: John Shearer**.



SUMMER MEETINGS



We began our Summer meetings on Tuesday 7th July with a slightly longer journey to the Church of Saint Mary the Virgin, Peterborough. This is a very modern building. The original eighteenth century building was not equipped to cope with the needs of the worshipping community of today, so a new church was built with modern facilities which include a disabled toilet, a lift and a ramp outside, which was very useful to some of us.

Some of the materials used in the building are Purbeck Stone and York Stone. The stained glass is from the former building and sighted within backlit panels. There is a private Chapel for prayer and shorter weekday services, and the Stations of the Cross are sited around the building.

The Vicar, the Reverend Michael Moore, led us in a service of Holy Communion and gave a short address. We sang the hymns: "Alleluia, sing to Jesus", "Be thou my vision" and "Trust and obey", an old favourite of mine from my Sunday School days. It was nice to be accompanied by a very fine organ. A new organ had been installed, electronic sounds could be played through this as well as through an amplifier and speakers. The Verger, Sandra Bloom, read the Epistle and the Gospel. Tea, coffee and choccies were served after the service.

We had some sad news about one of our members, Sylvia Crawley, who has had to go into a care home near her daughter in Yorkshire due to health problems. We shall miss her very much, she was always very cheerful, had an infectious laugh and always smartly dressed.

She was admitted as a Full Member of the Guild in 1995 in Birmingham Cathedral during one of the Rallies which was held there. She was Branch Secretary from 2004 to 2008 and the Magazine Distributor from 2004 to 2012. She was also a very close friend to me and provided transport until she had to give up her car several years ago.

She continued to attend and enjoy the Guild Festivals, along with her friend Jean Evans and other Branch members up to her last one in Hereford Cathedral last September. She also attended her local Church, Saint Bartholomew in Kirby Muxloe, Leicestershire. She worked in the Parish Office and verged at weddings and funerals there, again with her friend, Jean Evans. We prayed for her and all signed a card, we hope she will be well cared for.

Thanks were given to everyone for coming, also to the Vicar, the Reverend Michael Moore, the Server, the Organist and to my four wheels, Clifford Dunkley. The Journey to the meeting had not been very easy, what with road works and peak traffic, we only arrived with five minutes to spare. But the journey home was much easier. Sadly only eight members attended this meeting due to the longer distance, holidays or being otherwise indisposed.

On Monday 27th July eleven members of the Branch and our Branch Chaplain, Canon John Tonkin, met at Saint Peter's Church, Braunstone, Leicestershire. Canon John led us in a service of Holy Communion with two hymns: "Praise, my soul", and "Lord of all hopefulness". We were accompanied on a very good organ by Mr Chris Ellis.

Our Honorary Branch Life Member, Jack Lippitt, verged Canon John in and out as well as serving and administering the chalice at Communion. We had a mini bun fight with shared fellowship afterwards.

Our thoughts were once more with Sylvia Crawley. We prayed for her again and for all who were indisposed. Jack Lippitt mentioned that some of the late Alf Bateman's ashes were being interred at Saint Peter's sometime during the next couple of weeks.

Thanks were given to Canon John for leading the service, and to the Organist, Jack Lippitt who was Verger and host for the evening and to the ladies who prepared and served the refreshments. Additional thanks were given to those who help with transport to different venues throughout the year. A signed card and flowers had been sent to Sylvia Crawley with our love and best wishes.

Margaret, Pauline and husband William, attended the York Province Festival, but through visiting different places were very disappointed at not being included in the group photograph.

Whilst writing this report I have just had the sad news that Sylvia Crawley passed away on Wednesday 30th July. Her funeral would be held in Yorkshire, but a Memorial Service will be held at a later date at Saint Bartholomew's Church, Kirby Muxloe, Leicestershire, the Church she loved, and where she worshipped and verged for many years. A report on the service will appear in the Winter Edition of The Virger.

Our next meeting will be held in Saint Bartholomew's Church, Kirby Muxloe.

Marjorie Thomas, Dip GV ~ Branch Chairman & Correspondent





"IF YOU WANT TO GET TO HEAVEN, BUILD A CHURCH"



This was the challenge in 1896 from Canon Walter Wanstall to Lincoln industrialist and philanthropist Alfred Shuttleworth that led to the building of All Saints, on Monks Road in the city. All was done to the very highest quality. The building was designed by Sir John Ninian Comper who was one of the last great Gothic revival architects. The glass is by Clayton and Bell, and the organ is a two manual 'Father Willis' installed in 1905. The new church was consecrated by Bishop Edward King on November 5th, 1904 and was much to his taste being unashamedly Anglo-Catholic in its construction, decoration and churchmanship, and remains so to this day.

The scent of incense has permeated the woodwork and was very evident to the eighteen members of the Branch who were able to meet there on the evening of Wednesday 13th May. We were shown round All Saints by the Reverend Paul Paynton, one of our members, (sixth from the left with the white tie), who has a great love of the church having been married there. A supper of soup and rolls, tea and cakes which was followed by a service of Compline completed the evening.

Our thanks to Paul, and the ladies of the Church who provided supper and a very enjoyable evening. The next Branch meeting will be at Saint Mary's, Knaith near Gainsborough on 16th July when a new member of the Guild will be admitted.

A FUNNY LITTLE BOX OF A CHURCH

You can drive through the little village of Knaith on the road between Lincoln and Gainsborough without noticing the little Church of Saint Mary a hundred yards or so from the road, in a picturesque setting in a grove of trees amongst the meadowland on the banks of the River Trent in the neat grounds of Knaith Hall. Indeed, many of the sixteen members of the Branch did miss it, initially driving straight past.

Eddie Overson, whose wife Brenda is Churchwarden, calls it (much to Brenda's annoyance) "a funny little box of a church". He gave a very entertaining talk about the building, parts of which date back to Saxon times. It became the Cistercian Nunnery of Heynys.

The decorated font, described by Simpson & Roberts in 1830 as the finest in England dates from this period of about 1330 and at the dissolution in 1539 was purchased by the first Lord Willoughby of Parnham, whose family settled at Knaith.

It was his great-grandson who gave the Church its silver. Lord Francis Willoughby, a Presbyterian, fell out with Charles I over Ship Money, and fought alongside Oliver Cromwell during the Parliamentary Civil War of the 1640's. By 1650 he was an Admiral for the exiled Charles II and fighting against Cromwell's forces in the West Indies. His gifts of wine flagons and an alms dish showing the martyred Charles I, dangerous to have made in 1658 before the restoration, put him in the new King's good books and he went on to become the Governor of England's Colonies in the West Indies. The Willoughby family are also responsible for its Jacobean pulpit. The family died out in the 1760's, and the estate is now in the hands of John Burke, Lincolnshire's High Sheriff in 2012.

Our thanks go to John and his wife Rosie for inviting us into their home and for providing us with refreshments.

We were pleased to welcome a new member, David Jarrett, who is now Verger of Saint Wulfram's Church, Grantham.

We also thank Eddie Scarsebrook for arranging both this evening and the next on Wednesday 30th September at Stowe. It will be the third meeting this year that Eddie has organised. Thank you Eddie.

Colin Beevers ~ Branch Correspondent

Photographs: The Jacobean pulpit; Saint Mary's, Knaith; the decorated font ; & members enjoying the inevitable cup of tea.



**PLEASE NOTE
THE DEADLINE FOR
THE NEXT EDITION IS:
Saturday the
14th of November 2015**



THE AREA LEADER TAKES A POST-EASTER BREAK

It has become customary for me to take a few days off immediately after Easter. The trend has been to go to a dog friendly hotel so that Ian, Max and myself can relax and be slightly pampered. This year we headed off to Somerset and stayed in a smart hotel on the outskirts of Minehead. Walks to Dunster and the Valley of Rocks and perusing the shops at Lynton and Lynmouth were the order of our holiday. I had forgotten just how wonderful the scenery is in that part of the world. Having said that, the weather certainly helped.

On our last evening, I gave Tanya Ritchie a call, to see if she would be free for coffee. Tanya moved to Watchet over three years ago from Putney. I could never understand the reason why she would make such a massive change from the hustle and bustle of London, to a quiet seaside town. I now know why.

Tanya and Peter gave us a very warm welcome, even as Max rampaged around the house exploring new surroundings. Out into the garden for coffee, where Max decided to nosedive into the pond and then argue with Rodney the tortoise. After coffee, we were treated to a light lunch in the town.



On the way, with a guided tour of Watchet, we could hardly finish a sentence as all the locals greeted Tanya and Peter and ourselves. "This would never happen in London" said Tanya, "I hardly knew anyone." Peter said that going for the morning paper was a major event.

A light lunch in 'The Patio' with Rosemary, gave Tanya and I time to catch up properly. She was totally overwhelmed with the Life Membership of the Branch awarded to her earlier this year. She misses the Guild very much, but thanks to social media, she can keep in touch with all her friends. Watchet is hardly a place to be a shrinking violet, it is a busy thriving place where folk get involved with so many activities for at least 8 months of the year. The three hours we were all together, we laughed and heard stories of a busy life in Watchet. Ian and I left Tanya and Peter and headed home back to the capital having spent the end of our few days in Somerset enjoying good company, good food in a splendid part of the country.

John Shearer ~ Area Leader



LEES VISIT

The Lees is a small village in Buckinghamshire, between Aylesbury and Amersham, and near such wondrously named places as Swans Bottom and Great Missenden. Road access is difficult except for locals, those with good navigation skills, or those, who (like me) cheat with a satnav system.

Yet it was there that members of the Oxford Branch met on the 19th of May to visit the Churches of which Bill Pearce is Verger. The two are of different eras, the earlier (being 13th century, the Lees Old Church), the other Victorian. We celebrated Eucharist in the later building, the Church of Saint John the Baptist, in BCP format which seemed to fit with the style of the building. Refreshments were made available - how wonderful to meet with such great hospitality - before an informal teaching session on "The Administration and Hierarchy of the Anglican Church".

Then came lunch, but Bill was delayed - there were other visitors to the Church, and especially welcome as they were there by chance, expecting it to be closed. They identified themselves as relatives of a previous Vicar: the one who had married Bill and June more than fifty years previously. The ministry of welcome sometimes bring its own joys.

Lunch (a veritable banquet!) was served at the local hostelry, the "Cock and Rabbit", which may be recognised from "The Midsomer Murders" series - not that there were any fatalities on our visit. Indeed, the food was both excellent and very appetising, so much so that some of the diners found themselves ordering desserts when none had been anticipated. However, the hosts were more than equal to the enhanced demand, and eventually all were replete. Then came the formal visit to the Churches, and the histories; the visit to the "Liberty" graveyard (associated with the family behind the fashion shops).

The Churches are not without amusing anecdotes. The path between the two buildings is, of course, lined with graves. One elderly gentleman (let's call him Ebenezer) was known to walk this path on his way home from the pub every week, and every time he passed would swear he had seen a ghost seated on a particular gravestone. Amused by this story, a couple of young lads decided to have their own joke one evening, so young Alfred left the pub just before Ebenezer, threw a white sheet over himself, and sat where Ebenezer always saw the ghost. Sure enough, as Ebenezer passed the grave, he exclaimed "Oh my goodness! There's two of the b****ers there tonight!" (Apparently, no-one had ever seen Alfred move so fast as he did on hearing this remark!)

Dennis Wildman ~ Branch Correspondent



Members of the Oxford and Saint Albans Branches met on Tuesday 18th August at Merton College in Oxford, for a visit organised by Leah Stead (Verger of Merton College) and Christopher Waterhouse, a Verger and the Sacristan of Christ Church Cathedral, Oxford. A very welcome tea or coffee was provided before we moved into the Chapel, where a service of Holy Communion was celebrated by the Reverend Canon Dr Simon Jones, assisted by Branch Chaplains Peter Viney (Oxford) and Andrew Ferrar (Saint Albans). Father Simon, confronted by an array of vergers, spoke on Chaplaincy. The mandatory group photographs then followed, taken in front of the high altar of the College Chapel. Then lunch was provided (And what a lunch!) where we were privileged to eat at the high table of "The Hall". An excellent meal was partaken surrounded by emblems of famous academic and ecclesiastical figures.

In groups, we were later taken around two of the remarkable areas of Merton College: the Library and the Chapel itself. It was remarkable that the College has three quads: Fellows Quad, (obviously not for us), Saint Albans Quad (no, not that either, despite associations), but the one around which we stayed was "Mob Quad".



The Library is fascinating. It is housed on the upper floor of two sides of the quad, and it is (by some definitions) the oldest still-functioning library in Europe. There are some books in this library from before the invention of bookshelves; there is a chest that contained documents that were so valuable that all three Bursars had to be present and in agreement so that each would open his separate lock to allow access. Books are there that were chained to the shelves; and light levels are kept low so as to limit damage to the volumes. Yet in past centuries the light levels would have been lower still: windows were fewer, and candles banned. The Chapel, which dates from the thirteenth century, is beautiful. Twelve of the fourteen windows contain original glass: they have the oldest complete ring of bells (cast in 1680), and a magnificent new organ, installed in 2013. In one of those interesting foibles of the centuries, the Chapel has no nave (the land it should have occupied was leased out in 1517 to Bishop Foxe, founder of the neighbouring Corpus Christi College). Even so, the resulting T shape was accepted as a model for other churches.

Allowing some free time for mental digestion, we made our way to Christ Church Cathedral. Christopher guided us through streams of visitors to give a fascinating tour. (Christopher has studied history: it's obvious from the flair and interest he brings to it.) From the assistance of Bishop Wolsey in modern services (well, his memorial, at least) to the identification of the "Three ladies" – Saints Cecilia, Frideswide, and Katherine. The commemorative window and Shrine of Frideswide both have fascinating features – and the stories or legends of her are remarkable. Windows, ancient and modern: ancient Bishops to "Harry Potter" imagery, combined to make an interesting tour. High tea was provided in the Christ Church main hall – and again the group of vergers were placed at the high table. For those who could stay on, a sung Evensong completed our day in Oxford, and a chance to see the many and varied duties of a verger in a busy Church. Many thanks are due to Leah and Christopher (and their colleagues) for an interesting and well-filled day. Both Merton College and Christ Church Cathedral have excellent websites, but the best way to visit must be courtesy of a Verger!

Dennis Wildman ~ Branch Correspondent



R.I.P. JEAN BERYL EBDON



4th October 1928 to 22nd July 2015

Jean became a member of the Guild in 1991, being admitted into the Oxford Branch at Christ Church Cathedral in Oxford (shortly after I had commenced my full time position there as a Verger (and later as the Sacristan)), and thus renewing a friendship which had originally formed back in the late 1960's when Betty and I moved to Theale (just west of Reading). When it became known that I was involved in football administration I was asked to become part of the local football club and The Ebdons – Bert and Jean – were part of the management team. In 1974 Betty and I moved to our present address and thereby lost contact with Jean (Bert having subsequently died), so to meet up again in the cloisters of Christ Church was a happy reunion and a renewal of a friendship that continued until her death.

Although a local girl born and bred, she loved to travel and many a family holiday was spent in caravans and boats. Jean was a golfer and flew small aircraft and took great joy in driving her Aston Martin DB5 perched on cushions in the driver's seat so she could see (she being of petite build). Rumour has it that she was a bit of a speed merchant thereby resulting in a number of 'meetings' with the local constabulary! Jean was very involved with her local Church – Saint Michaels, Tilehurst – not only as a Verger but also as a member of other groups such as the Mothers' Union and the New Hill House Group. She was a regular attendee of Branch functions, driving herself, when possible, (provided she was given clear directions) and could always be relied upon for constructive and 'down to earth' input, especially at our Quiet Days.

The Branch was represented at Jean's funeral on Thursday 6th August 2015, which took place in her Church where a large congregation said their farewells and afterwards, reminisced at the reception in the Church Hall. On behalf of the Oxford Branch, our 'thanks' to you, Jean, for your friendship and your support over many years, and a personal blessing from Betty and I for the times we shared in those early years.

Michael Golby, FCEGV ~ Chairman/Secretary, Oxford Branch



HULL 2015

Monday 1st June saw a team of vergers from all around Yorkshire visiting Holy Trinity Church in central Hull – a building which is about to see huge changes in the next two years. In 2017 Hull will become the UK's City of Culture, and Holy Trinity – or Hull Minster as Archbishop Sentamu has promised to rename it – is a key player in the plans to revitalise the centre of the city. Although the Guild had visited the Church only a few years ago, the substantial changes promised were a good reason to return – along with a promised trip up the central tower.

Reverend Neal Barnes, Vicar of Holy Trinity, welcomed us with open arms (and subsequently said how impressed he'd been when meeting around 15 vergers in one place). Dave Allum, Churchwarden, described how the proposals for transforming the church will take at least five years to implement, although some of them have been prioritised to make Holy Trinity more suitable as a venue for events during the Year of Culture. The current arrangement of the pews, especially a block of civic seats which face the central aisle instead of the front, are only really suitable for large formal events. The proposals are to remove them all, put the choir stalls on wheels, and use the pew ends and poppy-heads to frame single, double and triple seats along the aisles. The Victorian Society is objecting but, as Neal pointed out, the Church needs to find another £70,000 funding each year to balance the books and concerts appear to be the best way forward. There are also ambitious plans for a glass-fronted extension outside, carried through inside, which will house a café and possibly even be able to cater for wedding receptions in future.

Many of us then climbed the tower (almost, but not quite as tall as Beverley Minster's) and enjoyed breath-taking views of the city, including the massive and long-overdue redevelopment of the waterfront by Wykeland, which is supporting Holy Trinity's fund-raising efforts. A Communion Service was conducted by Neal and our own Reverend Marian Gardner who formally welcomed two new members, Su Graves from Saint Romald's Church, Romaldkirk near Barnard Castle and Benjamin Ellis from Saint Michael and All Angels Church, Headingley. Then it was across the square at the western end to Riddlers' Bar and Food, which had opened especially for us (and which cannot be recommended too highly! Very good indeed). Those who had not been before then walked the short distance through Old Town to Wilberforce House Museum, home of anti-slave trade campaigner William Wilberforce. He was christened and subsequently worshipped at Holy Trinity before moving to London and becoming the leading force in the anti-slavery movement which culminated in it the abolition of slavery in the British Empire in 1833 – three days before his death.

Vanessa Salter, Assistant Curator of Projects at Wilberforce House Museum took us round the exhibits, highlighting the decisions that had been taken on how best to display what William Wilberforce achieved, as well as the continuing issue of slavery in the modern world. It is a provocative and yet unemotionally-told narrative and several other visitors to the rooms were in tears when we entered.



THE VERGERS ALL TOGETHER AT HOLY TRINITY, HULL WITH NEW MEMBERS BENJAMIN ELLIS AND SU GRAVES FLANKING REVEREND MARIAN GARDNER

Unfortunately we'd had to schedule this day at the same time as the York Province Festival, which possibly affected the attendance at both events, but those who visited the East Riding had an emotional roller-coaster of a day which, amongst other things, showed that the battered city of Hull is on the way back again – and that the Church is at the centre of this latest rebirth.

Neil Pickford ~ Area Leader



PRAYER REQUESTS



If you know of someone for whom prayers would be of benefit or someone who has been prayed for and has recovered or shown improvement, please inform the National Chaplain or the National Welfare Officer

Blackburn, Chester & Manchester: Margaret Scott & Geoffrey Timms

Chichester, Guildford & Portsmouth: Marilyn Lee

Gloucester, Hereford & Worcester: Joy Birkin & Graham Williams

London, Southwark & Chelmsford: Ken Allen

Oxford: Anita (Annie) Bayliss, Ernestine Denham, Jeanne Scott & Reverend Canon Roy Taylor

Rochester: Tina Lawrence

Saint Albans: Peter Hudson

Salisbury: Jean Jackson & Babs Taylor

Somerset & Avon: Reyn & Jeanette Badger, Norah Broomfield, Pat Dawes,

Lionel & Mary Holway, Roger Lawrence, Sally Sommerfield & Joy Stevens

York: George & Doreen Cook

R.I.P

Alan Cottam, Sylvia Crawley & Jean Ebdon

And everyone not specifically mentioned who need love, counsel and the grace of our Lord



DONE IT! CHURCH REACHES ITS TARGET



EXTRACT FROM 'THE MALVERN GAZETTE & LEDBURY REPORTER'

'Urgently needed work to repair the organ at a West Malvern Parish Church is set to start next month after a fund raising appeal hit its target. The organ at Saint James' Church needs a new electrical system at a cost of £29,000.

The Church already had £16,000 in its funds to help cover the cost, but earlier this year launched an appeal to raise the rest. And now the target has been reached and an order placed with Somerset-based Clevedon Organs to carry out the renovations, which will involve replacing hundreds of components.

Reverend David Nicholl, the Vicar of West Malvern, said: "We're delighted that we've hit the target, somewhat sooner than we'd expected, and that the work can now go ahead. "The organ's electrical system has been failing badly, to the extent that when the organist presses a key, he does not know if that note is going to sound."

Among the recent donors was the Church of England Guild of Vergers, which held its Annual Training Conference this month at the Elim Conference Centre in West Malvern. The Guild made extensive use of Saint James' Church and the organ and decided to say thank you by donating £2,000 to the appeal.

The work, which is scheduled to begin in September, will involve replacing the old wiring linking the organ console and its keyboards and draw-stops to the wind chest and pipes with solid state electrics.

"During the replacement work, the organ itself will be out of commission and we will have to use our piano to provide the music for our services," said Mr Nicholl. "We're hoping it will all be finished in time for Christmas and our Carol Service."

Among the fundraising events was a 12-hour music marathon in May, involving some 70 local musicians playing a variety of styles of music, and an auction of gifts and promises.'

by Robert Hale
Malvern Gazette & Ledbury Reporter, Friday 21st August 2015
Forwarded by Michael Tiley



REVEREND DAVID NICHOL
NEXT TO THE ORGAN AT SAINT JAMES' CHURCH



A HUGE THANK-YOU TO THE GUILD OF VERGERS



Dear John,

I write as organist of Saint James' Church, West Malvern, with heartfelt thanks for the incredibly generous donation to our organ electrics fund from the Guild of Vergers.

As I am sure you realised when at Saint James' last week, we are blessed with a fine organ for a small Parish Church (albeit with a sadly shrinking congregation) and there has been a magnificent community response to our appeal this year (as there was seven years ago when we extensively overhauled the chests and the pipework). At that time, it was felt the console electrics were in reasonably good order - with a few more years of life in them - but seven years on the 1958 electrics are showing their age with various problems occurring with increasing frequency.

So we decided a year ago to obtain quotations for new solid state note switching and for renewing the organ wiring and the key/pedal contact units. Doing this work was also considered an appropriate time to install a new multi-level piston capture system (to replace the now rather unreliable existing system) and to renew the draw-stop solenoid units and wiring as well. So once done we should have a much more sophisticated and yet more convenient console from the player's perspective.

We have done really well with our fundraising campaign this year and, with your very generous donation we are now in a position to be able to commission the work - which hopefully can be undertaken this side of Christmas.

So thank you once again, and we look forward to your return in 2016, when the Guild of Vergers will be able to enjoy an even better organ for your services at Saint James'.

With very best wishes and gratitude,
John

from John W Raine BA PhD ~ Organist of Saint James' Church, West Malvern
forwarded by John Shearer

The views and opinions expressed in the articles and letters in this edition of The Virger should be taken as those of the author unless it is specifically indicated that the Central Council of the Church of England Guild of Vergers has given its endorsement.

The Central Council of the said Guild accepts no responsibility for the accuracy or otherwise of statements, or for any offence caused by any of the articles or letters published herein.