

# The Virger

Autumn 2013  
Issue 280

## 2013 Conference Edition



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The Official Magazine of the Church of England Guild of Vergers





Welcome to the Autumn 2013 issue 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 to the Communications Officer.

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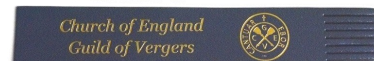
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## NATIONAL CHAIRMAN'S LETTER



It does not seem five minutes since our Training Conference, a great few days together with superb speakers, fantastic food, wonderful worship, and convivial company, our grateful thanks go to the Training Team who masterminded the event. To John, Canon Maureen and Margaret, a very big thank you for all you did to make it such a success and your continuing guidance to the students who are undertaking our Training Course. We have several people who have been newly elected at the AGM to fulfil national roles please support them as they find their feet. Thank you to those who have retired from those positions and all that you have achieved.

I am always conscious of our debt to those who have guided and supported us as we have grown up together in the guild. Some of those are now struggling with ill health and may not be able to get to our gatherings. If it is possible, can you keep them in touch with our activities and reassure them of our continued gratitude and prayers.

It has been a very busy few months and always is at this time of the year, although the big special services are fewer, the daily round of Cathedral life continues, often with the few staff that are not on holiday holding the fort. This can have its own joys however it can drive you to distraction. Having to explain to visiting choirs how to process into the choir stalls, how to find the music stand that has been covered by the choir directors robes, where the loos are, why the visiting organist cannot have extra practice times just because he slept in. Oh, I could go on.... and then one year one of our clergy who had been away for six weeks announced in his sermon that as he was now back we would get some real work done. Well you can imagine the hurt that was caused by those few throw away words, so if you have been on holiday or are about to go, do not forget to say thank you to those who have been holding things together in your absence. I hope you have all had some time to relax over the last few months and are now feeling refreshed and ready to take on autumn and all that it holds.

**James Armstrong**



## INTRODUCING YOUR NEW WELFARE OFFICER



Introducing myself as your new Welfare Officer. I worship at the ancient Parish Church of All Saints, Edmonton, London, where I married in 1970, and I have never left. Though 'life's rich tapestry' in sickness and health led us to the darkest place and only I returned. I was blessed with an adopted son, who now lives overseas.

I joined 'The Verger Family' in 2006 at a service held in Saint Martin's, Ludgate, very near Saint Paul's Cathedral. Very quickly I became Treasurer of the London, Southwark & Chelmsford Branch. Having done the work of a Verger for decades before joining the Guild, I remain a volunteer and lone Verger.

Over the years I have attended training courses for counselling skills, and spent twenty-five years as a Bereavement Visitor, as well as ten years with a local GP Practice doing much of the aforementioned work. In 2000 I received an MBE for 'Services to the Mother & Baby Unit at Holloway Prison and for my work in my Parish of Edmonton'. I have many interests and have just begun a wood work group, I love needlework and I belong to an Ecumenical Project in Jerusalem. Your former Welfare Officers are a hard act to follow, but I can assure you of my confidentiality and my willingness to care.

**Irene Money, MBE, Dip GV**



## INTRODUCING YOUR NEW TRAINING REGISTRAR



My name is Sue Ansell and I have been a Verger at Saint Nicolas Church, Cranleigh, Surrey, since July 2000. I joined the Guild in 2001 and have attended all the Training Conferences and a lot of the Festivals in the following years.

Our Church is in a large Parish and the Village is the largest in England. I work with a Rector, Curate, two retired clergy, one LSM and two Lay Ministers. I have an assistant Verger, Colin Tilbury, who is a great help to me. We have been in interregnum for nearly a year but our new Rector will be installed by the Bishop of Dorset on 10<sup>th</sup> September.

I have been a widow since March 2000, which came as a great shock after almost 28 years of marriage and of course I had a gaping hole in my life. I was extremely stunned to be asked to take up the role of Verger but it was a good decision and I have really enjoyed my role, have learnt a lot about the running and Liturgy of the Church and have made many friends, especially through the Guild.

I completed the Foundation Unit and Diploma Courses, which I found interesting and challenging at the same time but they gave me a great sense of achievement and pride as I did not think that I would be capable of doing them. Since passing the Diploma Course and being presented with my certificate and hood, my younger son calls me "a dippy hooded Verger". How true!! I hope that I can do my position of Training Registrar justice and be of assistance to all of you who are doing or are contemplating doing the course.

**Sue Ansell, Dip GV**



## NATIONAL CHAPLAIN'S LETTER



Dear Friends,  
Greetings from Hereford!

I do hope you have been enjoying the sunshine this summer. Here in Hereford the harvest is well and truly underway.

Just a mile or two out of the City, one is confronted with clouds of dust stirred up by the combine harvesters; there are lorry loads of sheep being transported to the cattle market; the pick-your-own farms are busy and, fortunately this year, doing much better than last. We visited a PYO last week and the freezer is now heaving with raspberries, cherries and blackcurrants, not to mention our own French beans which have been prolific this year!

All this bounty reminds us of the goodness and the gifts of God who provides food from the earth. However, not all communities are so fortunate. We see the refugee camps of the Sudan, of Syria and Lebanon where there is so little food, no clean water and little medical help and we although we probably feel impotent to help, we can at least give thanks for all the aid agencies who are trying to provide for the vast company of people who have nothing!

During this year we have been reading Luke's Gospel for the Gospel on Sundays and I have been struck, again, by the importance that Jesus lays on food and feasting. Jesus seems to spend his life having meals with people – they were opportunities for teaching as well as fellowship. We all love feasting with friends, relaxing over a drink *[or two!]* and the conversation that develops out of the fellowship and friendship that we share.

Reflecting on these stories of feasting and fellowship, I am struck anew that Jesus wants us to change our attitude to table fellowship. Many of his invitations were probably invitations of testing: Will Jesus eat with people who are not ritually pure? Will Jesus be offended when people come in off the street – people who are 'sinners'? The Jews were very particular about those with whom they would share table fellowship.

The early Church had many problems because the moment Gentiles became Christians, the Jews wanted to insist on a ritual cleanliness before they would share a meal with them. You will no doubt remember how Peter having seen the vision of the descending sheet urged his fellow Christians to stop the distinction between Jew and Gentile. We remember too, the controversy in the Paul's letters about whether or not to eat food that had been sacrificed to idols. Jesus, however, suggests that the important thing is not the ritual cleanliness of one's table mates but rather the attitude to the goodness of God in providing food for us.

We come to the banquet of the Lord at the Eucharist, our hearts full of gratitude for the sacrifice that Christ made for us on the Cross. We come as fellow pilgrims, as part of the great family of Christians who are baptized into his death and who believe that Christ died for us. We are all equals at the Lord's Table!

The West Front of Lincoln Cathedral bears a reminder of the equality of all human beings. On the left hand side is Saint Hugh, the saintly Bishop, who was venerated for the miracles that occurred after his death. On the right hand side is a Swineherd: a pious man who gave his life savings (actually a very small sum of money) to help to re-build the Cathedral – it is the Widow's mite story at Lincoln. The two figures are the same size and look out over the City of Lincoln reminding us that in the eyes of God we are all equal.

As we approach the season of Harvest Thanksgiving, we pray for all who live with hunger and need and we ask that God will help us to be generous in our giving and grateful for all that he bestows on us.

With every blessing and my love,  
**Canon Maureen**



## GREETINGS FROM HOLLAND



**Hans Brons**  
(Director of Music)

**Emma Brown**  
(Verger)

**Michiel Harmsen**  
(Verger)

**in the Hooglandse Kerk  
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### ROSEMARY LINDA BALLARD

24<sup>th</sup> May 1947 – 28<sup>th</sup> June 2013

The Church of Holy Trinity, Folkestone, was full for the funeral of Rosemary Ballard on Thursday 25<sup>th</sup> July, and many people from the various organizations she was associated with – the Guides, Saint John Ambulance, and the Guild of Vergers – were there and took part in the service, reading lessons and leading prayers. The beautiful anthem, *Panis Angelicus*, was sung by a former choirboy, Harry Strachan, accompanied by Tim Parsons. I will hand over now to Chris Crooks for the main words, because they are so fitting.

#### **Cherry Johnstone Canterbury Branch Correspondent**

As most of you here will know, Rosemary was a person who dedicated herself almost exclusively to the selfless care and wellbeing of others; her parents, her friends, and the organizations that she chose to support – among them *The Guide Association*, *Saint John Ambulance* and her beloved Church – both in this place (*Holy Trinity Church, Folkestone*), and the wider Church family; all of them organizations dedicated to the care and nurturing of others. Typical!



Alongside her family and voluntary work, she devoted her life to the care of this building, its contents, and more importantly – its people, as the Verger. I once asked Rosemary why it was that she was Verger of Holy Trinity, but yet her dad was Verger of Saint Saviour's. "Saint Saviour's is where we all went to Church, but Holy Trinity needed a Verger - and I needed a job" she said, pragmatically.

As my colleagues here who are salaried vergers know only too well, it is not a job that you will ever grow rich doing. It's perhaps not what most people think of as a job, really; it's a vocation, a calling to serve and, in reality, a way of life. The pay may be small, but the benefits are huge, so much so, that, having applied for and accepted this position, she dedicated herself to fulfilling that role quietly, unassumingly and gently, dealing with everything that came her way, for the next thirty three years; happy parents bringing a child for Baptism, or a grieving family at the funeral of a loved one; a regular weekly service or one of the many special services and events that were hosted in the church. In her own quiet way she prepared, helped, guided, encouraged and cleared up after each one. She saw Incumbents, Curates, Area Deans, Churchwardens and PCC members, come and go – but for thirty three years she was the rock upon which they all quietly leant. During those years, Rosemary, (and her dad George), joined the

Church of England Guild of Vergers, a national organization of which she was very proud to be a member, wearing the Guild's badge prominently on her robes. Originally joining the Kent and East Sussex Branch, they were both founder members of the new Canterbury Branch when it was formed out of the larger Branch in 1994, serving as Treasurer for some time. Rosemary's quiet encouragement drew more members into the Guild when she came across folk doing this very valuable work as she travelled around.

Both Rosemary and her dad were keen supporters of the Guild locally, attending meetings across the area, but also often travelling long distances to join in the National Festivals, sometimes combining it with a mini break in that area, occasionally to visit friends, past Curates or Vicars now retired to green pastures. They were also regular delegates at the Annual Training Conference, held in Birmingham for many years, then later in London Colney. It was at these national gatherings that I first met Rosemary and her dad, long before I ever knew that my vocation would eventually bring me to serve in Canterbury Cathedral, and to work alongside Rosemary on the local Branch Committee. On more than one occasion, Rosemary kindly took me to or brought me and my luggage back from these conferences in her little car.

In 2002 as part of the Guild's 70<sup>th</sup> anniversary, the Canterbury Branch – under Rosemary's encouragement – hosted one of the Guild's annual National Festivals, based in Canterbury Cathedral. In 2004 Rosemary was elected to serve on the Guild's governing body – Central Council – as Area Leader for Kent and East Sussex, representing the Canterbury and Rochester Branches at Central Council meetings for the next seven years. Through this committee Rosemary and I got to know each other better, as I served as the National Chairman of the Council at that time.

When Rosemary retired from her salaried position as Verger of Holy Trinity in May 2007, the occasion was marked by a special service, many presentations and speeches, but somehow I felt Rosemary would rather have been standing at the back, looking after the strangers at the door, than being the centre of attention. Typical! In June of that year, the Guild of Vergers also wished to mark Rosemary's remarkable achievement of service to the Church and the Guild, and so the Central Council unanimously elected her to Life Membership of the Guild. On 18<sup>th</sup> July our National Chaplain, Canon Maureen Palmer, came to a meeting (a planned visit to Aylesford Priory) attended by members of both Canterbury and Rochester Branches, and presented Rosemary with her certificate and a glass bowl, suitably engraved. We made sure she was in the middle of the group photo.

***Continued Overleaf...***



## R.I.P ~ ROSEMARY LINDA BALLARD CONTINUED



Over the years Rosemary was also a faithful supporter of Diocesan and special services in the Cathedral, more so once she retired, and would often wave to her friends, the Cathedral Vergers, on her way in, introducing them to whichever friend she had brought along to share the experience.

In 2010, Rosemary proposed that the Canterbury Branch should once again host the Guild's National Festival in Canterbury, this time in 2012 to mark the Guild's 80<sup>th</sup> anniversary, and the 18<sup>th</sup> birthday of the Canterbury Branch. Slowly, over the next two years, the plans came to fruition, but it was with some sadness that at the very time of the festivities her dear old dad was coming to the end of his life on earth, and Rosemary was torn between being at his side, and also helping with the hosting of the Festival she had been instrumental in setting up. With the help of friends to be at her dad's side, she was able to join us for a little of the time, and for the big Festival Evensong in the Cathedral, attended by 150 vergers. In the group photo at the end of the day, before she dashed back to her dad's bedside, she is right on the edge, just hiding behind somebody else. Typical!

George died two days later. Who would have guessed that just ten months later we would all be gathered here to commend Rosemary to her maker, at just 66 years of age. She was never one for the limelight, but rather a quite encourager, a gentle enabler of others, steadfast in her faith; what better verger/friend/colleague could anyone ask for? I end with these words of John Henry, Cardinal Newman, from his *Meditations and Devotions*\*, which might have been written specially for the Rosemary that I was privileged to get to know a little.

***"God has created me to do Him some definite service; He has committed some work to me which He has not committed to another. I have my mission – I never may know it in this life, but I shall be told it in the next. Somehow I am necessary for His purposes, as necessary in my place as an Archangel in his. Yet I have a part in this great work; I am a link in a chain, a bond of connexion between persons. He has not created me for naught. I shall do good, I shall do His work; I shall be an angel of peace, a preacher of truth in my own place, while not intending it, if I do but keep His commandments and serve Him in my calling."***

**Chris Crooks**

**The Vesturer, Canterbury Cathedral & National Chairman of the Guild of Vergers 2004 – 2011**

\* Taken from *Meditations and Devotions*, "Meditations on Christian Doctrine," "Hope in God—Creator", 7<sup>th</sup> March, 1848.



## R.I.P ~ DORIS MILLS



Liverpool Branch lost it's oldest member when Doris Mills died on 16<sup>th</sup> May 2013, aged 96. Doris was the Verger at Saint John the Evangelist, Ravenhead, Saint Helens for 37 years. She retired 25 years ago remaining as an active worshipper and member of the Guild. Latterly, Doris was confined to home but received visits and cards from her fellow members. Several members attended her funeral service and provided a Guard of Honour. Her family were very appreciative of this honour. Numerous tales were related of events during her life as a Verger, one of which was a poetic tribute written by a friend of hers some time ago, (see below), when Doris was able to read and listen to this wonderful accolade. May she rest in peace in the arms of her Lord and Master.

***"She keeps the church so nice and clean, and sees that all is well. Her duties are so many, that only she can tell. On Sunday, Church and Bible Class; On Monday, Mother's Union; On Tuesday she is at the Guild; On Wednesday at Communion. Then Thursday comes to dust and clean; Friday, there's rummages too. There's always something to be done, and so the week goes through. On Saturday she helps at weddings and can tell a tale or two, of many little incidents you may not think are true. He's busy as a little bee, we do not need to urge her. She's small, petite and very neat. You've guessed it, she's our Verger."***

*By Beth Haden.*

**Howard Llewellyn**

**Liverpool Branch Secretary**



## 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**

**Chichester, Guildford & Portsmouth: Graham Brindley & Bill Groves**

**Gloucester, Hereford & Worcester: Michael Bayliss, Joy Birkin & Jim Wooldridge**

**Lincoln & Southwell: Reverend Robert Whitehead**

**Oxford: Anita (Annie) Bayliss, Ernestine Denham, David Dutson & Margaret Morris**

**Saint Albans: Peter Hudson**

**Salisbury: Barbara Carr, Jean Jackson & Babs Taylor**

**Somerset & Avon: Lionel & Mary Holway**

**York: George & Doreen Cook**

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



Monday 10<sup>th</sup> June saw the Service of Thanksgiving for the Life of Peter Wills, who was a former Secretary and Area Leader of the Salisbury Branch who died suddenly on 17<sup>th</sup> May. The service was held at Holy Trinity Church, Bradford on Avon, where Peter had been vergers and also in other roles for many years. The tribute was given by The Reverend Canon Peter Hardman, friend and former Branch Chaplain, and the hymns included 'Love Divine', 'Thine Be the Glory', and Peter's favourite 'Christ Triumphant'. Donations were given in aid of Dorothy House, a local hospice charity. Founded on Christian principles of care, they aim to offer physical, psychologically, social and spiritual care to patients (and their families) facing life threatening illness, death or bereavement, who have specific problems which need specialist skills. Rather than try and sum up the address given by Canon Peter, below is the full version. We will miss Peter very much, and continue to hold his widow, Jo, and their family in our prayers.

### TRIBUTE GIVEN BY CANON PETER

When Frances and I retired to Bradford-on-Avon thirteen years ago, one of the first people we met and got to know, as is so often the case where a Church which has one, was the Verger, Peter. We soon became good friends, but I was a bit surprised a few months later, when he asked if I would be willing to consider becoming the Chaplain to the Salisbury Branch of the Guild of Vergers, of which he was the Secretary. I cautiously agreed, and so began a happy partnership, with Peter driving me to the Quarterly Meetings at different Churches around the Diocese, sometimes accompanied by Jo. The meetings always consisted of three parts – the formal business; a service in the church, with the vergers all robed and entering in procession; and last, but never least, a splendid lunch or tea, when we would socialise. I soon became aware of Peter's great efficiency, care and commitment, and that is certainly borne out by the number of Vergers from around the Diocese who have come to be with us this afternoon, for which Peter would be truly gratified, and especially we welcome Chris Crooks, a former National Chairman of the Guild, when he was Head Verger at Salisbury Cathedral in Peter's time. He is now Head Verger at Canterbury Cathedral, from where he has travelled to be with us today. And he has written these words of tribute for me to share with you:

*'I first met Peter when he was the Verger at Warminster Garrison Church, and he and I belonged to the Salisbury Branch of the Guild of Vergers. It was not long before there was a vacancy on the Branch Committee for a Secretary, and Peter bravely stepped up to the plate. In a very short time he proved to be an able secretary and administrator, fastidious with minutes of meetings, meticulous in planning events and outings for the Branch, and generally keeping an eye on us all. And that was the key – he didn't just organise 'things' (and us!) – he genuinely cared for us all, and often wrote a personal comment on the standard invitation letters or agendas for meetings, with some personal and pertinent comment. He knew the members, and was concerned if they were not well, or if he hadn't heard from them for a while. He was real gentleman. A great encourager, and a quiet enabler of others – the best type of Verger that anybody could want!'*

Those of us who belong here will know much of Peter's eleven years of loyal and dedicated service in this Church, and in the Saxon Church and also Saint Mary, Tory, but I suspect that there is much more that we do not know – the many hours he spent in here, at night or in the early morning, sweeping, cleaning, polishing and furniture arranging. I only discovered last week that two years after his retirement, he had still been regularly polishing the communion silver, and tending the Memorial Garden in the churchyard. But who better to pay tribute to him than Bill Mathews, our former Vicar, who sadly is not well enough to be with us, but who has sent us these memories:

*"When he joined us as verger, Peter proved a tremendous asset to us all. As far as I was concerned he proved to be a loyal and utterly reliable colleague, who rapidly became a good friend. We liked to do things in much the same way, and we rapidly developed systems which made the conduct and preparation of services very easy. We even complemented each other in processions, as he tended to list to port, while I listed to starboard. His only occasional complaint about lack of communication was echoed by mine about him steadfastly refusing to use e-mail!"*

*The Churchwardens valued enormously all the help he gave in preparing services, as did the serving team. His care of the Church building and environment was especially valued on a winter's morning, when he was early on duty dealing with icy paths. His work as Verger was entirely a labour of love. His faith and worshipping life were of central importance to him, and over the years he developed a great interest in our three Churches and their history, as well as in wider Church history in the area. And he was very much a part of the Church's Ministry of Welcome, which he took very seriously. We also especially owe Jo a tremendous debt of gratitude for supporting him in all the time and attention he gave to the Church and its life."*

And I know that we will all warmly echo Bill's final tribute to Jo's unstinting support.

The ancient symbol of office carried by a Verger is called a 'Verge', and was originally for clearing the way through the nave for the clergy to reach the sanctuary. The one which Peter bore here each Sunday was made specially for him, and is uniquely inscribed with a representation of the Holy Trinity, copied from a medieval memorial brass in the church. It could not be more appropriate, as there is no doubt in my mind that although it came later in his life, Peter found a true and fulfilling vocation of Christian service in his role as Verger, which sprang from his own firm faith, and from which we may all find encouragement and inspiration. For this we shall always be truly grateful.

**From Tina Cullen**  
**Salisbury Area Leader**





## 'LIKE A VERGER' ~ A FIRST-TIMER'S PERSONAL REFLECTION

**"I'm not a proper verger, I'm just a glamour verger"** I whispered shyly on arriving at the Training Conference. It was my first Conference; my first meeting with Guild Members en masse. I was apprehensive. My role as a Verger in the Hooglandse Kerk in Leiden, the Netherlands, is simply to lead the choir to their places during the processional (the sopranos, it seems, find singing and walking in the correct tempo nigh impossible). Of course, I do my bit setting up the church and welcoming visitors, but surely this doesn't qualify me as a verger?

I soon realised how wrong I was. The friendliness of the vergers at dinner and afterwards in the pub made me feel accepted and welcome. Then James Armstrong enlightened me in his speech "Vergers: tracing our origins". Under different names – verger, virger, porter, acolyte, sexton – we have been taking responsibility for Church buildings, welcoming visitors, assisting clergy, and performing a multitude of other tasks for centuries. James presented some examples of vergers through history using manuscripts, art, literature, and photographs in an entertaining and very informative lecture. Broadly speaking, vergers facilitate worship. We do this not only by assisting during services, but also by welcoming people into Churches and Cathedrals: by being the one who says "Hello, how are you today?" so that visitors feel at ease, by showing them the inspiring features of the building, and by guiding them to a place where they can reflect and pray. The topic of this year's Conference, pastoral care, reflected this second role. I heard many moving stories about vergers' firsthand experience with pastoral issues. A repeated theme was that visitors may often feel intimidated by ordained ministers and turn instead to vergers for a listening ear.

Working with children and vulnerable adults is a sensitive area. The Reverend Ann Ogram discussed identifying abuse and what steps to take to help a vulnerable person: how to recognise abuse, how to respond appropriately if an individual confides, the necessity to write down their story as fully and accurately as possible, and to contact the appropriate agencies. It is a sad thing indeed that we may encounter people in abusive situations in the course of our work. For my part, knowing the appropriate course of action gives me confidence.

Funerals are also occasions where sensitivity and even diplomacy may often be required. Father Tom Cameron challenged us to consider our responses to certain situations. For example, how would we respond to the parents of a teenage boy who wanted to exclude his friends from his funeral? How would we address someone with a terminal illness who was moving into a hospice? Tom's speech sparked some lively and fruitful debates.

Canon Maureen Palmer presented some real-life situations in a lecture on baptism. First, she outlined the scriptural basis for baptism and the different historical practices that have led to the service we have today. We then discussed the attitudes of families who, although they do not attend church, present their infants for baptism. This revealed the difference between our understanding of baptism as church-attending Christians and the ideas of non-churchgoers. I think it is important to respect both views. Through our understanding, we can help make families welcome in the Church community.

I certainly felt welcome during the services in Saint James's Church. Our opening Solemn Eucharist was for the feast of Mary, Martha, and Lazarus. Canon Maureen discussed hospitality in her sermon. After listening I was struck by how welcome I had been made at the conference: that I was no longer concerned about being an outsider. I was delighted to be admitted to the Guild. Our guest speaker at Evensong was the Bishop of Worcester. He spoke about the importance of Church buildings, both in scripture and in practice. He encouraged us to keep churches open. His words echoed my view of their being special places in my life to which I can retreat and reflect. For many people, these are churches. Our work as vergers enables people to use these special places for contemplation and healing. It was a beautiful service; I very much enjoyed singing in the choir.

The last Solemn Eucharist was for the Feast of Lammas Day. The kitchen at Elim Conference Centre, which had provided excellent food in generous quantities throughout the Conference, kindly prepared a Lammas Loaf for our Communion Bread. Stephen Stokes graced us with some figure-of-eight thurible-swinging, and the service ended triumphantly with Phil Ypres-Smith's rendition of Lefébure-Wély's *Sortie*, which is possibly the silliest piece of organ music ever to have been composed.

Our final conference session was on the subject of healing. Canon Maureen presented two readings: Mark 2:1-12 and Luke 7:36-50, and points for reflection. We were asked to maintain silence so that those who so wished could contemplate. After the riches of the Conference, and the moving Requiem Mass that morning, I found myself thinking about many themes, especially, about the role of the verger. Part of our vocation concerns healing. We may not even be aware of this. We are aware of showing support when we meet people at extreme moments in their lives: be it during grief at funerals, or in the elation of a wedding or the baptism of a child. We also meet people in our daily lives who are drawn into Church buildings. Simply by keeping Churches and Cathedrals open and by welcoming visitors, we may help people find time and space to reflect, to bring their worries before God, and ask for His blessing. In this sense, I understand myself to be more than a '*glamour verger*'. I welcome people into our Church, I explain aspects of the Anglican Evensong to Dutch and foreign visitors, and, most of all, I help them feel part of a faith: to feel that they belong in an Evensong, whatever their Church background. In the same way, I was given a sense of belonging during the Conference. I left with a deeper understanding of my work as a verger, a renewed enthusiasm, and the feeling that I can, with confidence, call myself a Verger.

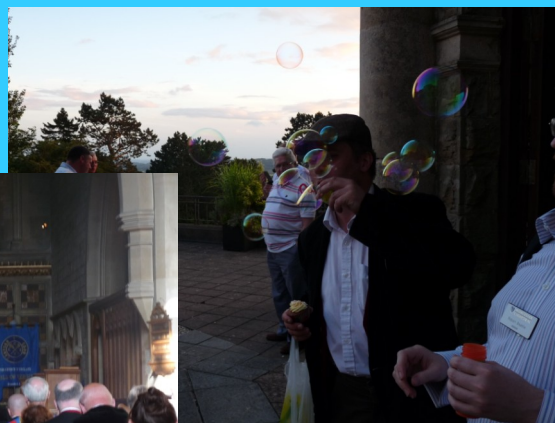
**Emma Brown**

**Verger at Hooglandse Kirk in Lieden, Netherlands**





# CONFERENCE PHOTO ALBUM 2013





## CENTRAL COUNCIL & A.G.M REPORT



After a very clear drive I arrived at the Elim Conference Centre for this year's Conference, the second time that we had met here, and still my breath was taken away by the vista. During the week The Reverend Thomas Cameron, Assistant Priest of Clayton with Keymer, spoke to us about Funerals and what hymns would be appropriate. The hymn 'Jerusalem' was mentioned, (I won't say if it was a good or a bad choice), but this hymn made me think of the surroundings where we were: **"Till we have built Jerusalem, In England's green & pleasant Land."** And thinking that Malvern might have been what Milton was talking about (albeit we know it was Glastonbury).

On the Sunday evening the Central Council met to discuss the business of the Guild, the Central Council is made up of All Area Leaders (who are voting members) and all Fellows and National Life Members (who do not have a vote), Central Council meets at least twice a year, and this meeting included the appointment of new Officers and the better use of our finances.

The following Positions were vacant, either due to resignation or the end of the period of office: General Secretary, Communications Officer, Training Registrar, Welfare Officer, Canterbury Province Representative and York Province Representative. Before these positions were presented it was agreed to restart the period of Office for the Training Registrar, as both the Training Registrar and Training Officer were running concurrently, and it would be better if there was an overlapping effect, this was agreed upon meaning that the Training Officer would still have 2 more years left (of 3) and the newly elected Training Registrar would have 3 years (of 3) to run.

The following people were elected to the various vacant positions:

**General Secretary:** Only one candidate, Stephen Stokes (Ipswich Branch), Stephen was elected to serve for 5 years.

**Communications Officer:** Only one candidate, Marek Barden (Somerset and Avon Branch), Marek was elected to serve for 3 years.

**Training Registrar:** Only one candidate, Susan Ansell (Chichester, Guildford & Portsmouth Branch), Susan was elected to serve for 3 years.

**Welfare Officer** – There were two candidates, Florence Devine (Salisbury Branch), and Irene Money (London, Southwark and Chelmsford Branch), following a secret vote Irene was elected to serve the remaining 2 years of a 3 year term.

**Canterbury Province Rep:** 3 Area Leaders stood for this role, Tina Cullen (Salisbury), Stephen Holland (Oxford & Saint Albans), and Malcolm Bates (Kent & East Sussex), following a secret ballot Malcolm was elected to serve for the year.

**York Province Rep:** Only 1 Area Leader stood for this role, Neil Pickford (York & South & West Yorkshire), Neil was elected to serve for the year.

All these positions were accepted at the AGM and all those elected were appointed to their office. At the AGM it was also announced that Area Leaders will no longer receive a free copy of The Virger Magazine in an attempt to curb the costs to Central Council. The AGM was attended by all members who were able to be with us with Full Members being able to exercise the privilege to Vote. The AGM also heard that the National Chairman would like all Branches to register their Members who are 'Overseas Members' with the Overseas Liaison Officer, John Campbell, ([CEGVOverseas@gmail.com](mailto:CEGVOverseas@gmail.com)), so that we can centrally assist Branches with the Overseas Membership, however it was reiterated by the National Chairman that we are not looking to remove these Members from their respective Branches. The AGM was very well attended and the meetings were very productive.

**Stephen Stokes**  
**General Secretary**



## CHICHESTER, GUILDFORD & PORTSMOUTH BRANCH NEWS



On Wednesday 17<sup>th</sup> July thirteen members of our Branch assembled around noon at the Lighthouse Restaurant in Littlehampton for lunch and then passed the next couple of hours in pursuits that varied from shop crawling, active walking, inhaling the good clean sea air to enjoying the scenery in less active fashions.

We then headed to Saint Mary's Church, Yapton. There we had a delicious cream tea with strawberries, which had been prepared for us and laid out in the churchyard. Agreed, it is probably not a regular place to eat, but as the sun was very hot that day, it was ideal under the large trees. We were joined by two more members and the Incumbent, who later led us in their parochial version of Compline. After which, we returned to the churchyard to chat and two postcards had been purchased for us all to sign for our Chairman, Bill Groves, who at that time was very poorly and receiving treatment. Our united thanks go to Christopher Weymouth for his efforts in planning this enjoyable meeting.

Our Area Leader, Sue Ansell, and I attended the Training Conference in Malvern, about which you will doubtless read elsewhere in this issue. It was a stimulating few days with good fellowship. Sue had intended to join me for Rosemary Ballard's funeral, the previous week (we had both attended Frank Lane's funeral in Saint Albans in late April), but at the last minute she was unable to join me due to family commitments.

**Sheila Ford**  
**Branch Correspondent**





Well at long last it has arrived, the 'SUNSHINE' and what a beautiful day to spend at Aldeburgh, Suffolk. Prior to the Branch AGM, Tom and I spent the day looking around the local Parish Church of Saint Peter & Saint Paul taking photographs but mainly to find the final resting place of both \* Benjamin Britten and Peter Pears. (*I have written something further on in my report about Britten and his significance re: Aldeburgh – with grateful thanks to wikipedia*).



The Ipswich Branch AGM took place on Friday 26<sup>th</sup> July at the home of Dick and Valerie Jeffery in Aldeburgh, on a beautiful summer evening. Like most Branch AGM's the Agenda is followed quite rigorously with minutes/reports/AOB being discussed, which sometimes you can get through quite quickly! Most of the points covered seemed to be very straight forward. The election of the Branch Officers remained the same as previous years: Ian Cobb (Chair), Pam Cobb (Secretary), Dick Jeffery (Treasurer), Reverend Dr Steve Griffiths (Chaplain). Due to Matthew Kemsley having stood down as the Area Leader the position needed to be filled for the next 12 months. Jean Cobb accepted the position for the coming year ahead. As was commented on at the time: is this a Cobb take over? We also welcomed Kenneth Game as a new Member to the Branch.



After all had been discussed and various 'AOB' points were raised (which are to be followed up at our next meeting in October), there was, quite unexpectedly, a presentation of a rather lovely birthday cake to Peggy Seeley, after the traditional 'Happy Birthday' followed by a generous slice of cake, we then proceeded into the garden for a BBQ. Then it was time for the 'real' business to commence; catching up with friends and finding out what each other had been up to and enjoying the food in the lovely flora and fauna of the garden. After consuming all the food we then made our way home leaving Dick and Val to wash up. I'm sure that somewhere in their kitchen was a dishwasher, I hope!

As I mentioned at the beginning of this report, Aldeburgh is celebrating the centenary of the birth of Benjamin Britten. So below are a few facts relating to the man himself:

*Edward Benjamin Britten was born on 22<sup>nd</sup> November, 1913 and died on 4<sup>th</sup> December, 1976.*

*Britten was an English composer of opera's/orchestral and chamber pieces, conductor and pianist. Britten's best known opera was 'Peter Grimes' (1945). With the premiere of 'Peter Grimes' Britten leapt to international fame.*

*Britten was born in the fishing port of Lowestoft in Suffolk, the youngest of four children of Robert Victor Britten and his wife Edith Rhona. His father, Robert, a dentist by profession, was reported as being an agnostic and refused to attend Church on Sundays. His mother was the force behind the musical background/influence in Britten's life and held family musical soirees at their home. Britten described himself as coming from a 'middle class' family. When he was 3 months old he contracted pneumonia (obviously survived) and later on became an outstanding musical child. His first attempt at composition was when he was five and his mother taught him piano at the age of seven, he also played the viola when he was ten.*

*In 1937 his mother died and he used money that she had bequeathed him to buy the 'Old Mill' at Snape in Suffolk (which became his country home) it was about that time that he met the tenor Peter Pears, the pair became very close friends over the years.*

*Aldeburgh Festival was launched in June 1948; the festival was an immediate success and became an annual event that has continued to this day.*

*In the last year of his life Britten accepted a life peerage, so in July 1976 he became Baron Britten of Aldeburgh in the County of Suffolk. His funeral was held in Aldeburgh Parish Church and he is buried in its churchyard. He was offered a burial place at Westminster Abbey but Britten had made it clear that when he died his wishes were that his grave to be side by side with Pears.*

*\* We did find the graves of both Britten and Pears and directly behind them is the grave of Imogen Holst, 1907 to 1984, the British composer and conductor, lifelong friend to both Britten and Pears and daughter of Gustav Holst.*

And finally Members of the Branch would like to pass on their 'love, thoughts and prayers' to Matthew at this time, to let him know that we are all thinking of him and hopefully will see him at our next meeting in October.

We also hold in our prayers those members of the Norwich Branch.

Until next time,  
God Bless.

**Jean Cobb**  
**Area Leader & Branch Correspondent**





## LIVERPOOL BRANCH NEWS



Our 2013 A.G.M. took place on the 12<sup>th</sup> March in Liverpool Cathedral. Whilst not large in number, there was still a keen interest in all matters at National, Branch and Parish levels. There was interest, also, shown in the Provincial Festivals and Conference.

Our Christmas Eucharist and lunch heralds the start of the Christmas season. Last year's Christmas Eucharist and lunch took place in the splendid surroundings of the smoking room for first class passengers aboard the Titanic. This is a room situated in the Adelphi Hotel in Liverpool. Our Guest was our General Secretary, Stephen Stokes. We were, also, joined again with our fellow members from Blackburn, Chester & Manchester Branches.

We have lost three senior members with the deaths of Alan Owen, George Quarless and Doris Mills, whose obituary appears elsewhere in this issue of the magazine.

On a happier note, we had a wedding in the Branch when Miss Tracey Cavanagh became Mrs Tracey Lumb in a ceremony in the Crypt of Liverpool Cathedral. A group of us were in attendance to ensure Tracey did not escape.

We hold our Branch meetings in Liverpool Cathedral and for our Easter Eucharist and Lunch we choose a different venue, usually it is an invitation to a member's Parish Church. Socially, we join forces with our brothers and sisters from Blackburn, Chester & Manchester Branches during the year enjoying good fellowship, good food and shared worship.

Our Life Member, Tom Cobley, is now retired and living in sheltered accommodation since his hip operation. Tom still maintains an interest in Guild matters and welcomes the occasional visits from some of the members.

Our Branch Chaplain, Canon Michael Wolfe, retires in September from his Cathedral duties and is also retiring as our Branch Chaplain after ten years. We look forward to welcoming our new Branch Chaplain at our Christmas Eucharist in December.

**Howard Llewellyn**  
**Branch Secretary**



## NORFOLK BRANCH NEWS



The Norfolk Branch sends greeting to all other Branches. We are quite a small outfit and Norfolk is a large County and so getting our members together for any social event has to be carefully planned.

On Friday 16<sup>th</sup> August we had a barbecue at the home of our Secretary and Treasurer, Barbara Harrold. She lives in Saham Toney, a delightful village located right at the southernmost part of the county. She, and her husband Roger, provided a splendid feast for us, and he used his BBQ skills to produce wonderful food, skills which he picked up whilst working with Gauchos in Argentina!

Attendance was good by our standards and the social get-together was not at all marred by the expected downpour as our hosts had erected a marquee in anticipation of this. We were able to meet and welcome our new Area Leader, Jean Cobb, and her husband.

Also swelling the ranks was the local Vicar and her husband and the whole afternoon was really delightful. We were very saddened to have lost the services of Matthew Kemsley, who has been our Area Leader for several years and has been of enormous support to us all.

We hope to gradually increase our membership and are planning a series of social events, the aim being to make them both interesting and informative. The next one on our list will be held at the seaside town of Cromer, famous for its pier, the genuine end of the pier summer show and, of course, the Cromer crabs, whose reputation extends far beyond Norfolk.

This coming meeting will be held on Thursday 10<sup>th</sup> October, starting at the Cromer Parish Church at noon and we shall be visiting a number of Churches in the town, representing the various faiths and ending with a talk by the local Roman Catholic Priest. Also within the itinerary is a backroom visit to a local funeral parlour.

The day will, of course, include a fish and chip lunch at a restaurant operated by one of our local fishing families, so both the needs of the body physical and the body soulical (new word for you) should be well satisfied.

If any branch has good ideas on social events for members, which we could purloin I will always be delighted to hear from them.

**John Markes**  
**Branch Chairman**





## OXFORD BRANCH NEWS



An encouraging number of Oxford Branch members met at Saint John the Evangelist's Church in Mortimer – a small village just south of Reading – for a training event on Tuesday 16<sup>th</sup> July. We convened at ten o'clock on a blazing hot day: the church was cool, but the welcome very warm. Tea, coffee, and some very nice biscuits awaited us as we composed ourselves for the day. The Eucharist that formally started our day was led by the Reverend Paul Chaplain, and was a service very appropriate to the group. Certainly vergers were very much in the foreground, reading the scriptures and preaching, as well as in more discrete roles. (The sermon was a short but interesting meditation on the interaction between faith and prayer).

The first training session focussed on the preparation of the altar table for Communion, with some helpful insights and suggestions even for the very experienced people. Some interesting issues emerged from this; for example, the difficulties encountered by a left-handed verger during the priestly washing of hands. A short second session centred around a display of very helpful books and manuals on the role of a verger in its many aspects and duties. This was followed by a "talk-through" of the laying out of vestments in preparation for the formal robing of priests and others.

Lunch followed in a local hostelry. Tables had been booked for us well in advance – ("Good forward preparation" had been cited as a valuable aspect of the role of a verger, and here was well illustrated). The food was excellent.

The afternoon session was a visit to Saint Mary's Church at the far end of Mortimer. This splendid building has an impressive and very noticeable 160 foot spire, making it easy to find even without the benefit of a sat-nav. (The spire is so prominent that a train driver was inspired to visit the church, having seen it as a landmark while driving trains on the nearby railway.) The church was built in 1868 and consecrated the next year by Samuel Wilberforce, then Bishop of Oxford. The stained-glass windows here are a fascinating study in themselves.

Many thanks are due to the Branch Chairman who led the training sessions, and to Jean Halfacree and the team of Vergers at Saint John's for their welcome and hospitality.

Our congratulations go to Jean Halfacree on passing the Foundation Unit of the Guild Diploma Course, for which she received her certificate at the Training Conference. And I would like to express my own thanks for the warmth of the welcome, the knowledge gained and the help received at the Training Conference. Certainly the locale had a lovely environment and Christian ethos: even the hill to Saint Edward's House building felt like 'One in Three.'

**Dennis Wildman**

**Branch correspondent in Training**



## SOMERSET & AVON BRANCH NEWS



In February we held our AGM at Saint Gregory the Great, Horfield, Bristol, after which our talented longstanding member, Father James Wilson, cooked us a splendid lunch for us all. This was our first main event for 2013 and we try and have bi-monthly meetings throughout the year. So far this year we have visited Saint Mary's, Yatton, North Somerset; Saint Mary's, Shirehampton, Bristol; and Saint Martin's, Knowle, Bristol. Our April meeting even went into South Wales, where our Secretary, Tim Egan, gave us a conducted tour around the Gallery of Art in the National Museum of Wales in Cardiff. This was followed by a visit to Saint Dingat's, New Tredegar, where we met the Verger, John Price, who has been the Verger at that Church for fifty-three years and a member of the Guild for fifty years. People often express surprise when they discover that the boundary for our Branch encompasses a part of Wales including Llandaff Cathedral. Our meetings begin with a service of Evening Prayer or Holy Communion and conclude with a Bring and Share Supper which allows us to enjoy a meal and fellowship with our Branch Members.

We have two further meetings coming up later this year with a quiet day to be held in Bleadon, Somerset, in October and a social gathering followed by coffee in the Lord Mayor's Chapel in Bristol in November.

At our recent meeting in Saint Martin's, Knowle, we were pleased to admit two new Full Members to the Guild: Colin Godfrey from Saint Mary's, Shirehampton, and John Taylor from Saint Saviour's, Bath. They were formerly admitted by our Branch Chaplain, Colin Maggs. We hope they enjoy many happy years as Members of the Guild.

An exciting piece of news is that Father James Wilson, who is a National Life Member of the Guild, is to be installed as an Honorary Canon of Bristol Cathedral on Sunday 6<sup>th</sup> October at 3.30 p.m. All are welcome to attend this service, (*No Robes Please*). Father James is much loved by us all in the Branch and we offer him our hearty congratulations.

On the welfare side of our news we have to report that members Lionel and Mary Holway have not been enjoying particularly good health during the earlier part of this year, and we were delighted that they were able to host to Saint Martin's, Knowle. Also, Ivor Watts from Saint Mary Redcliffe, Bristol, has been unwell and has had to make regular visits to the Bristol Royal Infirmary. And our Area Leader, Marek Barden, is recovering from a recent major Hernia operation. We remember them all in our prayers and wish them a full and speedy recovery.

It is always interesting to read the Ipswich Branch News as this is written by Jean Cobb, our former Secretary before she moved away. Hi Jean! We send you God's blessing from us all down in here in the Somerset & Avon Branch and hope you are well. We are all waving to you, it's only the hills in between that stop you from seeing us!

**Christopher M Eynon**

**Branch Correspondent**



## MEDAL WINNERS

Yorkshire celebrated two special verger events in June with both silver and golden anniversaries.

First up, chronologically speaking, was Doreen Cook, who has spent twenty-five years as Verger at Saint Cuthbert's Church, Kirkleatham near Redcar. Doreen was, for a long time, the Area Leader for the Yorkshire and also the South West Yorkshire Branches of the Guild and will be well-known by many from her attendances at Conference.



Doreen Cook flanked by National Officers  
& Members of the Yorkshire Branches

To mark the event on Wednesday 12<sup>th</sup> June the Vicar of Saint Cuthbert's, The Reverend Malcolm Jackson, presided at a special Choral Evensong which featured an address from CEGV National Chaplain, Canon Maureen Palmer. Also present was James Armstrong, CEGV National Chairman and guardian of the Millennium Virge, plus other National Officials and Members of the CEGV York and South West Yorkshire Branches. The service was followed by refreshments at Sir William Turner Court nearby.

Although Doreen has been receiving medical treatment in recent months, on the day itself she looked in fine spirits and, only a few days later, she got the welcome news that her specialist doesn't want to see her again for another year.

Less than a fortnight later, on Sunday 23<sup>rd</sup> June, John Lazenby celebrated fifty years as a Verger at Saint Mary's Church, Thirsk with a service of Choral Evensong sung by the girls of York Minster Choir. It was originally planned that the Archbishop of York, Dr John Sentamu, would attend but his need to recuperate after an operation prevented this. The service was held in the summer rather than during the month of November, which marks the actual anniversary, because John "hates wintry weather."

The address was delivered by The Venerable Paul Ferguson, Archdeacon of Cleveland, to a packed congregation which included fellow members of the Guild of Vergers, the two surviving previous Rectors and at least five of the Curates who trained at Saint Mary's during John's term of office.



John Lazenby (Centre),  
Stephen Rutherford, York Branch (left), & Maurice  
Pethrick, South & West Yorkshire Branch (right)

During the service the heavens provided a truly biblical storm as a backdrop – I leave the theological interpretation of this to others – but as the post-service refreshments were served in the church it guaranteed that everyone stayed afterwards for a good chat.

The Yorkshire Branches of the CEGV plan to make their own presentation to John in November when he and his wife Pam will be guests at the Branches' Christmas lunch, which will be held this year at the Lazenby's favourite venue, The Golden Fleece in Thirsk.

**Neil Pickford**

**Area Leader, York & South West Yorkshire**

The *Solution to the puzzle that appeared in the Summer Edition of The Virger. How many did you find?*

The Bible books **number sixty-six** in the King **James** Version and they form **a most remarkable** library.

The impact of the Bible, **whose** ancient writings and **truth** still apply, has been **dynamic**. **A** **hard-to-ignore** fact is the quality of its teaching. Most of the Old Testament was written in **Hebrew**, somewhere east of **Suez**, rather close to **Judea**. Accounts such as these are interesting, but the main **job** is to find the Bible book names in this paragraph.

All may **compete**. Respond by underlining each book as you find it. **It usually** takes but a few minutes to **judge** several sentences for such names. **There** is the danger of **seeking** so hurriedly that one will overlook names in going **from** **answer** to answer. This is just a **fluke** of eyesight. Though twenty-two books are here concealed, it is hard to say what score is **normal**.

**A child** may find certain books whereas adults will overlook them. **At the worst**, one should find a few. As a matter of **fact**, some are obvious in **a humorous** sort of way.

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## 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 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 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**.



## CONGRATULATIONS & WELCOME



### WE WOULD LIKE TO OFFER CONGRATULATIONS TO THE FOLLOWING PEOPLE:

Elizabeth Albery, Joan Halfacree, Maureen Hargrave, John Hughes and David Jones who have all completed the Foundation Unit of The Diploma Course and hope they will all now move on to the second stage.

Irene Money who has been awarded the Diploma with Merit.

Roger Lawrence who has been awarded the Honorary Diploma for his services to The Guild.

Phillip Ypres-Smith who has been awarded Life Membership of The Guild for his services as Guild Organist over many years.

Doreen Cook, John Lazenby, John Marsh, Robert Preston and John Price who have all received their Long Service Certificates.

### WE WOULD LIKE TO WELCOME THE FOLLOWING NEW MEMBERS TO THE GUILD:

Emma Brown, Philip Dunne, Colin Godfrey, Paul Harris, Tracy McKeever, Dyn Frederick Parry and John Taylor.



## FORTHCOMING EVENTS



**2014**

**Sunday 10<sup>th</sup> - Thursday 14<sup>th</sup> August**

**Annual Training Conference at the Elim Conference Centre, West Malvern**

**Canterbury Province Festival at Hereford Cathedral**  
(Details to be Confirmed)

**York Province Festival in Lancaster Priory**  
(Details to be Confirmed)

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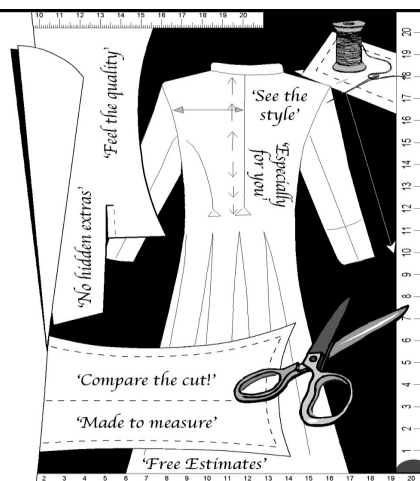
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OUR MOTTO ... "THERE'S ALWAYS TIME FOR COURTESY!"



Established by  
Joyce Davison & Maureen Waterston in 1980

'I would rather be a door keeper in the house of our Lord,  
than to dwell in the tents of the  
Ungodly'

*Psalm 84*

The Guild seeks to make effective the ministry of Vergers  
through the following key **objectives**, by :

Promoting the spiritual nature of the **Vergers' Vocation**  
through Christian Fellowship and spiritual guidance for all its  
Members;

Encouraging the advancement of knowledge by education,  
through maintaining standards of good practice, and by  
equipping Members for Ministry as vergers in all its aspects,  
through the provision of advice, training, resources, and by  
organizing and promoting training courses and conferences;  
Providing the means and opportunity for **communication** and  
discussion of ideas and proposals of common interest to

Members;

Providing **support** and encouragement to the Membership in  
all aspects of their duties whatever they may be and wherever  
performed;

**Advising**, upon request, and making recommendations as to  
terms of employment and welfare of any Member;

**Recording** the gamut of work undertaken by Vergers; in  
addition noting each Member's training, experience and  
qualifications.

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Page 16