

The Virger

Winter 2013
Issue 281



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~CEGV~
Canterbury Province Festival ~ Saint Albans
Thursday 12th September 2013



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The Official Magazine of the Church of England Guild of Vergers





Welcome to the Winter 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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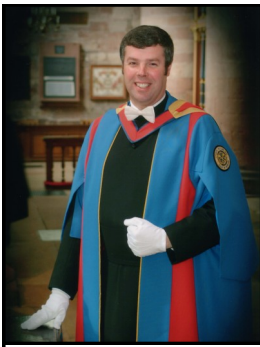


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NATIONAL CHAIRMAN'S LETTER



"If you have nowt to say, say nowt" This is a saying that I remember my Granddad using often. As a child I just thought it was one of his funny remarks, however, as I grow older I have come to realise it has great value. In today's world we are bombarded with noise, mobile phones announcing their presence, headphones leaking drum and base sounds out of the ears of countless people and at this time of year those infernal seasonal tunes that follow us around the shops, all this on top of incessant twenty four hour news coverage and those people who want to tell you their life history just because you have asked them if they would like to join the worship. Well can they not answer yes or no, as I have to seat the other 250 people? So, as we are now in Advent, my wish for you is to spend some moments of peace and tranquillity as

befits this season of expectation, time to gather our thoughts and to remind ourselves why we do the things we do.

The Verger's Guild of the Episcopal Church is 25 years old. We wish them well for the next 25 as they continue to flourish. Some of our members, including some who were at the inauguration, went over to Nashville, Tennessee, for their Conference and very encouraging reports have come back to us. I would like to thank Margaret McLarty, their outgoing President, for all her hard work and friendship towards our own Guild and congratulations to Scott Smith as he takes over her mantle and we look forward to future collaboration.

The Central Council met in the Lord Mayor's Chapel, Bristol, in September, some members experienced very difficult and frustrating journeys due to the very bad weather, however we received a warm welcome by Marek who supplied us with hot drinks. It is sad to acknowledge the passing of more of our Guild friends. Bill Groves and Cyril Ward who will be keenly missed, however I am confident they are safe and enjoying their rest with the Lord.

Now I must take some more of my Granddads advice, as he used to shout at the Television when he got fed up with someone "Get off we have had enough of you", but can you rely on the advice of a man who tells you that a rabbit pops out of an appendix scar...

My love and warmest wishes to you all this Christmas.

James Armstrong



NATIONAL CHAPLAIN'S LETTER



Dear Friends,
Greetings for a very Happy Season of Advent!

As we enter the season of Advent one word seems to sum up our expectation and longing: that is the word 'Hope!' Sometimes our utter despair at world events threatens to rob us of hope: the natural disasters which devastate communities and cause tragic loss of life; the wars and the violence for which there seems to be no solutions; the corruption and the poor leadership which

encourage us and tempt us to despair. But then, we must hold fast to hope. When I was a young child a very wise priest taught me a short saying: one which has been with me as a guide all my life and one which helps me to keep things in proportion.

'Honour lost, much lost. Money lost, little lost. Hope lost, all lost.'

Advent comes to us with all its busyness, its long hours, its frustration and often the Feast of the Incarnation of our Lord comes as something of an anti-climax. By the time we get to Christmas we have already sung 'O come! All ye faithful' endless times and the whole story of our redemption can become very stale. It is at this point we must hold on to the hope of our calling: the hope of the promise of the new creation given us by God in the birth of his incarnate Son, Jesus Christ.

I suppose we associate 'hope' more with Easter than we do with Advent. We have the words of I Peter ringing in our ears: 'Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who in his great mercy has given us a new birth into a living hope by the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead ...'

Hope is a word which runs all through the Old Testament expressing the trust and expectation of the Jews for God, who chose them and will nurture them in the covenant relationship. 'I will be their God and they shall be my people.' So God is the hope of Israel!

By the time the new Testament authors are writing their letters – some time shortly after the death and resurrection of Jesus, all hope has been vested in Jesus: 'Christ in you, the hope of glory', writes St. Paul. So what is this hope?

- I. In Christ we have the hope of forgiveness of sins such that we can stand before God and be made holy [whole].*
- II. Through Christ we have grace of justification. We never merit or earn this grace with which we are endowed – it is a free gift.*
- III. We hope for the beatific vision of God given us through our Lord Jesus and by the power of the Holy Spirit.*

I know that what I am going to suggest is probably impossible – but try to give yourself a little time to reflect on the hope which is vested in the birth of our Lord Jesus, so that, come Christmas Day, the story lives for you, giving you joy, gladness and hope for the future.

With every blessing and my love,

Canon Maureen



On a bright day in September Members of the Saint Albans Branch, looking resplendent in their golden sashes, set about welcoming vergers from across the country to the Canterbury Province Festival. All the preparation and hard work had come down to the day itself.

Vergers were directed first to the crypt for the registration and then to the restaurant, Lussmanns, for tea and coffee. Here the official welcome was made by the Sub Dean, Reverend Canon Richard Watson. Housekeeping and other notices were given out for the organisation of the day. Members were then free to wander until the Eucharist Service at noon.

This was held in the Lady Chapel with Canon Maureen, the Guild Chaplain, as president and the Precentor, Reverend Canon Paul Arbuthnot, and the Saint Albans Branch Chaplain, Reverend Andrew Ferrar, as deacons. During the sermon slot new Members were admitted.

Reverend Andrew Ferrar had his appointment as the Saint Albans Branch Chaplain confirmed. Paul Russell, Rosamund Russell and Karen Cursans, all from Saint Albans Branch, presented by Lindsay Kemp, were admitted as Full Members. Dr Stella Rogers from Gloucester, Hereford & Worcester Branch, presented by Raymond Fowler, and Ralph Lightfoot from London, Southwark & Chelmsford Branch, presented by Denise Mead, were admitted as Associate Members.



Then it was quickly over to Lussmanns for the meal. Members were allowed to sit where they wanted with reserved seats for Saint Albans Branch members on every table. Lussmanns staff were very helpful and managed to cope with serving so many their choices, aided by coloured dots, in an efficient manner. The food was excellent and the noise whilst eating meant that everyone seemed to be enjoying the chance to talk with their dining companions.

After lunch some members took the advantage of the specialist tours, whilst others enjoyed some more free time to explore on their own. Then it was time to robe back in the Lady Chapel where all the gear had been moved by the Saint Albans Branch members. Once robed, we all lined up in

order for procession before Solemn Evensong. Within the procession were 3 verges including the Guild's Millennium Verge.

The whole procession was led in by Paul Russell using Frank Lane's Verge, another fitting tribute to him, his memory and for his dedication to the Guild. (Frank Lane, who died earlier this year, was a Life Member of the Guild and until his death he was an active member of the Branch's organising committee for the Festival).



Thanks to the Precentor our procession went from the Crossing up the South Aisle to the Organ then under the Organ passage, through the Quire and to the Presbytery where we were seated.



At the end of the service the official festival photograph was taken on the steps leading to the Presbytery. Then everyone gathered up their belongings, said their goodbyes and that was the Festival over for another year.

Our thanks go to all at the Cathedral who helped to make the day go smoothly, to all our sponsors including Charles Farris, who had a stall near the Bookshop for the day.

To all the Guild members who came, we hope you enjoyed your day and not forgetting all those from the Saint Albans branch who not only turned up but also helped out on the day.

And finally our special thanks go to our honorary Branch member, Michael Golby, without whom the organisation both before and on the day would have been a nightmare!

Rosamund Russell
Branch Correspondent





VGEC CONFERENCE 2013 ~ NASHVILLE



The 25th Anniversary Conference of the Vergers Guild of the Episcopal Church (VGEC) of which I am a member took place in Nashville, Tennessee, in October 2013 and Father Tom Cameron, John Campbell, Stephen Haude, Irene Money & I attended.

The members of the host committee from the Diocese of Tennessee should be congratulated on what was a great conference. Nothing like the CEGV (Church of England Guild of Vergers) conference! With over 230 attendees from all over the US, Canada, and England, I think this has to be the largest gathering of vergers ever.

We arrived in a blaze of sunshine in the afternoon of Wednesday 2nd October (*Nashville being 6 hours behind the UK time wise*). We unpacked and began to mingle and a whole load of us headed to Downtown for supper. Nashville is a vibrant place that never sleeps. Music blares from the hostellers and along the roadside. There's colour and movement everywhere.



Thursday morning registration was a bit of a drawn out affair so once we were registered Stephen, Irene and I took ourselves off to mooch around the Life Way Christian Book Store and then on to the Frist Museum and the Union Station Hotel all of which were across the road from our hotel. Irene has more pictures of both buildings should you wish to see them. The Frist Museum is a fine example of an Art Deco building, the Union Station Hotel was once Nashville's main railway station and has the finest booking hall of its kind again in the Art Deco style. It is truly breathtaking.



Thursday afternoon saw the start of the celebrations, we were taken by coach to Saint George's Episcopal Church, the Location Church of the inaugural meeting. Here we were welcomed by the Reverend Leigh Spruill, the Rector.

We attended a beautiful Choral Evensong, the highlight for me being the responses which were composed by Peter Nardone, who is now Director of Music at Worcester Cathedral and the former Director of Music at both Chelmsford Cathedral & Croydon Minster, and written when he was in residence at Croydon Minster (my home Parish). Supper followed Evensong. Several of the Founder Members, including Father Tom were present for this celebration supper. The inaugural photo was interesting seeing Father Tom with lots of dark hair!

All other events were held at Christ Church Cathedral, in Downtown Nashville or in the Holiday Inn Express Hotel which was next door. Services included the Feast of Saint Francis with the Blessing of the Animals, a workshop by the Reverend Geoffrey Butcher on the 1982 Hymnal, the keynote address by John Campbell, our Overseas Liaison Officer of the CEGV, Verger 101, Verger 307, the Dynamic Ministry of the Verger in the 21st Century and many more. Here Margaret McClarty the President, introduced us to the Virge of the future, a Disney style coloured light-up globe – not so sure this will catch on here though! NB: this was very tongue in cheek!

Business meetings took place on Saturday morning so we were free to rest and explore or just socialise in the hospitality room where booze flowed freely!

Saturday afternoon had been allocated to the various tours but we opted, out of necessity, to go shopping in the Opry Mall some 11 miles away. Shopping in the USA is a whole different ball game, but I'll save that for another time. Early on Saturday evening we were taken in our evening finery, by coach to the Rotunda at the Vanderbilt University for a Gala Dinner. Here, after the obligatory photo, we were given a superb meal and 47 certificates and vergers wands (virges) were handed out to those who had completed the training course, plus a few honorary ones to long serving members.



We were allocated coaches and tables and the English Vergers were split up. At first I was worried about this but all the vergers were very friendly, interested and interesting.

The Sunday Eucharist was a grand affair only blighted by the rain. We had been due to process up the road from the hotel but the weather had other ideas which meant we had to line up in the hall under the Cathedral and process up the circular staircase. Great fun in long flowing robes.

The Bishop of Tennessee, The Right Reverend John C Bauerschmidt presided, The Very Reverend Timothy E Kimbrough, Dean of Christ Church Cathedral, preached and the final conference photo was taken.

Most of the vergers began to disperse, few were staying on until Monday so we went to lunch with Father Tom and Emilie Rowe from Albuquerque, who is also a member of LS&C, and also with next year's host vergers. Next year's Conference will be in Toronto with a planned visit to Niagara Falls. Can't wait!

Denise Mead
Liaison Officer

(Photographs: Denise Mead, Stephen Haude & Irene Money; The Frist Museum & The Union Station Hotel)



CHICHESTER, GUILDFORD & PORTSMOUTH BRANCH NEWS



The Saint Albans Festival was mixed with a tinge of sadness and it was as Peter and I entered the dining room for breakfast on Thursday 12th September, that Clive told me of Bill Groves death the previous day. After registering in the Cathedral, we adjourned for coffee in a nearby restaurant and were welcomed by the Sub Dean. Following this Canon Maureen informed everyone about Bill and his long connection with the Guild. He was remembered in Prayers at the Communion Service and Choral Evensong. We were well looked after by the staff at Lussmann's for lunch and tea. The short walk from and to the Cathedral gave us some fresh air and a stretch of the legs. We had an interesting and pleasant day.

On Friday 18th October about thirty robed and unrobed Guild Members from the Branch and further afield gathered in Guildford Cathedral to attend a Memorial Service for Bill. The three speakers, his daughter, Sue, Christopher Crooks and Canon Nicholas Thistlethwaite, spoke from different perspectives, but they all spoke of his sense of humour and impeccable fanaticism for detail.

There was a joint meeting for the Vergers and the Cathedral Fellowship Members on Tuesday 29th October in the Diocesan Centre. Unfortunately, neither our Area Leader or I were able to attend due to Church services. We have since discovered that it was decided at that meeting that the Branch should "fold". The Branch started in 1952. I was at a dinner held in the Guildford Cathedral Refectory in September 1987 for the Silver Jubilee. It seems so sad that after over 60 years when back in the 1990's during the 9 years I was Branch Secretary that we were the second or third largest Branch. One of the Branch Founder Members was Arthur Burnett who served for 40 years as Verger at Saint Mary and Saint Nicholas, Leatherhead, and I inherited his gown in 1984. Yes, it was threadbare in the back panel and needed re-velveting, which a parishioner kindly executed. Things were made to last in those days! After about 9 years, I had my own made, but the original gown is still in the vestry cupboard and still used if someone is really needed when I am at Conference or a Festival and have my own robes with me.

Sheila Ford
Branch Correspondent

Members joined the former Cathedral Fellowship in Guildford Cathedral Education Centre on Tuesday 29th October for coffee and biscuits. This was the day after the storm on Saint Jude's day but luckily nobody at the meeting had suffered any serious damage to their property.

This was a very friendly meeting and there was plenty of conversation. The vergers had a short business meeting to discuss how the Branch was to continue and the Members asked Elaine to arrange for our Area Leader to find some answers to our queries from the Guild Officers. The Members were very appreciative of all the work that Elaine had done over the past two years during which our Branch had had no official Secretary. They realised that the work load had been especially heavy during this last year when our Chairman, Bill Groves had been ill and so had been unable to attend any meetings. The amicable conversations continued during lunch in the Refectory restaurant where there was a menu with a wide choice of meals. After lunch we returned to the Education Centre to continue our relaxing social day. We sat round in a large group and Elaine and Richard served tea and cake. Although we had all eaten a good lunch we could not resist a slice of Elaine's famous tea loaf! When it was time to leave Members expressed a wish to have another meeting with a similar format next year.

Valerie Groves
Associate Member



GLOUCESTER, HEREFORD & WORCESTER BRANCH NEWS



On October 22nd our Branch welcomed to Saint Stephens, Barbourne, Dee Carlton Ball to talk to us on the Care of Church Linen with a practical demonstration on the "ironing Board", we also learned about the vestments worn by the priest and the meaning of them, also being privileged to view embroidery (some really old) brought along by Dee. The evening was attended by Branch Members and friends all of whom found it very interesting, the evening finished with light refreshments. We thank Dee for giving up her time for us all.

Tuesday 26th November will see us visiting Odda's Chapel at Deerhurst and Deerhurst Church followed by Choral Evensong at Tewkesbury Abbey. Then on 12th December our Annual Christmas Dinner at Holland House, Crophorne.

The New Year starts with our AGM on 28th January. We are at present in the process of organising the Canterbury Province Festival at Hereford Cathedral on 23rd September 2014 and we look forward to welcoming you all to Hereford, full details and the booking form will be available shortly.

Peter Young
Branch Correspondent

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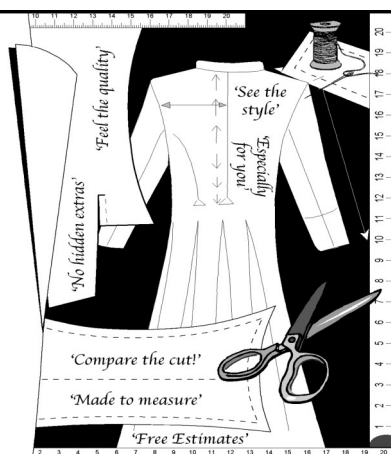
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IPSWICH BRANCH NEWS



Ipswich Branch had their last meeting on Thursday 24th October at Saint Mary's Church, Walton in Felixstowe on a very nice sunny day, which was great for us as the weather can be very changeable from one day to the next.

A LITTLE HISTORY OF SAINT MARY'S CHURCH

**** Saint Mary's Church, Walton, is recorded in the Domesday Survey of 1087, under the name 'Walentuna', a Church of six acres valued at 16 pence (cheap as far as today's prices go!). As you enter the gates and look to your right there is a bus shelter that was formerly the old Market Cross and later changed to Walton Cage. This Cage was used as a lockup for local wrongdoers. The large stone ball, which now rests just inside the gates, was placed on top, evidently to keep the prisoners in. There were also stocks and a whipping post which are now in the Landguard Fort Museum. These were also used during this period, around 1750. The present Church building was grafted onto the ruins of a 14th century building. On the left of the South entrance stands the ruin of the buttress of the old tower, which is thought to have been struck by lightning sometime between 1650 and 1700. The remains of the tower were cleared away by 1811. In 1992-3 a car park was added North of the building and the building itself was reordered, the pews being replaced with modern chairs. Saint Mary's Church is very light inside and lends itself to the more modern family friendly Church.**



BACK TO BUSINESS

Getting back to the day itself, as previously quoted, it was a nice sunny day for a change and a good number of members attended. We started proceedings with a buffet lunch provided by the Secretary, Mrs Pamela Cobb, and being lunch time there was not much left at the end. There was a relatively short meeting afterwards as there was to follow a talk by Mr Phil Hadwen. Mr Hadwen took us through **'Walton from old Photographs'**, a very interesting and sometimes humorous talk with slides of Walton from years gone by when there was no road, just a dirt track that ran down the now High Street and photographs showing old shops and local people. One of these showed a small shop with meat on hooks hanging outside in the fresh air and a horse tied up outside the door. No health and safety rules then! Most, if not all of these shops have long gone and been replaced by, shall we say, more modern shops. All of us enjoyed listening to the talk, seeing the old photos and reminiscing about years gone by. It came across that Mr Hadwen is a very passionate man with regard to local history and is definitely someone to book again for a future meeting.



It was lovely to see Matthew Kemsley back among us; we have missed you, so welcome back Matthew. We are also hoping that a date, before our next meeting in 2014, will result in us as a Branch gathering together in a more leisurely atmosphere for a New Years Lunch. In my new role as East Anglia Area Leader I found myself, of all places, back in Bristol for a meeting of the Central Council. It was lovely to catch up with and meet new members of the Guild in the lovely surroundings of the Lord Mayor's Chapel. Can I say a **'Big Hello'** to the Somerset & Avon Branch and just how much I enjoyed reading their last report; and also to the Norwich Branch for their report in the last magazine, the first of many I am sure.



Jean Cobb

Area Leader & Branch Correspondent

(** Photographs: The Large Stone Ball, Walton Cage & The Ruined Buttress)



LEICESTER & PETERBOROUGH BRANCH NEWS



We began our summer meetings on Monday 24th June with a Faith Supper in Wanlip Church Hall. This Hall has been refurbished, and what a big improvement with the new comfortable chairs, tables, kitchen and new loos! It had also been freshly painted with new doors inside and out. During the supper our Branch Secretary, Kate Mobbs gave out notices and asked us for our thoughts on next years meetings. We also welcomed the Reverend Sheila Skidmore, a retired Priest who had moved into the area recently. She joined us and led us in Compline in the Church of Our Lady and Saint Nicholas later in the evening. Ten Members were present. We had a raffle which raised a small amount for Branch funds and we thanked Clive and Kate Mobbs for acting as our hosts for the evening.

On Monday 22nd July fifteen Members, including our Area Leader, set out on a lovely summers evening to Saint Mark's Church on the Lincoln Road, Peterborough. We began with a Service of Holy Communion with hymns, taken from Common Worship Order One with some alternative material compiled by the Vicar, Reverend Adrian Holdstock. We processed in and out led by a Crucifer, very dignified and reverent, and the Vicar preached a very encouraging sermon. After the service we had light refreshments followed by a photo call for robed Members. Kate Mobbs thanked everyone for coming and the Reverend Holdstock for taking the service, and the Organist for accompanying us on a very fine organ.

Continued on the next page...



On Monday 19th August fifteen Members and one possible from Ratby, attended a service of Holy Communion with hymns and one or two songs in the Church of Saint James the Great, Birstall, led by Rector, Reverend Vince Jupp. The preacher was our Branch Chaplain, Reverend James Shakesphere. Two of our Members, Anne Anderson and John Walters read the Lesson and Epistle and the Intercessions were led by yours truly.

It was nice to have the Choir, which added to the beauty of the singing. Kate Mobbs and John Walters, the Vergers of that Church led the procession of clergy and robed vergers in a very neat and reverent fashion. After the service we had some tasty refreshments and our Chairman, Jack Lippitt, thanked the Rector, Branch Chaplain, Choir and Organist. Also Kate and Clive Mobbs, and John Walters, and the ladies for preparing the refreshments.

On Thursday 12th September six Members plus one husband attended the Canterbury Province Festival held in Saint Albans. This was my first time and I must say I enjoyed it. I am disabled, and when I arrived Michael Golby, the former Welfare Officer, asked one of the officials to get my instructions for the day from the Crypt which was down some steps.

After that I looked around the Cathedral until it was time for the Communion Service in the Lady Chapel. I was very impressed with how reverently it was conducted, observing all the acts of devotion. I then had my lunch in Abbot's Kitchen in the Cathedral, joining up with some of my fellow Branch Members. It was nice to meet up with some other Members I had made friends with while attending Conference from 1998 to 2006. Sadly I can no longer attend these due to my disability. I do miss them a lot.

During the afternoon I went on the Vestments Tour which was very interesting. A lot of patience, good eyesight and love goes into making these vestments with fine embroidery. After another look round and taking photographs in the Cathedral I went to the Lady Chapel and donned my robes ready for procession to the Chancel for Choral Evensong. The Choir of Boys Voices rang out in the Cathedral. The Altar was censed during the Magnificat. Although there were steps up into the Chancel I managed to climb them, holding on where needed.

After the service there was the group photograph with all of us lined up on the steps. We sang some lovely hymns at both services, and although the Cathedral Choir were not there for the Communion, some of the Guild members were choristers in their own Churches and led the singing. I must thank everyone for making this day a success and we all got home safely, tired but having enjoyed every minute.

On Tuesday 24th September nine Members attended a Service of Holy Communion held in Holy Trinity Church, Barrow on Soar. Numbers were down due to this being a different night for some. The service was conducted by the Reverend Rob Paddison. We sang some well known hymns and songs, "O Jesus, I have promised", "Be still, for the presence of the Lord", and "Take my life, and let it be". It was nice of the Choir to turn out for us to add beauty and strength to the singing.

After the service we were served with some very tasty refreshments and Kate Mobbs, our Branch Secretary, thanked everyone for coming. Margaret Steadman and Pauline Haynes were also thanked for being our hosts as well as the ladies for providing the refreshments.

On Monday 28th October we had originally planned to go to Saint Mary de Castro, Leicester. But unfortunately their spire has had to be taken down because it was in danger of collapse and has to be repaired, so they have had to close the building, and it could be for at least six months. It is a shame as it a lovely 12th century Anglo Catholic Church. Instead we were invited to have our service at Saint Nicholas Church in Leicester not far away. This is the oldest Church in Leicester. It is an Anglo Saxon Church, built in the 11th century and until the Reformation it had a stone Altar.

Seventeen Members, including our Area Leader, Lance Bloom, and his wife Sandra, were in attendance. During the service we admitted Sandra Slater from Saint Philip and Saint James, Ratby, as a Full Member of the Guild. As it was the Feast of Saint Simon and Saint Jude we had bells and smells. The Solemn Sung Mass was celebrated by Father David Maudlin, the Priest in Charge. It was a Book of Common Prayer service with some nice hymns. The Organist, John Bence, and the Altar party came from Saint Mary de Castro. After the service we enjoyed some light refreshments. Our Branch Chairman, Jack Lippett, thanked everyone for the lovely service and the ladies who had prepared the refreshments. He also thanked Clifford Dunkley, the Verger at Saint Mary de Castro, who arranged for us to Go to Saint Nicholas at short notice.

Our Branch Secretary, Kate Mobbs, gave out the very sad news that our Branch Chaplain of the past four years, Reverend James Shakesphere, has had to give up the role due to increased commitments. We shall miss him a great deal and will now have to find a new Branch Chaplain.

On a happier note we were pleased to welcome our new Member, Sandra Slater, and hope that she will enjoy our fellowship in the future.

We have just had the sad news that one of our Members, Reginald Hodgson, from Peterborough passed away in September. A short obituary appears elsewhere in this magazine.

So, after this extended Branch report, I would like to wish all our Members, Branch, National and International, a Merry Christmas and a Happy and Healthy New Year.

Marjorie Thomas, Dip GV
Branch Correspondent



OXFORD BRANCH NEWS



The Oxford Branch held the second of this year's Quiet Days on Tuesday 24th September, at Douai Abbey, Upper Woolhampton. The Communion Service in the morning, and the Meditation in the afternoon were both led by the Reverend Marie Jackson (Associate Priest of Christ the Servant King Church, High Wycombe). 21 Members and guests attended. The theme was "Greater Things". In the morning activities focussed on Jesus' surprising statement that "His followers would do greater things" than He did; and in the afternoon, we explored our personal feelings in relation to when a boy's lunch fed five thousand people. Douai Abbey is the home of a Community of Monks of the English Benedictine Congregation. I find it a very restful and inspiring place: there is an aura of calm, and the Abbey Church and Oratory are beautiful. Considering how many members attend these quiet days, perhaps others also share this opinion of the Abbey.

Some Oxford Branch Members (including the Branch Chairman, Michael Golby, his wife, and the Vice-Chairman) represented us at the recent Canterbury Province Festival at Saint Albans in September. Branch Members send their Christmas greetings to the Guild. We will be celebrating with a Christmas Lunch in early December.

Dennis Wildman

Branch Correspondent-in-Training



OVERSEAS NEWS



The Overseas Liaison Officer joined in the 25th Annual Conference of the Vergers' Guild of the Episcopal Church, together with four other CEGV members: The Reverend Tom Cameron, attending his 16th US Conference; Denise Mead, Stephen Haude and Irene Money of the London, Southwark & Chelmsford Branch. What can one say about the celebratory conference held in Nashville, where does one start to sum the event up? It was as, Margaret, the President of the VGECC, hinted on several occasions, a seminal occasion one filled with Faith - Fun - Fellowship and Food. Instrumental in the formation if the VGECC in 1989, I was happy to have been a part of this most historic event, attending as Overseas Liaison Officer of the Church of England Guild of Vergers and as Keynote Speaker.

The mix of liturgical excellence and variety; from the quiet simplicity of Morning Prayer held in the side Chapel of the Cathedral to the triumphal Evensong at Saint George's Church and the simple and yet well-orchestrated 'Blue Grass' Communion Service with sacred dancing to boot [the opening of which, a dimly lit empty space with just a single musician playing the dulcimer, was for me the climax, giving the illusion of a Vermeer Master Piece – all was at peace]; to the chaotic Blessing of the Animals liturgy on the Feast of Saint Frances giving an almost Pentecostal feeling, was a show of great organisation and thoughtfulness. Other liturgies supported by the Bishop, Dean and Canon Corkern, your Chaplain, were greatly appreciated, they brought us together on a sacred level and punctuated the many, many secular and teaching events. *Not to mention the 'Nash Trash Tour' - so I won't!* In true vergerial [sic] tradition I must commend the hospitality; Southern Fried Chicken, Barbeque, Buffet, Birthday Party and Banquet were all excellent, not least the latter, these were all an endorsement of 'Southern Hospitality'. I suspect many went the extra mile to provide such repasts.

Sacred and secular sat cheek by jowl whether; standing in line waiting for a procession to begin, queuing for food at the many well laden boards, passing in the lobby of the Holiday Inn or riding the elevator [lift to me] to and from our rooms for a well-earned rest, the fellowship was palpable conversations were many and varied, all with one common aim. With 200+ vergers in procession this was the largest gathering of vergers in the United States, the organisation was exceptional, the enthusiasm was nothing less than magisterial. Congratulations to the Board and Members of the Vergers Guild of the Episcopal Church.

John G Campbell

Overseas Liaison Officer CEGV



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**.



TWO ACCOUNTS OF THE SALISBURY BRANCH VISIT TO TEDWORTH HOUSE, WILTSHIRE

The summer quarterly meeting of the Salisbury Branch was held at Tidworth Army Garrison in Wiltshire and we were delighted to have the National Secretary, Steven Stokes, with us for the day. The Garrison has a beautiful Church building and our Branch Chairman, Beth Steele, just happens to be its Verger and made us all very welcome.

Part of our day was taken up by a conducted visit to Tedworth House, an impressive grand mansion set in some magnificent surroundings, and all within the Garrison. But Tedworth is no ordinary country seat. It is now one of four Recovery Centres for Military Personnel who have suffered physical and mental injuries, principally as a result of armed conflict, but not exclusively so, and run by Help for Heroes through voluntary contributions and donations. Men, and some women, of all persuasions and religions arrive at Tedworth, and after receiving their initial medical and surgical treatment with horrific injuries to body and mind. The task of the doctors and carers is to assist them to overcome their traumas and regain the use of their minds and bodies, and this they do with amazing success. We heard moving accounts of determination and courage as these - mainly young people - battle their way back to some form of fitness and stability before moving back to civilian life and a wholly new lifestyle.

Some have done so with great success. It was indeed a very moving experience and it is safe to say that all of us were considerably affected by what we saw. It is difficult to find words to adequately describe the dedication and skills of all the staff and volunteers, and the courage of those young people who struggle with their mutilations. What we did find was the very best of human endeavour and Christian kindness pervading the entire Centre. It was a true privilege to have witnessed such good people and their good works and we were humbled by it.

Finally at the end of our day another moving experience. Our usual robed processional service was replaced by a battlefield 'Service in the Round', using the updated Military Service Booklet which is now handed to every service man and woman entering a field of battle. I recommend this booklet to all vergers. It caters for all religions and none, and contains very valuable prayers, thoughts and advice for a wide range of circumstances. We were privileged to have the Senior Chaplain to the 43rd Wessex Brigade (who was instrumental in rewriting the booklet) talk us through the service and conduct our prayers. Our thanks go to all who made the day so special.

Our next quarterly meeting is at Sherborne Abbey in November.

David Guy
Branch Treasurer

On Wednesday 7th August the Salisbury Branch visited Tedworth House in Tidworth. Tedworth House is a Forces Recovery Centre where a team of very caring personnel look after our wounded servicemen and women ('our boys and girls' as our guide referred to them). Mainly Army are here, but the other services are also catered for. There are four of these establishments in the country - Tidworth, Catterick, Colchester and Plymouth. The majority of men and women are amputees, but they do look after other conditions.

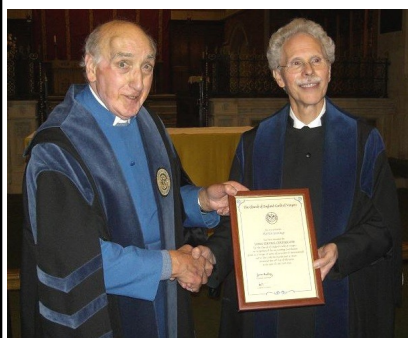
The facilities available to aid their recovery are second to none - hydro pool, an amazing Olympic size gymnasium, a lovely garden which 'the boys and girls' are encouraged to look after (all the vegetables grown here are used by the kitchens). There are also very comfortable lounges and a bar. Amazing accommodation is available for families, all housed in a new building that blends in so well with the original building. Help is there for the families of the wounded and they have the use of a well-equipped kitchen with sink, cooker and work surfaces which can be adjusted in height, particularly for wheelchair users. The family rooms are beautifully furnished, complete with wet room for easy wheelchair access and adjustable wash hand basin. Tedworth House accommodates up to 50 wounded who stay for about 6 weeks, but can return at any time if they need help. The house is set in amazing countryside, with a beautiful wooded area complete with a tree house for the children. We all enjoyed our visit and our thanks go to Wendy, our guide.

We then enjoyed a picnic lunch back at Saint Michael's Garrison Church, followed by our quarterly meeting and a short service from the Armed Forces Operational Prayer Book, led by Padre Mark Christian, who, incidentally, helped compile the book. We then had tea and cake before we departed for home.

Christine Ibberson
Branch Secretary



CONGRATULATIONS TO MARTIN JENNINGS



On Monday 16th September at Saint Albans Church, Charnminster, our Area Leader Ernie Krohn presented Martin Jennings with a long service certificate for 41 years as a Verger at Saint Albans. Martin is our Branch Treasurer.

Members of the Guild joined members of the congregation for the service followed by a buffet with a special cake.

Vera Gale - Branch Secretary
Bournemouth & Channel Islands





Sunday 6th October was a beautiful, sunny, Autumn day which showed up Bristol Cathedral across College Green in all its glory. As I entered the Cathedral with my wife we could hear the choir rehearsing for the forthcoming Service of Choral Evensong, which was to include the installation of four Honorary Canons and one Lay Canon. One of the Honorary Canons to be collated and installed was our own National Life Member of the Guild, Father James Wilson, as was briefly mentioned in the last magazine.

The Cathedral was filled to capacity. The Dean of Bristol formerly welcomed everyone to the service before the Archdeacon of Malmesbury and acting Archdeacon of Bristol, the Venerable Christine Froude, presented the names of the new Canons to the Bishop of Bristol. The Bishop then read the Deeds of Collation and all the candidates then returned to their seats and the Order of Evensong then commenced.

The music at the service was magnificent. Then came the time when the new Canons were verged to the Quire to stand before the Dean, who asked the Registrar to read the Bishop's Mandate. After this, Father James and the other new Canons were conducted to their stalls. Father James' stall is named Bishop Butler.

The service then continued and at the conclusion the Choir led the procession, including the new Canons, to the Chapter House. Refreshments were provided for all in the South Aisle of the Cathedral and it was here that I was able to personally congratulate James on his new appointment.



At the same time I had the great privilege of being introduced by Father James to our National Chairman, James Armstrong. This was a truly inspiring service, long to be remembered.

The very next day, Monday 7th October, our Branch held a Quiet Day at the Church of Saint Peter and Saint Paul, Bleadon. Twelve Members of the Branch attended together with a number of ladies from the Church. The theme of the day was "Take time out with Jesus, Mary, Martha and Lazarus". It was arranged by the Parish Priest, Reverend Philip Stevens. The day included three simple services of Morning Prayer, Holy Communion and Evening Prayer, interspersed with four short meditations based on the Gospel accounts of Mary, Martha and Lazarus, these included opportunities for silent prayer.

An excellent lunch was served in the Church Hall, for which grateful thanks must be given to our Branch Chairman, Reyn Badger, for organising it. Reverend Philip was thanked for a very spiritual and uplifting day. This was his last duty at Bleadon before moving to the North of England. We wish him well.

Finally, may I ask you all for your prayers early in the New Year when I have to go into hospital for a replacement heart valve operation. Thank You!

Christopher M Eynon
Branch Correspondent



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
Gloucester, Hereford & Worcester: Michael Bayliss, Joy Birkin & Jim Wooldridge
Lincoln & Southwell: Reverend Robert Whitehead
Oxford: Anita (Annie) Bayliss, Ernestine Denham, David Dutson & Margaret Morris
Rochester & East Chichester: Tina Lawrence
Saint Albans: Peter Hudson
Salisbury: Jean Jackson & Babs Taylor
Somerset & Avon: Lionel & Mary Holway & Roger Lawrence
York: George & Doreen Cook

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

R.I.P Chichester, Guildford & Portsmouth: Cyril Ward
R.I.P Leicester & Peterborough: Reginald Hodgson
R.I.P Salisbury: Barbara Carr

Michael Greaves, Head Virger of Exeter Cathedral and Secretary of the Devon & Cornwall Branch would like to express his gratitude to fellow vergers around the country for their prayers and the letters of support he received following his brain haemorrhage last year. He is now back at work on a phased return and hopes to be back full time and fully fit by the middle of next year.



CEGV YORK BRANCH VISIT ~ TUESDAY 3rd SEPTEMBER ~ SOME SYKES CHURCHES

During the 19th century the 4th and 5th Baronets of Sledmere (both named Sir Tatton Sykes) rebuilt or created 19 Churches in the East Yorkshire Wolds, using the finest craftsmen of the day. All of them are beautiful and some are breathtaking.

We have previously visited Sledmere House but this time the main focus was on the Church buildings in the villages around the estate rather than the estate itself.

The first port of call was Saint Mary's Church at Thixendale. The Church is one of six in what is known as the Waggoner's Benefice. The Victorian building was designed by G E Street and recent restoration has included a "light and sound" narrative about the building and organ which visitors can activate.

From there, a wonderful drive on clear roads in bright sunshine brought us to Saint Michael and All Angels, Garton on the Wolds. This is a Norman building that was extensively restored with many unique features, which include a wonderful recreation of mediaeval wall painting. The building receives a glowing write up in Pevsner's Survey on the English Counties and the latest cleaning of the paintings was sponsored by the Pevsner Society to commemorate his work in uncovering and promoting art and heritage around Britain.

The party then proceeded to Sledmere House for lunch and a chance to chat and catch up on news. Since our last visit in 2011, members had expressed a wish to return, as indeed had Sir Tatton Sykes. After lunch we walked to Saint Mary's Church, designed by Temple Moore and consecrated in 1897. The total cost of the Tatton Sykes' gifting to the Churches of Yorkshire is reckoned to be around £15,000,000 in today's money and the quality of workmanship in all of them is of the highest standard.

Returning to Sledmere House we then went to the family Chapel for Communion where Jeremy Sykes made us very welcome and joined us for the service. This was a significant occasion as our Branch Chaplain, Reverend Marian Gardner, pointed out in her talk, as we were an Anglican congregation in a Roman Catholic Chapel and the service was being conducted by a lady Priest. Richard Babington, our Chairman, played the organ and following the service, we all said our farewells and headed home after a very interesting day.



(Photograph: York Branch Members & Guests outside the surprising church at Garton on the Wolds near Driffield)

CEGV YORK BRANCH MEETING ~ MONDAY 21st OCTOBER

For the last few years the York branch has combined its annual business meetings with a training day at Beverley Minster and 2013 continued this tradition. Nearly two dozen Guild Members, including some from the South West Yorkshire Branch, assembled to hear a talk entitled "Psalms, Hymns and Spiritual Songs" given by The Archdeacon of the East Riding, the Venerable David Butterfield. The Archdeacon studied music at university and he is a most accomplished organist, pianist and composer. For this presentation he used his specialist knowledge to categorise the different types of hymns and encouraged us to sing along to different examples. We were certainly ready for our lunch when the talk was over, and we enjoyed another triumph of the culinary art by the volunteer Minster catering team before the business section of the meeting.

The day concluded with a service of Holy Communion led by the Vicar of Beverley Minster, Reverend Jeremy Fletcher, whose wonderful sermon in praise of the work and dedication of virgers and vergers was somewhat blunted by the total absence of any communion wine on the altar – thanks entirely to an oversight by the Area Leader, yours truly. Still, to err is human, but to forgive divine.

Neil Pickford
Area Leader



FORTHCOMING EVENTS



2014

Wednesday 14th May
York Province Festival in Lancaster Priory

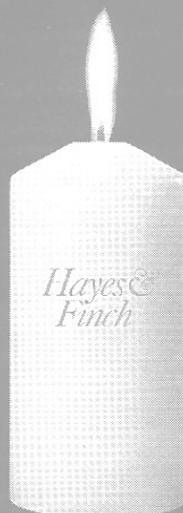
Sunday 10th - Thursday 14th August
Annual Training Conference
at the Elim Conference Centre, West Malvern

Tuesday 23rd September
Canterbury Province Festival at Hereford Cathedral

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R.I.P ~ EDWARD GEORGE RICHARD CHENOWETH



6th June 1935 – 26th January 2013

Although several months have passed since we laid our dear fellow verger 'Dick' Chenoweth to rest, we at Saint Mary the Virgin, Yatton, are still coming to terms with our loss.

Dick died, as he wished, in harness, his Verger's gown was hung next to the altar at the funeral, the altar itself was decorated with some of the best examples of his artistic gift. Intricately detailed studies of flowers, reeds, and leaves, culled from his many years working at the Long Ashton Research Station, were interspersed with watercolours on which Dick was lavishing his skills only weeks before his final hospitalization.

Dick was Bristol born and bred, but his surname, brought from Cornwall by his grandfather seeking work, betrays his original bloodstock. When our verger met and married Sheila, a Lancashire lass from Preston, the genes were well and truly mixed!

Tributes paid at the funeral by his two daughters revealed the close family bonds. Sons-in-law, grandchildren, neighbours, and colleagues all wanted to demonstrate their love of and respect for a man of many parts, who lived out his strong faith to the end.

Dick and I both joined the Guild of Vergers together in July 1995, at a very moving ceremony in Bristol Cathedral, thus cementing a very happy and fruitful partnership as the Verger and Assistant Verger at Saint Mary the Virgin, Yatton, until Dick's health began to give cause for concern.

The asthma that had plagued him as a boy returned more aggressively with the years, revealing a scarring of the lung that rendered him increasingly susceptible to both pollen allergies and chest infections.

Hopeful and positive to the end, Dick used his last Christmas spent in hospital to plan a memorable Thanksgiving Service, including hymns and Bible readings he treasured particularly. The words of the 'Nunc Dimittis' accompanied the coffin from the Church, as the faithful servant departed in peace to his final resting place. 'May he rest in peace, and rise in glory'.

Norah Broomfield

Verger Emeritus, Saint Mary the Virgin, Yatton



A TRIBUTE TO BILL GROVES FROM THE UNIVERSITY OF SURREY



Bill Groves was a loyal and longstanding friend to the University of Surrey. For example, he was always very helpful in the days leading up to our degree ceremonies held in the magnificent surroundings of Guildford Cathedral on two occasions each year – in the spring and the summer.

During the years Bill was the Dean's Virger the number of degree ceremonies increased significantly with the growth in student numbers – from 4 ceremonies spread over two days in the summer in the 1970s to many more by the time he retired in 2000. Even after retirement Bill often came up to the Cathedral to help the University Mace Bearer, and there are now 11 degree ceremonies in the summer spread over four days.

Nothing was too much trouble for Bill, from organising the chairs for the platform party to making sure that the sound system was working and attending to the many and detailed arrangements which are so vital to the success of such occasions. And he always cheerfully welcomed the "advance party" which descends on the Cathedral the day before the degree ceremonies commence, to set up the Cathedral, layout the programmes and so on.

And on the day of a ceremony, Bill was helpful and reassuring, for example to the VIPs gathering in the Chapter House. Some of the eminent recipients of honorary degrees are a little apprehensive about the ceremony - doing the right thing in the right place at the right time - Bill was always there with a smile and an encouraging word.

The ability to be cheerful, keep everyone calm and above all be a reassuring presence is surely the hallmark of a good virger. The role also demands precision and timing of the highest order and Bill always carried out his duties as Dean's Virger to the very highest of professional standards.

I can still picture Bill as he conducted Her Majesty the Queen, accompanied by the Right Reverend Michael Adie (then Bishop of Guildford) and the Very Reverend Alexander Wedderspoon (then Dean of Guildford), down the aisle of the Cathedral on the occasion of the Service of Thanksgiving to mark the 25th anniversary of the Foundation of the University of Surrey in 1991. His expression was one of total concentration as he carried out his duties to perfection.

The University acknowledged Bill Groves's professionalism and all the help he had given to us over many years when HRH The Duke of Kent (Chancellor) conferred the Degree of Bachelor of the University honoris causa on him. It was always good to see Bill wearing his BUniv hood on special occasions.

The High Officers of the University of Surrey, and his friends from the lower slopes of Stag Hill, give thanks not only for all he did in his role as Dean's Virger, but also for everything he was, invariably cheerful, calm and reassuring and very often with a slightly mischievous twinkle in his eye!

James Strawson

Former Secretary of the University of Surrey and University Orator



A TRIBUTE TO BILL GROVES, BUNIV FCEGV



19th May 1935 - 11th Sept 2013

**Saint John the Baptist, Eltham (1958-62) - Saint James, Muswell Hill (1962-65) - Saint Oswald's Norbury (1965-76)
Canons' Virger, Guildford Cathedral (1976-79) under Alfred White as Dean's Virger
Dean's Virger, Guildford Cathedral (1979-2000)**

(The following is one of the three addresses given during the memorial service to give thanks for Bill's life and ministry, held in Guildford Cathedral on 18th October 2013. His daughter Sue spoke movingly about his life as a family man, Canon Nicholas Thistlethwaite, Sub-Dean, spoke of his life as Dean's Virger of Guildford, and Chris Crooks spoke of his life in the Guild of Vergers and the Dean's Vergers Conference.)

In the vestry of one of England's other great Cathedrals, shortly before some spectacular festival service or other, the Chapter of Guildford were gathered and arrayed in their finery. The resident Precentor who was rushing around distracted by the myriad of questions from visiting clerics, was nowhere near the vestry. The Canons of Guildford turned to their Dean's Virger and asked what their instructions were. Without missing a beat, with that mischievous glint in his eye Bill Groves announced: "Ya follow me in, say the *A-mens*, and ya follow me out; have ya got that?" The Chapter, reassured, nodded meekly. Another cleric from the home team who was robing nearby proclaimed "Good heavens, that's a better briefing than we usually get!"

Bill was a virger through and through; the language of the Church, and the dear-old Church of England in particular, were common parlance to him, and the mysteries of the Church were his daily business. Bill, despite his wicked sense of humour, took it all very seriously, and he set high standards for himself and his colleagues. Early on in his career, he joined the only national organisation for Church Vergers – the Church of England Guild of Vergers, an organisation charged with providing *Fellowship* for those who choose this vocation, the advancement of *Knowledge* by education, opportunities for *Communication*, and providing *Support* and encouragement.

Bill was at the time Verger of Saint Oswald's, Norbury (part of that unique Archdeaconry of Croydon, then an island of the Diocese of Canterbury surrounded by the diocese of Southwark). This was around 1969. Bill soon travelled all over the Southwark Branch, attending meetings and making new friends. Unsurprisingly for a man of Bill's talents and charm, he was not to remain a mere member for long, and in due course became Branch Chairman, and then Vice Chair and finally Chairman of the then South East Province of the Guild of Vergers. This gave Bill a place on the governing body – Central Council – an association with the highest level of the workings of the Guild that he retained in various forms ever since. On his move to Guildford Cathedral, he transferred his membership to the then *Guildford and Mid-Southern Branch*, now the *Chichester, Guildford and Portsmouth Branch*, in which he served in nearly every Branch Office in the years that followed. In 1982 the Guild celebrated the golden anniversary of its founding at York Minster (in September 1932) with a great festival service back at the Minster; an occasion that coincided with Bill's term as National Chairman (1980 - 1983); a moment of immense pride for Bill.

I joined the Guild in 1986 in Somerset, and attended local and national gatherings as well as the Annual Training Conference when I could, and Bill and I met at these events in various places in the country over the years. For this rather young virger up from the country, characters like Bill, David Dorey, Alfred White, Dennis Sumner, Bill Haynes, Ron Melliush and Roy McDonald were legends in the world of verging, famous names to get to know and learn from.

So when I became Head Verger of Guildford's neighbouring Diocesan Cathedral in Portsmouth (at an alarmingly young age) in 1991, and transferred my membership to the CG&P Branch, I felt I already had a friend in Bill. When I arrived in Portsmouth in June, the Cathedral was a building site, the Nave was being completed and the interior was being rewired and re-ordered. At the end of November that year, the newly finished Church was to be consecrated in a very comprehensive liturgy. This required several additional virgers, and my first choice of a colleague was Bill.

When Bishop John Gladwin was to be enthroned in Guildford, Bill in turn called upon some of us, his friends in The Guild, to assist with virging in the service. At the moment of installation, as the Archdeacon of Canterbury took the new Bishop by the hand to lead him to his new throne, a group of protesters with an axe to grind, who had secreted themselves within the congregation, burst forth, pulled out placards from beneath their jumpers and formed a wall of people on the Chancel steps chanting their slogans, and totally obscuring the congregation's view of the moment of enthronement. We virgers arrived from all corners of the cathedral and converged on the steps to begin to round up the protesters and attempt to walk them off-stage so that the service might continue. Bill grabbed one of these chaps by the elbow in an attempt to move him on: "Don't you touch me" exclaimed the protester "that's assault". Bill grabbed him by the other elbow as well, applied his knee with a swift sharp movement to a certain part of the gentleman's anatomy and replied "No – that's assault: now shift!"

Bill and I worked together on various services, Guild events and committee business over the years. Bill was a great supporter and encourager. Both he and Valerie became very good friends, and, even after we moved on, first to Salisbury and now Canterbury, they always send cards on our children's birthdays. I'd like to think that perhaps Bill found a kindred spirit in me; like him, I became a virger at a relatively young age; we both met our wives after we had become virgers, so they have had many years of coping with someone whose job always meant working what other people call "the weekend", always busy at Christmas and Easter, when other folk are enjoying a few extra days off; the long days, evenings of concerts and special services, living over the shop, and calls from the police when the alarms go off at unearthly hours; missing family occasions because the Cathedral diary calls. Neither of us could have managed this without their love, support and understanding. We both served as National Chairman of the Guild of Vergers, Bill in the 50th anniversary year, and me in the 75th. Some might say we both have the gift of the gab... This was no mere job for Bill but, as for many of us here, this was his vocation, his way of life, his ministry.

Continued overleaf...



A TRIBUTE TO BILL GROVES, BUNIV FCEGV CONTINUED



Don't get me wrong, Bill was no saint; he was not to be crossed if you could avoid it; but he was loyal and caring. He was full of anecdotes and good humour, tips and advice. Long before the days of mobile-phones and texting, Bill would be sure that he always let Valerie know he was on his way home so that there could be a cup of tea waiting – he would phone home from the vestry, let the phone ring three times then hang-up. Valerie knew; the phone didn't need to be answered, unless it rang more than three times, it never cost the Dean & Chapter a penny!

On September 25th 1990 the then Head Vergers of England's Cathedrals were invited to a meeting in Southwark Cathedral, the purpose of which was to see if there was any mileage in an organisation specifically for the Dean's Vergers of England's Cathedrals. Bill was present at that meeting and became a founding member of what was to become The Deans' Vergers' Conference. Bill loyally supported this conference for the rest of his time as Dean's Verger, and continued to support it in retirement, often with Valerie once she was free of school terms. I am far too young to have been a founding member, but joined them for their third annual meeting, and like Bill, have continued to support it. The day conferences in Southwark soon developed into an overnight affair, the first being hosted at Coventry Cathedral. We Head Virgers were billeted in the rather unlikely setting of the Cathedral's Youth Hostel, John F Kennedy House (in the Cathedral grounds). This 1960s building (by Sir Basil Spence) had 4 identical dorms, each with 5 identical pairs of bunk beds. Bill and I were to share one of these, and I was detailed to take the top bunk just in case Bill needed to get up in the night. In the morning, to my surprise, the bunk beneath me was empty and Bill was nowhere to be found in our dorm. Bill's call of nature in the night had required a trip along the corridor, and somehow on his return he took a wrong turning in the dark, and entered one of the other identical dorms, settled into an identical empty bottom bunk, and went back to sleep! However, before he left our dorm, he was there long enough to discover that I talk in my sleep. Thankfully he was sufficiently discrete not to reveal to anybody exactly what I'd said! The building has since been demolished.

In July 1991 the Chancellor of the University of Surrey (HRH The Duke of Kent) conferred on Bill the Degree of Bachelor of the University *honoris causa* in recognition of his many years' service to the University at their degree ceremonies and other events hosted in Guildford Cathedral. This was a wonderful honour for Bill, and he wore the hood of his honorary degree with immense pride thereafter. To mark 25 years of membership, and in recognition of services rendered in various offices, The Guild of Vergers awarded Bill with Life Membership of the Guild in 1995. In 2006, the year of Bill's 70th birthday, a lifetime of service to the church was recognised when he was made a Fellow of the Guild of Vergers, the highest honour the Guild can bestow. I can't resist but end this tribute with a short poem taught to me by Bill many years ago, and both he and I have used it at various talks we have given over the years. Its authorship is always listed "anon" – unless you know otherwise.

The Verger

The Verger stood at the Golden Gate his head was bended low,
He meekly asked the Man of Fate which way he had to go;
"What have you done" Saint Peter said, "to gain admittance here?"
"I was Verger of the Cathedral Church for many a long year."
Saint Peter opened wide the gate and gently tolled the bell:
"Come inside and choose you harp" he said, "you've had your share of Hell."

Chris Crooks

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



R.I.P REGINALD HODGSON



1928 ~ 2013

We are sorry to report that Reginald Hodgson passed away in September. He was Verger at Saint Mark's Church, Lincoln Road, Peterborough, for well over twenty years.

He was born in India, but we are not sure when he came to this country. His funeral service lasted over an hour with two Priests officiating.

There was also a big screen in the church showing different highlights from his life.

We send our deepest sympathy to his widow and family.

To Reginald, "Well done thou good and faithful servant."

"May he rest in peace and rise in glory."

Marjorie Thomas, Dip GV

Leicester & Peterborough Branch Correspondent



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'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.

*The Official Publication for the
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Leading the way since 1932*

Presidents: The Archbishops of Canterbury and York

The Virger

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