

# The Virger

Summer 2015

Issue 287



[www.cofegv.org.uk](http://www.cofegv.org.uk)

The Official Magazine of the Church of England Guild of Vergers







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

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

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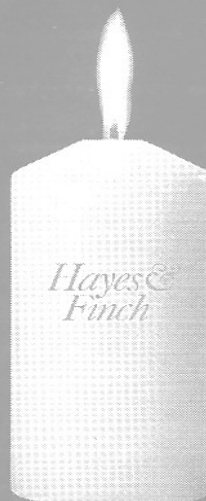
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**FRONT COVER:** A modern copy of a 15<sup>th</sup> century Pentecost Icon in the Kirillo-Belozersk (Saint Cyril of Beloozero) Monastery in Kirillov, Russia.



## NATIONAL CHAIRMAN'S LETTER



"Get fit and have fun this summer James" was the salutation that greeted me when I logged on to my computer this morning. I nearly choked, as I had just had a look in the Cathedral diary for July and was busy muttering to myself "how do they think I am going to get through that amount of events, are they trying to kill me?" I am sure we all feel like that at some point, but in the back of our minds we know we will get by. After all we are vergers and have super human powers...

I have just purchased a new t-shirt with a silly slogan on it, it reads "Vergers by day Ninja by night" this amused me and still does. The thought of some of us becoming Ninjas running along roof tops doing back flips as we leave Church to go home after a long day. However the truth is more like the advert for a chocolate bar with Mr Bean lacking some nuts.

As the Trinity season and summer is upon us let us try to get fit, whether that is by physical exercise, mental agility or more importantly relaxing and recharging our batteries. Don't forget that the Training Conference is a good way to charge up our skills as vergers. Now for the fun part, dance as though no one is watching, drink, eat and enjoy the company of friends, pop into a Church or Cathedral while you are on holiday and say hello to the verger. But above all have fun....

May I wish you all a relaxing and sun filled summer and will look forward to seeing you whenever we meet? You never know I may jump down off a roof showing you some of my Ninja skills.

**James Armstrong**



## FORTHCOMING NATIONAL VACANCIES



The current term of the following National Officers is due to end at the next meeting of the Central Council in August:

**The National Treasurer (5 year appointment)**

**The Training Officer (3 year appointment)**

**The Liaison Officer (3 year appointment)**

**The Welfare Officer (3 year appointment)**

**The Conference Secretary (3 year appointment)**

**The Guild Chronicler (3 year appointment)**

All current post holders are willing to stand for re-election

For further information and job descriptions please contact the General Secretary

**Mr Stephen Stokes**

**20 Benians Court, Cambridge, CB3 0DN**

**07968 111240**

**CEGVGenSec@Gmail.com**

**Nominations must be received by Wednesday 1<sup>st</sup> of July 2015**



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## NATIONAL CHAPLAIN'S LETTER



Dear Friends,  
Greetings and I hope you have all had a very joyous and blessed Easter.

Many of us are now looking forward to the Ebor Festival – a Festival with a difference but one, nonetheless which will enable us to see something of the wonderful Northumbrian countryside and enjoy a time of fellowship together. I have been reading the documentation about Aidan in preparation for what will be, I believe, a pilgrimage.

Northumbria was not always the peaceful place it is today. It had been ravaged as King Edwin had been defeated by the pagan King Penda in 633. Oswald, the new King of Northumbria had spent some time in exile on Iona, he had become a Christian and now had the vision that his country should share his new-found faith. Having established himself at Bamburgh, Oswald sent to Iona for monks who would teach and nurture his people. The first expedition was a disaster and they returned after only a few months saying that Oswald's army were dismissive of them, surly and unwilling to hear the message of good news that the monks brought.

Aidan offered to try again using a very different tactic: he refused to live in the castle because he wanted to be with the ordinary folk so he established his monastery on the island of Lindisfarne. He insisted that the monks kept to their normal cycle of prayer and recitation of the psalms and that instead of trying to create a Church in their image, they should listen to the soldiers and the local people and should give them an example by the love which they showed. Oswald wanted the faith to unite his people and Aidan went some way to achieving that aim. Aidan, Bishop of Lindisfarne, lived as he taught. He loved to give away his food and clothing to the poor. He lived by the Magnificat and he turned the expected upside down so that the people he helped might have freedom, justice, peace, education and even food! Oswald was killed in battle at Oswestry in 642 while Aidan died at Bamburgh in 651 and it is said of him that his days followed the beating wings of the dove and he listened and was inspired.

Aidan can teach us so much about ministry in the Church: the art of listening to people and trying to understand their point of view, not so much trying to change them as to show them that we accept and value whatever they have to offer. Aidan was able to bring a unity and love to the Church simply by who he was and by living out the faith that he professed. I hope this thumb-nail sketch will whet your appetite for the Festival.

I am so looking forward to this Festival with a difference, as indeed I look forward to every meeting that I have with you. Conference is on the horizon and I do hope as many of you as possible will come and enjoy worship, learning and fellowship together: Get your costumes ready for the Wizard of Oz!

With every blessing  
**Canon Maureen**



## R.I.P. ALF BATEMAN



On Thursday 16<sup>th</sup> of April thirteen members and friends attended a Service of Thanksgiving for the Life of Alf Bateman, (Brother Damien, SS - an Order of which was given to him for his work as Head Verger at Leicester Cathedral for sixteen years.) He also had the honour of an invitation to the queen's Garden Party at Buckingham Palace.

Whilst he was Verger at Leicester Cathedral I called in to there one day, he was quite busy dusting the wooden chairs and he was putting his heart and soul into it whilst having a cheerful word with me, all part of his vocation. I also attended the Enthronement of one of our Bishops where he verged the clergy with dignity and prayerful thought. He acted as Crucifer at one of our meetings and did that with great dignity and reverence.

Amongst his many activities was his work for the Saint John Ambulance Brigade for many years. He was given the Order of Saint John in recognition of his work with them, performing duties all over the country.

The service was held at the Church of The Martyrs in Leicester. We sang three hymns: "Dear Lord and Father"; "Lord of all hopefulness"; and "Praise, my soul, the King of heaven", which may have been chosen by Alf. The Vicar, the Reverend Richard Worsfold, led the service and paid tribute to him for all the work he had done for that Church, the Cathedral, and with the Saint John Ambulance. His Insignia & Badges were on a cloth on top of the coffin.

He was given a Guard of Honour outside the building by members of the Leicester & Peterborough Branch of the Guild and members of the Saint John Ambulance Brigade saluted him. He was verged into and out of the Church by the Head Verger of Leicester Cathedral, Peter Collett. The sun came out just as we were performing the Guard of Honour and I am sure Alf must have ordered it for us with a smile.

"Well done, thou true and faithful servant. Enter into the joy of the Lord."

**Marjorie Thomas, Dip GV**  
**Branch Chairman & Correspondent - Leicester & Peterborough Branch**





## R.I.P. LOUIS HUBAND



Louis Huband died on Monday 16<sup>th</sup> of March, aged 85, after several months of ill health, cheerfully and bravely borne, and a final few days in Saint Richard's Hospice.

His involvement with Worcester Cathedral stretched back to his schooldays, and he had looked forward to celebrating the 70<sup>th</sup> anniversary of his Confirmation there this Spring. He first came to work for the Dean and Chapter more than thirty years ago after retiring from the engineering firm Heenan & Foudé, and up until last November he had remained active as a Voluntary Verger with particular responsibilities for the Cathedral's Wednesday lunchtime Eucharist and as Macebearer to the Bishop. He regularly attended the Guild's Training Conference, since (at least) its Newman College days, and drove me to my first Branch event.



The funeral was held on Wednesday 1<sup>st</sup> of April at Louis' lifelong village Church, Saint Philip and Saint James, Whittington, on the outskirts of Worcester, and the little church overflowed with a congregation of more than 170, leaving many standing and some outside in the rain, for a service led by his Vicar, the Reverend Clare Griffiths. There were tributes from a cousin and from the Very Reverend Robert Jeffrey, Dean Emeritus of Worcester, and an address by the Very Reverend Dr Peter Atkinson, Dean of Worcester. A dozen members of the Branch formed a guard of honour at the end of the service; and Louis had made provision for a Toast to be offered afterwards in his memory at his 'local', the Oak Apple.

### **Robert Beattie**



### **Excerpts from Dean Jeffrey's tribute:**

What is a Verger? A verger is someone who carries a verge in Church processions. When people asked me what a verger was I normally used to say said that a verger was a sort of Ecclesiastical Butler. But that was not adequate because vergers do much more than that. They make sure that services flow well and that are no hiccups. I have this very strong image in my mind of Louis carrying the Bishop's Mace in front of the Bishop which he did in a very self-effacing manner. Vergers are essential to the good and effective running of a Cathedral and in my experience most of them have been caring, supportive and practical people.

Louis was through and through a Worcester man. Educated at the King's School and confirmed by Bishop Cash. Lived in his cottage, working for a Worcester industrial firm. Then in retirement, joining the staff of the Cathedral, first as a cleaner and then as a verger. A humble, gentle man who cared for people and related to many, he also had very shrewd views about issues and people but he kept most of them to himself. A faithful member of the Guild of Vergers, he enjoyed their company and activities. A devout man of prayer centred around the BBC Daily Service - the practice of listening to which he commended to Bishop Goodrich on his retirement.

Even after he retired as a verger he carried on looking after the Wednesday 1.05 p.m. Communion when he was able and did his best to recruit people to attend. Partly, I suspect, so that he could continue in this role. After I left Worcester, every so often the phone would ring and Louis would be on the phone mainly to see how I was and sometimes to share a titbit of news.

His house and garden meant much to him and there he understood the significance of the seasons. Complaining when his crop of Apples and Plums were heavy and fell to the ground and cultivating Tomatoes and Cucumbers in his greenhouse mainly to give away. But poor health got the better of him and he bravely in the end put up with much pain and suffering.

While preparing this it has crossed my mind that there is another picture of a verger. In a way a verger is a presence in the Cathedral holding everything together, sharing information, supporting and caring for people being an enabling presence among us all. So it is that the verger gives us glimpse of the Presence of God in our midst.



(Pictures: Louis, January 2013; Louis and his colleagues in the 1980's; Louis with the Very Reverend Robert Jeffrey, September 2012; Louis with Mrs Jan Bayliss, January 2013 [n.b. Jan is another branch member]; & Louis' 85th birthday)





We begin where we left off in the Spring Issue - that of the Branch Pancake party in Robert Beattie's flat. What a splendid affair that was, and greatly enjoyed by many. It was a suitable conclusion before beginning our Lent preparations.

The two photos show Carol Oliver catching another of the many pancakes she had tossed all evening and the Guild's past Chairman, Raymond Fowler about to taste Carol's excellent cooking.

An alteration from our previous report was the news that our long standing branch Secretary, Sue Lyall, has had to take early retirement due to family commitments. Mind you after ten years of scribbling and scribing it is enough to too tire anyone's hands, so the Branch sends Sue their very best wishes and a huge thank you for her time, patience and efforts. In the meantime this role will be shared by the committee members, with the hope that someone will step forward to take on this highly crucial post - please?

On a painful note we pass on to the news of the death of our beloved Louis Huband, verger extraordinaire. It was following a long painful illness that dear Louis moved from verging at Worcester Cathedral to that home we all aim to aspire.



The funeral took place in Louis' local Church; and which was attended by so many of his family and friends there wasn't even standing room available. This included many vergers who robed to form a guard of honour, plus past and present dignitaries of the Cathedral who led the celebrations of Louis' wonderful and humorous life. Later that afternoon we all gathered at Louis favourite hostelry to fulfil his final command; - that of raising a glass of port to his name and memory. Louis you shall be dearly missed.



On Tuesday 24<sup>th</sup> of March we gathered at Holy Innocents Church in Highnam, Gloucestershire. A Grade 1 star listed Victorian gem. The church is most noted for its magnificent wall frescos painted by its benefactor, Thomas Parry, the father of the composer Hubert Parry. It was well worth the trip into the Gloucestershire countryside. After Easter a well-deserved Quiet Day was arranged at the House of the Open Door, near Broadway. This was an appropriate antidote for tired post Easter vergers when there is the need for peace, reflection and calm. The event was a great success for the thirteen members who profited from this escape.

Once revived it is our aim to gather in Tewkesbury for our annual BBQ. A day of fun and laughter at Tony and Jean Day's home, hopefully on Tuesday 26<sup>th</sup> of May. Following this event it is also hoped as many as possible will be able to meet at Berwick-upon-Tweed for the splendid York Province Festival, which includes visits to Bamburgh and Alnwick along that most stunning Northumberland coast.

The following events planned are a visit to Great Whitley Church; Mucknell Abbey - an Anglican Benedictine Community; then Malvern Priory before we all gather at West Malvern for the Annual Training Conference.

Goodness me, who says we aren't an active enjoyable busy group of friends!

**Philip Dunne**  
**Branch Correspondent**



## 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**.



Monday the 9<sup>th</sup> - Thursday the 13<sup>th</sup> of August 2015

Elim International Centre  
De Walden Road, West Malvern,  
Worcestershire. WR14 4DF

# Booking Form

Please detach these pages and  
use as your booking form.

Either send it by post  
or scan it and email in PDF format to:

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[margaretburston@sky.com](mailto:margaretburston@sky.com)

01905 455961

**Please submit your booking form by  
Friday the 17<sup>th</sup> of July 2015**

Name: Mr/Mrs/Miss/Reverend.....

Address: .....

.....

.....Postcode:.....

Home Telephone:..... Mobile Telephone:.....

Email:.....

Parish Church etc:.....

**Attendance** Full Time or Part-Time (Tick the boxes you will be attending)

Sunday			Dinner
Monday	Breakfast	Lunch	Dinner
Tuesday	Breakfast	Lunch	Dinner
Wednesday	Breakfast	Lunch	Dinner
Thursday	Breakfast	Lunch	

### **Cost for the Week**

#### **Single Occupancy Room**

Sunday – Thursday inclusive £316.00

Monday – Thursday inclusive £237.00

#### **Shared Double Room**

Sunday – Thursday inclusive £280.00 pp

Monday – Thursday inclusive £210.00 pp

#### **One Day Overnight Charge**

The cost of one overnight delegate is £79.00 in a single room, this also includes all meals.  
(Breakfast, Lunch & Dinner)

**Day Rate** no accommodation is £28.00 plus £8 evening meal

Deposit of £35.00 or payment in full to be sent with the Booking Form

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



Medical Information

Do you suffer from anything we need to be aware of: Yes/No

If Yes, please list below:

.....

.....

Do you suffer from any allergies? YES/NO If Yes, please list below:

.....

.....

Are you on any Medication? YES/NO If Yes, please list below:

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Do you have any special dietary requirements? YES/NO

If Yes, please list below

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Next of Kin Contact Details

.....

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.....Telephone Number:.....

How do I get there

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

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

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

For Sat Nav: WR14 4DF

**By rail:** The nearest stations are Great Malvern and Malvern Link. Taxi services from either to the Conference Centre will cost from £11, or let Conference Secretary know if you require a lift.

## Draft Outline Programme for the week

### ‘Handling History’

Sunday 9 <sup>th</sup> August	
18:30	Dinner
19:15	Central Council Meeting
Monday 10 <sup>th</sup> August	
07:45	Morning Prayer – Church
08:30	Breakfast
09:30	Registration
11:00	The Annual General Meeting
12:30	Lunch
13:30 -14:30	
16:00	Service rehearsal
17:00	Opening Conference Eucharist and Guild Congregation – Church
20:00	Dinner followed by Social Evening “The Wizard of Oz”
Tuesday 11 <sup>th</sup> August	
07:00	Morning Prayer – Church
07:30	The Eucharist – Church
08:30	Breakfast
10:00 - 11:45	
12:00	Angelus & Midday Prayers followed by Lunch
14:00 -16.00	Talk to be arranged Guest Preacher???
17.15	Choral Evensong and Sermon – Guest Preacher
18:00	Dinner
19:00	Free Time, Swimming and/or Prayer Walk
21.00	Compline
Wednesday 12 <sup>th</sup> August	
0700	Morning Prayer – Church
07:30	The Guild Requiem – Church
08:30	Breakfast
10:00 - 12:00	Talk to be arranged
12:00	Angelus & Midday Prayers followed by Lunch
14:00 -16:00	
17:00	Committee Meetings followed by Dinner
18:30	Dinner
20:45	Compline
Thursday 13 <sup>th</sup> August	
08:00	Morning Prayer – Church
08:30	Breakfast
09.30	Final get together –
11.00	Solemn Eucharist – Church followed by
12.45	Lunch and Departure

We encourage all delegates to attend the services to experience new traditions and customs and participate fully.

Towels are provided in your rooms, but should you wish to use the heated outdoor pool, please bring your costume and your own towel.

No Alcohol is permitted on the Elim International Centre.





## LEICESTER & PETERBOROUGH BRANCH NEWS



### SPRING MEETINGS

Twelve members and one husband, along with our Branch Chaplain, Reverend Canon John Tonkin, and his wife Margaret met on Monday 23<sup>rd</sup> of March at the Red Lion, Rothley, for a meal at midday. Most of us had a carvery, which was very tasty and the waiter service was excellent. We hope to go to the same place next year.

Our thoughts were with one of our members, Alfred Bateman, who was in hospital at this time and very poorly. Also any other members who were absent through illness or otherwise indisposed. Our Chairman, Marjorie Thomas, thanked everyone for coming and hoped that we had all enjoyed the meal. She also thanked our Secretary, Kate Mobbs, for organizing the venue. We looked forward to our next meeting at Saint Philip and Saint James Church, Ratby, Leicestershire, on Monday 27<sup>th</sup> of April at 7.30 p.m.

On Sunday 5<sup>th</sup> of April, Easter Day, Alf Bateman passed away at home after a serious illness. His obituary can be found elsewhere in this issue.

Fourteen members, including our Area Leader Lance Bloom and his wife Sandra, met on Monday 27<sup>th</sup> of April at Saint Philip and Saint James Church, Ratby, for a service of Holy Communion led by the Team Rector, Reverend Peter Hooper who also preached at the service. It was good to welcome our Branch Chaplain, Reverend Canon John Tonkin, who led the intercessions and assisted with the administration of Communion. We did not have an organist or sing any hymns, which was a disappointment for me, being a chorister in my own Church. Sandra Bloom, Verger, read the Psalm and Sandra Slater, Verger, read the Epistle. Lance Bloom verged us with great dignity into the choir stalls and out again at the end. We were very pleased to hear that Canon John's wife, Margaret, was doing very well convalescing at home with lots of TLC after a hip replacement. We were very sorry to hear that Sylvia Crawley was not well enough to attend, and we sent our love to her. Thanks were given to Reverend Peter Hooper for leading the service, also to Canon John for assisting. Refreshments were prepared and served by Sandra Slater, Verger. Thanks were given to her afterwards.

Our next meeting will be on Tuesday 7<sup>th</sup> of July at Saint Mary's Church, Peterborough, at 7.30 p.m.

**Marjorie Thomas, Dip GV**  
**Branch Chairman & Correspondent**



## LINCOLN & SOUTHWELL BRANCH NEWS



### A RAILWAY EXPERIENCE

There seems to be a strong affinity between the Church of England and steam engines. So much so that I suspect that a prospective priest who knew that the Reverend W Awdry's 'Jinty' was a Henry Fowler Class 3F rebuild 0-6-0T six-coupled tank engine, or that the Stanier Class 8F N<sup>o</sup> 8431 featured in Pink Floyd's animated film of their album 'The Wall', would fly through any ordinands' selection panel.



ITS PHONE CAMERAS AT THE READY AS RICHARD WOOD (SECOND FROM THE LEFT) ANSWERS MEMBERS' QUESTIONS

And it doesn't just apply to the clergy. Meeting in Gainsborough on Wednesday 4<sup>th</sup> of March, members of the Lincoln and Southwell Branch, (which sounds like a railway!), was fascinated by its visit to the rooms above the garage of Richard Wood. Richard had his first railway when he was 7 and has been an enthusiast ever since. The current layout was begun in the early 1980's and was first opened to the public in July 1983.

It has an oval made up of six circuits which through the use of points can become one line with a passenger terminus at one end and a freight terminus at the other.

The inner circuits are lower and a long incline raises the trains to the outer level. Twelve controllers allow for six trains to be run at a time and for shunting. To get the best effect for visitors, three people need to operate the system. In a second room Richard has a smaller circuit, as well as a circuit for small engines that actually make steam. Richard's walls are lined with display cabinets housing his huge and very impressive collection of engines, rolling stock and other vehicles.

At the end of the evening members enjoyed tea, cakes, and Lincolnshire Plum Bread and cheese at All Saints. Thank you to Eddie Scarsebrook for arranging the evening.

**Colin Beevers**  
**Branch Correspondent**



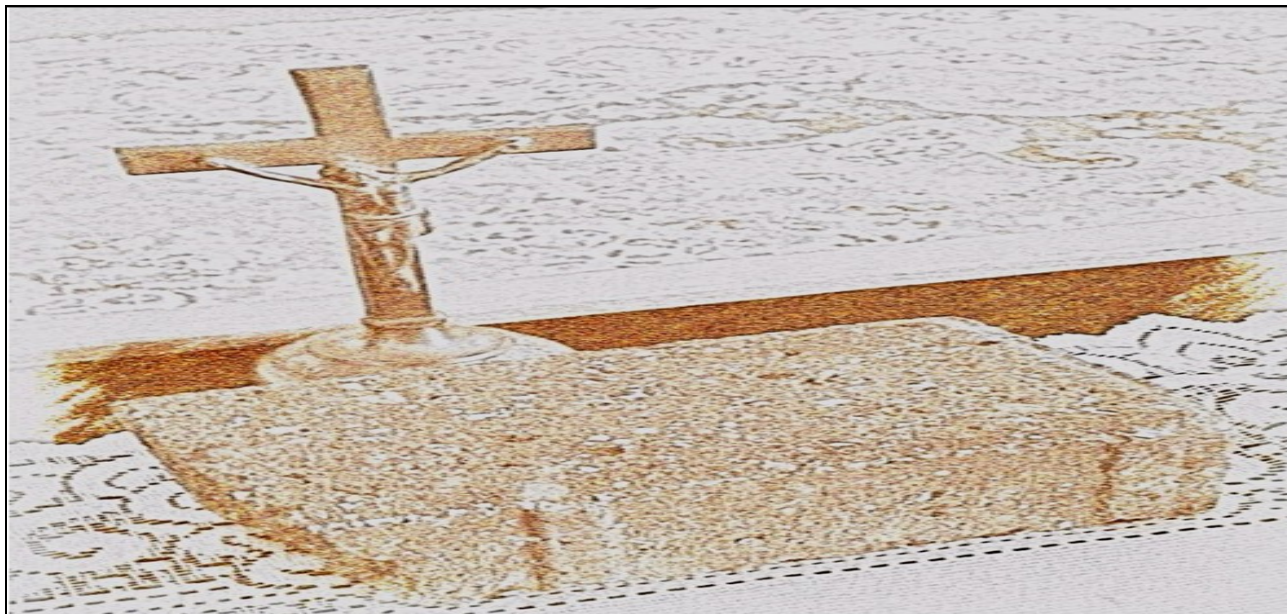
A BUSY STATION SCENE



The organisation that had been asked to lead members and guests of the Oxford Branch for a quiet day at Douai Abbey on Tuesday 10<sup>th</sup> of March dropped out at short notice, so, on inspiration, Reverend Marie Jackson was asked to lead our quiet-time sessions.

After celebrating the Eucharist together, Marie led us as we considered Jesus' parable of "The unforgiving servant" and Saint Peter's question about how many times one should forgive. We know the answer Jesus gave: seventy-seven times, or 490 times. In either case the real answer was an indefinite number – there should be no real limit. Forgiveness is about grace, not merely "quid pro quo". But "Forgive and forget" needs also to be treated with caution: the prodigal son could be forgiven by his family, but could not receive a new inheritance. Probably better to consider "forgive and move on", like the man freed after ten years on death row said: *"Today is a new day, I have moved on from my anger"*.

Don't live in the past: walk free into the future – otherwise it is only you who suffer. Consider resentment to be like a brickbat. You can cuddle it, polish it, weigh it – but it's heavy. Better to leave it at the foot of the cross and move on.



The afternoon session was very different. We were asked to consider *"Christ in the ordinary things, and in the 'other'"*. Then we all were each given a spoon. A spoon is indeed very ordinary and we were reminded that *"All things were created by and for Him"*. (Colossians 1:16)

After some expressions of amusement at this unusual ploy, we settled down. With eyes closed, we investigated the shape and feel of the spoon, becoming intimate with contour and weight, and asked what this could teach us, if we paused to ask, about living in Christ. Everyone had different answers, of course.

My own were:

- Being in hot water may be uncomfortable, but it helps the cleansing process.
- Hold your shape without being too brittle.
- Sharpness makes you uncomfortable to use.
- Stainless steel is perfect for workaday spoons. Highly polished or silver are really only good for ceremonial.
- Reflections in a spoon will distort a lot. For a true image, use a mirror.
- Decorations are ok as long as they don't weaken you.
- Prodding, jabbing and poking probably indicate you're the wrong way around.
- Scratches that are too deep may spoil your usefulness until they're dealt with properly.

It was a fascinating day, with interesting insights, and the unusual aspects made it memorable. We were blessed by the fine weather on that day, and by Reverend Marie Jackson who spoke with inspiration.

**Dennis Wildman**  
**Branch Correspondent**





The Salisbury Branch welcomed Brian and Keith Normington and Chris Harpham (Romsey Abbey) from the Winchester Branch at our AGM in Salisbury on Saturday 28<sup>th</sup> of February. It was also a time for goodbyes, as our long-standing and hard-working Treasurer, David Guy, stepped down from his role. David has done a wonderful job in his 10 years in this role, but was happy to handover to our new Treasurer, Martin Taylor, of Salisbury Cathedral. All other Committee Members were re-elected.

Our meeting was slightly different to our usual format as one of our members, Robert Lewis, was opening his new Chocolate and Tea Rooms in Salisbury that day, so we were honoured to process through the town to be with him at this momentous occasion. The following report can be seen in the Salisbury Journal. We all wish Robert well in his new venture, and hope to sample his wares frequently!



Excerpt from the Salisbury Journal:

[http://www.salisburyjournal.co.uk/news/11843553.New\\_chocolate\\_shop\\_gets\\_blessing\\_during\\_grand\\_opening/](http://www.salisburyjournal.co.uk/news/11843553.New_chocolate_shop_gets_blessing_during_grand_opening/)

Robert Lewis Chocolates and Tea Rooms was officially opened by the Salisbury Mayor Jo Broom and blessed by the Reverend Canon David Linaker.

Among those to attend the opening at 33 High Street were a group of vergers belonging to the Salisbury Diocesan Branch of the Guild of Vergers.

They processed down to the shop from Saint Thomas' Church, where they had been holding their annual general meeting. Robert, who is a verger himself and who also runs the Britford Farm Shop, said: "It meant a great deal to me to have so many friends and well-wishers support me for the grand opening. They have supported me through the last few years and have given me great strength."

The official opening took place on 28<sup>th</sup> of February.

**Tina Cullen**  
Area Leader



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Hello Everyone! Here is the latest news from Somerset & Avon to show we are still alive and kicking down here in the South West.

Our AGM took place in mid-February at our usual venue, Saint Gregory the Greats' Church Hall, Horfield, Bristol at the kind invitation of Reverend Canon James Wilson. Our Branch Chairman, Reyn Badger, made the decision to step down this year as his wife, Jeannette, has regrettably been diagnosed as suffering from Breast Cancer. Reyn quite rightly feels he needs to use the majority of his time to support Jeannette during the time of her treatment. We wish her a speedy recovery and remember her in our prayers.

Our Branch Secretary, Tim Egan, has recently moved from Bath to Llandaff in South Wales and stated that this was too far away for him to carry out his duties effectively. He has agreed to hold the post of Assistant Secretary and to take care of our members in the Eastern region of South Wales. At present we do not have a Branch Secretary, but Reyn Badger has offered to step in and shoulder some of the work as and when he is able. The question then arose of who would take on the role of Branch Chairman. I was very flattered and honoured to be asked to fulfil this role and I willingly accepted. I will do my best to keep the Branch happy and active. At this meeting I was delighted to meet Michael Robinson, a Verger at Bath Abbey, who has recently transferred from the Salisbury Branch. We wish him well and hope he enjoys his membership of the Somerset & Avon Branch. Our Branch Chaplain, Colin Maggs, recently informed me that two other Vergers at the Abbey had intimated their interest in joining the Guild. This is wonderful news and we will definitely welcome them with open arms.

On a sad note I have to report the death of Doreen Bull. She was a former Associate Member of the Guild and wife of retired member, John Bull, from my own Parish of Saint Mary's, Shirehampton. She was a very devout Christian lady who will be sadly missed for the excellent way she would read the Lessons - absolutely faultless. We extend our deepest sympathy to her husband, John.

On a brighter note, on Monday 23<sup>rd</sup> of February, about a dozen members of the Branch attended a service at Saint Mary's Church, Lower Almondsbury, for Trevor Llewellyn who has now retired as Verger of that Church. Trevor was a former Chairman of the Branch for many years and has been a faithful supporter of the Guild and all we stand for. His Vicar, the Reverend Philip Rowe, led us in a service of Choral Evensong in Trevor's honour. During the service Trevor was presented with a certificate of Honorary Branch Life Membership by our Area Leader, Marek Barden. Trevor was overwhelmed and overjoyed by this honour. He has also been made Verger Emeritus by the Vicar & PCC. After the service we all enjoyed a Bring & Share Supper together with members of Saint Mary's congregation. It was a truly memorable evening!

We have a number of social events planned for this year. The main ones are a visit to Bath Abbey in April, a Boat Trip up the River Avon to Hanham for a pub or picnic lunch in late May and a visit to Llandaff in Early August. All we need now is for the weather to be kind to us.

That appears to be all our news from the South West at the moment. We wish all the members of the Guild well throughout 2015.



Trevor Llewellyn with his wife, Gilly

**Christopher M Eynon**  
**Branch Chairman & 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: Sue Ansell & Marilyn Lee*

*Gloucester, Hereford & Worcester: Joy Birkin & Graham Williams*

*London, Southwark & Chelmsford: Ken Allen*

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

*Rochester & East Chichester: Tina Lawrence*

*Saint Albans: Peter Hudson*

*Salisbury: Jean Jackson*

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

*Lionel & Mary Holway, Roger Lawrence & Joy Stevens*

*York: George & Doreen Cook*

**R.I.P**

*Somerset & Avon: Doreen Bull*

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





We'll keep a welcome in the Minster. We virgers at Beverley Minster are in a sort of halfway house: we are not as big or well-staffed as a Cathedral (although we're bigger than one third of them), but we are more of a tourist attraction than the average Parish Church.

Currently we are host to more than 60,000 visitors each year – far less than a major City Church could expect but not bad for a small town which is not regarded as a major tourist destination in its own right. For those reasons we try to maintain a welcoming presence on the main door for seven days a week, but because visiting numbers are not huge, we only try and staff it with volunteers for five hours a day, instead of all eight or more that the doors are officially open. There is a team of nearly 50 names who are available on a regular or occasional basis and we virgers have responsibility for them while they are on duty. Some have been there longer than we, and know exactly what they want to welcome people to, and how. Conversely, we have been recruiting quite a few more during the last few months to extend the hours they are available and there's a lot of new faces as well.

For a long time it was a fairly relaxed relationship with very little overlap: the welcomers turned up and did what they did while we virgers did what we had to. However, over the last seven years we have become much more integrated. The virgers started offering daily tours in the roof-space of the Minster, which were boosted when the welcomers were encouraged to promote them to visitors – we now collect nearly £20,000 a year from these tours which goes towards maintaining the fabric of the building. It was very noticeable that some welcomers were regularly getting us groups of six or more for tours every time they were on duty whilst others got none, so we had to gently encourage the latter volunteers to be more confident in mentioning this new attraction.

We have also become a lot more active in hosting events for young children, which some of our volunteers found difficult to cope with, especially the music. For a while we kept getting reports of welcomers telling visitors: "don't come in here, it's horrible," which wasn't quite the message we wanted to give. The simple solution was to give them a new form of words: "There is a youth event going on today which you might find a bit noisy. However, it will finish at 3 p.m. when the children go back to school so you might prefer to come back then." To the astonishment of some of these individual welcomers quite a few visitors said how marvellous it was to watch children having fun in a Church. There were some who still did not like the noise so we encouraged them to swap with other volunteers if their shift coincided with these events: after all, there is nothing worse than a grumpy welcome.

We then started hosting wedding and antique fairs in conjunction with a local marketing firm. Many of the welcomers did not like these interruptions to their normal routine, so we just made sure everyone knew what was coming and built up a team of individuals who were happy to act as simple information pointers to the several thousand visitors who were there for the event, and nothing else. There was no stigma to anyone who didn't want to work on those days, provided they let us know in advance.

We have got a whole mixture of individuals: some who love working with others and some who would rather be alone; some who want to guide and some who would hate to leave the doors. We virgers have discovered the best way to accommodate everyone is to make sure we talk to them individually, ask what and how they want to do, then discuss any problems or doubts they may have about the next few weeks. We are aware they are volunteers, we value the commitment they are willing to give us and we want them to be happy doing it. Often, just talking through some of the doubts they may have sorts the problem out and then, to our surprise, we find them smilingly handing out balloons to several dozen young children at the next loud event.

It works: we get dozens of rave reviews on Trip Advisor every month and very few negative comments. We have now extended training to some of those who would like to do a bit of guiding as well when requested and, much to our surprise, some previously rather shy individuals are keen to lead small groups to some of our attractions.

In many ways we appear to provide a pastoral role to at least some of our team, giving them a rare experience of (perhaps) companionship, peace, security, self confidence and improved self-esteem. It is lovely to see this blossom in different individuals and our visitors thoroughly appreciate them.

There is a cost however. It is the virgers' responsibility to make sure they are never in danger – that there is always some support available if and when they need it. It has been surprisingly difficult to persuade some of them to have a walkie-talkie with them at all times in case of emergency – we still have to remind some of them at regular intervals where the on-off button is – but no one would ever forgive us if someone was hurt and we hadn't done all we could to protect them- and we would never forgive ourselves.

Yes, sometimes it's a bore having to remind welcomer after welcomer over the course of several days that the toilets are open across the road for visitors, in addition to the rather less pleasant ones outside our wheelchair entrance, but that's a small price to pay.

Our welcomers have developed, over the years, into one of the Minster's greatest living assets; helping people to understand and appreciate our lovely building, and giving ignorant but interested casual visitors a glimpse of a truly Christian community. We virgers at Beverley Minster couldn't fulfil our informal and secular duties as we want to without them. They're worth cultivating.

**Neil Pickford**  
**Virger at Beverley Minster**



## A SERVICE IN PLANNING



In March you may have seen in the media a report of a commemoration service held in Saint Paul's Cathedral in the presence of Her Majesty the Queen to mark the cessation of British involvement in Afghanistan. What was not widely reported was that three similar services were held at the same time. The service at Saint Paul's was a service for the nation, commemorations for the three armed services were also held in various parts of the country; Royal Navy, Army and Air Force, here in Lincoln Cathedral we catered for the Royal Air Force.

With only three weeks notice the Cathedral responded to a request from 10 Downing Street to provide a major event to commemorate a major event. This of course is what we [Cathedrals, Churches, Vergers] do, we respond to crisis; the death of Diana Princess of Wales, 911, the tsunami of ten years ago and the Lockerby disaster are but a few examples.

However the lead in time for this sort of event was unusually short, because of the security implications lead in time was kept to a minimum and all publicity was embargoed until just the week before the event. Meetings were quickly organised, conference calls were set up, visits by the RAF to the Cathedral and by me to the Officers Mess at RAF Cranwell were arranged, protocol [RAF & Church] was discussed, planning security and recce meetings abounded.

The Station Commander of The College of RAF Cranwell took the lead from their side and I, in the absence of the Precentor, was the link with the Cathedral, negotiating everything from; parking, seating, processions and timings to the format of the service - including the shade of the colours should be used of the RAF ensign. Press and media as well as the number of verses of the National Anthem to be used, together with debating which arrangement should be used were deliberated. Bringing together the Band of the Royal Air Force, the cathedral choir, with around 50 in each and the organist was a logistical challenge not least giving them adequate time for rehearsals - fitting them in with rehearsals for; colour parties, collectors, ushers and stewards - all in the end came to a timely conclusion.

Three meetings with the security agencies [RAF, Military Police and Civilian Police] concluded with a full search of the Cathedral the night before the event with 21 officers and two 'sniffer' dogs combing every level. With over 100 security personnel on duty on the day [the Chief Constable of Lincolnshire commented (tongue in cheek) on arrival that he did not know that he had so many officers in his force, I (tongue in cheek) replied that he hadn't most of those on duty came from neighbouring forces of Nottinghamshire and Leicestershire!

The issuing of tickets, to RAF personnel, families, Royal Representatives, Civic Parties and other VIPs together with a public ballot and the issuing of staff security passes, as well as the re-arrangement of the Cathedral Works Department, commercial enterprises and other supporting staff were all on the to do list.



Of all of the above, two remaining items were discussed at great length, and with equal importance; [should it rain] what colour umbrella should be used to protect the Lord Lieutenant as he walked from his car to the Great West Door [a journey of 20 yards] and the cost of refreshments [£1.33 or £2.00 per head] - such was the detail of the day.

As to the day itself and the service in particular; for me, it started at 5 a.m. with a magnificent sunrise as I entered the secured building, by 10.45 the 900 strong congregation were seated having joined the 200 strong support staff of Military, Civilian and Cathedral paid and voluntary personnel. The processions were on time, the musicians were in tune, those with speaking parts were word perfect, even the sound system played its part - and the sun shone throughout.

Team work paid off and a fitting service to a horrendous happening invoked God's peace on the world.

One blessing of the whole event was that it was in Lent - no flower ladies!

**John G Campbell**  
**Dean's Verger – Lincoln Cathedral**

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

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