

# The Virger

Spring 2016  
Issue 290



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

The Official Magazine of the Church of England Guild of Vergers







Welcome to the Spring 2016 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!**

**Marek J Barden, MLJ**

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**PLEASE NOTE  
THE DEADLINE FOR  
THE NEXT EDITION IS:**

**Saturday the  
14<sup>th</sup> of May 2016**



## TRAINING CONFERENCE 2016



Elsewhere in this issue of *The Virger*, you will find an Booking Form for this years Annual Training Conference. Once again we will be enjoying the delights of the Elim Conference Centre at West Malvern. When you book, you will be receiving a Conference Programme and Welcome Letter outlining what we will be getting up to for the four days and just how to get there. If you haven't completed a Booking Form yet, now is your chance.

What is happening this year, well, we will be taking a look at just how we look after ourselves as Vergers in the Church, spiritually, physically and mentally. Our speakers this year will be the Reverend Bruce Kinsey, Chaplain of Balliol College, Oxford, who will focus on 'Our personal wellbeing' and Canon Neil Heaviside, former Precentor of Gloucester Cathedral will be our speaker and preacher at Evensong. We also hope to be visited by the Police and a medical practitioner who will give us some useful pointers as to how we should look after ourselves as lone Vergers and other issues.

We also hope to be joined by some Clergy, who are keen to join in with our practical training sessions and find out just how Vergers can be an asset to them in their ministry. There will be time for fellowship, sharing and a singalong movie. It is a time of fun, fellowship and learning over four days in wonderful surroundings.

**John Shearer**  
**Training Officer**



## 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**'.

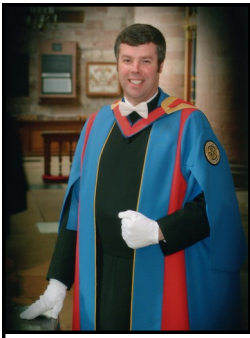
If you are interested in learning more about the Course, please contact the **Training Registrar: Susan Ansell** or the **Training Officer: John Shearer**.

**FRONT COVER: SCENES FROM THE LIFE OF CHRIST** - A sixteenth century Italian Narrative Cycle in fresco with twenty-one scenes from The Annunciation to The Resurrection.

**TOP ROW:** The Annunciation, The Nativity, The Visit of the Three Magi, The Flight to Egypt, The Baptism of Christ, The Raising of Lazarus, The Entry to Jerusalem, The Last Supper.

**MIDDLE ROW:** The Washing of feet, The Agony in the Garden, The Arrest of Christ, The Trial before the Sanhedrin, The Trial before Pilate, The Flagellation.

**BOTTOM ROW:** Ecce homo, Via dolorosa, Christ falls, The Crucifixion, The Deposition from the cross, The Harrowing of Hell, The Resurrection.



## NATIONAL CHAIRMAN'S LETTER



Is God a railway train? You are going to have to stick with me on this one as I try to explain.

After the latest Guild Standing Committee in London I confided in a friend that I had a bit of a rough six months working long hours, not feeling well and something had happened that had slammed on the brakes to what I thought was a given scenario, after some sage advice from my friend I set to thinking about what the future might hold in store for me.

I arrived at Euston Station only to find the trains were all delayed due to bad weather, not a problem I thought it will arrive when it arrives, so I waited and eventually my train set off. There were not many people in the carriage, as we trundled off 15 minutes late into the darkness there was the inevitable announcement "we are sorry but we are now 40 minutes late". There were two theatrical type men not far from me who phoned one of their mothers to say they were going to be late home and just to make sure she had something to eat. Then I heard from them "well there is just enough time for a small glass of wine" this statement was made several times on the journey. The advice from my friend had basically resulted in me being told that I ought to be better prepared for what lay ahead in life, this was colouring my thoughts. I had been musing earlier that maybe the train was an allegory for God, I had free will to get on the train and I could get off when I chose but that the train (God) had me protected in life as I journey to my destination, a destination that at that moment in time I did not really want to go. Anyway there was a young man sitting a few seats away who was clearly in the early stages of a cold, he had the foresight to bring along some oranges and I thought there was a sensible chap in being prepared. Another announcement was made, there was signalling problems ahead so we were going to be further delayed. "Oh we have just time for another small glass of wine" I smiled to myself, as I thought they had come prepared. Then it struck me, why was I not? I had committed myself to this journey and was traveling through the night looking out into the darkness feeling very, very alone. All around me phones were being used to contact loved ones to say they were going to be late. Mine lay on the table in front of me with no one to ring, as I have said feeling very alone. The two wine drinkers left the train and the young man was greeted on the platform by his young lady. I sat there feeling every ache in my body. Then we drew alongside another train and we travelled together for a while, a poster in the other train that kept coming into view it read "little things make a difference" and I idly thought can God be that train as well and there was a little flash from the overhead power line. As my mood was getting darker something moved on the overhead luggage rack, it was the case that housed the Millennium Verge which I was taking back with me. In that moment I knew that although I was feeling lonely and apprehensive about my future, above me was a symbol of the love and support that we all have as members of the Guild of Vergers.

So dear friends can I say I love you and thank you for your friendship over the years as we journey together knowing that however hurt, lonely, battered and bruised by what we do to one another we are surrounded by the love of our God. Ok you can call the men in white coats to take me away. However the coincidence that my train travel and thoughts come as we journey through Lent with our Lord has not been lost on me.

Let us all rejoice in his resurrection. Happy Easter.

**James Armstrong**



*Congratulations to  
George & Doreen Cook  
who Celebrate their  
Diamond Wedding Anniversary  
on Thursday 31<sup>st</sup> March  
We Wish Them Every Happiness*

### HOLY NAME EMBROIDERY

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## NATIONAL CHAPLAIN'S LETTER



Dear Friends,

Greetings! I am writing this letter on Ash Wednesday and I am sure it will arrive on your doorstep in time for me to wish you all a holy and blessed Lent. For all of us Lent represents a time of recollecting our sins and short-comings in the barrenness of the desert, a time of renewed diligence in reading and meditating on our Lord's words in the Scriptures and some self-discipline in our 'giving up' – whether it's coffee, or alcohol, or chocolate, or ..... The popular idea of 'giving things up' for Lent is reflected in our Liturgy when the stark simplicity and austerity of the Lenten worship precludes the 'Gloria in excelsis' and the Alleluias. This plainness and 'giving up' provides the contrast as we express our joy in the resurrection of our Lord at Easter.

'Giving things up', prayer and Bible study are not really enough for we must also prepare our minds to put behind us the sin that clings to us, and to turn around into new life. The key to this is asking for forgiveness. For most of us our 'sin' is in the things we think and say rather than in the things that we do. If we really try to respect and love others, especially those that we find it hard to get along with, this might be more beneficial to us than forgoing that piece of chocolate, or that glass of wine – and harder discipline for us as well.

The commandment bids us to love God with our whole heart, with our whole mind and with our whole strength and to love our neighbour as we love ourselves. We are created to love God and learning how to do this is an essential part of our spiritual life. Loving our neighbours does not mean that we should have a vague goodwill towards them but rather that we wish good things for them and actively help them to achieve these good things. So prayer and action are two sides of the same coin. If we are to function properly as human beings then we must accept the love and forgiveness of God and both forgive and accept the forgiveness from those who have hurt us and those whom we have hurt.

We have to hang on to the fact of God's love for us and this often demands great courage. We have to hang on to the concept that other people love us and this often demands an even greater courage. If we really do desire to love God then we must trust him, even if he seems remote. So often we feel that our lives are useless and that we are walking down a long, dark tunnel, alone and out of touch. But we are not alone, God is with us, loving us and guiding us. Others are also praying for us and with us, loving us as good neighbours.

Lent is for loving! The season of Lent is one for renewing our resolve to love God; to love our fellow human beings; to prepare our minds and lives to enter into the Passion of our Lord and to share in the joyful resurrection.

With my blessing, my prayers and my love

**Canon Maureen**



## PRAYER REQUESTS



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

*Blackburn, Chester & Manchester: Margaret Scott & Geoffrey Timms*

*Chichester, Guildford & Portsmouth: Marilyn Lee*

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

*London, Southwark & Chelmsford: Ken Allen*

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

*Rochester: Tina Lawrence*

*Saint Albans: Peter Hudson*

*Salisbury: Jean Jackson & Babs Taylor*

*Somerset & Avon: Pat Dawes, Lionel & Mary Holway*

*York: George & Doreen Cook*

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

**R.I.P**

**Shirley Booth, Alan Leary, Reverend Canon Peter Palmer, Philip Stewart and Graham Williams**



## YORK PROVINCE FESTIVAL 2016



I am proposing that the York Province Festival of the Guild will take place on the Wednesday 15<sup>th</sup> June 2016. To be held by kind permission of the Reverend Jane Nattrass in the York City Centre Churches: All Saints Pavement, Saint Denys, Saint Helen, Saint Martin and Saint Olave. Details to follow. Please hold the date.

I shall act as booking clerk etc... so we do not flood our hosts with too much work. Cost: Free (at this point in time), refreshments will be provided by our hosts. The meal at lunch time will be at the members own cost and eaten at a venue of their choosing. So this Festival will be free so no excuses for it being too expensive.

Accommodation in York is a little odd because they will only let you book two or more nights. So far the date chosen does not have a race meeting attached so the cost will not be inflated.

**James Armstrong**  
**National Chairman**





## BLACKBURN, CHESTER & MANCHESTER BRANCH NEWS



Nine members of the Branch had a wonderful time at the Temple Church in September and much appreciated the hard work done by the London, Southwark and Chelmsford Branch to make the day such a success.

The Branch is holding its AGM in February at Blackburn Cathedral when we are having a visit from Canon Maureen who will be installing our new Branch Chaplain. It is some years since we had a functioning Chaplain and we are very much looking forward to the Reverend Karen Marshall joining the Branch in this capacity.

At the end of January we were saddened by the death of the Verger of Holy Rood Church, Swinton. Alan Leary had been a Branch member for many years and but had recently been very ill and lost his battle for life on 18<sup>th</sup> January. Three Branch members were able to attend his funeral and this was appreciated by his widow Elaine and his deputy, David Grimshaw. Arrangements are now being made to admit David to the Guild.

**Freda M. Murphy**  
Branch Secretary



## GLOUCESTER, HEREFORD & WORCESTER BRANCH NEWS



We open our report with the very sad news that our recently appointed Branch Secretary, Graham Williams, has died suddenly from cancer. Although he had been very ill for some time during past years he appeared to have made a positive recovery and this well-liked charismatic and energetic gentleman bounced back into the life of the Cathedral as a Voluntary Verger and Welcome', plus the many other activities in which he was involved. Graham was very much part of the life and soul at our Christmas Branch Dinner, doing everything he could to make it a success. He will be greatly missed. Our thoughts and prayers go out to his beloved wife, Jennifer, and his family. His funeral will take place at Worcester Cathedral on the 17<sup>th</sup> February at 11.30 a.m.

Our Branch held its AGM at Saint Stephen's Church on the 26<sup>th</sup> January. Margaret Burston, whom many of you will know due to her role as our excellent Conference Secretary, has stood down as Area Leader after ten years but has kindly offered to fulfil the role of Branch Secretary following Graham's death. The Branch is most grateful to Margaret, and we expressed our sincere thanks to her for her past leadership. Our new Area Leader is David Anwyl-Hughes, a most capable gentleman who possesses many skills. He is also an Assistant Verger at the same Church as Margaret Burston. We wish him well in his new role speaking up for the Branch at Central Council.

Following Choral Evensong at Worcester Cathedral on Shrove Tuesday we held our annual Pancake Party in our Treasurer's flat within the Cathedral Precincts. Thank you to Robert for a most enjoyable and fun evening. We look forward to our Annual Quiet Day held at the House of the Open Door, Chidswickham, this year being led by Canon David Truby, formerly Canon Pastor of Derby Cathedral.

**Philip Dunne**  
Branch Correspondent



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## IPSWICH BRANCH NEWS



The first part of this Branch Report is 'Tidying Up' left over news from East Anglia in 2015. Starting at the beginning of the summer holidays both Norwich and Bury Saint-Edmunds held 'Trails' within the towns. Norwich had a 'Dragon Trail' and Bury had a 'Wolf Trail'. So suitably equipped with town maps and accompanied by grandson, we set off. A certain amount of stamina was required as neither trail took 5 minutes, more like 5 hours.

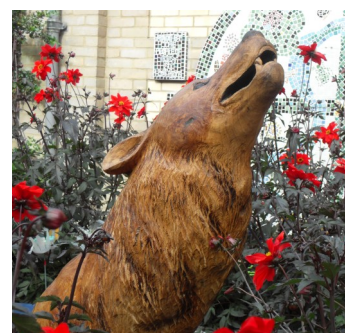
The GoGo Dragons of Norwich consisted of 84 large dragons and 120 school dragons which were amazing, made from glass-fibre and beautifully painted by local artists, schools and various organisations – all did a brilliant job and must have taken hours of painstaking work. Not all the dragons were in eye view, at times you had to play detective and look in not such obvious places to find them. Dragons have been a heraldic symbol closely associated with the city since the Middle Ages. The Dragons have since been auctioned off to raise funds for various charities.

The 26 unique Wolves at Bury were a totally different kettle of fish, all made from a variety of materials, shapes and sizes but nevertheless still super to find and look at and admire. In Saint Edmundsbury Cathedral, two wolves sit in the holiest part of the building, the Sanctuary, both sides of the Bishop's Throne, carved wolves stand guard over Saint Edmund's head.

All I can say is thank goodness for digital cameras, we took so many photos, if we were using film roll I dread to think of how much it would have cost to process the films. Actually whilst we were in Bury in October (Ipswich Branch Meeting) I did notice that the Wolves were still very much around and families walking the wolf trail. These will also be auctioned off. An excellent idea for bringing in the tourists, a couple of photos show off both Dragons and Wolves. I think Marek would find it quite a squeeze if I submitted all 230 photos!

A very windy Saturday, 5<sup>th</sup> December, saw members of the Branch made their way to Bury Saint-Edmunds for a guided tour of the 'Greene King Brewery'. The tour guides were excellent at explaining the procedures carried out to produce the different beers. At one point we all made our way to an extremely windy rooftop for a birds-eye-view of the town, needless to say we were all glad to get back inside the building afterwards, although looking as if we all needed to brush our hair. I think for most it was the 'tasting' that was the clear winner of the trip, three of their most popular beers were sampled suitably soaked up with a generous supply of crackers and cheese.

We all gathered at a local hostelry in Needham Market on Monday 1<sup>st</sup> February to enjoy a New Year's Lunch. As usual good company and food and a nice way to start the year before the onslaught of meetings, the first of these is on March 10<sup>th</sup>. This report now rounds up 2015 and hopefully new things to look forward to, as a Branch, in 2016. I must mention that Ipswich are doing a trail this coming summer and it consists of 'Pigs'- my personal favourite – keep an eye out for a future report (with photos).



**Jean Cobb**  
Branch Correspondent



## LEICESTER & PETERBOROUGH BRANCH NEWS



We began 2016 with our AGM on Monday 25th January. This was held in Saint Bartholomew's Church Hall, Kirby Muxloe, Leicestershire. Following the opening prayers we had the election of Officers, all of whom remain unchanged from last year: Chairman & Branch Correspondent - Marjorie Thomas, Dip GV; Secretary - Kathryn Mobbs, Dip GV Hons; Treasurer - Clive Mobbs; Magazine Distributors - Kathryn & Clive Mobbs.

Mention was made regarding the amount of notice given for Province Festivals. It was felt that this was often too short and Branches did not have time to plan their own meetings around them. It was suggested that six months to a year would be better in the future. The Chairman mentioned in her report that the meeting to be held in the Church of Saint Philip & Saint James, Groby, Leicestershire, on Tuesday 24<sup>th</sup> May would be Songs of Praise Service to mark her 50<sup>th</sup> year as a member of the Church Choir along with fellow member. Members were asked to let her know their choice of hymn and which tune by the March meeting at the Red Lion in Rothley, Leicestershire. The other meeting planned for the spring will be at Wyggeston Hospital in Leicester.

Thanks were expressed to Mary, Brian and Jean for providing the refreshments after the AGM. A raffle, with some very nice prizes, was held to boost Branch funds. I wish you all a very Happy Easter.

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





***Monday 15<sup>th</sup> - Thursday 18<sup>th</sup> August 2016***

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

# **BOOKING FORM**

PLEASE PULL OUT THE MIDDLE FOUR PAGES  
AND USE THIS AS YOUR BOOKING FORM  
AND SEND IT BY POST TO:

**Margaret Burston  
10 Prestbury Close  
Blackpole  
Worcester  
WR4 9XG**

OR EMAIL IN A PDF TO:  
[margaretburston@sky.com](mailto:margaretburston@sky.com)

01905 455961



**Please submit your booking form by Friday 24<sup>th</sup> June 2016**

**TITLE: MR/MRS/MISS/MS/DR/REV/OTHER - NAME:** \_\_\_\_\_

**ADDRESS:** \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_ **POSTCODE:** \_\_\_\_\_

**HOME TELEPHONE:** \_\_\_\_\_ **MOBILE TELEPHONE:** \_\_\_\_\_

**E-MAIL:** \_\_\_\_\_

**PARISH CHURCH ETC...:** \_\_\_\_\_

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

<b>SUNDAY</b>			<b>DINNER</b>
<b>MONDAY</b>	<b>BREAKFAST</b>	<b>LUNCH</b>	<b>DINNER</b>
<b>TUESDAY</b>	<b>BREAKFAST</b>	<b>LUNCH</b>	<b>DINNER</b>
<b>WEDNESDAY</b>	<b>BREAKFAST</b>	<b>LUNCH</b>	<b>DINNER</b>
<b>THURSDAY</b>	<b>BREAKFAST</b>	<b>LUNCH</b>	

**COST FOR THE WEEK**

**SINGLE OCCUPANCY ROOM**

***EARLY BIRD PRICE IF BOOKED BEFORE 30/12/2015***

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

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

**SHARED DOUBLE ROOM**

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

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

**ONE DAY OVERNIGHT CHARGE**

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

(Breakfast, Lunch & Dinner)

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

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

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



**MEDICAL INFORMATION:**

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

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

**ARE YOU ON ANY MEDICATION?: YES/NO**

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

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

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

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

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**NEXT OF KIN CONTACT DETAILS**

**TITLE: MR/MRS/MISS/MS/DR/REV/OTHER - NAME:** \_\_\_\_\_

**ADDRESS:** \_\_\_\_\_

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**HOW DO I GET THERE?**

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

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

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

**FOR SAT NAV: WR14 4DF**

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

## DRAFT OUTLINE PROGRAMME FOR THE WEEK

### ‘ART IN CHURCH’

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

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

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



## OXFORD BRANCH NEWS



### BISTROMATICS & THE VERGER

The Oxford Branch met for their Christmas Lunch 2015 at the "Wee Waif" - whither we usually repair because of good prices, wholesome food, and friendly service. This year there was a difference, the Committee had bravely let the Branch Correspondent organise it. It was a success. Everyone had somewhere to sit, made their menu choices, and got what they selected. The wine was very fair, the service as good as always – and everyone paid. We all went home, replete and satisfied.

Then the "Bistromatics" set in. This is a field of quasi-mathematics mentioned by Douglas Adams in his "Hitch-Hiker's Guide to the Galaxy" series. It describes how the entries on a waiter's pad, though correct in themselves, never quite reflect what the customer thinks they were going to spend, no matter how strictly one follows the rules of arithmetic. Whence, I wonder, came the extra £1.06?

It reminds me very much of the old Stanley Holloway monologue about Albert swallowing a gold sovereign, and the doctor operating to remove it (which cost 18/6d): after the operation the Doctor kept Albert and "... still stands in some doubt as to whether he's "in" eighteen shillings or whether he's eighteen pence out!" In the long run, we had nineteen meals, and everyone went home happy. Fulfilled in the best sense.

Our next Branch 'occasion' was the AGM, held in January at Christ the Servant King Church in Booker, High Wycombe. We shared Communion, then there were excellent sandwiches, and cake, and even salad for those with figures to continue caring about. The meeting was well attended (maybe as a result of the reputation of the sandwich-makers), successful, and we now have a Secretary-elect (Take it easy at first, lad, you'll be fine!). We look forward to an eventful year – maybe even in the ways we plan.

**Dennis Wildman**  
Branch Correspondent



## SAINT ALBANS BRANCH NEWS



### AGM

Our AGM was held on Monday 18<sup>th</sup> January. This year 19 out of the 31 members managed to attend. The agenda included no surprise or difficult matters. Following the prayers, the minutes and accounts for 2015 were approved and the reports for serving officers were accepted. Our Chaplain, Father Andrew Ferrar, chaired the meeting during the election of officers. All were elected by nomination and no voting was required. Some spirited yet consensual discussion occurred through the meeting however.

The Officers for 2016 will be: Lindsay Kemp – Chairman; Rosamund Russell – Secretary; Tony Kempson – Treasurer; David Williams – Information Officer; Lindsay Bevis – Committee Member; and Dennis Wildman – Area Leader for the Oxford and Saint Albans Area.

Under any other business discussion centred around the distances many of our members have to travel to attend meetings. Options for alternative venues for the AGM were considered but it was decided that the next AGM to be held on Monday 16<sup>th</sup> January would again be at Saint Albans Cathedral.

The Saint Albans and Oxford Branches of the Guild share some Branch planning ideas, also the duties of Branch Correspondent. Two visiting members of the Oxford Branch were welcomed at this meeting.

Each year our Chaplain is invited to give a short address, "Chaplain's Thoughts and Reflections." Father Andrew continued his theme from 2015 about "Thoughtfulness" and this year he spoke for a few minutes about "Silence". He observed that we accept and generate considerable noise during our busy lives, often leaving little time for inward thought and reflection. He referred to Macarius, an Egyptian Monk and Hermit, circa 300 – 391. Macarius, a Saint in the Orthodox Church, was guided to the spiritual science of watchfulness and prayer. Perhaps we could consider his teachings with a question to us all, "Is the default setting of your in-car radio "ON or OFF?" "

Further events: A Committee Meeting was held on Monday 1<sup>st</sup> February and planning is now well advanced for this year's activities. Members of the Branch will assemble for Lenten Devotions at Saint Saviours' Church, Saint Albans on Monday 22<sup>nd</sup> February at 8.00 p.m.

**David Williams**  
Branch Information Officer

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We ended 2015 in old/new surroundings and we started 2016 in old/old ones.

For our Christmas Service and meal we met on Monday 30<sup>th</sup> November at Bar Convent in York, our first time there. This is the oldest-surviving Roman Catholic Convent in England and was established in 1686. Here we had a Communion Service in the chapel which boasted a hidden dome. When the building was constructed it was illegal to build such Papist architecture so this was concealed beneath a more conventional roof line. Inside, however, it continued to defiantly proclaim its origins.

Also below the floor of the chapel was a priest hole which can be illuminated for any visitors who are interested in this aspect of the Reformation. The chapel's décor is very ornate and exotic – it has been compared to being inside a decorated wedding cake – and we were made very welcome by the Sisters and volunteers during our stay.

The Communion Service was conducted by the Reverend Rodney Nicholson, who stepped into the breach at very short notice after the unfortunate unavailability of our normal Chaplain, the retired Reverend Marian Gardner. He was rewarded for his rapid response with a free meal in the Bar Convent restaurant – an excellent repast served in the brightly-lit central area. We also toured the Convent's exhibition which detailed the trials, tribulations and dedication of the founder, Frances Bedingfield, following the teachings of Mary Ward who founded the Sisters of Loreto, despite huge hostility outside and within the Roman Catholic Church. A very interesting and filling experience, in more ways than one.

Monday 25<sup>th</sup> January saw us meet in Saint Michael le Belfry in York – a complete opposite in terms of practice. This Church is where many of the Minster and other Yorkshire Clergy go to worship, being all multi-media and so forth. There's an untidiness around the interior which speaks of constant activity and it's a hotbed of service, enthusiasm and mission.

The mood was somewhat subdued as most of the officers were stepping down: John Dell, Head Virger at Beverley Minster, was retiring six weeks later to devote himself to golf and learning to cook. His colleague Neil Pickford, Assistant Virger at Beverley Minster and your humble scribe, was unsure of his own continuing role and so had also announced his intention to quit. After a rather contemplative Communion led by our Branch Chaplain, and hearing various tales of woe from fellow-members who were being side-lined by their current incumbents we resolved to go forward, unbowed. There was, after all, a total seven new applicants for membership waiting to be received and a continuing role for Vergers in the north of England, whether clergy and congregations realised it or not.

Our Chaplain, Marian, volunteered to become Caretaker Chairman as it clearly enabled her to increase her role of pastoral support to members by becoming more proactive. The Treasurer, Angela Hamilton, took on the additional title of Secretary as this post largely overlapped with her reporting responsibilities to the Central Council and also was willing to act as Area Leader, liaising with the National body. A truly holistic combination of duties. Marian's husband has considerable experience of organising social events for her Parish so he was elected in his absence to do the same for the Branch, while Su Graves, who is a new member since last year, volunteered to become Press Officer. All of these new appointments were greeted with acclamation and we broke up in a much more positive mood than we had started.

Next issue: we'll tell you what the new team has done to keep the Branch's beacon alight and burning bright.

**Neil Pickford**

*Former branch secretary, Area Leader and Press Officer*



**DON'T FORGET**  
**THE DEADLINE FOR SUBMISSIONS FOR**  
**THE NEXT EDITION IS:**  
**Saturday the 14<sup>th</sup> of May 2016**



## THE FUTURE OF VERGING



Next year the Guild of Vergers reaches its 85<sup>th</sup> Anniversary, my how things have changed. As we remember how Vergers were in the days of Dad's Army, Vicar of Dibley and even Trollope, today we find jobs being advertised as Buildings Manager or Head Verger and Floor Manager. The traditional role of the Verger is changing. The axe has fallen in some Cathedrals and Churches where teams have been drastically reduced, yet the work has increased. Many of us will have noticed how the Church of England is also changing. Whether this change is for the better, is a debate that many are having all over the country.

The role of the traditional Verger could well be under threat. Just recently, the BBC carried out a survey over the funding for upkeep of our Cathedrals and the costs of maintaining them. Pressure on Deans and Clergy to find the cash to keep the show on the road is increasingly mounting. In some case's visitor numbers are up, but giving is down. This is also the case in Sunday congregations. I am sure you will have noticed this even in your Church. The tightening of the Church belt often has the effect of changing roles of Church staff or at worse, losing staff.

Recently, a report headed by Baroness Butler-Sloss, GBE, PC, was also challenging. It brought into question the future of the Church. "The proposals in this report amount to a 'new settlement for religion and belief in the UK', which is intended to provide space and a role for all within society, regardless of their beliefs or absence of them." This 150-page report sets out a major shift away from Christianity in Britain – particularly the Church of England – with the number of people describing themselves as having no religion at all jumping from less than a third of the population to almost half in just 30 years.

The Church of England's stance on LGBT matters also brings into question just how much it actually cares for its current congregation. Attitudes to same-sex marriage within the pews of the Church of England are sharply at odds with the stance of its leadership, as for the first time in recent years more Anglicans are in favour of gay and lesbian couples marrying than oppose it, according to a poll. At the close of this month's Anglican summit the Archbishop of Canterbury, Justin Welby, apologised for the "hurt and pain" the Church had caused to LGBT people. "It's a constant source of deep sadness that people are persecuted for their sexuality. I want to take this opportunity personally to say how sorry I am for the hurt and pain, in the past and present, that the Church has caused and the love that we at times completely failed to show, and still do, in many parts of the world including in this country," he said. The dear old Church of England has hardly covered itself in glory again!

The use of our magnificent buildings is also changing. At many London Churches, there are more concerts being mounted and other events being staged that are deemed to be under the guise of raising funds. In some instance's the buildings are being used as a film set for television or big film productions. I remember walking into a Cathedral just before lunchtime and it was like walking into the dining room of a very smart hotel (thank goodness for pews!). Everything is being considered that will bring in extra money to keep Churches afloat. This is on top of opening the Church for endless groups of tourists and visitors and charging them for entrance, let alone the traditional services that are expected. For Vergers, working hours are being changed and many long days are now the norm up and down the country.

So spare a thought for those Churches who have a Verger, but cannot afford to pay them a decent wage, or those who cannot even afford a Verger. One London Vicar wrote on a social media website that sometimes as a Vicar he feels like a premises manager. The comments that this brought ranged from 'get yourself a Verger Father.' to one sage soul saying 'My father's pre-ordination retreat was given by +Michael Ramsey, who gave this sage piece of advice "remember, you are called to be Fishers of Men, not aquarium keepers! Another commented that is an utterly ridiculous situation – and unsustainable. It is this kind of thing that needs the "reform and renewal".

It is not just Vergers that are experiencing issues in today's Church. Having volunteers carry out some functions in the Church is sometimes the answer, but that could open another can of worms. Having volunteers to be Church Watchers has changed in some Churches, to shop assistants and security guards. Most volunteers are retired and in some cases elderly vulnerable folk. The handling of money and the regulations metered out by auditors brings into question whether this should be a paid role or not.

Today's Verger has to act in the traditional role of sacristan, keeper of the vestry and registrar as well as volunteer manager, personnel manager, financial controller, counsellor, events manager, health & safety officer and fire officer. Our Diploma course helps Vergers to cope and think about some of these roles in this changing world. This year, the week is geared towards just how we need to look after ourselves spiritually, mentally and physically. I hope that we can encourage many Vergers who have not attended to try out the Conference and experience fun, fellowship and friendship. A booking form and copy of the programme can be found elsewhere in The Virger Magazine.

**John Shearer**

**Training Officer & Area Leader - London, Southwark & Chelmsford**



## FORTHCOMING EVENTS



**Wednesday 15<sup>th</sup> June - York Province Festival  
to be held in York**

**Sunday 14<sup>th</sup> - Thursday 18<sup>th</sup> August - Annual Training Conference  
Elim International Conference Centre, West Malvern**

**Monday 12<sup>th</sup> & Tuesday 13<sup>th</sup> September - Canterbury Province Festival  
to be held in Salisbury Cathedral**





## CONGRATULATIONS TO CHRISTOPHER HARPHAM



Christopher Harpham, formerly Verger of Romsey Abbey has transferred his membership from the Winchester Branch to the London, Southwark & Chelmsford Branch. Chris has been appointed to the office of Chapel Keeper & Verger at the Military Chapel, Saint James Park (The Guard's Chapel), London.

Chris was installed on Sunday 24<sup>th</sup> January at 11.00 a.m. during a beautiful service of Choral Matins and Irene Money and I were privileged to attend the service along with my husband Melvyn and an American Verger, Eric Whitten and his wife Neha, who happened to be in London for the weekend. Also in attendance was Louis Parminter who had come over from Dublin and is not only a member of the London, Southwark & Chelmsford Branch, but also a long standing friend of Chris' as I think they served in the army together. The service was lovely, a military band played the music and they have a professional choir who were amazing.

There were over 100 friends from Romsey Abbey to see Chris installed and they told me they are missing him terribly. Light refreshments followed the service.

We wish Chris well in his new post. I know that he has a few ideas for visits within London, particularly to some of the other Military Establishments that his role will gain him access to.

**Denise Mead**

**London, Southwark & Chelmsford Branch Chair**



## R.I.P ~ SHIRLEY AUDREY BOOTH



29<sup>th</sup> March 1936 - 29<sup>th</sup> December 2015



Shirley was born at Minehead on 29<sup>th</sup> March 1936. In the Saint Albans Branch we have little background about the early life of Shirley. We do know however that she started nursing training at Westminster Hospital, then continued training at a Convalescent Hospital. She later moved to continue her work at a Children's Hospital.

Sometime later, and back at Westminster, she was asked by a fellow nurse to "make up a foursome" when two local policemen offered an evening out. Although tired, Shirley agreed. They went to a cinema where they watched a (not romantic in the slightest) film called "Attack" starring Jack Palance and Lee Marvin, and afterwards went to a pub – the first time that Shirley had been in such a place in her life. Later, she phoned her parents and said of one of the policemen "I'll marry him" - and did, on the 15<sup>th</sup> February 1958.

Shirley and Alan lived for a while at various locations, before moving to 35 Beehive Road, Goffs Oak in Hertfordshire. This is where the couple lived until the present time. A neighbour across the road was her longtime companion from that first memorable evening. Clearly the arrival of Shirley and Alan was noticed. When three children, Jonathan, Theresa, and Liz came along, Shirley became a full time mother and when the children grew up, she went to

work in a local Chemists Shop. However, with the introduction of computers to the shop floor, things were made just a little too complicated.

Shirley attended Saint James' Church, was Churchwarden twice, and Verger for 25 years. She also sang in the Choir. As Verger, she was diligent and efficient, and "Did it right!" She's known to have confiscated cameras if she caught people using them at weddings when they weren't allowed to. During her Requiem Mass we learned that she was sometime heard to say, "Never let anyone down, never let Jesus down." Shirley had requested the Reverend Juergen Bridstrup, a previous Vicar, to support Reverend Carole Selby in conducting her Requiem Mass and this arrangement was happily made.

She took great delight in her children and grandchildren, and could be seen gesticulating from the back to ensure they did things in the Church properly. Shirley supported "Heart Throbs", a local Cardiac Support Charity.

In hospital, she was asked "What would you like?" The expected answer was "A cup of tea." But "To get to heaven" was understood to be her actual response. Shirley suffered a heart attack in 2004, had a stent fitted, then followed triple bypass surgery. She had not been well for the last couple of years. Shirley slipped away on 29<sup>th</sup> December to be in heaven where she wanted to be.



**David Williams**

**Branch Information Officer**

**Noted and Advised by Dennis Wildman**





The Saint Albans Branch of The Guild of Vergers has lost a great friend, colleague, mentor and pastor with the death of Peter, our much loved Chaplain for 17 Years.

Peter was born in Waltham Cross in 1931 and as a boy sang in the Parish Church Choir. After leaving school he served an apprenticeship as an engineer. Following this he worked for the Government in the Ministry of Supplies. After two years of this work he was called to serve the Lord and started his theological studies, spending three years at the Theological College in Chichester. In 1959 He was made Deacon in Saint Albans Cathedral and served his Diaconate and subsequent term as Curate at All Saints Church, Leighton Buzzard under the training of the Vicar, Canon John Scammell. This was a period when this Parish had a Vicar and three Curates.

In 1963 he left to become Priest in Charge of Saint Benedict's Church, Bennets End, Hemel Hempstead. This was followed by work in Parishes in Hitchin, Ickleford, Oxhey and lastly in the three villages of Studham, Whipsnade and Kensworth. In 1996 he was made a Canon of Saint Albans Cathedral in honour of his devoted leadership and ministry in all of these Parishes, all within the Saint Albans Diocese. Each Parish had its own characteristics -

Market towns, new urban development, rural villages - and each place was tackled with the same enthusiasm and devotion to the flock. He was also blessed with a great sense of fun and humour and an energy with stood him in good stead. Following his retirement in 1996 Peter became a greatly revered Chaplain to the Saint Albans Branch from 1997 until January 2014.

During his time at Hemel Hempstead, in 1965, he met, fell in love with and married Nonita. Peter and Nonita were a great "team" and had over 50 years of happily married life together. Wherever his ministry called him Peter was a popular, devoted Pastor to those with whom he had the cure of souls, and was held in high esteem and great love. He will be sadly missed by all who knew him as a friend, mentor and above all as parish priest to so many.

He died peacefully on 5<sup>th</sup> January 2016. His Requiem Mass was held in Saint Albans Cathedral at 11.00 a.m. on Tuesday 26<sup>th</sup> January, and was attended by family, the Guild of Vergers and many friends, colleagues and Parish representatives.

### REQUIEM EUCHARIST FOR CANON PETER PALMER – 26<sup>th</sup> JANUARY 2016

*'I am the bread of life. Whoever comes to me will never be hungry, and whoever believes in me will never be thirsty.'* It is the Priest's privilege, through God's grace, to be the one who makes those words of Jesus a reality in bread and wine. Peter, was a good man and a good Priest to his very finger tips. For over 50 years he fulfilled, in his life and ministry, the role of the Priest to share the good news of the Gospel. And he did it with gentleness, wisdom, humour and quiet joy. He was, first and last, a Parish Priest, serving God through a variety of communities, *'coming day by day'*, as Michael Ramsey put it, *'to God with the people on his heart.'* He knew that you can hope to give to others only what you have received yourself. Peter, with Nonita, was assiduous in coming to the Eucharist where he could be nourished with the Body and Blood of his Lord. His merits and his commitment as a Parish Priest were formally recognised by this Diocese when he was made an Honorary Canon.

The passage from Romans, is a powerful, even fierce affirmation of Christian faith in the face of all that this world can throw at us. *'If God is for us, who is against us?'* For Saint Paul no amount of hardship, suffering or persecution could deflect him or undermine his final confidence that nothing in life or in death *'will be able to separate us from the love of God in Christ Jesus our Lord.'* Peter's final struggle against illness had something of that same tenacious faith of Saint Paul. And if you needed any further witness to the depth of his faith you would have seen it in the courage, honesty and uncompaining patience with which he tackled those last miles of his earthly journey. And he tackled those last miles with Nonita. Beside his faith there was another great sustaining pillar of his life, his marriage, *'for better, for worse; for richer, for poorer; in sickness and health'*. The depth of Peter and Nonita's love for and their commitment to each other was palpable and we all rejoice that they were able to celebrate their Golden Wedding together in style last summer.

On a lighter note, some of you may know the story of the person who rather tactlessly commented to Ginger Rogers what a good dancer Fred Astaire was. Quick as flash Ginger Rogers came back with, *'I do everything Fred does only backwards and in heels!'* Nonita rose to every challenge which Peter's ill health threw up, backwards, forwards and sideways. She learned to cope with his difficult nights, his constant oxygen supply, complex medication and how to manoeuvre both Peter and a wheelchair in and out of the car. And all in heels! She has kept her style, her humour, her care for others and her gracious hospitality especially so that Peter could spend time with family and old friends. Nonita, as we honour you for that commitment, carried through until death us do part, we offer you our love, support and prayers.

So then Peter's funeral is not just any service but a Requiem Eucharist. It contains all we need to say about the faith which we and Peter shared. It allows us to pray for him as he would wish to be prayed for. It allows us to affirm that fundamental unity that transcends death, the unity we have in the Risen Christ, so that we celebrate *'with angels and archangels and all the company of heaven'*, and that company that now includes Peter. It allows us to reflect on the central act of priestly ministry and to receive in bread and wine Our Lord Jesus Christ who said, *'I am the bread of life. Whoever comes to me will never be hungry, and whoever believes in me will never be thirsty. This is indeed the will of my Father, that all who see the Son and believe in him may have eternal life; and I will raise them up on the last day.'* So finally I am able to say out loud in the presence of all of you here today what I whispered into Peter's ear just minutes before his death, *'Well done thou good and faithful servant. Enter into the joy of your Lord.'* AMEN.

**David Williams**  
Branch Information Officer



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