

THE VIRGER

The Official Magazine of the Church of England Guild of Vergers

Spring 2020 | Issue 306

MEET OUR FELLOWS

Chris Crooks

CONGRATULATIONS ON YOUR RETIREMENT FR TOM

SMILES ACROSS THE MILES



FROM THE DESK OF THE EDITOR



As others have commented, by the time this edition lands on your doormat we'll have already had the first Sunday in Lent. The year rolls on apace and seasons change, but our work as vergers carries on - sometimes noticed, sometimes not, always (hopefully) for the greater glory of God and also in the knowledge that our work constitutes physical prayer.

I've sometimes felt cheated when Lent Courses and services are scheduled for times that "clash" with verger duties so that I'm unable to attend, and making it difficult for me to be a Mary rather than my more usual Martha rôle. I find that consciously remembering who we ultimately work for and the purpose of that work helps me to feel less cheated (along with remembering to ask the course or service leader for a copy of their

material or sermon). One of the privileges, then, of working in the House of God is being able to take some quiet time later on when everyone is gone and to sit, read and ponder the lessons that have been delivered, to give thanks that we are able to be so close to Him, and to be such integral members of our church families.

On a slightly different note, please do try to take time out from your parish or cathedral's Easter Season and join with members for the York Province Festival in Carlisle. Details can be found inside the

back cover of this edition. I'm sure James Armstrong will be happy to "sign you up" for what promises to be a very special time of fellowship, food and fun (with some worship and photos thrown in for good measure).

I wish you a blessed and prayerful Lent, and joyful celebrations when the Easter festivities are done.

Jane Gorrie
Editor

Please note that all submissions for the next edition should reach Jane via email, **CEGVMedia@gmail.com** no later than the date here:

How should you do this....Submissions for all editions of The Virger should reach me before the set deadline. If they miss this date, they may be held over to the next edition. All articles should be sent in MS Word files only and photographs in JPEG format. Please attach text and image files separately in one email.



COVER STORY

The covers of our last few Virger magazines have been graced with close-up photos of some of our beautiful verges (the last one was mine, which I proudly used just over a year ago when I verged my leaving incumbent into his new Abbey church). I love its Marian symbols of Gabriel's wings and a sword piercing the heart of Our Lady. I also love that it also bears the marks of weekly use over many years prior to my arrival in post in 2012.

I'm using another of St Mary's verges this time - it was made by the verger who trained me

when I arrived. He is a bellringer (his wife is our tower captain) so he wanted a verge to reflect his areas of duty and interest. It's beautifully balanced and elegant. Sometimes simple is best!

If any of you would like to share a photo of your verge, please do get in touch. To get your verge on the cover, you need firstly to get permission from your clergy or church warden, then take a nice, clear photograph of the head of your verge. Email it to me and I can then add yours to our currently very small collection.



FROM THE DESK OF THE NATIONAL CHAIRMAN



It is easy at this time of year to become introspective. We have experienced Advent and Christmas with all the hard work that comes with that part of our calendar. With short days and long, dark evenings, it is easy to fall into a depressive state. January comes along with all the household bills etc., just to make our lives seem even worse. As we pick ourselves up from this general malaise, along come the forty days of Lent. The decision of what to give up for Lent can be a great challenge. In all of the churches that I have served in, the clergy would encourage the congregation not to give up, but to take on something new, dispensing with the "give up" phrase and focusing on the "take on" words. Now before you all start reaching for the phone to ring the Samaritans, Lent is a great time to reflect and focus on our lives. We turn our thoughts towards the joy of the Easter season.

All around us we are seeing change in this new decade. Brexit has happened and we have another year of uncertainty. The Church has caused a certain degree of upset with the Pastoral Statement issued by the House of Bishops and its apology a week later. The Royal Family have not escaped changes within their family with 'Megxit'. Our Guild is also seeing change this year. Canon Maureen is stepping down as our Chaplain and we will be welcoming Rosemary in the summer. The role of Area Leaders have changed, becoming Regional Representatives. Branches are merging, some have closed, but our aim is to not lose any members. Archbishop Sentamu, one of our



Presidents, is also retiring and we thank him for his prayerful support over the years. We wish him and his wife a long and happy retirement. Our magazine has seen a revamp and soon our website will also have a makeover. Remember to submit branch events in good time so we can advertise them at a national level. Jane Gorrie will be very happy to receive your submissions in good time.

Our Facebook page has now become a closed group. To join and be admitted to the Group and follow CEGV members and activities, you need to answer a few basic questions and be approved by the admins. I appreciate that not all members use Facebook, but it is another useful tool in communication in today's social media. Our Regional Reps will be using electronic media to keep in

touch with the large areas around the country so that they can report back to the Executive Group on local concerns. Communication is a two-way process and it is hoped that once the list is finalised, you will be able to contact your Regional Rep and keep them informed of activities and things you want reported back to National Officers as well as the other way around.

For our Guild to modernise and implement these changes will require a great deal of hard work from the National Officers. The ethos of the Guild is fellowship, training and support. During the coming year please hold the Guild, its members and officers in your continued prayers for all that is happening.

John Kirby-Shearer

FROM THE DESK OF THE NATIONAL CHAPLAIN



Dear Friends,

Greetings! Thank you all so much for all the invitations that I have received to visit Branches and to share with you in worship and wonderful food! It has been a real privilege to meet you all. Now we leave behind the joy of the birth of our Lord Jesus, with all the celebrations [and hard work!] that the season of Christmas brings, and we turn to the busy and emotionally draining season of Lent, Holy Week, culminating in the joy of the Resurrection of our Lord on Easter Sunday followed by the great 40 days!

Recently I have had two very disturbing conversations with vergers in near despair for the future of the Church. One said, 'What will happen when the older members of the Guild die and there are no younger people ready to step into their shoes. The members of the Guild are indeed getting older.' It is indeed a concern both for the Guild and for the Church.

Our world is in crisis! The predictions of Global Warming and Climate Change are now too prominent for us to ignore: bush fires in Australia, 2019 the warmest year on record, glaciers melting and extremes of drought and flood affecting our own farmers. Coupled with this is the possibility of mass extinctions of plants, and animals. The world is also in a crisis of violence: scarcely a day goes by without reports of murder, knife-attack, robbery - all of which witness to the lack of love, the selfishness and greed which individualism brings. It is small wonder that our young people have turned from God, to find solace elsewhere.

I was reflecting that the problems we face today: especially those of violence and lack of social order, are probably not so very different from those that the first century followers of Jesus faced. Things were so bad then: the violence, the civil strife, the misrule and lack of trust, the corruption, that people really felt that the end of the

world was near. Much of the teaching of Jesus is about how to live in a world when all that is familiar, controllable and secure disappears. The anxieties and fears affect us all - young and old alike. For the young people there is concern about the sort of world they will find when they raise their children, while for the elderly the fear is whether they will have sufficient money for their care. Many feel lost and isolated.

If all this sounds very negative, Jesus bids us to keep faith and to live in hope. A very wise Indian philosopher wrote: 'Faith is the bird that sings when the night is still dark.' Hold on to the faith that Christ, who we receive into ourselves as bread and wine in the Eucharist, will give us the strength and resolve to endure to the end, passing on our faith to those who follow us as the early Christians did. Christ also gives us the hope of eternal life through his death on the cross and his Resurrection from the dead.

As we make our Pilgrimage through Lent, we pray that Christ will be the light to guide us and lead us through doubt to faith and from despair into hope.

I pray that you will all have a Holy Lent and a joyous Easter.

With every blessing and much love

Canon Maureen

SMILES ACROSS THE MILES

Interest between vergers worldwide is steady, with connections between the Vergers Guild of the Episcopal Church and the Church of England Guild of Vergers, and with a small number of independent vergers in the USA and other parts of the world.

Visits from VGEC members to the UK continue to forge relations with individual members. Thank you to those who have hosted and facilitated hospitality - I know it is greatly appreciated.

Each year, a small contingent of CEGV members (mainly connected with the London Branch) attend the VGEC conference [this year being held in Seattle] and likewise it is not unusual for Overseas Members to join in the CEGV's annual training conference held in Malvern each August. These confraternal exchanges are positive forms of fellowship and are to be encouraged - however it has to be acknowledged that these reciprocal arrangements come at a cost, a cost that cannot be borne by all!

A recent note from a colleague which read ***'How cool is it to receive hand written letters!! Is there a possibility of setting up a pen pal system between vergers of different areas, ages - even countries?? (The American guild....)*** got me thinking.

PRAYER REQUESTS

To All Branch Chairmen & Secretaries

Please would you keep in touch with your members and if you hear of illness or death, we would be grateful if you could notify the General Secretary, the Welfare Officer and the National Chaplain as soon as possible. In this way we can make sure a card is sent or a funeral attended by someone from the Guild. It is important that we nurture our members as well as we are able.

Our prayers are asked for:

Somerset & Avon
Marek Barden

East Anglia
Pam Cobb

Salisbury
Babs Taylor

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

Although we have so much in common, there is also much we can learn from each other and not only through The Virger magazine; Facebook or our respective websites, but good, old fashioned, one to one communication is to be applauded and if not by handwritten letters, then by individual email. My colleague goes on to comment '...it is much more personal, the way a person speaks comes out in a letter and you see their unique hand writing... these bits and pieces almost give the reader an illusion what the writer is...'

If anyone is interested in forging a pen pal relationship with fellow vergers at home or abroad please contact me on **CEGVOverseas@gmail.com** or **deansverger@aol.com** to encourage 'Smiles across the Miles'.

John G Campbell
Overseas Membership Officer

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MEET OUR FELLOWS

CHRIS CROOKS



27-Virgers-Virging.. The assembled virgers for the enthronement of Archbishop Justin Welby in March 2013



I was born in an industrial village in South Wales to a Welsh mother, a teacher, and an English father, who was one of the Readers in the parish and also served as an *Industrial Missioner* (Lay Chaplain) working for the *Industrial Christian Fellowship* (ICF) in the local oil refinery. One of the ICF's earlier Missioners, and a hero of my father, was the Reverend Geoffrey Studdert Kennedy MC, more famously known as 'Woodbine Willie'. One of my father's responsibilities was for the 'mission church' which met in the refinery's Village Institute on Sunday mornings, which required setting up a 'church' inside the main hall on a Saturday afternoon; I would go regularly to assist with this, from the age of 2! Later, as an active member of my Anglican (Church in Wales) parish, I sang in the choir, played the organ occasionally (rather badly), acted as crucifer, served at the altar, was administrator for the large parish Sunday School, and assisted the virger and the caretaker when required. So, as you can see, I've always had an interest...

On leaving school in 1984, in what was intended to be a "gap-year" between A-levels and university, I needed a job and was fortunate to be appointed as the Assistant (2nd Virger) at Llandaff Cathedral – my home diocese – where my younger brother was at the time a chorister. My first boss was a real character called Maurice Eales; he and his wife Hilda were very good to this rather green young man away from home for the first time. Sadly, we lost touch over the years, so if anybody knows what happened to them, I'd be pleased to hear. As I arrived, a major project to restore the west front was just coming to an end, and one of my first jobs was to sweep-up after the contractor's scaffolding had been removed, and re-open the Great West Door for use.

After a year at Llandaff, doing everything from mowing the grass and cleaning the loos to welcoming visitors and meeting Princess Anne, I moved to Wells Cathedral in 1985, where I served as 3rd Virger for 6 years. As I arrived, a

major programme to restore hundreds of mediaeval statues and stonework on the west front was just coming to an end, and one of my first jobs was to sweep-up after the Works Department scaffolding had been removed from the west front, and to prepare for a great open-air eucharist on the Cathedral Green attended by the Prince of Wales, with the west front as a great mediaeval reredos behind an out-door altar under a huge canopy. During my time at Wells I met Debbie, and we were married in the cathedral in 1989.

In 1991, at an alarmingly young age, I was appointed Head Virger of Portsmouth Cathedral with a team of two other full-time virgers, an honorary virger, and two part-time caretakers for the church-hall for which I was also responsible. At the time the nave was still under construction, the west front, and a brand-new great west door were being completed (can you see a theme building up here?).... and during my 5-and a-half years there the whole interior was re-ordered, new ceilings



inserted, re-wired for a state-of-the-art lighting system, re-decorated, and a new organ installed, with various liturgies and Royal Visits from The Princess of Wales (twice!) and HM Queen Elizabeth the Queen Mother; and, on the 5th June 1994, I found myself on duty on Southsea Common with the Cathedral Chapter and choir for the 50th anniversary of D-Day, in the presence of HM the Queen and the then president of the USA, a scene re-enacted in June last year (2019) for the 75th anniversary. They were busy times, during which we also had the first two of our children, and between us Debbie and I wrote a comprehensive guide-book for the cathedral, recording the various changes of the re-orderings.

Having been appointed to Portsmouth as the youngest cathedral Head Verger in the country at the time, I moved to Salisbury Cathedral in January 1997 as Head Verger. Here we spent 9 happy years, with a bigger team (4 full-time virgers plus myself, and 4 full-time caretakers) plus a resident Works Department of skilled craftspeople and our own police-force, the 'Close Constables'. We had the privilege of working in that world-famous building, lived literally under the shadow of that iconic spire, and had our third child. As we arrived, the project to conserve the (completely scaffolded) west front stonework was well underway, so out with the broom...

In October 2005 we moved again, this time to Canterbury Cathedral as Vesturer (Head Verger) leading a team helping to run a very busy environment. Here our fourth child completed the family. In March 2013, I found myself responsible for co-ordinating the liturgical and practical aspects of the enthronement of the 105th Archbishop of Canterbury (there being no Precentor in post at the time), working closely with the Dean and the various cathedral departments, Lambeth Palace, the BBC production team and other key-players in the lead-up to the service, and taking a leading role within the liturgy on the day.

My role now, as (1) Head of Department with a large department of 20 staff - in an organisation of over 350 staff in 19 different departments - is spent mostly in meetings and administration, and answering hundreds of emails - the curse of modern life! However, I am also the (2) Dean's Verger on formal occasions, so do get to 'virge' now and again, and (3) I am also required by ancient tradition to attend upon the Archdeacon of Canterbury when she is sent as *Commissary* (or representative) of the Archbishop of Canterbury to enthrone new diocesan bishops in the Southern Province on his behalf. Over the past 14 years I have therefore also virged in every cathedral in the Canterbury Province at the installation of their new bishop, with the exception of Exeter, Gibraltar and Norwich (the latter was seen to in autumn 2019 when the new bishop was enthroned). There is never a dull moment! I have, therefore, been privileged to undertake this amazing ministry for thirty-five years now, in five amazing, yet different, cathedrals, and - as I often say - have never had a proper job in my life!

I have been proud to be a member of the Church of England Guild of Vergers since my time in Somerset, joining at a branch meeting at St John's Church Glastonbury in 1986, and Debbie soon joined as an Associate Member. Over the years we have served in various capacities in local and national office in 4 different Branches, driving minibuses full of vergers all over the place to meetings and events. I was one of the first to qualify with the Diploma of the Guild of Vergers [DipGV] in 1994, and from 2004 - 2011 I was privileged to serve as National Chairman of the Guild. In 2012 the Guild honoured me by conferring the Fellowship of the Guild of Vergers [FCEGV], an honour I cherish. I have also served as a member of the Deans Vergers Conference (the professional association for the cathedral Head Vergers of England) since 1991, serving for a period as an Area Representative.

The busyness of my current role - and the fact that we are part-way through a £24.7m project to repair the nave roofs, conserve the west towers (so - yet again - I find a west-front under scaffolding!), build a new cathedral shop and visitor centre, install two different exhibition areas for vestments and silver etc., restore the Christchurch gate and re-landscape the cathedral Precincts - does take its toll on my ability to get away to attend events. Part way through that project it was announced that the cathedral organ would also be re-built (and doubled in size, with a new organ loft and console!) as a parallel - but completely separate - project has also added somewhat to the workload. Add into the mix that during all of this we are also planning to welcome 800+ bishops from all over the Anglican world in the summer of 2020 as the archbishop hosts the Lambeth Conference, which happens - this time - to coincide with our own cathedral celebrations for the 850 anniversary of St Thomas Becket's *Martyrdom* in the cathedral 1170, and the 800 anniversary of the Translation of his bones from a tomb in the crypt up to the new shrine in the Trinity Chapel in 1220, so things are never dull! I do try and attend national events when I can, and support as many local branch meetings as possible, even when life is busy and a day off, or bed, are calling!

Recent family research has revealed that my paternal grandfather rang the bells and sang in the choir of his parish church in Burneston, North Yorkshire, for many years and that his wife's grandfather (my great-great grandfather), Thomas Hood, had been Parish Clerk and Sunday School Superintendent of South Otterington in North Yorkshire, where there is still a plaque on the vestry wall to him so - clearly - service in some form of Lay Ministry in the church is hereditary in my family!

Chris Crooks
Canterbury
June 2019

BRANCH DIGEST

LINCOLN AND SOUTHWELL BRANCH

2019 - MOVING ON

It's been a while since I've done a report for our branch. Writing this at the beginning of February as Britain leaves the European Union, it seems that the only thing that never changes is change.

2019 was a busy year for the branch. January saw our AGM in the Old Song School of Lincoln Cathedral. March saw us visiting the Victorian inner city church of St Faith's made memorable for me by a Lenten Stations of the Cross. In May we had a guided tour of St Denys's Church, Sleaford, with their church historian, Douglas Hoare.

July saw us back in Lincoln for a party in the garden of our Chairman, Dean's Verger, John Campbell. We made a presentation to our outgoing secretary Mike Haynes in recognition of his twenty years of service to the branch. In September we enjoyed fish and chips in Skegness, and in November our Christmas Lunch in Woodhall Spa.

During the year we've had fun being given silly things to do by our newest member, Jo Blanchard. Following John's heart attack Jo set up the *Campbell Marras* (meaning 'friends' in Geordie) to raise money for the British Heart Foundation. This will reach its climax later this year with members running the Lincoln 10K dressed as John Campbell, complete with moustaches and glasses.

For our branch, the last couple of years have seen a number of changes. Members have left because they have moved to other branch areas to take up new jobs or for family reasons. Some have ceased to practice as vergers and so have resigned, others have gone to

glory. Sadly their departures have not been offset by a similar number of new members.

The size of our two dioceses means that attending meetings can mean a round trip of 100 miles or more! Driving is becoming less enjoyable for some members so we now hold our three winter meetings during the afternoon. The consequence is that the working members miss meetings because they are at work!

We remain upbeat. Future meetings are being planned to a lifeboat station, mosque, and Waitrose! We are making plans to increase awareness of the Guild, making it better known throughout both sees. Most of our existing members are in Lincoln diocese, so we are especially keen to draw in new members from Southwell / Nottingham diocese.

I am sure these problems are not unique and we would welcome ideas and suggestions from other branch members on how we can better reach out to and support those many people in every church who, as it says on the Guild's website, are "at the forefront of the Church's ministry of hospitality, welcome, care (of people, buildings and sacred things) and outreach in one form or another".

Branch Correspondent
Colin Beevers



Members chat in the Lady Chapel of St Faith's, Lincoln.



Douglas Hoare (left) highlights aspects of St Denys's Church, Sleaford.



Mike and Elizabeth Haynes after the July presentation.



Mike and Elizabeth Haynes after the July presentation.



John Campbell socks it to us at the Christmas Lunch

EAST ANGLIA BRANCH

The East Anglia Branch met on Monday 27th January at the Chestnut Tree Pub (Ipswich) for lunch and social get-together. Fifteen Branch members were able to make it and we all thoroughly enjoyed our meals. We were delighted to meet our newest and youngest member Callum Brittain (aged 19). It was the first time we had visited the Pub and all agreed they would like to return at a future date.

Pam Cobb
Branch Secretary

CHICHESTER, GUILDFORD & PORTSMOUTH BRANCH

A quiet quarter for us this time - we have our AGM on 27th February, just before this edition goes out, so the next meetings have not yet been set. We have a few visits to be proposed, namely Leonardslee Gardens near Horsham (recently changed hands and re-opened after extensive refurbishment), a trip to Chichester Cathedral (watch out Howard, we're thinking of visiting...!), and a visit to one of Portsmouth's many attractions, possibly with, again, a visit to the Cathedral.

Officers to be re-considered are: Stephen Reeds - Chairman, Jane Gorrie - Secretary, Sue Ansell - Area Leader (to become Deputy Regional Rep). Vacancies to be filled: Vice Chair and Treasurer.

OXFORD BRANCH

Twenty five members of the Oxford Branch attended the Christmas Lunch held on Tuesday 3rd December at the Wee Waif, Charvil. We were pleased that our National Chaplain, Canon Maureen Palmer, was able to join us on this occasion. To mark Canon Maureen's forthcoming retirement we made a presentation to her, thanking her for the support she has given to our Branch over the years and wishing her well in the future. Our gifts to her were a carafe and glass representing God's

Water of Life; a pendant symbolising God's Creation and a wooden carving of open hands reaching out to the world confirming God's love and protection. We all enjoyed the tasty lunch and then it was time to exchange Seasonal Greetings before getting ready to return home to prepare for the busy weeks ahead.

Our AGM was held at the Church of Christ the Servant King, High Wycombe on Tuesday 21st January 2020. Gerry

Knight, our Branch Secretary for many years has retired and his place taken by Heather Ringrose. We thank Gerry for his faithful and generous service over many years.

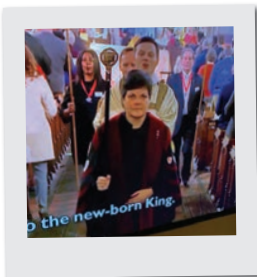
The Branch's next event will be our Spring Quiet Day at Douai Abbey, Woolhampton, in March.

Molly Payne
Branch Correspondent

LONDON, SOUTHWARK & CHELMSFORD BRANCH

TELEVISED MIDNIGHT MASS AT CROYDON MINSTER

With my own Midnight Mass requiring my ministrations, I carefully recorded another, simultaneous service, which was being broadcast live on BBC 1. It made good Christmas Day viewing!



There was our Denise Mead, Verger/Administrator of Croydon Minster in full glorious Technicolour. Her husband

Melvyn, Dee Caulton-Ball, and Andrew Page aided her. They all secured good camera shots - even our Branch Chaplain, Rev'd Canon John Ackland appeared in procession.

The service went flawlessly (although Denise might know differently - Vergers always do). The music and choir were on a par with any of our highest rated cathedrals.

As many of you may have experienced, the BBC is often not the easiest body to plan and work with. In the fortnight leading up to the transmission Denise

was bombarded with demands on layout and lighting, but she was more than a match for them!

Result? This was a most beautiful and moving service, seen by millions to celebrate the birth of our Lord and Saviour. Well done the Minster, Denise and all her team. Good choice Aunty Beeb!

Stephen Haude,
Branch Correspondent

BRANCH DIGEST

LEICESTER, PETERBOROUGH WITH DERBY BRANCH

Our year has opened with the Branch AGM in January, held this year at St Bartholomew's Kirby Muxloe. All officers were re-elected and thanked for their service to the branch. Special thanks went to the festival committee for their hard work in organising the Canterbury Province Festival in September. We received numerous letters and emails from the members who attended, expressing their kind and encouraging thanks to the branch for the organisation, Liturgy and the Goodie bags, so we gave ourselves a pat on the back and a round of applause.

When I committed the branch to take on the festival they were a little overwhelmed with the thought of whether they would be able to pull it off, but they did. Personally, I was more concerned that the Cathedral was about to take on its second phase of reordering following the re-interment of King Richard III (which was planned to start in September 2019). Thankfully for us, it didn't - and we were able to carry out our commitment to the Guild. The question is, would we do it again? Maybe not...

But maybe, when the reordering and new Exhibition and Educational facility is built, (which will also includes new facilities for the Vergers - Praise the Lord), is completed, you may wish to visit Leicester Cathedral again or, if you missed visiting this time - and you are doing the 2020 Year of Cathedrals, Year of Pilgrimage - you might want to add us to your list.

New members joining the guild

It is very good and encouraging to have the Vergers of Peterborough Cathedral back within the fellowship of the Guild. We welcome Scott Owen who will be admitted in Peterborough Cathedral at our spring meeting date (TBC) and he will join David Wood (Head Verger) and Guy Torrance.

New Verger at Leicester Cathedral - we welcome Carys Underdown to the team at Leicester, Carys comes with great experience having served at both St Mary's Redcliffe, Bristol, and Newcastle Cathedral.

Never too old for a party

In the Winter 2018 Virger magazine, I reported that our then Chaplain Reverend Canon John Tonkin had celebrated his 90th birthday and that

his family had sent him sky diving with his grandchildren. We now congratulate him again, this time along with his wife Margaret, as they celebrate their Diamond Wedding Anniversary on 13th February. The branch will give thanks for his chaplaincy ministry with us and celebrate with them at our Annual Dinner in March.

Branch Diary 2020

March 23rd

Branch Annual Dinner at St Crispin's Braunstone

April 20th

St Mary's Humberstone, Service of Wholeness and Healing

May 18th

St Mary's Anstey, Service of Holy Communion

June 30th

St Philips & St James Groby, Service of Evening Prayer



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YORK BRANCH



Two meetings have taken place since the last edition of the Virger magazine was published. On the 2nd December the first branch Christmas Dinner outside of York for a few years took place. The venue for the meeting was Leeds Minster where we were welcomed by the Caretaker (originally Head Verger and Parish Clerk) Mr. Iain Howell. We were also blessed, as we have been at every Christmas meeting, by Canon Maureen joining us. Following refreshments we received a further welcome from the Rector of Leeds, the Reverend Canon Sam Corley as we joined the Minster congregation who were present for the Celtic



Eucharist that takes place every Monday. After the service we had the group photos and continued to enjoy the Minster, including the life size Nativity figures which had been dotted around the Minster in preparation for forming the focal point for the forthcoming Christmas celebrations. The Christmas meal took place at the Lamb and Flag, next door to the Minster.



On the 3rd February the Branch held its AGM, a little later than usual due to allowing time for Branch members to receive, read and inwardly digest, their copy of the new National Constitution. The meeting took place at Holy Trinity Priory Church, Micklegate in York. The meeting began with the annual reports from the Chair, Area Leader (for the last time due to the changing nature of this post), Treasurer, and Chaplain. Next was the election of Branch Officers for 2020. With the exception of the Treasurer all other branch positions were kept by the current post holders. The Branch officers are as follows: Chair: Mrs. Su Graves; Chaplain: Reverend Marian Gardner; Treasurer: Mr. Alan Gardner; Secretary: Mrs. Angela Hamilton; Publicity Officer: Mr. Ben Elliott-Hill

Once the meeting was brought to a close we headed to the chancel for a celebration of Holy Communion, presided by the Reverend Marian Gardner, before heading to a nearby Wetherspoons for lunch.



Currently, our only future arranged event is that we are encouraging members to attend the York Province Festival in Carlisle in May - we hope to see you there!



NATIONAL OFFICERS ELECTIONS

JOHN KIRBY-SHEARER

During my membership of the Guild I have served as Verger in three churches; Marylebone Parish Church, St Mary Redcliffe and the Temple Church. I have held a variety of posts within the Guild, both at Branch and at National level. I am passionate about the training and wellbeing of vergers and about maintaining the ethos of vergers and their role in supporting the Church today. Prior to becoming a Verger I spent fifteen years working as an NHS administrator.

I am happy to stand again for a further term as the Guild's National Chairman.



JOHN CAMPBELL

It has been a privilege to serve as Overseas Liaison Officer of the guild since 1996, building up relations with worldwide vergers as well as being instrumental in the formation of the Vergers Guild of the Episcopal Church and its development.

I am happy to be considered for re-election as Overseas Membership Officer, when the present term of office runs out this year. As I run up to retirement in June of this year I am looking forward to having time and opportunity to develop new initiatives world wide. Retirement will give me time to pay extra visits to the USA (mainly fuelled by the migration of our son to Washington DC in July) and to continue and to further enhance relationships with members of the VGEC.



TIMOTHY WIGGLESWORTH

Having been admitted as an Associate Member of the Guild at some time in the early 1990s by my late Godfather, the then National Chaplain, Father Bill McLaren OBE FCEGV, it was his influence that encouraged me to play a continued part in the Guild. After discussing the matter with other members of the Standing Committee, he asked me if I would be willing to occupy a new post, that of Solicitor to the Central Council. I agreed, and so upon my qualification as a solicitor in September 1999 I took on the duties of preparing a new Constitution for the Guild, which seemed to take years to finalise and have approved! Since then I have transferred to the other side of the legal profession, and was called to the Bar in July 2007, where upon my 'job title' was amended to that of 'Legal Advisor to the Central Council' to reflect the fact that I was no longer a solicitor, but now a Barrister. I continue in this position and am more than happy to offer my services to the Central Council for another five years. I was truly honoured to have been made a Fellow of the Guild last year, something that my dear late Godfather would be very proud of.



ROBERT BEATTIE

I have worked as a verger at Worcester Cathedral since 2006, but before that I spent seven years studying mathematics, so have no fear of numbers. I have been active in the Guild at branch or national level for many years, having served since 2010 as Branch Treasurer of the Gloucester, Hereford and Worcester Branch. I initially took on responsibility as National Treasurer last summer, which both allowed Andrew Page a well-earned retirement, and promised a better fit for my talents than the role of Training Officer.



It is now time to stand for a five-year term in my own right...



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CONGRATULATIONS ON YOUR RETIREMENT FR TOM

On 22th December 2019, the Fourth Sunday of Advent both Stephen Stokes and I went to the Parish Church of St Cosmas and St Damian. Here the Rev'd Tom Cameron celebrated his Retirement Mass as Priest from The Benefice of Clayton (St John the Baptist) with Keymer. To be fair this was his second time of retiring, the other from being Canons Verger at St Pauls' Cathedral and as Deacon at St Bart's Hospital Chaplaincy.

The Church itself looked very much like St James' Malvern (to the uninitiated it's where our Conference is held in the summer - it even had the same big slope up to it from the road). Stephen Stokes joined the parish choir as Cantor and I was invited, by the Church Warden, to use the clicker to count in over 150 congregation members from the 3 parishes who, along with visitors, combined in the farewell. Bishop Martin is a long-time friend of Fr Tom's, having been the equivalent of his training incumbent while he was attached to St Bart's. There were also incense and bells, but as I was at the back it didn't make me cough! The Church bell-ringers also played their part in the proceedings. I knew this as there was a terrible draft from the ringing room which was on the ground floor behind me!

Stephen and I had happily managed to escape our own places of Worship to attend, Stephen because his workplace is closed out of University Term, and I deserted my post because I could, leaving everything in order (though that didn't stop my Vicar ringing me at 9.20 am to ask where I was!).

The service began with Bishop Martin of Chichester welcoming Steve, Fr Tom's partner, and all of us to this special service. He mentioned how welcoming the Parish had been to them on their arrival 8 years ago.

The first hymn was my favourite, 'O come, O come Emmanuel' and the final one was the hymn setting of the Magnificat 'Tell out,

my soul'. During the service the children were invited forward to find all the Church mice (these were small stuffed toys) that had been hidden around in the sanctuary and then to light the fourth Advent Candle. They then went off, taking an altar candle with them, for their activities. The young church were still a part of the service as they were in the back quarter, so they could still hear us (and we them). Towards the end of the service they came forward to return the mice and then to present to Fr Tom with what they had been working on, a collage of pictures with Fr Tom prominent in them.

After the Service the very full Church re-located to the Church Hall where the 3 parishes had provided a very fine spread down the centre of the Hall. The wine and juice flowed as did the good wishes to Fr Tom. There were speeches of love, good wishes and gifts. Amongst the presentations from the parishes was a beautiful framed watercolour of the Clayton church painted by the artist Hagop Kasparian, who was present.

In reply to the presentations, Fr Tom said that he was very grateful for the time spent serving the 3 parishes and for the welcome he had received from the parishioners which had allowed him to be himself with Steve.

Though the news of floods and weather reports it had almost made it feel that travel to this special service would not be possible, however by the grace of God all was fine, and I made it by Sunday rail services and Stephen driving down on the Friday.

Of course, as Vergers, we ended up across the road with Fr Tom, Steve and a couple of other of their friends in The Grey Hound Public House.

Congratulations on your retirement Fr Tom, and may God Bless you.

Irene Money





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You may be interested in events happening across the country hosted by local branches. Please ensure that you contact the local contact prior to attending in case details have changed, especially times or locations. While we are a local Branch-based organisation, we wish to remember that we are equally a National organisation. If your Branch wishes to have their events listed here please let us know.

Monday 4 and Tuesday 5 May 2020

York Province Festival, Carlisle Cathedral

Monday 10 – Thursday 13 August 2020

Annual Training Conference Elim Conference Centre, West Malvern. Anyone wishing to come should contact Margaret Burston on CEGVConference@gmail.com

Wednesday 16 September 2020

East Anglia Branch have offered St Edmundsbury Cathedral as a venue for a Festival Lite. More details will be forthcoming in the near future.

Monday 9 – Thursday 12 August 2021 tbc

Annual Training Conference Elim Conference Centre, West Malvern. Anyone wishing to come should contact Margaret Burston on CEGVConference@gmail.com

If your Branch has any events that you wish to have advertised on this page please contact the Media Officer CEGVMedia@gmail.com



Church of England Guild of Vergers

York Province Festival

4th & 5th May 2020 Carlisle Cathedral

By kind permission of the Chapter

Monday 4th May *(optional)*

17:45 Evensong sung by the Choristers and Lay Clerks

18:30 for 19:00 Food & Fellowship at The Castlegate Coffee House
for those stray souls staying overnight

Tuesday 5th May

09:30 Arrival & Robing *(should you wish)*

10:15 Guild photo at the High Altar

10:30 Admissions & Eucharist with Hymns

Celebrant :- The Very Revd Mark Boyling Dean of Carlisle

11:45 Sandwich Lunch with a glass of wine or soft drink

13:00 Free time, take a tour of the Cathedral, see the refurbished Fraternity and Undercroft, have coffee and cake in our new café or simply have retail therapy in the city.

17:45 Evensong *(optional)* sung by the Choristers and Lay Clerks

18:20 Departure for those who have not needed to set off earlier.

Please contact James or his team to let us know you are planning to attend.

by phone 01228 535169 or e-mail headverger@carlislecathedral.org.uk

The festival is free but a donation for your meals would be appreciated

CARLISLE CATHEDRAL



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The Guild Prayer

Almighty Father, from whom every family in heaven and earth is named,
who has called us into the fellowship of your Church,
grant, we pray, that in all our churches we may fulfil the duties
and enjoy the privileges of our spiritual home.
And on those who offer themselves for service as vergers in the house of God
bestow the fullness of your grace,
that, united in love to you and to one another,
we may show forth your glory and hasten the coming of your kingdom.
Through Jesus Christ, our Lord. Amen.



www.cofegv.org.uk



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